

**For public notice via internet**

**REASONS FOR DECISION UNDER *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978***

(REFERRAL NUMBER 2023-R04)

**Title of Project:**

Western Renewables Link Project (formerly known as the Western Victoria Network Transmission Project)

**Proponent:**

Ausnet Transmission Group Pty. Ltd.

**Description:**

Construction and operation of a 500kV double circuit transmission line between Bulgana and Sydenham. The project also includes upgrades to the existing Bulgana Terminal Station, works to enable connection of the transmission line into the Sydenham Terminal Station and minor upgrades to existing terminal stations at Elaine and Ballarat.

**Decision:**

The Minister for Planning has decided that an environment effects statement (EES) is required for the Western Renewables Link Project, as described in the new referral (no. 2023R-04) accepted on 11 August 2023.

**Reasons:**

- The area of interest for the project supports significant environmental values, including native vegetation and ecological values, residential and agricultural and other land uses, heritage values, visual and landscape values and other social values, potential aggregate impacts on which are of at least regional significance.
- Multiple alignment and design alternatives for the project within the area of interest require rigorous and transparent assessment and refinement in relation to opportunities for avoidance and/or minimisation of potentially significant effects to inform both project and statutory decision-making.
- An EES process will provide a robust, transparent and integrated framework through which:
  - i. the project's potential environmental effects can be rigorously assessed, including in the context of the comparative effects of feasible siting, alignment, design and operational alternatives for key components of the project; and
  - ii. the effectiveness and acceptability of proposed measures to avoid, minimise, manage and offset environmental effects and related risks can be evaluated/ examined.
- An EES responds to community interest in project siting, alignment and design alternatives by providing appropriate opportunities for public input.
- The construction of a new Sydenham Terminal Station is excluded from this decision as that is excluded from the referral, and is no longer proposed as part of the project.

**Date of decision:** 22 August 2023