

Neighbouring Landholders

We recognise that landholders with property near the proposed Western Renewables Link transmission line may have questions about the project, including how the proposed route has been selected, how impacts on neighbouring landholders are being considered, and how feedback is being used during project planning.

Neighbouring landholders

Neighbouring landholders are landholders who do not have a proposed easement on their property but live close to the proposed route.

Proposed route selection

The current proposed route has been identified based on a range of desktop studies, surveys, input from landholders, stakeholders and the community, and technical considerations. We are continuing to work closely with landholders and stakeholders to respond to feedback on the proposed route and project design, scale of towers and access track locations.

Finalising the proposed route

While we have a proposed route that will be presented in the Environment Effects Statement, the route for the Western Renewables Link will not be finalised until the Minister for Planning issues their assessment of the proposed project's environmental effects under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic). The Environment Effects Statement process must be complete, and Victorian and Commonwealth approvals must be obtained, including approval of the planning scheme amendment, before the route is finalised and construction of the transmission line can begin.



Proximity to houses

While identifying the proposed route, we have worked to maximise the distance between the transmission line and existing houses, while balancing other route selection criteria to avoid or minimise environmental, social and cultural impacts of the project. While the width of the transmission line easement will vary along the proposed route, the easement would provide a 35m to 50m separation (approximately) each side of the transmission line where houses cannot be built.

We have tried to reach a target separation of at least 300m from dwellings. However, in some circumstances along the proposed route this is not possible. There are many instances around Victoria and Australia where dwellings are located adjacent to the boundary of transmission easements. AusNet works with bodies such as Energy Safe Victoria to manage the activities, vegetation and buildings permitted on easements to mitigate potential electrical or fire hazards – both for the safety of the public and landholders, and the electricity system in general.

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Visual impact from houses and property

We understand that landholders are concerned about the visual impact of transmission lines and towers from their houses and property. The impact on views from houses and residential areas is being assessed as part of the landscape and visual impact assessment for the Environment Effects Statement.

Visual impact assessment involves the technical specialist undertaking site visits, aerial and land-based surveys, and using computer-based theoretical mapping to understand the potential visibility of the proposed infrastructure from identified locations.

Where the proposed route is close to a house and a transmission tower will be visible from the residence, we are exploring options to reduce the visual impact including adjusting tower locations, considering use of existing landscape and vegetation to screen the infrastructure, and options for tree planting. We are also developing virtual reality tools to show how the proposed project infrastructure will appear in the landscape at selected locations. These will be shared with the community as part of ongoing engagement activities.

You can register your interest in having the views of the proposed transmission lines assessed by contacting our team.

Community benefits plan

VicGrid has released a Draft Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan that will apply to the Western Renewables Link and is due to be finalised by the end of 2024. The draft plan features the introduction of new community energy funds, payments for host landholders, payments for significantly impacted neighbours and a commitment to co-design benefits for Traditional Owners. We will work with neighbouring landholders and VicGrid to understand the impacts, guidelines and what it means for our landholders and neighbours.

Fire

We recognise that the proposed Western Renewables Link is planned in fire-prone areas and communities are concerned the transmission line could cause fires or make it harder to fight fires. Bushfire risk is being assessed as part of the bushfire impact assessment for the Environment Effects Statement. In Victoria, transmission lines are highly regulated to ensure they are designed, maintained and operated safely. In compliance with Energy Safe Victoria regulations and to ensure the risk of a fire being ignited is minimised, we have Vegetation Management Plans and Bushfire Mitigation Plans. You can view existing plans on the AusNet website at www.ausnetservices.com.au/about/network-regulation/regulatory-publications.

Undergrounding

While the project has been proposed as an overhead transmission line, we are required to investigate the feasibility of undergrounding as an alternative in preparing the Environment Effects Statement. Based on the preliminary findings, AusNet considers overhead construction the most appropriate form for the proposed transmission line. Our investigations are continuing as part of the Environment Effects Statement preparation.

Using your input and feedback

It is important for us to understand the values, impacts and concerns of landholders and communities near the proposed route. Input from the community and landholders is collated and provided to the technical specialists working on the impact assessments for the Environment Effects Statement. So far, this information has been used to inform the proposed route and our understanding of local impacts of the project, and to design the transmission line, tower siting and access tracks in a way that minimises environmental, social and cultural impacts of the project. Feedback also helps the project team improve our communication and stakeholder engagement activities.

We are continuing to provide opportunities for you to have a say on the project, inform the project design and development, and contribute to the Environment Effects Statement process.

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

Support

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

Contact

- Telus Health (formerly 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.

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