



Sponsorship Program



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About the Western Renewables Link

The Western Renewables Link is a proposed new 190 kilometre overhead high-voltage electricity transmission line that will carry renewable energy from Bulgana in western Victoria to Sydenham in Melbourne's north-west.

As ageing coal-fired power stations are retired and become less reliable, the project will play a critical role in securing Victoria's energy future. By connecting new renewable generation through Renewable Energy Zones, WRL will deliver cleaner, more reliable energy to homes and businesses.

The Western Renewables Link is being delivered by AusNet, who currently operate over 6,600 kilometres of transmission lines across Victoria. AusNet will develop and, if approved, finance, build, own and operate the new infrastructure. For more information, visit the [WRL website](#).



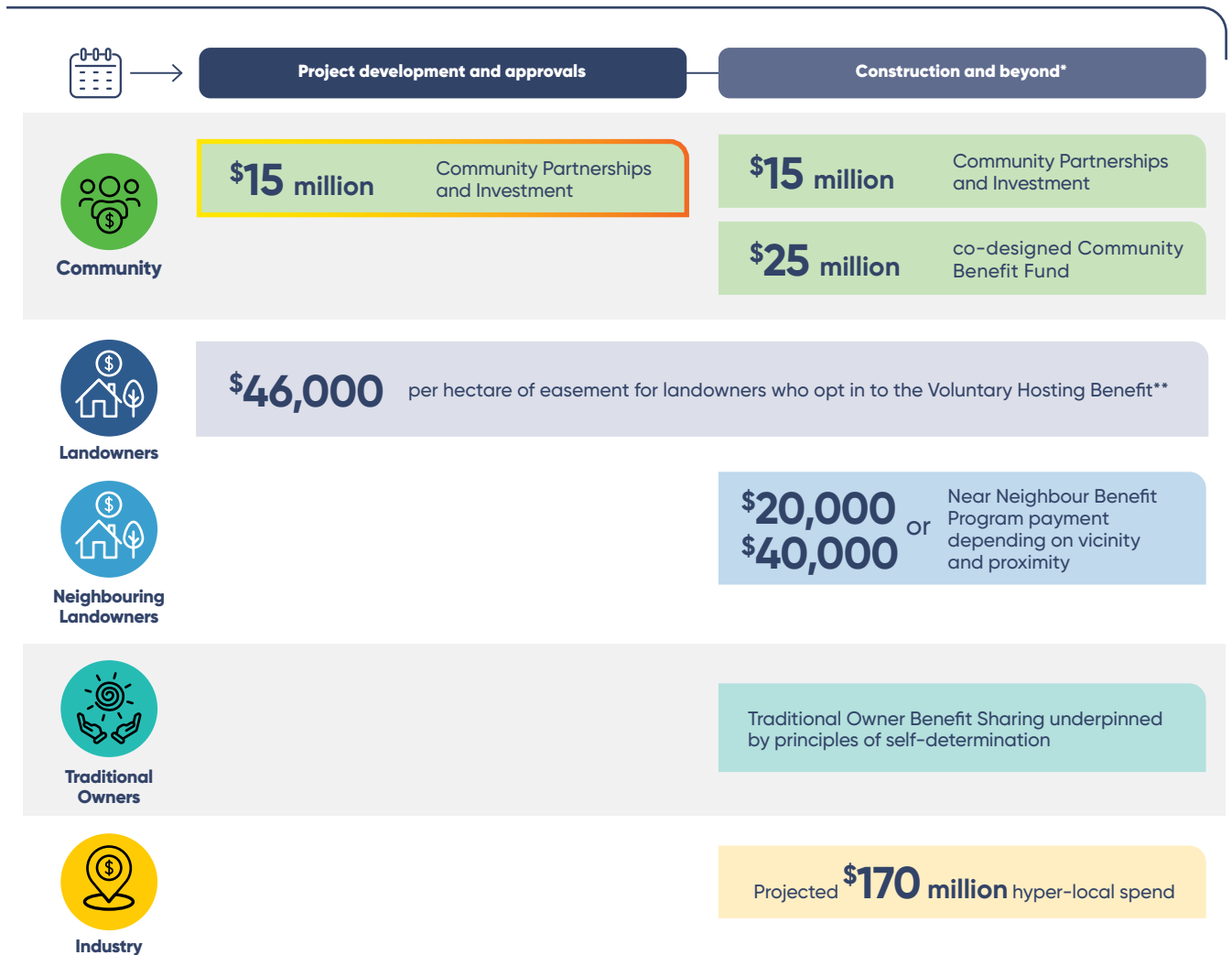
The Western Renewables Link Benefit Sharing Program

The Western Renewables Link's Sponsorship Program is one of several initiatives delivered under the broader WRL Benefit Sharing Program - a multi-million-dollar commitment designed to make sure communities along the proposed route share in the social and economic value created by the project.

The WRL Benefit Sharing Program was developed through engagement with landowners, Traditional Owners, communities and key stakeholders and is designed to directly respond to the challenges of those most affected by the project. The program will support local initiatives, improve public infrastructure, recognise landowners and near neighbours and invest in Traditional Owner partnerships. It will focus on outcomes that are feasible and viable, delivering meaningful impact and a sustainable legacy.



The Sponsorship Program will provide \$250,000 during WRL's development phase to increase connection and engagement with local organisations and to support locally driven events, activities and initiatives that strengthen relationships and build trust with communities across the WRL project region. This early investment will be delivered regardless of whether the project proceeds to construction. If the project is approved, a further \$250,000 per year will be made available for the next three years, totalling \$1 million in sponsorship funding overall.



*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

About the Sponsorship Program

Sponsorship is an exchange of financial support for promotional opportunities, brand visibility and access to relevant networks.

The program supports local events, activities, initiatives and projects that reflect WRL's social values and deliver mutually beneficial outcomes.

WRL is committed to partnering with volunteer and community-led organisations whose goals align with the WRL Benefit Sharing Strategy.

We take a collaborative approach, working with applicants to tailor engagement opportunities that connect audiences with the energy transition in ways that complement their event or activity.

Through this program, WRL aims to:

- Support meaningful local initiatives.
- Foster locally driven and delivered activities that build trust and long-term relationships across the WRL project region.
- Strengthen connections with local organisations, stakeholders, networks and community groups.
- Raise awareness about the energy transition.

Sponsorship decisions are guided by the following objectives:

- Contribute to the resilience and prosperity of communities along the proposed alignment
- Facilitate economic growth and development
- Back community-led progress toward a net-zero future.



The Sponsorship Program sits alongside the Local Grants Fund, which focuses on strategic outcomes rather than promotional opportunities. The Local Grants Fund supports activities aligned with WRL's strategic priorities:



Community infrastructure



Environment



New energy initiatives



Community connection and participation



Emergency services

Further details on the Local Grants Fund can be found on the [WRL website](#).

The Sponsorship Program is part of a \$15 million early investment in community benefits. It is not dependent on project approvals and will be available regardless of whether the project proceeds to construction. Participation in the program does not affect a community's right to oppose the project.

Funding overview



The WRL Sponsorship Program has an annual budget of \$250,000 a year for four years to support local events, activities, initiatives or projects.

There are three funding tiers:

- **Foundation:** \$5,000
- **Momentum:** \$20,000
- **Multi-year Legacy tier:** \$15,000 a year for three years, total value of \$45,000.

*** The multi-year support option is conditional on the WRL project being approved and proceeding to construction.*

Applicants should indicate within their application which tier of support they are applying for.

There are no fixed funding rounds or deadlines for applications. The Sponsorship Program will operate on a rolling basis and will remain open until all funds are allocated. If funds are not fully expended within a calendar year, they will carry over to the following year. Details of successful sponsorships, including the level of support provided, will be published on the WRL project website.



Sponsorship Program priorities and objectives

The WRL Sponsorship Program is designed to support community events, activities, initiatives or projects that align with the WRL Benefit Sharing Strategy, outlined below.

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

This pillar aims to support a strong, resilient region by partnering on community led initiatives that foster participation, strengthen local identity and enhance overall liveability. Our efforts aim to improve social cohesion and support vibrant communities where local habitats are protected and people can thrive, now and into the future.

Key goals:

- Increased liveability of the region, with a focus on healthy activity and education.
- Proactively protect habitats and ecosystems.
- Increased disaster resilience.
- Improved access to local health services for people within the region.

For example:

Arts and community festivals or events, fun runs, trivia nights or other fundraisers for local and community causes, conferences within the health sector, community sports teams.



Facilitate economic growth and development

A commitment to unlocking long-term economic opportunities for communities along the proposed alignment by building local capability and strengthening pathways to employment. This includes equipping job seekers with the skills needed to participate in the renewable energy sector, increasing job availability across seven local government areas and expanding access to training and formal education.

Key goals:

- Strengthen access to training and formal education opportunities for the region.

For example:

Industry jobs, trade and educational fairs or conferences and events that progress or promote renewable energy.



Back community-led progress toward a net zero future

This pillar aims to assist communities to move toward a net zero future by improving access to renewable energy. Our goal is to support practical, locally driven solutions that support a sustainable future, benefiting both people and the planet.

Key goals:

- Strengthen the region's access to reliable energy.
- Increased adoption of renewable energy in the region to achieve net zero targets.

For example:

Community sustainability event or educational events to encourage communities to electrify and become more sustainable. Industry fair or conference that progresses or promotes renewable energy.



Applications for sponsorship should align with at least one pillar of the WRL Benefit Sharing Strategy and meet at least one key goal.










Eligibility

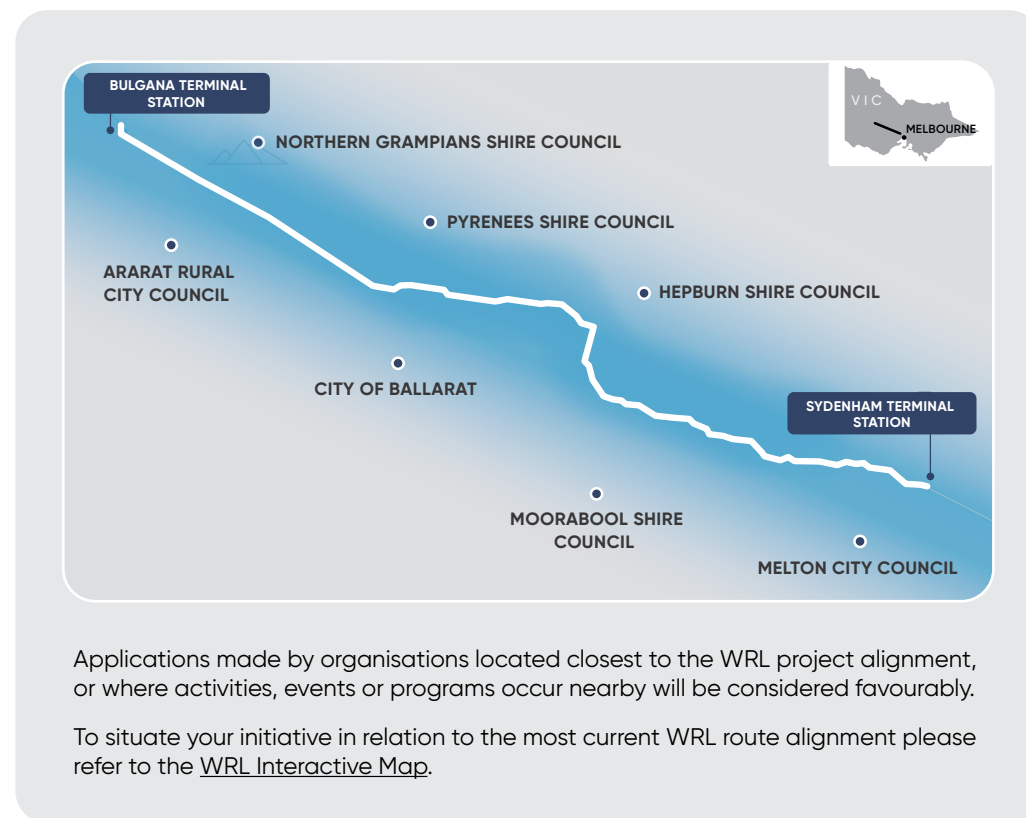
The WRL Sponsorship Program supports community events, activities, initiatives and projects that align with the objectives on the previous pages. As sponsorship involves an exchange of support for agreed promotional opportunities, recipients must acknowledge WRL in ways agreed in advance.

This differs from the WRL Local Grants Fund, which supports mutually agreed community outcomes and does not require promotion or acknowledgement of WRL's financial support. Sponsorship applications are assessed by the WRL project through a multi-stage process that includes review by an internal assessment committee. All assessors and decision makers must complete a conflict-of-interest declaration. Further details on eligibility and assessment are provided below.

Eligible locations

The Sponsorship Program is intended to support initiatives and activities delivered within the Local Government Areas (LGAs) that are proposed to host or who are situated very close to the WRL project. These include:

-  **Melton City Council**
-  **Moorabool Shire Council**
-  **Hepburn Shire Council**
-  **City of Ballarat**
-  **Pyrenees Shire Council**
-  **Ararat Rural City Council**
-  **Northern Grampians Shire Council**



Applications made by organisations located closest to the WRL project alignment, or where activities, events or programs occur nearby will be considered favourably.

To situate your initiative in relation to the most current WRL route alignment please refer to the [WRL Interactive Map](#).



Who can apply?

The WRL Sponsorship Program aims to reach a broad range of community groups, prioritising not-for-profits, charities and volunteer-led organisations.

To be eligible to apply for a sponsorship, applicants must:

Have a valid Australian Business Number (ABN).

Unincorporated and community groups can apply through an incorporated organisation acting as their auspice. Evidence of the auspicing organisation's agreement to manage the funds will be required. Victorian local government, state and federal government entities can apply as the auspice (and project managers) with the main applicant listed as the community group. This acknowledges that many community facilities are owned by or on council or other government land but managed by a volunteer association who may not be able to receive funds. See more information on auspices on [page 11](#).

And be one of the following types of organisations:

- Incorporated association
- Not-for-profits (Australian public companies limited by guarantee whose governing rules demonstrate a not-for-profit or charitable purpose / registered not-for-profit through the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission)
- Social enterprise
- Industry association or business chamber
- Crown land Committee of Management
- Cooperative, registered in Victoria under the Cooperatives National Law
- Incorporated Aboriginal entities, including Aboriginal not-for-profit organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Traditional Owner groups and land trusts.

This is not an exhaustive list of eligible entities, if you have any queries or would like to check your eligibility for the program then please [contact us](#).

Who's ineligible?

The following entities are not eligible to receive funds under this sponsorship program:

- For-profit companies
- Sole traders
- Individuals or individual partners
- Joint ventures
- State Government and Australian Government agencies and statutory bodies or authorities
- Political parties, political organisations and lobbyists

Local Government is ineligible to apply directly but can submit applications as an auspice.

If the applicant previously received funding from WRL or AusNet and has outstanding reporting requirements, they are ineligible to receive new funds unless:

- They have written agreement by WRL or AusNet to do so. For example, where a WRL or AusNet supported project is nearing completion, WRL is satisfied that all funds have been used in line with the agreed purpose, with no outstanding risks or issues identified with the project or its key stakeholders.
- They are an auspice organisation or acting as an auspice for multiple projects supported by WRL or AusNet.
- Reporting requirements are met (see section on reporting on [page 17](#)) or in the process of being finalised or approved by WRL.



Eligibility requirements

To be eligible for support through the WRL Sponsorship Program, eligible entities must:

- Be able to enter into a formal agreement with the WRL project via AusNet and have the capacity to invoice and receive funds.
- Be able to deliver the event, activity, project or program within 12 months of the application date.
- Deliver the initiative within an eligible area (refer to Eligible Locations).
- Hold appropriate insurance coverage for the proposed event, activity or project, and be able to provide evidence of this at the time of contracting with the WRL project via AusNet.
- Have acquitted any previous funding received from the WRL project or AusNet, including through other support programs such as the WRL Local Grants Fund, prior to entering into a new agreement.
- Agree that we may request further information of the applicant or conduct our own due diligence checks on the applicant or the proposal.

Note: Funds requested are considered exclusive of GST. If your application is successful and your organisation is registered for GST, you may invoice the WRL project via AusNet for the agreed amount plus GST. GST will not be paid if the recipient organisation is not registered for GST.



Auspice arrangements

- An auspice organisation is a larger entity, such as a council, TAFE, or university, that manages funding on behalf of a smaller organisation or unincorporated group without an ABN. To be eligible, the auspice organisation must agree to the application and take responsibility for managing the funds. This agreement must be documented and submitted with the application.
- Sponsorship funds will be paid directly to the auspice organisation and the sponsorship agreement will be made jointly with both the applicant group and the auspice organisation. The auspice organisation is responsible for receiving, administering and acquitting the funds.
- It is reasonable for an auspice organisation to charge a management fee, which can be included in the project budget. This fee should be agreed upon by both parties and generally should not exceed 10% of the total project cost.
- An auspice organisation may manage multiple funding agreements at once. However, it can only have one active agreement with us at a time for any specific group or initiative it is auspicing.





How decisions are made

The WRL Sponsorship Program is a commercial arrangement in which support is provided in exchange for agreed cross-promotional opportunities.

Applications are assessed by WRL through a multi-stage process. First, applications are reviewed to confirm they meet the eligibility requirements (as outlined on the previous page). Eligible applications are then assessed by an internal assessment committee made up of team members from communications, community and stakeholder engagement roles. The committee scores applications against the stated assessment criteria and makes recommendations for approval. All assessors and decision makers are required to sign a conflict-of-interest declaration.

This approach differs from the WRL Local Grants Fund, which supports mutually agreed community outcomes and is assessed with input from an Independent Local Grants Review Panel made up of community members.



Assessment criteria



The WRL team will assess applications based on the criteria to the right. We encourage applicants to clearly address each criterion in their submission to support a thorough and fair evaluation.

- The extent to which the proposal aligns with the pillars and outcomes identified by the WRL Benefit Sharing Strategy that the program seeks to support (see priorities and objectives on [page 4](#)).
- The extent to which the proposal delivers a benefit to the community.
- The extent to which our support will help build trust and increase connection within the local region or community.
- The demonstrated need for support that the organisation, event, project or activity requires and the value that we can provide.
- The capability of the applicant to deliver the event, activity or project as planned and successfully manage the funds awarded.
- The proximity of the proposal to the proposed route.

What can't be funded?



The WRL Sponsorship program will not support:

- Activities whose purpose is opposition to AusNet, the WRL project or related government decision making.
- Political parties or organisations.
- Guns, weaponry.
- Beauty contests/pageants.
- Projects that discriminate against any persons, organisations or groups.
- Promotion of antisocial behaviour, such as gambling, smoking, drinking, substance abuse.
- Activities for private profit or gain.
- Activities or events that exploit animals.
- Activities or events that could be detrimental to public health or safety.
- Political or religious events.
- Illegal, protest or political activities.

How to apply

You can apply for the WRL Sponsorship Program through the WRL SmartyGrants portal. A link to the portal is available on the [WRL website](#). SmartyGrants is a cloud based grants management system that we are also using to manage sponsorship applications for ease and consistency.

Application timing	The WRL Sponsorship Program will open on 31 March 2026. We have one annual sponsorship budget which will operate on a rolling basis, remaining open until all funds are allocated. There are no fixed funding rounds or deadlines, so you can apply when it best suits your planning. Sponsorships will be awarded on merit until funds are exhausted. We aim to assess and respond to applications within three months of submission.
Before starting your application:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Read the program guidelines carefully and check that you are eligible.2. If you have questions, contact us on 1800 975 975 or at grants@westernrenewableslink.com.au
To begin:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Create a SmartyGrants login if you don't already have one.4. Your application will include written information, a budget and supporting documents such as letters of support or an auspice agreement.



Tips for completing your application:

- Use plain language so that we can quickly and easily understand your proposal and see how it aligns with program objectives.
- Include your contact details so we can reach you if we need more information.
- Be prepared to outline:
 - The scale of your project.
 - How much of the project or program you propose WRL sponsorship to cover.
 - Who else is involved or supporting the initiative.
- Including a budget is often the easiest way to show this information, but you may also provide it in writing. We want to understand:
 - How likely the event or initiative is to proceed.
 - Any risks associated with delivery.
 - How requested funds will be used and what WRL's support will enable.
- If accessing a computer or providing written information is a barrier, please contact us – we can help with alternative arrangements. Call 1800 975 975 or email grants@westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Things to keep in mind:

- Budgets should be exclusive of GST. GST will be added to the amount awarded if applicable.
- Each initiative requires its own application.
- Applications must be received by the due date. Once submitted, you'll receive an automatic confirmation email.
- Design initiatives to be scalable, in case only partial funding is available.
- Check your application carefully before submitting – you cannot make changes after submission.
- Save your draft regularly to avoid losing work.
- Make sure any uploaded files are saved before exiting or submitting.
- For technical issues, contact SmartyGrants on +61 3 9320 6888 during business hours.
- For questions about your application, contact WRL on 1800 975 975 or grants@westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Brand and information sharing opportunities

The WRL Sponsorship Program seeks to align our brand and share information about the energy transition with audiences identified by applicants, in a transparent and inclusive manner.

This will be more relevant for some events and activities than others.

If this exchange of networks and information does not feel appropriate for your event or activity, you may wish to explore the WRL Local Grants Fund instead.

Where appropriate and welcomed, we use events as opportunities to share information and connect with communities alongside our financial support.



Below are examples of the types of opportunities we are interested in discussing, though we are open to understanding what works best for you.

Foundation package

- Acknowledgement of WRL/AusNet support within the events/activity/program logo page on website or similar location.
- Acknowledgement of support for the event/activity/program on our website or digital channels i.e. internal newsletter.
- Ability to leave information about the project or the energy transition (such as brochures or collateral) at a relevant place within the business or event – if appropriate. Acknowledgment of support within your event or project communications, such as in a newsletter, relevant website page, eNews, social post etc. and within a project or program report.
- Invitation to attend event, activity or project at a relevant time, i.e. an opening event.

Momentum package

In addition to the items listed in the Foundation package:

- Potential for banners or further information, collateral or promotional materials to be provided or promoted at the event, activity or project.
- Ability for us to promote the event, project or program and our support of it as a feature on our website and within an eUpdate or other relevant digital channels, including photos.
- Opportunity to speak or network at the event, activity or program, such as at an opening or launch event.

Multi-year legacy investment

- To be agreed collaboratively as relevant, but the suggestions under the Foundation and Momentum packages could form part of what is negotiated.

Please note that any use of the WRL logo must be checked and approved prior to publication. Once your sponsorship agreement is signed, we will provide you with the official logo and a brand guidelines pack to support correct usage.

Funding agreements and reporting



Funding agreement requirements

If your sponsorship application is successful, your organisation will enter into a funding agreement with the WRL project via AusNet. This agreement will outline the details of the proposal you have committed to deliver, including key activities, milestones and any agreed promotional opportunities.

Funds will be paid upfront as a single transaction. Please note that payment cannot be processed until the signed funding agreement and all required information is received by the WRL project. This may include:

- Registering as a vendor in AusNet's payment system.
- Providing a valid invoice for the agreed funding amount.



Insurances and legal compliance

As part of the funding agreement, successful applicants will be required to provide evidence of an appropriate level of insurance before funds can be issued. This could include public liability or personal accident insurance. Applicants must also agree to comply with all relevant laws, legislative and regulatory requirements, including (but not limited to) the *Privacy Act* and *Freedom of Information Act*.

Reporting

All sponsored projects must submit an acquittal report within three months of the event, activity, initiative or program ending. The report must confirm that the initiative was delivered as agreed and describe the outcomes achieved.

This report helps us confirm:

- The project was delivered as proposed.
- The agreed promotional activities took place.
- The impact achieved through WRL's support.

Reporting requirements will be outlined in your funding agreement and scaled to the level of funds provided.



Repayment of funds

Sponsorship funds may need to be repaid if:

- The funds are not used for the purposes outlined in the funding agreement.
- Information provided in the application is found to be inaccurate, false or misleading.
- The recipient fails to provide evidence that the sponsored activity occurred or the required acquittal or audit report, as specified in the agreement, is not submitted.

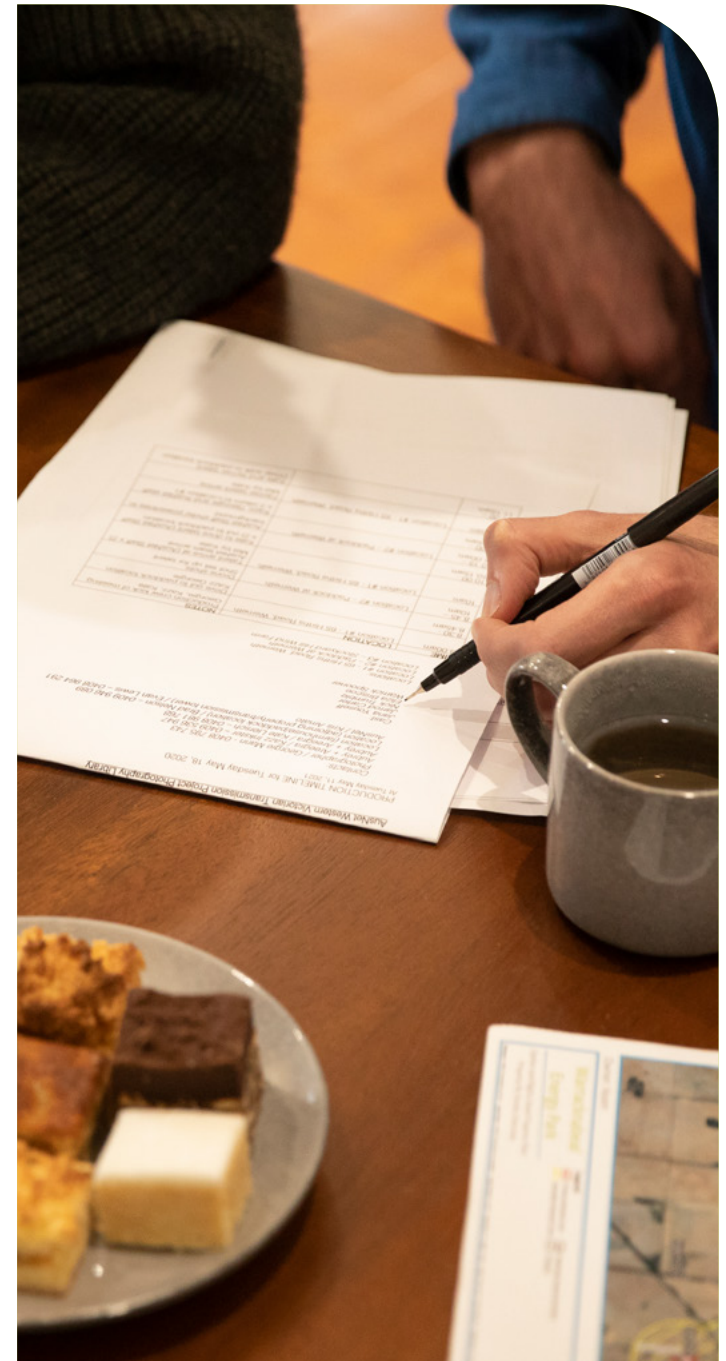


Keeping us informed

Applicants must notify WRL if:

- Anything arises that may impact their ability to deliver the project as outlined in the funding agreement.
- There are changes within the organisation that could limit the ability to complete the proposed activities.
- They believe they are, or may be, in breach of any terms of the funding agreement.

Applicants should also keep WRL updated if their contact details change. Prompt communication helps us work with you to manage any issues effectively.





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



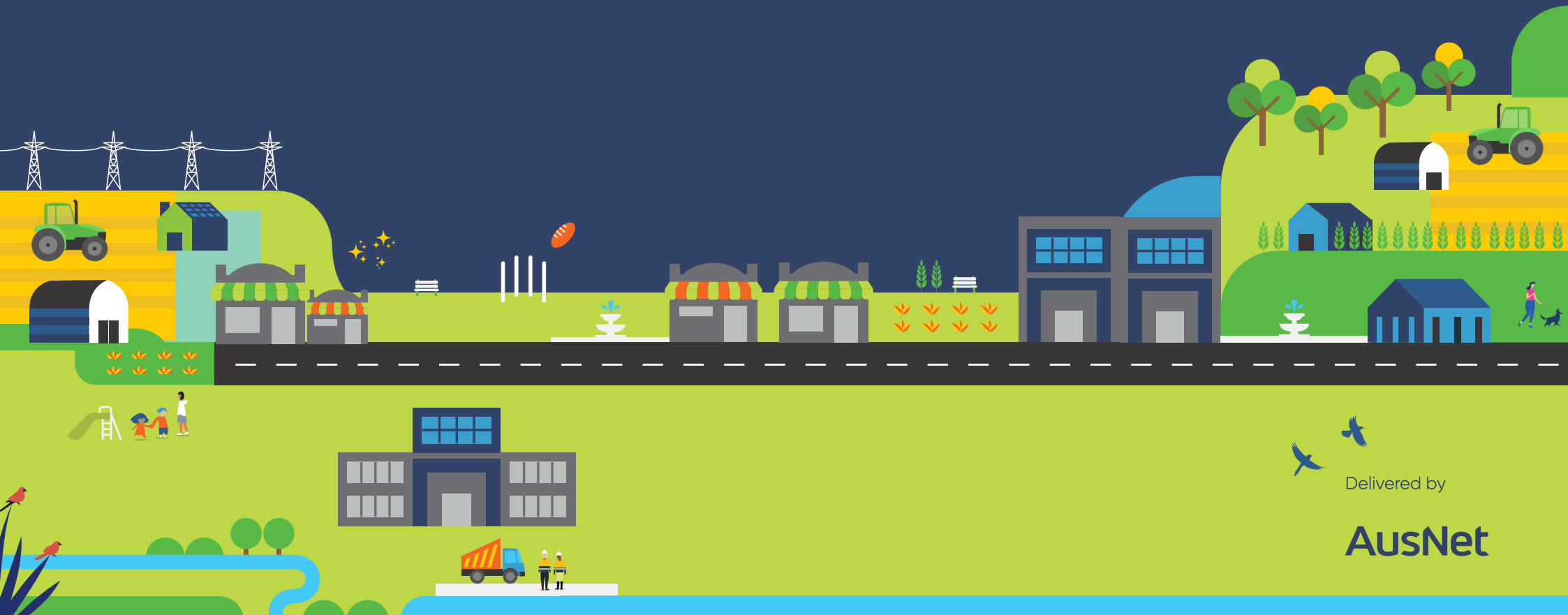
If you need an interpreter, please call 13 14 50.



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.

 Western Renewables Link

Benefit Sharing Program



Delivered by

AusNet