

Welcome to the Western Renewables Link (WRL) project update. This update introduces the WRL Benefit Sharing Program and highlights our \$55 million commitment to deliver lasting benefits for communities along the proposed route, if the project receives approval.

Introducing the WRL Benefit Sharing Program

A reliable energy system is essential for all Victorians and the WRL will play a critical role in securing our energy future. The communities that host this vital infrastructure are at the heart of making it possible.

The WRL Benefit Sharing Program will support the delivery of new investment, funding and job opportunities for communities as part of this once-in-a-generation change.

The Benefit Sharing Program was developed through engagement with landowners, Traditional Owners, communities and key stakeholders.

The program will support local projects, improve public infrastructure, recognise landowners and near neighbours and invest in Traditional Owner partnerships. Delivering meaningful impact and a sustainable legacy, the program will focus on outcomes that are feasible and viable.

\$55 million commitment to deliver lasting benefits for regional communities

As part of the program, the Western Renewables Link (WRL) project, delivered by AusNet, has committed \$55 million in funding to support community partnerships, investment initiatives and a co-designed Community Benefit Fund. In response to community feedback calling for earlier benefits \$15 million has been made available during the development phase and is committed whether or not the project proceeds. The remaining \$40 million will be delivered if the project is approved and proceeds to construction.

This commitment was outlined in materials submitted as part of the opening of the Environment Effects Statement (EES) panel hearing and shared with landowners along the proposed route.



\$55 million
Investing in Community to deliver lasting local benefits along the proposed route



Traditional Owners Benefits shaped and underpinned by self-determination



Industry
Driving economic growth with a
\$170 million
hyper-local spend and prioritisation of local jobs



Landowners and Neighbouring Landowners
Financial recognition for their role on the project

The WRL Benefit Sharing Program is guided by four key pillars that shape all elements of the program

Strategy



Contribute to the resilience and prosperity of communities along the proposed alignment



Partner with Traditional Owners



Facilitate economic growth and development



Back community-led progress toward a net zero future

Delivery



Project development and approvals

Construction and beyond*



Community

\$15 million
Community Partnerships and Investment

\$15 million
Community Partnerships and Investment

\$25 million
co-designed Community Benefit Fund



Landholders and Neighbouring Landholders

\$46,000 Voluntary Hosting Benefit for landholders per hectare of easement**

\$20,000 or \$40,000
Near Neighbour Benefit Program payment depending on vicinity



Traditional Owners

Traditional Owner Benefit Sharing underpinned by principles of self-determination



Industry

\$39 million
hyper-local spend to date

\$170 million
hyper-local spend

*Benefits in this phase will be delivered if the project is approved and proceeds to construction

**For those who sign a Land Access Consent and Option for Easement agreement early and voluntarily, The VHB is in addition to the \$8,000 per kilometre per year for 25 years (indexed to CPI) transmission line hosting payment announced by the Victorian Government in 2023



Community Partnerships and Investment

The Community Partnerships and Investment stream of the WRL Benefit Sharing Program will deliver \$30 million in funding to support initiatives that reflect local priorities and create lasting benefits for communities along the proposed alignment.

Guided by the strategic pillars of the WRL Benefit Sharing Program and underpinned by local research and engagement, this investment is designed to strengthen community resilience.

In response to community feedback, \$15 million of this funding has been brought forward to support initiatives during the development phase. This early investment reflects the project's commitment to sharing value with communities so they can experience tangible benefits well ahead of construction. Importantly, this funding will be delivered regardless of whether the project proceeds. The remaining \$15 million will be available if the project proceeds.

Projects committed to so far include:

- Supporting a range of energy initiatives to help local organisations advance their renewable energy goals and reduce operating costs – including Ballarat West Employment Zone energy assessments, rooftop solar and batteries at five Ballarat Community Health sites and an energy analysis for North Ballarat Precinct Structure Plan
- Improving mobile connectivity in western Victoria with new communication towers in Lexton, Smeaton and Coimadai
- Solar, battery and power upgrades at key community sites in the Pyrenees Shire
- A new community playground in Waubra initiated by local mums and backed by WRL.



Community Benefit Fund

If approvals are granted and the project moves ahead, \$25 million of the WRL Benefit Sharing Program will be allocated to a Community Benefit Fund, building on earlier engagement and partnering with communities to shape how funding is allocated based on local priorities.

The fund will be co-designed with community members and facilitated by an independent third party. Participants will be reimbursed for their time and costs. This approach shifts decision-making to those with local knowledge, helping to build trust, strengthen ownership and make certain funding delivers meaningful impact.

\$4 million in local grants to enable community-led projects

The WRL Local Grants Fund will support community-led initiatives across local government areas along the proposed project alignment.

Designed to respond to high demand for flexible funding, the program empowers local collectives and organisations to deliver projects that respond to and reflect community priorities.

The first funding round is expected to open in the first quarter of 2026.



Local families at Waubra's existing playground, soon to be transformed through a community-led upgrade supported by WRL.

About the project

The Western Renewables Link is a proposed electricity transmission line that will carry renewable energy from western Victoria to homes and businesses across the state and into the National Electricity Market. The project is critical infrastructure required to unlock the renewable energy potential of western Victoria as a key Renewable Energy Zone and will help to deliver clean and affordable energy to all Victorians.

Find more information online

Read more about the WRL Benefit Sharing Program and how you can get involved on the [project website](#) and the [program guide](#).

Sign up to the [project newsletter](#) on the website to receive updates on the program and notifications on when expressions of interest open.



Want to speak with a member of our team?

You can contact the team on our dedicated number 1800 975 975 or email us at info@westernrenewableslink.com.au.

More information

Visit the project website westernrenewableslink.com.au for the latest project information.

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