

Fact Sheet | Environment and Planning Approvals

AUGUST 2022

AusNet is leading the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone™ project (G-REZ™) that will unlock 3-4GW of renewable energy by 2027. ▽

Over the next 12 months, AusNet will undertake field investigations and studies to refine the route and inform the environment and planning approvals.

Determining the project route

This pioneering project, which is the first industry led Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) project in Victoria, is now in the development stage. The final design and construction timeline will be subject to the outcomes of community engagement, funding and approvals.

In determining the current transmission route option, AusNet considered:

- Geography and topography of the land including terrain and waterbodies
- Biodiversity and threatened habitat including conservation and flora reserves
- Overall length required of transmission route and number of landowners impacted
- Existing and future land use and infrastructure requirements
- Places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance
- Proximity to dwellings, schools, hospitals
- Incompatible land uses such as transport networks, rain gun irrigators, airfields and airports.

As part of this process, AusNet assessed a number of possible transmission routes for G-REZ. Using the above considerations, a transmission route emerged as the preferred option.

Over the coming months, AusNet will work with landowners and the local community to conduct further environmental and geotechnical studies to further inform the route.

Proposed assessment and approval process

AusNet will refer the G-REZ project to the Victorian Minister for Planning for a decision on the need for an Environment Effect Statement for the project.

The EES process is administered by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) on behalf of Victoria's Minister for Planning under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*. Its purpose is to assess the environmental effects of projects in order to inform a statutory decision. ▽



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 of potential environmental impacts, and an opportunity for the community to review and provide feedback on the project as it develops.

We plan to refer our project to the state and federal governments for assessment. This may include:

- A referral under the Victorian *Environment Effects Act 1978* to determine if an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required. An EES assesses the potential environmental, economic, heritage and social effects of the project, including how these effects can be avoided, minimised and managed, and the evaluation of feasible project alternatives.
- A referral under the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to assess nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places.
- Development of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan in conjunction with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to outline what measures need to be in place to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Planning approval under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* via a planning permit or planning scheme amendment to change the land use and enable activities such as the removal of native vegetation.

Community engagement

Consultation with the community will play an important role as we develop the project. The community will have many opportunities and channels to provide feedback on the project which will be considered in the final project design.

Planning a REZ project will involve some complex decisions and consider a broad range of views and issues. We will work with landowners, the community and stakeholders to have genuine conversations about these complexities to seek mutual understanding and achieve positive outcomes.

If we need access to private land for investigations, we will work with the individual landowner directly to discuss access arrangements, procedures, and agreements prior to any works taking place.

Landowner cooperation in allowing access to specialist consultants for their technical studies will be greatly appreciated, providing important input to the EES (if required) by presenting the most accurate information about environmental values and potential effects of the project.

In preparing an EES (if required), we will develop and implement a Consultation Plan to inform individuals and groups who could be affected and provide opportunities for input. This also helps us identify issues of concern and potential effects, as well as get feedback on project options or potential mitigation measures.

Should an EES be required, members of the public can participate in this by providing written comments on the draft scoping requirements, local insight and input on the technical studies and submitting written feedback on the EES when it goes on public exhibition. ▽




We will develop and implement a Consultation Plan to inform individuals and groups who could be affected and provide opportunities for input. ▽

Contact Us

AusNet is committed to providing many opportunities for locals to share their knowledge about the area and provide feedback.

For more information, or to speak to a member of our team, contact us via:

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AusNet

