

Land access for field surveys and investigations



Delivered by

AusNet

Purpose

This document provides information about land access for field surveys and investigations for landholders on the Western Renewables Link proposed route. We are committed to working with landholders, understanding your requirements, ensuring you are compensated for facilitating land access, and minimising disruption to your property and operations.

This document has been updated to comply with the Essential Services Commission Land Access Code of Practice (1 March 2024).



Landholder

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

In alignment with the Essential Services Commission Code of Practice, we will work with occupiers, 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:

- TELUS Health: 1300 360 364.
- Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) Victoria West: 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 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.

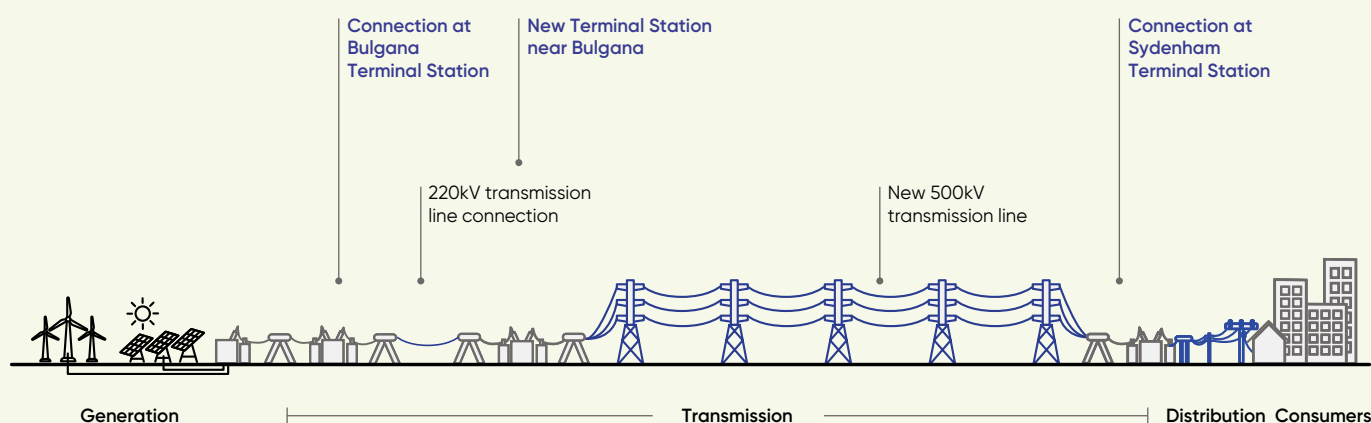
How to contact the project team

-  www.westernrenewableslink.com.au/contact
-  1800 WRL WRL (975 975) 8.30am–5.30pm, Monday–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.

Version	Section	Change	Rationale
4	All sections	Information about payments and heritage finds updated; Land Access Consent pro forma removed	Ensuring document currency

Western Renewables Link



For illustrative purposes only

Western Renewables Link

The Western Renewables Link is a proposed new electricity transmission line that will 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.

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) selected AusNet to develop, design, construct, operate and maintain the proposed transmission line.

Project assessment and approvals

We are required to prepare an Environment Effects Statement for the Western Renewables Link project that will be assessed by the Victorian Minister for Planning and an independent panel. To inform the Environment Effects Statement and project design, we are undertaking extensive technical studies including field surveys and investigations, along with landholder, community and stakeholder consultation on the project.

The Environment Effects Statement process must be complete, and Victorian and Commonwealth approvals must be obtained, including approval of a Planning Scheme Amendment, before construction. We expect the EES public exhibition and inquiry, which includes a public hearing, will take place throughout 2025. Further information about the Environment Effects Statement process is available on the Planning Panels Victoria website: www.planning.vic.gov.au/environmental-assessments.

You can find all the latest project information on the [project website](#).

Essential Services Commission Code of Practice

We are committed to complying with the Essential Services Commission Land Access Code of Practice (ESC Code of Practice).

The ESC Code of Practice governs procedures for electricity transmission companies, such as AusNet, to follow when seeking access to private land under the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (Vic) (Act). The purpose of the ESC Code of Practice is to mandate specific requirements to be followed before, during and after land access to minimise impact and improve communication with landholders, occupiers and other key stakeholders. It also regulates the information electricity transmission companies must provide prior to landholders signing a Land Access Consent or accessing private land under section 93 of the Act.

More information about the ESC Code of Practice is available on the ESC website at [Land Access Code of Practice | Essential Services Commission](#).

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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 ESC Code of Practice, 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 1800 WRL WRL (975 975) 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 Option for Easement and compensation process. 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 can provide more information on the Option for Easement proposal and agreement process, how compensation for the easement in the proposal is assessed and other payments available to you as a landholder.

More information can be found on our website in our [Landholder Guide: Option for Easement process and compensation](#).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 Environment Effects Statement 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 Land Access Consent for your consideration.• 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your LLO will discuss the easement acquisition process with you and can arrange meetings for you with the project's appointed independent valuer to discuss the compensation valuation.



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 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 Environment Effects Statement 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.
- Comply with the ESC's Code of Practice.
- Abide by all access protocols set out in the Land Access Consent, where in place.
- Carry project 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 specific survey information prior to being sent any notice to access.
- Receive information in relation to AusNet's rights and obligations under section 93 of the Act.
- Receive prior notice of any access to their property.
- See project identification of all persons entering their property.
- Have feedback or requested changes considered and promptly receive an answer or response from AusNet.
- Set out biosecurity, fire risks and health risks controls 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.

Access under section 93 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (Vic)

In the circumstances where we cannot reach voluntary consent to access property, AusNet may need to access and undertake work under section 93 of the Act. Your LLO will work with you to facilitate this process.

Under the Act, specifically section 93(1), it is lawful for AusNet and its authorised persons to undertake surveys and other necessary activities associated with the Western Renewables Link in accordance with the requirements in the Act and the ESC Code of Practice.

During any type of access to your property, we will work with you to confirm the approach, activities, timing, and any agreed protocols you wish us to observe whilst on your land.

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 entail walking over the site, making observations, taking photographs, measurements, and recording GPS locations.

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.

Cadastral surveys

Cadastral surveys are carried out by a qualified surveyor to verify and confirm the precise boundaries of each property parcel based on the public information available from Land Use Victoria. The surveyor will often work from known reference points such as along roads or boundary corners near your property. The surveyors will also need to survey features within the property, including old survey marks,

fences, old walls or building near the property title boundaries and survey along parcel boundary lines and at boundary corners.

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.

Land access under voluntary consent

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.

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.

Steps in the voluntary land access consent process

Step	Description	Timeframe
1. Request access and provide information on proposed 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 Land Access Consent to consider.	A minimum of 30 business days before the required property access period, or as otherwise agreed with you.
2. Understand and document 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, timing, biosecurity requirements, fire risks, health risks and cultural heritage protection.	
3. Support for legal advice	You can seek independent legal advice regarding the voluntary Land Access Consent and AusNet will reimburse the cost up to \$1,000 (excluding GST).	
4. Consent	<p>You consent to property access by signing the Land Access Consent, in which case you are eligible for the Landholder Participation Fee payment.</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>	
5. Confirmation notice	Where you give your consent, we will confirm the upcoming property access, activities and details.	A minimum of 10 business days before the agreed property access period, or as otherwise agreed.
6. Property access	We will undertake the field survey in accordance with the agreed arrangements and protocols.	We will contact you 48 hours before the agreed property access and on the day of the access prior to entry or as otherwise agreed with you.
7. 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. Request access and provide information on proposed access

If access to your property is required to conduct specific field surveys or investigations, we will endeavour to contact you a minimum of 30 business days prior to access to request your consent for temporary access. We will provide information on the proposed access and a template Land Access Consent 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 Code of Practice, with you.

2: Understand and document your requirements

As a landholder, you have the best knowledge of your land and operational requirements. We will work actively with you to understand and document 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, your LLO will document the requirements and protocols in the Access Protocols schedule attached to the Land Access Consent.

For example, requirements and protocols may include:

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

3. 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 Land Access Consent up to a maximum of \$1,000 (excluding GST). Your LLO can assist you to claim this reimbursement.

4. Providing consent for access

Landholder choice

Providing consent for us to access your property to undertake field surveys and investigations is voluntary. 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 Environment Effects Statement 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.

Land Access Consent

We will provide you with a template Land Access Consent for your consideration. This agreement can be used to provide your consent for us to access your property for specific work and to document the agreed field survey details and protocols you wish us to follow when accessing your property.

The Landholder Participation Fee includes an initial 5 days of land access for field surveys and investigations while the Land Access Consent is valid. If we need access for more than 5 days, you will receive \$2,000 per extra day, up to a maximum of \$30,000. The total payment for land access for each property is capped at \$50,000 (excluding GST).

More information about payments can be found in our [Landholder Guide: Option for Easement process and compensation](#).

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 Land Access Consent 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.

5. Confirmation notice and access details

We will contact you at least 10 business 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 Land Access Consent.

6. 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 48 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.
Project 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.
Entry procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will complete the biosecurity entry procedure and the health risk and fire risk protocols 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.• 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.
Exit procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will complete the biosecurity exit procedure and the health risk and fire risk protocols including any specific requirements you may have.• We will leave your property via the agreed exit point.• Using your preferred method of communication, we will let you know when access has concluded and the activities undertaken.

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 your LLO 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 risk

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 health risk

Our staff 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.

7. 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).

Land access snapshot



~190km
proposed route



~ 240
landholders



More than 970 field surveys
completed.



What happens if a landholder does not provide access consent?

Our aim is to work with you to reach an agreement to access your property with your consent, however providing your consent is voluntary. If you do not wish to provide consent for us to access your property, we may access your property to undertake field surveys and investigations under section 93 of the Act.

Essential Services Commission Land Access Code of Practice

The ESC Code of Practice governs procedures for electricity transmission companies, such as AusNet, to follow when seeking access to private land under section 93 of the Act. It also regulates the information electricity transmission companies must provide prior to signing a Land Access Consent or accessing private land under section 93 of the Act. The purpose of the ESC Code of Practice is to mandate specific requirements to be followed before, during and after land access to minimise impact and improve communication with landholders, occupiers and other key stakeholders.

More information about the ESC Code of Practice is available on the ESC website – [Land Access Code of Practice | Essential Services Commission](#).

Land access under section 93 of the Electricity Industry Act 2000 (Vic)

Under the Act, specifically section 93(1), it is lawful for AusNet and its authorised persons to undertake surveys and other necessary activities associated with the Western Renewables Link in accordance with the requirements in the Act.

Section 93(1) of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (Vic) states:

"For the purposes of this Act, an electricity corporation, subject to this Act– (a) may enter upon any lands and sink bores and make surveys and do any other acts or things necessary for sinking bores or making surveys... and (e) may do all other things necessary or convenient for constructing, maintaining, altering, or using any works or undertakings of, or under the control of, the electricity corporation."

During any type of access to your property, we will work with you to confirm the approach, activities, timing and any agreed protocols you wish us to observe whilst on your land.

Step and relevant ESC Code of Practice clause	Description	Timeframe
1. Request access and provide information on proposed access (as per clause 5 and 6)	We will send you a request for access to your property. This request will include access rights and obligations as well as information on the proposed access. Your LLO will follow up with a meeting, phone and/or email to you.	A minimum of 30 business days before the required property access period.
2. 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, timing, biosecurity requirements, fire risks, health risks and cultural heritage protection.	
3. Provide notice to access under section 93 (as per clause 7)	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 10 business days before the required property access period.
4. During land access (as per clause 9)	<p>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.</p> <p>We will let you know when access has concluded for the day and will outline the activities undertaken.</p>	We will contact you 48 hours before property access and on the day of the access prior to entry.
5. Provision of reports and information (as per clause 9.6)	Following access to your property we will communicate to you the number of people that attended your property, location at which we accessed your property, materials and chemicals used and a description of the activities undertaken in relation to biosecurity control, fire risk management and health risk management.	A maximum of 15 business days after the required property access dates.
6. 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.

Reporting requirements

The Essential Services Commission requires AusNet to report outcomes achieved in meeting the Code of Practice in relation to land access under section 93 of the Act for development of the Western Renewables Link. AusNet will report to the Essential Services Commission each month as required. 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.

In addition to monthly reporting, should AusNet breach any obligation set out in the ESC Code of Practice, we must remedy the breach as soon as practical and report it to ESC. Schedule 2 of the ESC Code of Practice outlines the manner, form and time in which a breach is to be reported to ESC.

ESC Code of Practice reference guide

	Principle	Reference in this guide
1. Preliminary	1. Purpose	Page 3
	2. Interpretations	
	3. Application	
2. Obligations prior to accessing land	4. Objective of part 2	
	5. Communications and engagement	Page 4 to 5
	5.1 Information about new transmission projects or upgrades	
	5.2 Obligation to consult	
	5.3 Accessible point of contact	
	5.4 Communication and engagement	
	6. Information on proposed access	Page 6 to 11
	6.1 Information on access rights and obligations	
	6.2 Information on proposed access	
	7. Notice of access under section 93	Page 12 to 13
	7.1 Notice of access	
	7.2 Maximum access period	
	7.3 Changes to notified access	
	7.4 Exceptions to consultation and notice requirements	
3. Obligations during land access under 93 of the Act	8. Objective of part 3	
	9. Requirements when accessing land	Page 12 to 13
	9.1 General obligations during access	
	9.2 Risk minimisation during access	
	9.3 Biosecurity controls	
	9.4 Fire risk management	
	9.5 Health risk management	
	9.6 Provision of reports and information to affected parties	
4. Dispute resolution, record keeping and reporting	10. Objective of part 4	
	11. Complaint handling and dispute resolution	Page 16
	12. Record keeping	Page 15
	13. Reporting	Page 13

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.

In alignment with the ESC Code of Practice, we will engage with occupiers regarding land access. Landholders can speak with their LLO to discuss what information will be shared.

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?

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

The results of technical studies will be publicly exhibited as part of the Environment Effects Statement. 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 Environment Effects Statement. 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, Aboriginal cultural heritage or historic heritage, we will provide you with as much information as possible about what was found.

If a site on your property is deemed significant, AusNet may provide financial support to help you access professional heritage services, such as heritage consultants. As with other professional services, these will require preapproval and payment guidelines will apply. Please advise your land agent and provide a fee estimate for review if you're intending to engage a heritage specialist.

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

- Record and register the Place with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR)
- Record and register the place with First Peoples – State Relations (formerly Aboriginal Victoria).
- Work with relevant Registered Aboriginal Parties, local Traditional Owners and First Peoples – State Relations 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 places on private land will not stop the existing land use from continuing. Aboriginal sites and places are protected by law; so, if something is found on your property, 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 Environment Effects Statement 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 Environment Effects Statement. The field survey and investigation findings and related material will be included in the Environment Effects Statement 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 1800 WRL WRL (975 975) 8.30am–5.30pm, Monday–Friday
- Writing to us at:
AusNet Services
Attention: Privacy Officer –
Western Renewables Link
Melbourne City Mail Centre VIC 8001
privacy@ausnetservices.com.au

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 1800 WRL WRL (975 975)
- 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.

More information about complaints is available on page 16.






Questions

We recognise that the requirements of each property and landholder are unique. This guide provides general information for landholders about the land access process for field surveys and investigations.

Contact details for your Land Liaison Officer can be provided by the project team on 1800 975 975 or via email info@westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Western Renewables Link

 www.westernrenewableslink.com.au
 1800 WRL WRL (975 975)
 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.

Feedback

You can provide feedback on this document via our website www.westernrenewableslink.com.au or by calling 1800 WRL WRL (975 975) 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.

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:

 1800 WRL WRL (975 975)
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au
 PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

You can also lodge a complaint or provide feedback directly to your Land Liaison Officer.

Complaint handling steps:

1. You can lodge a complaint with AusNet as outlined above.
2. We will acknowledge receipt of a complaint in writing and will provide a unique complaint reference number 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 with handling the complaint by providing regular updates on the investigation and a revised timeframe for resolving the complaint.
5. At any time, you may request to have your complaint escalated to the senior management team by sending an email to GeneralManager@westernrenewableslink.com.au.

If your complaint or question relates to the RIT-T process, you can raise it with AEMO by emailing WestVicRITT@aemo.com.au.

If your complaint or question relates to the Environment Effects Statement process, you can raise it with the Department of Transport and Planning by emailing environment.assessment@delwp.vic.gov.au.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome after you have made a complaint to the project team, you may pursue dispute resolution through the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria if the complaint relates to access or proposed access to private land under section 93 (1) of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (Vic), and/or compliance with the Land Access Code of Practice.

You can contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria by phoning 1800 500 509, emailing ewovinfo@ewov.com.au, or visiting www.ewov.com.au.

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

(www.energysafe.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/environmental-assessments/environmental-assessment-guides/environment-effects-statements-in-victoria) including information about the environment assessment process managed by the Department of Transport and Planning.

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 Code of Practice.

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 does not guarantee or warrant the accuracy, completeness, or currency of the information provided and AusNet, 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.

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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