

DECEMBER 2021

WVTNP Community Update



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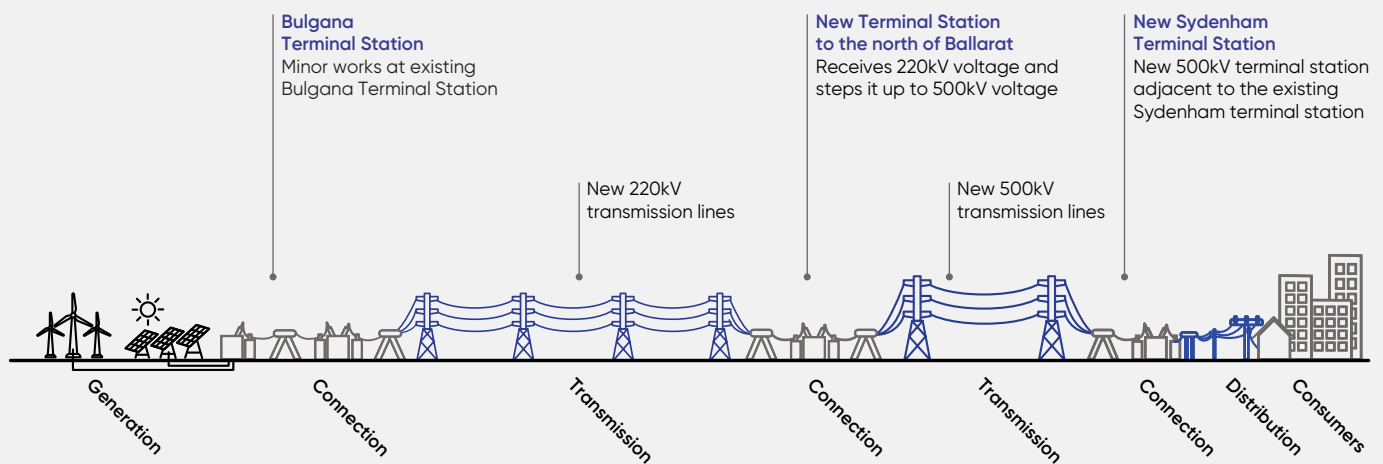
Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide an update on project and community engagement activities that took place in 2021 and provide details of activities planned for 2022.

What is proposed to be built?

The WVTNP is a proposed new 190km transmission line starting at Bulgana, near Stawell in Victoria's west, and connecting to Sydenham in Melbourne's north-west, via the existing Waubra terminal station and a new terminal station to the north of Ballarat. The project scope proposes a 220kV transmission line from Bulgana to north of Ballarat, and a 500kV transmission line from north of Ballarat to Sydenham.

Western Victoria Transmission Network Project



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

From there to the proposed new terminal station at Sydenham, a new overhead double circuit 500kV high voltage transmission line.

Not to scale



Proposed route announced for the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project

Western Victoria is now one step closer to becoming the state's renewable energy powerhouse with the announcement of the proposed route for the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP). The selection of the proposed route follows community engagement and investigations which enabled AusNet Services to narrow down the area of interest to multiple corridors in February 2021, and then to a single corridor in June 2021.

Detailed information on the proposed route, including the *Proposed Route Overview* and the *Underground Construction Summary* documents, can be found at the resources tab of the project website: <https://www.westvictnp.com.au/>.

The Western Victoria Transmission Network Project is a proposed new 190km overhead high voltage electricity transmission line that will carry renewable energy from Bulgana in western Victoria to Sydenham in Melbourne's north-west. The project includes:

- a 220kV double circuit overhead line from Bulgana to a new terminal station north of Ballarat.
- a 500kV double circuit overhead line from a new terminal station north of Ballarat to a new terminal station at North Sydenham.

The WVTNP seeks to increase transmission capacity in the Western Victorian network to unlock renewable generation in the region and help to deliver more clean and affordable energy to Victorians. This critical, state-significant project is a major economic investment in Western Victoria and will create jobs and unlock economic development opportunities during and after construction.

Landholder Guide released

Prior to the announcement of the proposed route, we released the *Landholder Guide: Land access, easements and compensation*. The guide provides additional information about land access, easements and compensation for landholders and communities affected by the WVTNP.

Topics such as land access, easements and compensation are extremely important for landholders - and that's why AusNet Services has developed these guidelines.

Ongoing Community Engagement

AusNet Services is committed to ongoing, meaningful engagement with all stakeholders throughout the approvals process and project development.

In response to community feedback, we have updated our website and added a new feature - an interactive map which allows users to access detailed layers of information such as being able to search and find their property on the map in relation to the proposed route.

AusNet Services held webinars on the proposed route in November and December, as well as five community information sessions in Waubra, Miners Rest, Darley, Melton and again at Miners Rest. There was a variety of information provided at the sessions, with topics including the proposed route, undergrounding and compensation. Technical experts and specialists were on hand to respond to queries at these sessions.

More information about 2021 community engagement activities appears on page 5.

The Environment Effects Statement (EES)

The WVTNP is subject to an Environment Effects Statement (EES), the most rigorous environmental impact assessment process in Victoria.

The EES process is administered by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) on behalf of Victoria's Minister for Planning under the Environment Effects Act 1978.

The purpose of the EES is to ensure that major projects are designed, constructed and operated to minimise adverse environmental and community impacts.

We anticipate this will continue through until early-2023. During this time there will be several opportunities for landholders, the community and stakeholders to have input into the process.

We are currently preparing the EES for the project.

There will be many opportunities throughout 2022 for landholders, stakeholders and the community to have input under the EES process.

Preliminary Information Sheets

Understanding the existing conditions within the project area of interest is the first step towards developing the impact assessment reports which will be part of the EES.

We have produced the following EES Preliminary Information Sheets which summarise the existing conditions based on desktop reviews, field surveys and investigations carried out by engineers and scientists. These can be found in the resources section of the project website and include:

- Surface Water
- Groundwater
- Aviation
- Bushfire
- Agriculture
- Biodiversity
- Geology and contaminated land
- Landscape and visual
- Historic heritage

Stakeholder Engagement

In 2021, AusNet Services' team of specialists continued to gather information from the community, industry and government to understand the potential impacts and opportunities in the planning, approvals and design phases of the WVTNP.

Assessing the viability of project alternatives, such as undergrounding transmission lines and refining the project by identifying areas of significance and sensitivity, is an important part of the EES process and determining the final location of the transmission line.

Following consideration of landholder, community and stakeholder feedback and technical investigations, we narrowed down the area of interest into multiple corridors in February 2021, announced a single corridor in June 2021, and identified the proposed route in November 2021.

Community and stakeholder feedback, combined with the findings of technical studies, field surveys and investigations, have informed the selection of the proposed route and alternatives.

The proposed route aims to avoid environmental, cultural and social impacts as far as possible, while considering constructability and technical aspects. Where impacts are unavoidable, such as the transmission line being visible or going through farmland, the proposed route aims to minimise the impact in line with the route selection criteria.

Alternatives

There are three points on the proposed route where alternatives are being considered. They are Hepburn Lagoon, Darley and Melton Aerodrome. Further technical assessment and community and stakeholder consultation will be undertaken to identify the alternative route, design, structure and / or construction methodology that most effectively addresses the constraints and potential impacts at those points.

Ongoing work

Ongoing technical studies, field surveys and community and landholder engagement aim to ensure the potential impacts of the project on affected properties are fully understood and avoided where possible. The next steps will focus on micro-siting towers, design modifications in response to land use requirements, and making small adjustments to the design to minimise impacts on properties.

Where ongoing investigations and engagement find something unanticipated, and design cannot manage the impact appropriately, alternative routes may be considered in that area.

COVID-19

COVID-19 continued to impact AusNet Services' ability to meet stakeholders in person throughout 2021. Most engagement activities were delivered online via webinars and online meetings, the dedicated project email, hotline and direct mail channels. Where possible, respectful of COVID-19 restrictions, face-to-face meetings were held.

Narrowing down the area of interest

Area of interest

A broad geographical area was investigated to understand the constraints and opportunities to identify corridors for further investigation.

Multiple corridors

Based on constraints and opportunities in the area of interest, multiple corridors were identified for further investigation in February 2021.

Corridor

The least constrained single corridor was identified based on additional assessment, including advice from technical specialists, in June 2021.



Route

Based on the findings from technical studies, field surveys and investigations, and community and stakeholder feedback, a proposed route was identified in November 2021.

Fast facts for 2021

Community information sessions:



Across 2021, we held 15 in-person information sessions with **636** people attending



40 one-on-one online meetings in October



Approximately **500** feedback forms were received



250+ questions raised and considered at the community engagement sessions

Webinars and online map:



We held 8 webinars in October with over **310** attendees



We held 2 webinars in Nov/Dec with over **60** attendees



1,951 map pins dropped into the online map in March



We added an interactive map to the project website

Emails, phone calls and eUpdates in 2021:



Over **740** emails to the project inbox



Over **160** phone calls



Over **25** eUpdates



Over **25,000** website visits

Community Consultation Group:



9 meetings of the Community Consultation Group

Landholders:



Number of letters sent – over **2,200**



Number of surveys completed – over **150**



Key engagement activities

Date	Project Milestone
<p>Q1 January - February - March 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EES Consultation Plan published • Community Engagement Report (April - October 2020) published • Area of Interest refined to identify multiple corridors • Call for Community Consultation Group nominations • 10 x Community Drop-in Sessions held in locations along project corridors; 670 people attended, 450+ feedback forms were received, 200+ questions were raised and considered • Call for community input via online interactive map • 12,000+ letters via mass mail drop • eUpdates issued • Government and industry meetings continued • Technical Reference Group meetings continued
<p>Q2 April - May - June 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently Asked Questions document updated from feedback received at Community Drop-in sessions • Community Consultation Group meetings commenced • Investigations and studies for the route options commenced • Single corridor announced • 603 letters, 188 emails and 568 text messages sent to people in the preferred single corridor • Project fact sheets updated • eUpdates issued • Government and industry meetings continued • Technical Reference Group meetings continued



Date	Project Milestone
<p>Q3 July - August - September 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 online webinars were hosted for environmental and technical specialists to present their investigation findings to date and answer questions about existing conditions; 312 people attended. The key specialist topics were agriculture, landscape and visual, biodiversity, bushfire, electric and magnetic fields (EMF), compensation and valuation and the single corridor selection process • Following the webinars, community members were invited to talk one-on-one to technical specialists via an online meeting link - a total of 54 one-on-one meetings were booked • eUpdates issued • Community Consultation Group meetings continued • Environmental and technical studies continued • Government and industry meetings continued • Technical Reference Group meetings continued
<p>Q4 October - November - December 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently Asked Questions document updated based on feedback gathered during webinars and online • Environmental and technical studies continued and existing conditions reports released • eUpdates issued • Following rigorous technical investigations and further consultation with stakeholders including the community, a proposed route was identified and announced • Community Information Sessions held in five locations; 67 people attended. The key topics for discussion were route selection, undergrounding and compensation • Fact sheets, including Landholder Guide, Proposed Route Bushfire and Undergrounding, were updated, posted on the project website and eUpdates were issued • Community Consultation Group meetings continued • Government and industry meetings continued • Technical Reference Group meetings continued



Next steps

In 2022, work will continue on preparing the EES. This includes scientific and engineering investigations into a range of factors including visual impacts, farming practices, areas of cultural significance and land use.

AusNet Services will continue to engage and consult with the community, landholders and interested parties through the project website, regular email updates, webinars and community engagement sessions.

These engagement activities are designed to provide opportunities for members of the community and landholders to have a say in the development of the project and to contribute to the EES.

We will hold further community information sessions and we will work with individual landholders to complete land use reports.

We will also ensure dwellings and infrastructure are mapped correctly.

These engagement activities will help inform the selection of the preferred route.

Environment Effects Statement engagement phases



Early stakeholder engagement
Stakeholder feedback has helped to shape the engagement and communications approach, including the project's understanding of issues and points of interest.



Area of interest engagement and EES referral lodged
Community and landholder input assists with identification of opportunities and constraints within the project area of interest, to inform decision-making on the potential project corridors.



Exhibition of draft EES scoping requirements
Formal public comment informs the final Scoping Requirements on matters to be investigated and documented in the EES.



EES preparation and specialist studies

Ongoing community feedback will assist in the:

- Identification of existing values and matters to be considered in environmental, cultural and social studies.
- Development of appropriate and effective measures to avoid and minimise impact and risks.
- Identification of opportunities to maximise benefits.
- Development of a design.



EES to DELWP

Draft EES document and supporting technical reports submitted to DELWP for review.

The EES will be exhibited for at least 30 days for public comment, allowing the public to review the EES and provide written submissions on the project to Planning Panels Victoria.

The submissions will inform the panel in making its recommendations to the Minister for Planning.



Ongoing landholder, community and stakeholder engagement



Environment Effects Statement (EES) considerations



Thank you for your input




There has been significant feedback from the community to date and we thank everyone who has taken the time to participate in the process so far.

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who has provided us with input. As mentioned above, AusNet Services will continue to engage and consult with the community, landholders and stakeholders through the project website, regular email updates, webinars and community engagement sessions. These engagement activities are designed to provide opportunities for you to have a further say in the development of the project and to contribute to the EES.

We look forward to your continued contributions and will be announcing opportunities for community engagement for 2022.



WVTNP information

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PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

Information straight to your inbox

Sign up for information straight to your inbox at the WVTNP website www.westvictnp.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.westvictnp.com.au. Or you can let us know by:

 1300 360 795
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 PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

Feedback

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

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.

Energy Safe Victoria

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

Essential Services Commission

(www.esc.vic.gov.au) including information about the regulation of transmission licenses in Victoria.

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