

Project Update



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After receiving a wide range of nominations from community members, AusNet has established a community advisory group to help inform the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone™ project (G-REZ™).

The G-REZ Community Advisory Group (GCAG) is a key part of our commitment to involve the community in the development of the project.

A diverse range of individuals have been appointed to the group representing landowners proposed to host infrastructure, local communities, agriculture, local government, unions, environmental, business and industry groups.

The GCAG meets every two months, with members already hearing from the G-REZ team about the project and having the opportunity to ask questions,

as well as learning more about some of the differences between overhead and underground transmission infrastructure.

Members also joined the G-REZ team for a drive along the preferred route in February to get a better understanding of the project area (pictured below).

The GCAG assists the team by providing local input and feedback about key elements of the G-REZ project, creating an effective forum for discussion and exchange of ideas and views regarding the project.

To find out more about the GCAG and learn about the members of the group visit www.grez.com.au/community-advisory-group



G-REZ project route update

In March 2023, the G-REZ team published a revised preferred route for the project.

This new preferred route has been identified based on ongoing engagement with landowners proposed to host infrastructure, local government, the community and other key stakeholders, as well as the findings of technical and ecological studies.

You can view this new preferred route and project investigation area, as well as previous routes, in more detail at www.grez.com.au/map



Legend

- Preferred transmission route
- Alternative investigation area as outlined in EES referral
- Terminal station site options

Change to our preferred route near Loy Yang

We have made changes to our preferred route near the Loy Yang mine, south-east of Traralgon.

Rather than travel north of the Loy Yang mine as we had originally proposed, we are now seeking to develop the G-REZ project south of the Loy Yang mine.

We've made this change to the route based on extensive discussions with a range of stakeholders including landowners, AGL (owner and operator of the Loy Yang mine) and Latrobe City Council.

Developing the project south of Loy Yang offers a number of benefits compared to the northern option.

It reduces the visual amenity impact to landowners and residents in the densely populated area of Traralgon east.

It also avoids sensitive current and potential future infrastructure within the area including the Loy Yang mine overburden site and the proposed route for the Traralgon Bypass.

By developing the project south of Loy Yang, we're able to follow existing infrastructure corridors while allowing AGL to continue its mining and rehabilitation activities as currently planned.

We have spoken with all new landowners along the new preferred route for the project and will continue to engage with these landowners in the months ahead.

Alternative terminal station site

AusNet Services has secured an option for an alternative site to develop a terminal station that could serve as the connection point for renewable energy developers seeking to utilise our transmission line.

The alternative site is located in Stradbroke, approximately 12 kilometres north of our original preferred site in Giffard.

We will continue to explore the relative merits of both the Giffard and Stradbroke locations for the terminal station for the G-REZ project.

As we learn more about the likely locations and scale of proposed renewable energy developments within the region, we'll gain a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges each location presents for developing the terminal station.

We're committed to continuing to engage with all landowners proposed to host G-REZ infrastructure, including those between Giffard and Stradbroke, as we work with the community to better understand these two potential locations for our terminal station.

The proposed transmission line route depicted on the G-REZ map is indicative only and subject to entering into appropriate easement agreements with landowners along the route as well as obtaining all required environmental and planning approvals. The proposed route may also change based on feedback from landholders and other key stakeholders, as well as the findings of environmental and technical studies.

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Environmental approvals process update

Victoria's Minister for Planning has advised AusNet that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) will be required for the G-REZ project.

The EES process is administered by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) on behalf of the Minister for Planning under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

An EES will give statutory decision-makers (ministers, local government and statutory authorities) the information they need to determine whether approval of G-REZ should be granted and what conditions should apply. It will provide information on the potential environmental impacts, and an opportunity for the community to review and provide feedback on the project as it develops.

The federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has also recently advised AusNet that G-REZ is a controlled action under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

'Controlled actions' are actions that the federal Minister for Environment decides have, will have or are likely to have a significant impact on one or more protected matters listed within the EPBC Act and therefore require assessment and approval under the Act.

To view the decision visit the EPBC Public Portal bit.ly/grez-epbc

Ecological surveys

Our ecologists conducted a round of summer ecology surveys for the G-REZ project from Monday 13 February to Friday 3 March 2023, with flora and fauna surveys undertaken during the day, at dawn and dusk, and at night.

The summer surveys took place in the Rosedale, Loy Yang and Giffard areas.

In the Loy Yang area, our ecologists found two species of eucalyptus listed as critically endangered under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act), with one also listed as vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Several threatened species of both flora and fauna were identified on Crown land in the Rosedale area.

They also completed surveys of pine plantation in the Rosedale area, where they found high quality native vegetation scattered throughout, along with several threatened species of both flora and fauna.

The ecologists also undertook a round of spring ecology surveys between Monday 7 and Friday 11 November 2022.

The spring surveys took place in the Rosedale, Stradbroke and Giffard areas.

Our ecologists surveyed the roadside verges along two sections of Giffard Road, Stradbroke, as well as on Willung Road and

Evergreen Road, Rosedale, and found high quality Plains Grassland in three of those four locations.

Ecologists identified patches of remnant vegetation on Crown land in the Rosedale area and found they contained a high diversity of native flora and are likely important areas for native fauna. In one patch surveyed they identified a type of eucalypt listed as a threatened species under the FFG Act.

They also looked at Crown land in the Giffard area, both in winter (as part of an earlier survey) and in spring, but found no Threatened Ecological Communities or threatened species. The ecologists identified habitat of very high quality however, and assume threatened species are likely to occur.

The ecological surveys will help to inform any environment and planning approvals necessary for the G-REZ project, and which mitigation measures may be required to reduce or avoid impacts where possible.

Survey findings on privately-owned land can be made available to the associated owners of those properties on request.



Contact Us

For more information, or to speak to a member of our team, please get in touch with us:

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