

DECISION ON PROJECT
Western Renewables Link Project (formerly
known as the Western Victoria Network
Transmission Project)
(Referral 2023R-04)

Decision under section 8B(3)(a) of the *Environment Effects Act 1978*

Assessment through an environment effects statement (EES) under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* **is required** for the reasons set out in the attached notice of reasons for decision.

The works that are the subject of this decision exclude the construction of a new Sydenham Terminal Station. Those works had been included in the previous referral of 19 June 2020 and were included within the scope of the decision of the then Minister for Planning, on 4 August 2020, under section 8B(3)(a) of the *Environment Effects Act 1978* in relation to the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project. However, those works are excluded from the re-referral accepted on 11 August 2023 on the basis that they are no longer proposed for this project.

This decision replaces the decision made by the then Minister for Planning on 4 August 2020.

Procedures and requirements under section 8B(5) of the *Environment Effects Act 1978*

The procedures and requirements applying to the EES process, in accordance with both section 8B(5) of the Act and the *Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978* (Ministerial Guidelines), are as follows.

- (i) The EES is to document investigations of potential environmental effects of the proposed project, including the feasibility of associated environmental mitigation and management measures, in particular for:
 - a. alternative corridors, alignments, site locations, designs or other options for the planning, construction or operation of the project;
 - b. potential effects on biodiversity, including loss, degradation or fragmentation of habitat;
 - c. effects on Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage values;
 - d. impacts on visual and landscape values; and
 - e. other effects on land uses and the community.
- (ii) The matters to be investigated and documented in the EES are set out more fully in scoping requirements.
- (iii) The level of detail of investigation for the EES studies should be consistent with the approach set out in the scoping requirements and be adequate to inform an assessment of the significance and acceptability of its potential environmental effects, in the context of the Ministerial Guidelines.
- (iv) DTP will continue to manage an inter-agency technical reference group (TRG) to advise DTP and the proponent on the design and adequacy of the EES studies and coordination with statutory approval processes.
- (v) The proponent is to maintain, implement and update an EES consultation plan for informing the public and consulting with stakeholders during the preparation of the EES. The updated published consultation plan needs to have regard to advice from DTP and the TRG.
- (vi) The proponent is also to update, maintain and submit to DTP its proposed schedule for the completion of studies and preparation and exhibition of the EES. This schedule is to be finalised and agreed with DTP, in order to facilitate the alignment of the proponent's and DTP's timeframes, including for TRG review of technical studies for the EES and the main EES documentation.
- (vii) The proponent is to apply appropriate peer review and quality management procedures

to enable the completion of EES studies to a satisfactory standard.

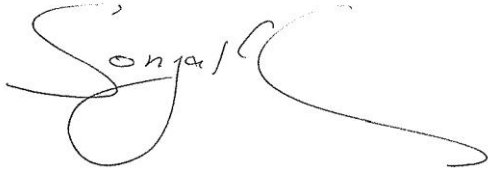
- (viii) The EES is to be exhibited for a period of 40 business days for public comment, unless the exhibition period spans the Christmas–New Year period, in which case 50 business days will apply.
- (ix) The proponent is to follow any specific directions given by the Director Impact Assessment, DTP, regarding advertising and exhibition arrangements, including with respect to giving advance notice of the intention to exhibit, provision of soft or hard copies of the exhibited EES to interested parties and the placement or otherwise of EES copies for viewing in public places.
- (x) An inquiry will be appointed under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* to consider environmental effects of the proposal. The inquiry will be conducted by formal hearing, which may include the use of video-conferencing or other technology as the inquiry Chair deems appropriate.

Notification

The following parties (proponent and relevant decision-makers) are to be notified of this decision in accordance with sections 8A and 8B(4)(a)(i) of the *Environment Effects Act 1978*, as appropriate:

- Ausnet Transmission Group Pty. Ltd.;
- Minister for Energy and Resources;
- Secretary, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change;
- Secretary Department of Transport and Planning;
- Executive Director, First Peoples – State Relations;
- Executive Director, Heritage Victoria;
- Environment Protection Authority;
- Parks Victoria;
- Ballarat City Council;
- Hepburn Shire Council;
- Melton City Council;
- Moorabool Shire Council;
- Northern Grampians Shire Council;
- Pyrenees Shire Council;
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority;
- Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority;
- North Central Catchment Management Authority;
- Melbourne Water;
- Wimmera Catchment Management Authority;
- Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation;

- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation;
- Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation;
- Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation; and
- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sonya Kilkeny', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

HON SONYA KILKENY MP
Minister for Planning

Date: 22 August 2023