

# Assessing environmental impacts

November 2024



Victoria's energy system is changing. We urgently need to change our power grid to carry energy from new renewable sources and batteries across the state to Victorian homes, businesses, hospitals, schools and other vital services.

VicGrid is developing the shared transmission line to connect offshore wind energy generated off the Gippsland coast to the grid. In March 2024 VicGrid confirmed the offshore wind transmission study area and connection hub area. The study area begins approximately 6 km from the coast near Giffard and travels north-west past Stradbroke West to Willung, across to Flynns Creek and then to the Loy Yang Power Station.

This factsheet outlines how VicGrid will assess the potential environmental impacts of the project and how input from Traditional Owners and First Peoples, landholders, communities and local stakeholders plays a key role in preparation of the assessment.

Major infrastructure projects, such as building transmission lines, are assessed under local, state and Commonwealth laws to ensure environmental impacts are appropriately identified and managed.

In October 2024, the Victorian Minister for Planning declared the works proposed by VicGrid to be 'public works' under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic). This means that VicGrid is required to prepare an Environment Effects Statement (EES).



## What is an Environment Effects Statement (EES)?

An EES is a comprehensive investigation of a project's potential environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts and informs decision-makers about what can be done to manage or mitigate those impacts.

## What is included in an EES?

### An EES usually includes:

- a project description, including an overview of the project, its location, its timeline and what alternative options have been considered
- existing environmental, social and cultural context that may be potentially affected
- a summary of community and stakeholder consultation undertaken during the preparation of the EES and key issues raised
- potential environmental effects of the proposed project
- proposed measures to avoid, minimise or manage the potential environmental effects
- a proposed program to monitor and manage the environmental effects during and after project construction.

---

## Draft scoping requirements

EES scoping requirements are guidelines issued by the Victorian Government that outline key matters that must be assessed in a project's EES.

The requirements specify the potential environmental, social, and economic impacts that need to be assessed, the boundaries of the assessment and what type of investigations must be conducted to provide the most accurate data for the EES.

Draft scoping requirements for VicGrid projects will be exhibited and open to public submissions. Feedback will inform the final scoping requirements prepared by the Victorian Government which will outline the key matters to be assessed in an EES.

## What is assessed in an EES?

Scoping requirements will be developed, outlining what the EES needs to contain and what technical assessments will inform the project's final location and design. The scoping requirements will be open for public comment, inviting feedback from First Peoples, landholders, communities and relevant agencies.

### It is expected the project will assess the following matters:

#### Biodiversity and ecological values

- Native vegetation, including threatened species
- Threatened fauna and habitats
- Geology and soils, including soil contamination
- Groundwater and surface water
- Bushfire

#### Amenity and socio-economic

- Landscape and visual amenity
- Socio-economic impacts

#### Cultural heritage

- Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Historic heritage

#### Infrastructure and planning

- Technical feasibility
- Land use and planning, including agriculture and forestry
- Traffic and transport
- Electromagnetic interference and electromagnetic fields (also known as EMFs)

---

## Types of investigations that inform the EES

VicGrid will conduct studies and assessments as part of the EES process, including:

- Reviewing desktop information – we investigate existing data, reports and maps to understand the environmental, social and cultural context of the project.
- On-site surveys – specialists visit the project area to observe and collect information about flora, fauna, water, soil and air quality.
- Technical analysis – we analyse data and models using simulations and specialist tools. For example, we might use a three-dimensional model to understand the visual impact of new towers on the landscape.
- Consulting people who live and work in the project area – we seek to understand local concerns and assess the social impacts of the project through workshops with local stakeholder groups or community surveys.

- Economic and social analysis – we look at data about the local economy and community feedback to understand potential benefits or opportunities, for example how many jobs the project will create. We also try to understand how the project will impact communities and ways to reduce or avoid those impacts.

### Other environmental approvals

Preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is required under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) to assess the project's effects on places of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance. A Planning Scheme Amendment is also required under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic).



## Assessing Commonwealth protected species

VicGrid has also submitted a referral to the Commonwealth Government under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999* (Cth) to evaluate the potential impacts on matters of national environmental significance.

In November 2024, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water assessed the referral and determined the project is a Controlled Action which means it requires assessment and approval under the EPBC Act.

A Controlled Action refers to a project or activity with a potential to significantly impact matters of national environmental significance, such as listed threatened and migratory species.

To learn more about the EPBC referral process and view VicGrid's referral, visit [epbcpublicportal.environment.gov.au](https://epbcpublicportal.environment.gov.au)

### Assessing EES and EPBC together

The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments have a bilateral agreement that enables projects requiring both EES and EPBC assessments to undergo a single assessment process. This approach helps avoid duplicating technical studies and streamlines assessment processes.

## EES (Victoria)

## EPBC (Commonwealth)

## Community participation

We submit a project outline to the Victorian Minister for Planning

### Referral



We submit a referral to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water

Minister declares the project as 'public works'



Minister makes referral decision



Open to public comment for 10 business days

## EES will be used as the assessment pathway for EPBC and EES matters

### Scoping

- Stakeholder consultation and initial investigations
  - Establish Technical Reference Group (TRG)
- Draft scoping requirements issued for consultation and then finalised

Scoping requirements published for public comment for 15 business days

### Preparing the EES

Complete EES and EPBC studies and collate information to address scoping requirements

Community feedback helps to inform the EES

### Public exhibition

- EES and EPBC is exhibited for public review and submissions (online and hard copy)
- VicGrid responds to issues raised through submissions

You can comment on the EES for a period of no less than 30 business days

### Public review and inquiry

- The Minister may decide to conduct an inquiry into the project's potential environmental effects
- Inquiry considers the EES, project effects and submissions and provides a report to the minister

If you make a submission and there is an inquiry, you may be able to speak to your submission at the inquiry

### Ministers' assessment

Victorian Minister for Planning assesses the EES



After EES assessment, Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water assesses under the EPBC Act

Community and landholder consultation continues into the next phase of the project

### Final decision-making

Statutory approvers consider the Minister's Assessment and make their decision regarding the project approvals



Minister makes approval decision under EPBC Act

## Project approval decision

## How consultation and feedback will inform the EES

Your insights are important to prepare the EES and will contribute to our understanding of local environmental and social values.

We will keep you informed about opportunities to contribute to the EES through our website, e-news, social media and at public events.

### EES consultation plan

We will prepare an EES consultation plan which will outline how we will share information and seek feedback during the EES process. The EES consultation plan is reviewed by the project's Technical Reference Group (TRG) before being published on the Victorian Government's website. The EES consultation plan will:

- list the people and groups we will consult with during the EES process
- detail our consultation methods and engagement activities
- outline how consultation will be recorded, considered and reported on.

### Technical Reference Group (TRG)

A TRG is specifically appointed by the Victorian Government to advise on the preparation of an EES and make sure potential impacts are properly addressed by the project.

Members of TRGs differ from project to project but generally include people from state government departments and agencies, regional authorities, local government and representatives from Traditional Owner Corporations.

TRGs will meet regularly to discuss and respond to ongoing information and issues provided by VicGrid during the EES process.

### Sign up for EES updates

To stay updated on our latest EES news and events, follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn or sign up for our newsletter at [energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/vicgrid](https://energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/vicgrid)



## Contact us



**Phone:** 1800 418 341

**Email:** [vicgrid@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:vicgrid@deeca.vic.gov.au)

**Deaf, hearing or speech impaired?** Please contact the National Relay Service on 133 677 or [communications.gov.au/accesshub/nrs](http://communications.gov.au/accesshub/nrs)



**Need an interpreter?** Contact Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450 (within Australia) or visit [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

ISBN 978-1-76136-990-2 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-76136-991-9 (pdf/online/MS word)

**Disclaimer:** The information in this document is current at the time of printing, may be subject to change and should not be relied upon. Please visit [vicgrid.vic.gov.au](http://vicgrid.vic.gov.au) for the latest updates.

