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Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project

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Revision	Date	Reason for Issue	Prepared	Reviewed	Project Approval
1	07/03/2022	First Created	D Chesterfield		
2	01/06/2022	Review and edit	B Holland		
3	03/06/2022	Review and edit	M Kaloscay		
4	**16/06/2022**	Review and edit	B Holland		
5	**25/07/2022**	Update	B Holland		

1 Introduction

The proposed Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project by RES Australia Pty Ltd (RES) (the proponent), comprises the construction and development of a large-scale wind farm, solar farm and a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility in north-western Victoria, approximately 16 kilometres (km) north-east of Stawell.

1.1 Acknowledgement

In planning for Australia's clean energy future, RES acknowledges its rich history. We pay our respects to the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jardwadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk Peoples (often collectively referred to as the Wotjobaluk Nations) as the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which the Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project is proposed. We recognise their ongoing connection to land and waterways, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

1.2 Purpose and objectives

This Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan (the Plan) outlines the approach, strategy, and implementation of stakeholder consultation for the proposed Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project (the Project). Community engagement anticipated by this Plan will be utilised to inform:

- Planning approval in the form of Ministerial planning permit application/s or a Planning Scheme Amendment for the Project made pursuant to the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (VIC).
- Referrals made pursuant to the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (EE Act) (VIC) and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) (Cth).
- Based on the outcomes of the referrals, approval requirements pursuant to the EE Act and EPBC Act.

As signatories to the Clean Energy Council's Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Projects, RES is committed to engaging respectfully with communities, being sensitive to cultural values and making a positive contribution to the regions where it operates.

Effective, considered community engagement is fundamental to generating community support for renewable energy development projects. In RES' experience, early and ongoing transparent engagement, and a clear benefit sharing plan, are the minimum communities expect from renewable energy project developers.

According to the Clean Energy Council (CEC) Community Guidelines for the Australian Wind Industry (2018), successful community engagement plans for wind farms include:

- Clear goals.
- A description of the community and the relevant issues for the proposed wind farm development.
- A choice of suitable tools for communicating with and interacting with the community.
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for company personnel in relation to delivering engagement.
- A timetable of proposed actions and events.
- Identification of the resources that will be needed to implement the plan.

The specific objectives of this Plan are to:

- Build and maintain strong relationships with local stakeholders to establish a socially sustainable project.
- Facilitate early engagement with local stakeholders to understand potential social impacts and opportunities that may arise from the Project.

- Guide and support a strategic and coordinated approach to engagement, including specific tools, timeframes and responsibilities during the planning and assessment phase of the Project.
- Support the understanding of local context and identify key stakeholders, including vulnerable community groups, stakeholder expectations and project alignment with local aspirations.
- Facilitate the genuine involvement of stakeholders in the planning and assessment process and develop effective and meaningful responses, as far as practicable, to any identified impacts.
- Ensure that community and stakeholder inputs are effectively integrated into the technical, environmental, and planning assessments for the Project and, as far as practicable, to inform refinements to project design and to support the overall development of the Project.
- Collaborate with identified stakeholders on potential local benefit sharing opportunities to ensure they are co-designed, targeted, and appropriate to the Project's operating context.
- Meet and exceed (as far as practicable) regulatory requirements for public, stakeholder and community consultation.
- Facilitate early engagement with identified Aboriginal Parties to maximise opportunity for the Project to be developed in a culturally sensitive way, considering any tangible and intangible heritage values relevant to the project site and to support a focus on the avoidance of potential impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

1.3 RES' Community Engagement Approach

RES' Commitment to best practice stakeholder engagement is founded on our company values of passion, accountability, collaboration and excellence, as well as our vision to be a Power for Good and to create a future where everyone has access to affordable zero carbon energy.

RES recognises the importance of early and ongoing community and stakeholder engagement through the development phase of the project. This approach is informed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum as per Figure 1.This methodology provides a guide for staff to steer how the engagement plan will be implemented.

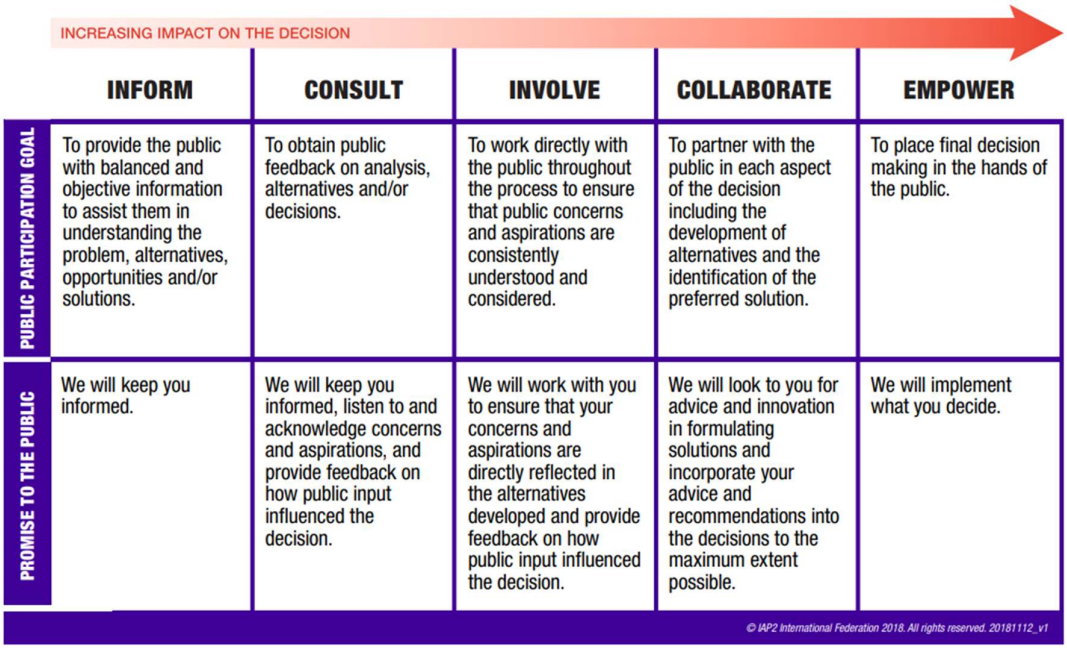


Figure 1 IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

RES's engagement approach is based on the following commitments:

- Keeping the community informed throughout the development phase of the Project and providing clear and timely information on how and when they can participate in decision making.
- Allowing the views of local stakeholders to inform project planning and design (as far as practicable) and listening and responding to any concerns raised. Providing access to up-to-date information on project progress and demonstrate (where applicable), how the design of the Project has been adapted to take account of community participation and the findings of feasibility studies.
- Use learnings from all projects to inform future engagement activities as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

Other key documents that will guide RES' approach include:

- *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria (DELWP, July 2021)*
- *Development of Wind Energy Facilities in Victoria – Policy and Planning Guidelines (DELWP, November 2021)*
- *Solar Energy Facilities Guideline in Victoria (DELWP, 2019)*
- *CEC's Best Practice Charter (CEC, August 2021)*
- *RES's Power for Good Report (RES, May 2022)*

1.4 Definitions

1.4.1 Landholders

There are 13 landowner groups within the project (9 of which have currently signed Option To Lease Agreements).

1.4.2 Neighbours

For the purpose of this Plan, the Project's neighbours are considered to be:

- Landholders with property immediately adjacent to the project site;
- Users of local roads and infrastructure near/adjacent to the project site;
- Any other stakeholders living, working, or who are regularly within 5km of the project.

1.4.3 Community

For the purposes of this Plan, the community is defined as any person, group, or business who lives/is based within, or has a connection to the geographic area surrounding the proposed project site, within an approximate radius of 20km. This includes the communities of Stawell, Landsborough, Great Western, Navarre and Joel Joel.

1.5 Key Project milestones

Table 1 outlines the key milestone dates for the Project throughout the environmental and planning approval phases.

Table 1 Key Milestones

Referral phase	Indicative timing
Preparatory planning	February 2022
Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan development	March 2022
Draft technical reports finalised	May 2022
Landholder agreements finalised	May 2022
Round 1 engagement	**May 2022**
Incorporate Round 1 engagement outcomes into Environment Effects Statement (EES) Referral and address any project queries/concerns	May-June 2022
EPBC Referral submitted to DAWE	July 2022
EES Referral submitted to DELWP	July 2022
EES and EPBC Referral Decision	August 2022
Planning Approval phase (assumes no EES and no controlled action)	
Round 2 engagement	**July - August 2022**
Project updates incorporating and addressing community queries, further impact assessment, management and monitoring	July - December 2022
Preparation of planning approval documentation (Ministerial planning permit application/s or Planning Scheme Amendment)	September – November 2022
Planning approval documentation submitted to DELWP and associated environmental assessment /management plans for assessment	December 2022
Planning approval granted	May 2023

2 Project overview

2.1 Project background

The Project consists of the development, construction and operation of a large-scale wind farm, solar farm and BESS facility across approximately 5,200 hectares of land in the north-western region of Victoria (VIC), Australia. Sections of the Project are located adjacent to the Joel Joel Nature Conservation Reserve located to the south. Land within and adjacent to the project site is predominantly associated with agricultural practices, primarily used for dryland mixed farming of sheep, cattle grazing and cropping. The Project is in the vicinity of a number of other proposed or operating wind farm projects in the region

The project will indicatively consist of:

- Up to 47 wind turbines, approximately 255 metres in height (blade tip), with a total capacity of up to 376 megawatt (MW)
- Up to 180,000 solar photovoltaic (PV) panels mounted on single axis trackers with a capacity of 85MW, across approximately 170 hectares
- An alternating current (AC) coupled BESS with up to 480 containerised battery units with an independent connection to the grid, across approximately 12 hectares.
- Underground electrical reticulation.
- Temporary construction site offices, concrete batching plant, construction vehicle parking areas, and material laydown areas for the construction phase
- An onsite switchyard for connection into the existing transmission lines that traverse the site, and a 220 kilovolt (kV) substation, operation and maintenance facility, storage facilities, and vehicle parking areas. Access tracks for construction and maintenance of the turbines will be constructed to link all turbines to access points throughout the project site.

The final configuration of the Project will be subject to the planning and environmental approval processes, and the detailed design phase.

The Project will connect to the Bulgana terminal station, which is located to the southeast of the project site. Connection to the existing grid is reliant on completion of AusNet's Western Victoria Transmission Network Project which is scheduled for completion in June 2025.

The project site will primarily be accessed from Vineyard Road. Preliminary transport route assessments have identified potential site access routes from the east of the project area, travelling along Joel Joel Road and the Landsborough Road. This route has been suggested as it follows similar routes used for construction of the nearby Bulgana and Crowlands wind farms. Various road upgrades may need to take place for Project construction to take place and these are being investigated currently.

The road upgrade requirements will also be informed by ongoing engagement with the local (Northern Grampians Shire Council) and state road authorities (Department of Transport) during 2022, as informed by the updated and final designs for the Project.

2.2 Policy setting

Under Victoria's Renewable Energy Action Plan, the Victorian Government has increased the Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET) to 50% by 2030.The increased target of 50% by 2030 has been legislated in the Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017 (Vic), building on Victoria's previously legislated renewable energy generation targets of 25% by 2020,40% by 2025 and 50% by 2030.

Victoria's Renewable Energy Action Plan sets out the action that the Victorian Government is taking to encourage investment in the State's energy sector. This policy context is relevant to inform the public positioning and key messaging for the planning and development of the Project.

Further, in November 2020, the Victorian Government announced plans for significant investment in the development and establishment of six Renewable Energy Zones (REZs), with the proposed Western Victoria REZ covering an area that includes the Northern Grampians Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA) and the project site.

2.3 Project Benefits

The Project is considered to provide a number of environmental and social benefits.

Environmental benefits:

- Minimal impact on the productivity of traditional farming practices, with ongoing agricultural use (to the extent practicable) anticipated within the wind farm and solar farm development areas.
- Site selection that has minimised the potential for environmental impacts associated with clearing, is located within low residential density, and reduced potential for impacts on local amenity.
- Land within the project site can be rehabilitated to its original condition and use at the end of the Project's operational life once all above ground infrastructure is removed.
- Wind farms have a smaller environmental footprint than comparative traditional forms of energy generation such as coal and gas.
- Additional fire breaks and improved access roads for firefighting.
- The Project will generate renewable energy to power more than 200,000 Victorian homes and offset more than 1 million tonnes of C02.
- Contribution to reaching the Victorian and Commonwealth legislated renewable energy generation targets.

Community benefits:

- RES is committed to developing a community benefit scheme once the Project is operational. This will provide ongoing funding to support local projects, community groups and organisations over the Project's lifetime. Finalisation of the structure of the benefit scheme remains subject to RES' ongoing engagement with the community.
- The Project will generate approximately 250 direct jobs during construction as well as indirect supply chain jobs. A number of full-time staff will be employed during the operation and maintenance phase of the Project (approximately 30 years) and medium-term contract jobs during any major maintenance activities. The peak construction and operational jobs will be subject to the final size and configuration of the Project, but an operations and maintenance team of approximately 20 staff is anticipated.
- Employment benefits from the Project will extend through local supply chains to fuel supply, vehicles servicing, plant and equipment hire, uniform suppliers, hotels/motels, cafes, restaurants, tradespeople and many other local businesses.
- Once the project is operational, it would provide annual income to host landowners and neighbour benefits. This additional income allows farmers diversify income streams to offset environmental impacts such as drought or flood.

2.4 Community profile

The Project is located within the Northern Grampians Shire Council LGA in central-western Victoria. The LGA has approximately 11,400 residents across 5,918 square kilometres and is 220kms north-east of Melbourne and 500kms north-west of Adelaide.

The key industries in the Northern Grampians Shire Council LGA include wool, broad acre grazing, cereal cropping, viticulture, olive growing, tourism, gold mining, manufacturing, textiles, retail trade, health and community services, landcare and catchment management, and professional services. In recent years there has been a focus on renewable energy, including the approval and construction of Neoen's large-scale Bulgana Green Power Hub, which is located adjacent to the Project site and within the Northern Grampians Shire Council LGA.

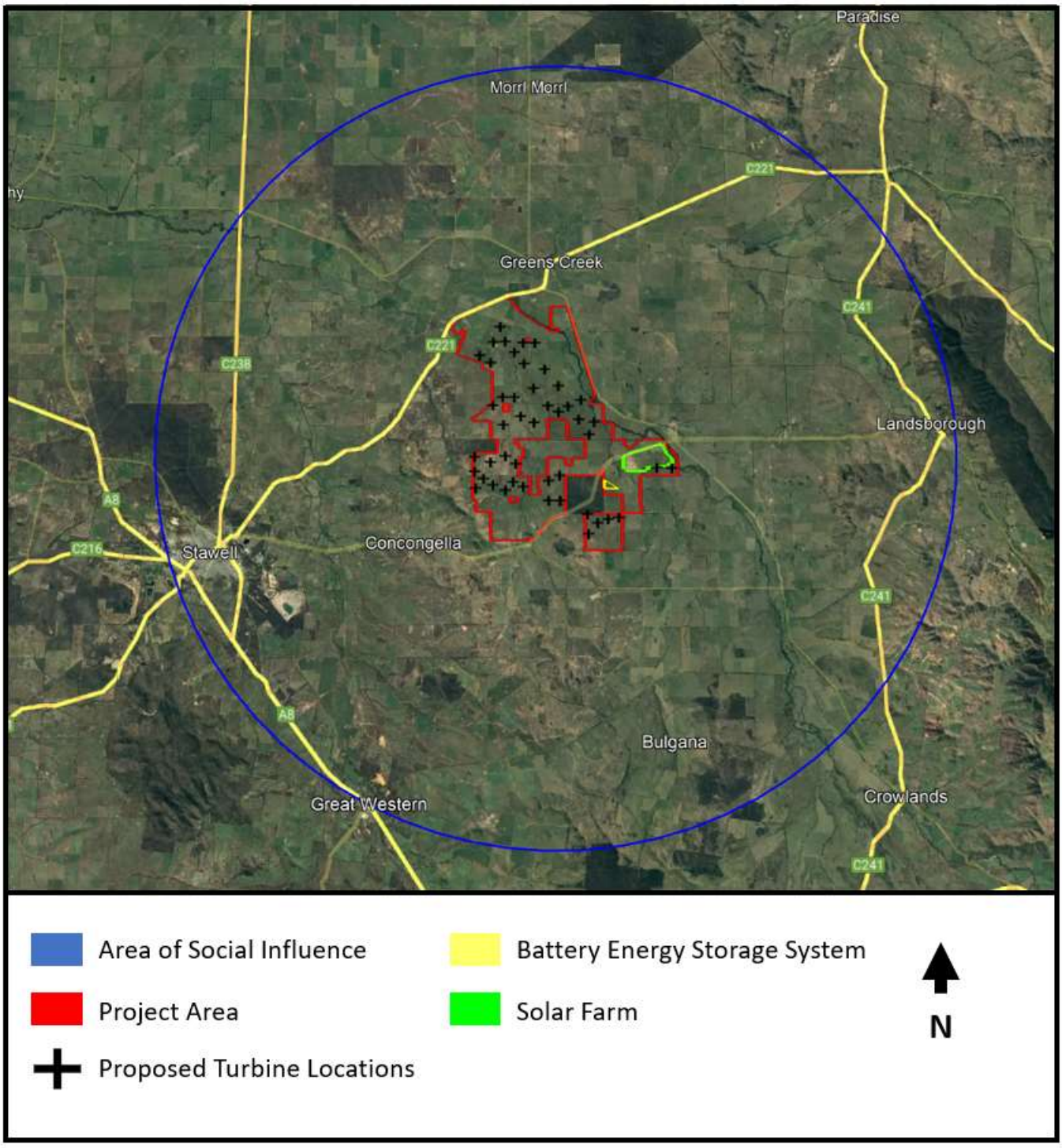
Northern Grampians' major towns are Stawell in the south and St Arnaud in the north, both are service centres for surrounding rural communities. Smaller townships include Great Western, Halls Gap, Glenorchy, Navarre, Marnoo and Stuart Mill. The corporate office for the Northern Grampians Shire Council (Council) is located in Stawell.

Stawell is also home to Australia's oldest and richest short-distance running race – the Stawell Gift, which is held on Easter Monday. Powercor were major sponsors of the 2021 event.

Table 2 Population centres and townships closest to the Project

Town Name	Population	Distance (km)	Direction	Access road
Stawell	*6033*	*16*	*SE*	*Landsborough Road/Stawell-Avoca Rd*
Concongella	*132*	*3.5*	*SE*	*Landsborough Rd*
Greens Creek	*52*	*3.6*	*NE*	*Greens Creek Rd/Stawell-Avoca Rd/Wimmera Downs Rd*
Joel Joel/Joel South	*47*	*1-5*	*E*	*Landsborough Rd/Joel Joel Rd/Wimmera Downs Rd/Joel S Rd*
Landsborough West	*42*	*5.5*	*E*	*Landsborough Rd*
Landsborough	*174*	*12*	*W*	*Landsborough Rd*
Bulgana	*38*	*9*	*SE*	*Joel S Road*
Campbells Bridge	*23*	*12*	*NW*	*Greens Creek Rd*
Germania	*13*	*12*	*W*	*Stawell Avoca Rd / Donald Stawell Rd*
Great Western	*371*	*14*	*SW*	*Western Hwy*
Deep Lead	*207*	*17*	*W*	*Deep Lead Rd / Western Hwy*
Navarre	*16*	*17*	*NE*	*Stawell Avoca Rd*
Glenorchy	*123*	*23*	*NW*	*Greens Creek Rd*
Marnoo	*140*	*32*	*NE*	*Donald Stawell Rd*
Stuart Mill	*80*	*36*	*NE*	*Stawell Avoca Rd*
St Arnaud	*2194*	*48*	*NE*	*Stawell Avoca Rd / Ararat St Arnaud Rd*
Halls Gap	*431*	*35*	*SW*	*Grampians Rd*

Figure 1 outlines the Area of Social Influence for the Project.



2.4.1 Local area demographics

A major issue for the Northern Grampians region is its population is declining and aging and social and economic disadvantage is growing.

- The Northern Grampians regions is the 4th most disadvantaged LGA in Victoria.
- Only 44% of the population (over 15 years) are employed (2% lower than the wider Grampians region and 5% lower than Victoria).
- 30% of families are at or below the poverty line.
- 4.86% are long-term unemployed.
- 37% of the community (over 15 years) is welfare dependent.
- 14% of 15—24 year olds are neither working or studying (3% higher than the Grampians region and 5.3% higher than Victoria).
- 9% of children (0-5 years) are developmentally vulnerable in language skills (2% higher than Victoria).
- Only 33% of children complete year 12 (41% in Wider Grampians region and 54% across Victoria).
- 11.3% of workers earn $1,500 or more a week – employed across, Mining, Health Care, Public Administration and Safety, Agriculture and Education.
- 20.6% of workers earn less than $500 a week – across Retail, Accommodation and Food Services, Agriculture and Health Care & Social Assistance, which often include higher levels of part-time roles and casualisation.
- Rental Accommodation is in short supply, with a 0.17% vacancy rate, compared to 0.29% in Hamilton, 0.57% in Ararat, and 0.45% in Horsham.

The closest major community to the Project and where most "wider" community engagement activities will be centred is Stawell. With a population of 6,033, Stawell can be characterised by the following demographics, summarised in Table 3:

- An older population than the VIC average, particularly in the suburbs proximal to the Project.
- A higher Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) population than the Victorian average.
- A slightly higher unemployment rate in the North Grampians Shire Council LGA in comparison to VIC.
- High motor vehicle usage, particularly in the host suburb of Stawell, from which we can assume a high level of road use.
- A lover level of internet access from dwellings.
- A low level of residents born outside Australia; therefore, the community is not expected to be culturally and linguistically diverse.

Table 3 Stawell Demographics

	Stawell	North Grampians Shire Council LGA	Victoria
Population	6,033	11,400	6,696,670
ATSI People	1.7%	1.6%	0.9%
Median Age	48	49	37
Unemployment Rate	5.9%	5.2%	4.4%
Internet Not Accessed from Dwelling	23.9%	24.9%	13.6%

2.4.2 Key priorities

In May 2021, Council released their Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2021 – 2031. The Plan identified 3 biggest challenges:

1. Population decline and growing social and economic disadvantage, casuing workforce and skills shortages that are restraining the economy.
2. Vulnerability to natural disasters and global market events, undermining consistend economic growth.
3. Investment preparedness, signalling priorities and ensuring investment competitiveness.

The Plan identifies three long-term objectives and the key performance indicators (KPI's) to achieve them:

1. Increased productivity and a prosperous future for all
2. Sustained economic growth
3. Investment in enabling infrastructure

By 2031 Council, together with the community, will work to achieve the following KPI's:

- KPI 1: Population growth, from 11,400 to 14,400, by 2031.
- KPI 2: Reduce the median age to equal the State (from 48 yrs. to 37 yrs).
- KPI 3: Reduce youth disengaged in work or study by 5% (from 13% to 8% of youth disengaged, being equal to the State).
- KPI 4: Reduce the percentage of developmentally vulnerable children by 2.5% (equal to the State).
- KPI 5: Grow GRP year on year from a $730M economy to $920M (26% growth, equal to the State).
- KPI 6: Reduce carbon emissions.
- KPI 7: Increase (private and government) capital investment.

Council have engaged a consultant to assist in developing an Energy Transition Action Plan to to identify areas within local industry that could be scaled up to meet the needs of renewable developments in the region. The Project Team are working with the consultant to discuss maximising procurement and employment opportunities through the Project.

2.4.3 Indigenous heritage

The area was first occupied by the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergai and Japagulk peoples, collectively knowns as the Wotobaluk peoples.

Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLC) is the trustee for the Native Title rights and interest of the Wotjobaluk peoples as recognised in the Consent Determination on 13 December 2005.

The Determination recognised non-exclusive Native Title rights to hunt, fish, gather and camp within an area roughly described as the Wimmera River from the head of the Yarriambiack Creek through to Outlet Creek at the northern end of Lake Albacutya and including Lake Hindmarsh (Gurru) and Albacutya (Ngalpakatia/Ngelpagutya).

BGLC and the Wotjobaluk people entered into an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) with the Victorian and Federal Government, which was registered in November 2005. The ILUA ensures that the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk peoples will continue to have a say about certain types of developments in the area where their native title rights have been recognised.

RES has engaged with Barengi Gadjin Land Council directly and through their heritage consultant, Tardis Archaeology. To date, a desktop standard assessment and site survey has taken place to identify potential areas of cultural heritage. These studies have informed a sub-surface testing plan as part of the complex assessment, which began in April 2022. This testing will also form the basis for the Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) 17482.

Various parts of the project site intersect with an area of cultural heritage sensitivity due to the presence of several registered cultural heritage places and named waterways as defined in the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007*. The project site contains 24 previously registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places and an additional seven places within very close proximity to the project site. Seven Mile Creek and the Wimmera River extend through the project site, with all land within 200 metres of a waterways considered an area of cultural heritage sensitivity.

The Grampians is rich in cultural heritage with 80-90% of Victoria's Aboriginal rock art located in the region, including Bunjil's Shelter in the Black Range Scenic Reserve near Stawell, which is one of the most significant Aboriginal cultural sites in south-eastern Australia.

2.4.4 Local renewables industry

The Project is the largest proposed renewable development in the area.

The Bulgana Green Power Hub site is adjacent to the proposed project site and its southern tip. The Bulgana Green Power Hub was developed by Neoen between 2018 and 2019 and consists of 56 wind turbines and a 20MW battery. The Bulgana Green Power Hub contributes $120,000 to an annual community benefit fund which is managed by Council.

The following proposed projects, which are yet to go through planning, may be relevant to the Project:

- Neoen Navarre Wind Farm Project – 350MW wind farm, approximately 20km to the north-east of the project site
- Wind Prospect Tulkara project – 200WM wind farm, approximately 10km to the north-east of the project site

There is the potential for cumulative socio-economic and traffic/transport impacts if the timing of the construction of the Navarre/Tulkara projects coincide. Consideration will also need to be given to established users of the road network and major events like the Stawell Gift. These will be closely monitored, and we will seek to cooperate with neighbouring projects should programs coincide.

3 Engagement strategy

3.1 Principles of engagement

RES believes that effective community engagement creates mutual benefits for both the developer and the communities in which they operate. RES is committed to clear, honest, and transparent community engagement through all stages of a project lifecycle from initial site selection through to development, construction and operational phases of a project. As a signatory to the CEC Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Development 2018, RES' approach to engagement is heavily influenced by, and consistent with, the Charter.

The principles underpinning community engagement adopted by RES align with the '*Community Engagement Guidelines for the Australian Wind Industry*' developed by the CEC (CEC, 2012). In adopting the principles of the Guideline, RES commits to the following with respect to the development of the Project:

- **Openness.** Relevant information will be shared with the community in a format that is clear, accurate, timely and honest.
- **Inclusiveness.** RES will work with project stakeholders to ensure their perspectives are considered.
- **Responsiveness.** All community concerns will be listened and responded to (as far as practicable).
- **Accountability.** The project will continue to monitor, evaluate and disclose information about Project activities and the identified positive and negative impacts of the Project.

RES has a dedicated and experienced team which can draw on its learnings from other projects, both globally and in Australia, to establish respectful relationships with local communities. RES aims to foster social acceptance to plan, construct and operate projects, striving for best practice, and early engagement with communities to develop an understanding of the community and the project's stakeholders. We understand that no two communities are the same and our investment in early engagement allows us to tailor our communications approach to the community we are working in. In turn, this supports the ability for communities and local stakeholders to participate in and inform project planning and development. RES acknowledges that a robust community and stakeholder engagement process can further inform the assessment process and project technical studies to bring about positive project and community outcomes.

3.2 Stakeholder identification

A stakeholder identification process has been undertaken to further define relevant stakeholders for the project within each of these stakeholder groupings

- **Group 1:** high priority – stakeholders who require proactive and collaborative engagement.
- **Group 2:** moderate priority – stakeholders who will require information provision and/or may be interested in the Project.
- **Group 3:** low priority – stakeholders who will be given the opportunity to participate but will not necessarily be engaged directly.

A breakdown of Group 1 stakeholders is presented in Table 4**Error! Reference source not found.**.

A list of key project stakeholders is shown in Appendix 3. For privacy reasons Project landholders and Project neighbours are not shown on this list, however, this information is stored in RES' Community Relationship Management System, Darzin.

Table 4 Project Stakeholders

Stakeholder group	Priority	Level of engagement (IAP2)	Potential interest or concern
Host Landholders	1	Collaborate	Accessibility, social amenity, land acquisition, livelihoods, and personal advantage/ disadvantage
Proximal Landholders	1	Involve	Accessibility, land use conflict, social amenity, personal advantage/ disadvantage
Traditional Owners	1	Involve	Aboriginal rights and interests, native title, cultural heritage, and land access, development opportunities
State and Local Government	1	Involve	Cumulative impacts, land use/ intergenerational equity, community or public perceptions, opportunities for collaboration, economic benefits, local infrastructure, and services
Environmental Groups	2	Consult	Cumulative impacts, land use/ intergenerational equity, climate change adaptation, ecological/ environmental impacts
Community & Special Interest Groups	2	Consult	Cumulative impacts, land use/ intergenerational equity, local benefit, impact on heritage or tourism, climate change adaptation, community and economic changes
Network service provider (Ausnet)	1	Involve	Cumulative impacts, connection of proposed wind farm to existing electricity grid
Air services stakeholders (Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Airservices Australia, Department of Defence and local air facilities)	1	Involve	Risks to air services associated with proposed development
Local Businesses & Service Providers – Accommodation, Education, Emergency Services, Employment & Training, Health	1 3	Consult	Cumulative impacts, demand and capacity, opportunities for collaboration, economic benefits, community and economic changes, local infrastructure, and services
Broader Community	3	Inform	Cumulative impacts, potential change to sense of community / community cohesion, climate change adaptation, local benefit, local infrastructure, and services
Local Media	3	Inform	Cumulative impacts, opportunities for collaboration, community or public perceptions, local benefits, community and economic changes

3.3 Engagement mechanisms

The engagement of stakeholders, Traditional Owner Groups, and community groups will include a combination of:

- **Consultation and engagement:** to facilitate stakeholder involvement in the identification of issues/impacts, areas of interest/concern and strategies to address the issues raised.
- **Information provision:** to improve knowledge and awareness of RES, its activities, the Project, and key issues/impacts as they arise.

Various methods will be used to engage with the different stakeholder groups based on the type of information being conveyed, level of feedback required, understanding of stakeholder needs regarding engagement, and identified stakeholder engagement preferences identified in Table 5 below. This will include existing or previous mechanisms utilised by RES as well as additional mechanisms.

Table 5 Engagement Mechanisms

Mechanism	Description
Website/hotline/email	Platforms and tools to provide opportunity for the wider community or public to engage with the Project (information provision and feedback submission) outside of dedicated consultation periods
Media release	Holding statement outlining key messages in local media
Project Information Sheet	No. 1 – Project overview No. 2 – Project update and outcomes of Referral phase No. 3 – Project update and outcomes of technical studies
Project briefings	Formal briefings to key stakeholders and government agencies, with Project Information Sheet and/or slide deck to formally introduce the Project
Personal meeting / interview*	Introductions to the Project and team, semi-structured discussion to listen to individual concerns, interests, issues and gather preliminary feedback, scope potential impacts and opportunities, including sensitivities, to inform mitigation / enhancement strategies, understand future engagement preferences
Community information and feedback sessions	Informal 'drop in' sessions to provide information (interactive), to provide a 'face' of the project, opportunity for members of the public to pose questions, project team to visually share results of technical studies, and collect community feedback (Round 2 only)

*Personal meetings can also be undertaken in small groups, noting that the focus of these meetings is to understand and scope local concerns, interests, issues, and priorities, not only to provide information on the Projects.

Table 6 outlines the mechanisms that are planned be used to engage each stakeholder group for the Project.

Table 6 Mechanism Matrix

Stakeholder group	Information provision			Engagement mechanism		
	Website/ hotline/ email	Media release	Project Information Sheet	Project briefing	Personal meetings/ interview	Community information and feedback session
State Government			✓	✓		
Local Government		✓	✓	✓		
Traditional Owners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Host landholders	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Neighbouring / proximal landholders	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Community groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wider community	✓	✓	✓			✓
Local businesses and service providers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local media	✓	✓	✓			

3.4 Supporting materials

The following materials, and tools will be prepared in support of the Implementation Plan:

- **Run sheets and/or agendas** – for formal project briefings for RES to hold with government agencies, and for key stakeholder meetings that the Umwelt team may facilitate in the local or regional area.
- **Interview discussion guides** – a suite of discussion guides including a standard discussion template/survey question set, as well as targeted guides for specific stakeholder or community groups/specific activities such as talking points and questions for community information sessions. Each guide will likely include up to 5 open ended questions.

- **Project information sheets** – to communicate key information visually and concisely on the project to the wider community, to be distributed in multiple means such as a resident mail drop, online format, and in hard-copy at community information/drop-in sessions
- **Record-keeping templates** – including interview note taking templates and meeting minutes templates
- **Stakeholder engagement database** – cloud-based relationship management program with spatial mapping capability.

3.5 Discussion topics for engagement

3.5.1 Round 1 (Referral Phase)

The EES referral document requires proponents to outline consultation conducted to date on the Project (including activities and stakeholders) and any proposed future plans.

Pre-referral engagement is required to gauge and understand stakeholder issues/concerns/interests in relation to the Project; to identify possible strategies/solutions to address topics raised; and to then use this information gathered to proactively inform project design and planning for the EES referral.

In this regard, likely social impacts will be appropriately scoped and identified through consultation with potentially affected stakeholders and mitigation and enhancement options explored.

Proposed engagement activities to be undertaken in this phase need to be targeted at identifying perceived issues of concern and/or positive impacts in relation to the proposed projects, to be further considered in the iterative design of the Project.

Questions to include in the interview discussion guides, either via story boards and questionnaires at community events and/or community interviews, that are appropriate to this phase, will include topics relating to:

- Awareness and attitudes towards renewable energy development (and other industry development in the local or regional area)
- Awareness and public perceptions of RES
- Potential issues, concerns or interests related to the Project
- Community values, identity, local needs, and aspirations
- Areas of value and use within and near the Project
- Sense of community in the area
- Potential sensitive receivers and/or vulnerable community groups
- Preferred engagement mechanisms, frequency, and content.

The information gathered in the referral phase will be used to inform subsequent project updates, assessment scope and engagement activities, by focusing on key social and environmental issues/impacts of importance to key stakeholder groups; and identifying project design refinements that may seek to avoid or minimise negative impacts and/or enhance positive impacts. This is an important step in the project development process and records of changes made will be retained for future reference.

The following engagement activities have been undertaken to inform the EES referral -

- Meetings, phone calls and emails with neighbouring landowners (summarised in table 7 below)
- Community drop-in information sessions held in Stawell on 27 and 28 May 2022
- Desktop research using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify potential dwellings within 5kms of the project area followed by field visits to every property to verify actual dwelling locations.
- Developed a project website and accompanying project summary - *http://wattawella-renewableenergy.com.au/*
- Unaddressed mail deliveries in August 2021 and May 2022 to all residential addresses within the project site of influence, providing updates on the Project and information about future engagement sessions.
- Project briefing notes sent to local Ministers of Parliament, introducing RES and the Project, including high level development process overview and Project details.

- Attended meetings and delivered presentations to Northern Grampians Shire Council officers in August 2021 and May 2022 to discuss the proposed Project and better understand local community context, priorities and environmental and community groups.
- Meeting with VicRoads to explore transport and logistics options as well as gain insight into the local conditions, driver and road safety considerations and road access permits.
- Meeting with Council's consultant to identify areas within local industry that could be scaled up to meet the needs of this and other renewable developments in the region.
- Engagement with Traditional Owners through the Barengi Gadjin Land Council.

Issues and opportunities identified during early engagement are recorded in Community Relationship Management program (Darzin) and will be updated throughout the life of the Project. See reports included as Appendix 1.

Table 7 Neighbouring landowners – summary of engagement to-date

Non-Involved Landowners within 2km of the project boundary	Sentiments	RES engagement to-date
Neighbour A - West of project on Vineyard Road	Initially concerned about noise, visual impacts and construction traffic.	• Included as part of the residential visual impact survey. Photomontage of view of turbines to be prepared. • Discussion about neighbour benefit sharing scheme. • Discussions about current preferred transport routes and avoidance of western arterial roads • Provided results from current noise assessment and expected noise levels at their property
Neighbour B - North of solar farm on Perry Road	Very supportive of project and no concerns raised.	• Background noise monitoring conducted on their property • Included as part of the residential visual impact survey. Photomontage of view of turbines to be prepared. • Provided results from current noise assessment and expected noise levels at their property
Neighbour C - Central to project boundary. No houses nearby but farming operations conducted within project extent	Concerned with noise and impacts to birds. Previously objected to Bulgana wind farm but have indicated that they will not object based on changes made by RES.	• Provided results from current noise assessment and expected noise levels at their property. • Moved turbines away from areas they have identified as being environmentally sensitive and could impact on bird activity. • Moved turbines away from shearing sheds and other farming infrastructure. • Discussions around stock movements during construction and ways RES could support this to reduce traffic risks.
Neighbour D - South of Bulgana Terminal Station on Thomas Road	Supportive of project, although concerned with noise impacts.	• Background noise monitoring conducted on their property • Included as part of the residential visual impact survey. Photomontage of view of turbines to be prepared. • Provided results from current noise assessment and expected noise levels at their property
Neighbour E - North West of project on Stawell Avoca Road. No houses nearby but farming operations adjacent to project boundary	Concerns about increased council rates due to increased value of land of properties with turbines.	• Discussion that their council rates would not change as a result of any change in value of land nearby. • Included as part of the residential visual impact survey. • Discussion about neighbour benefit sharing scheme.

Further activities planned in 2022 during the referral phase include:

- Contact all project neighbours within a 5km radius to introduce the RES project team, share preliminary information about the Project, provide contact details and gauge community sentiments.
- A written update to landholders and neighbours in late 2022, noting that the EES referral has been lodged.
- Engagement with interested local community and environmental groups to inform community benefit sharing opportunities.
- Meeting with local Councillors to discuss the Project and understand priorities and interests.
- Sponsorship of Stawell Show and stall with project information.

3.5.2 Round 2 (Planning Approval Phase)

Proposed engagement activities undertaken during Round 2 will be focused on responding to questions, concerns or issues that arose during the referral phase with environmental issues resolved and project refinements to be integrated where possible. Further, this round of engagement is an opportunity to further explore and validate the social issues, interests, and impacts that were identified during the referral phase. The planning program and preliminary insights or findings gathered through the various technical studies will also be further communicated during this phase, to assist in gathering feedback from key stakeholders and the wider community, on predicted project impacts (positive and negative).

Engagement in this phase, to inform the planning approval documentation (and potential EES), will focus on:

- Assessment of perceived issues, impacts and opportunities associated with the Project
- Existing capacity of local service provision and projected future demand
- Responding to, addressing, and integrating environmental and Project design matters raised during the scoping phase
- Potential strategies to address and respond to issues, impacts and opportunities
- Enhancement measures to improve collaboration between RES and community or stakeholders, including potential community investment and benefit-sharing opportunities.

3.6 Record-keeping and stakeholder database management

A dedicated stakeholder database has been established using a secure, cloud-based Community Relationships Management (CRM) platform (Darzin). The stakeholder database is used to track stakeholders, engagement events, and relevant information gained throughout the development phase for the Project. This database includes a detailed register of communications, whereby team members record the contact details of stakeholders, summaries of each consultation or contact with the stakeholder, and any actions that may arise from these meetings and has e a mechanism to allow information to be stored confidentially, in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*. This database has been established by RES and will be updated and maintained through the development phase of the Project to ensure consistent tracking and recording of all community or stakeholder engagement activities and outcomes, with potential use and application for later stages of the project (as required and where practicable). Information to be recorded includes:

- Activity details (including stakeholder engaged, attendees, time and place, mechanism used)
- Discussion points
- Summary of key outcomes, including any actions
- Stakeholder contact details
- Preferences for future engagement.

Following completion of engagement for each phase of development (e.g., pre and post approval), outcomes and data obtained will be collated and analysed by RES to identify key impact themes and impact prioritisation. Identified issues or impacts may also be mapped to identify any spatial patterns.

Outcomes of the engagement undertaken will be captured in the Planning Permit application's associated Planning Report and environmental reports following the Referral decision outcome.

3.7 Complaints handling and issue tracking

RES will maintain a Project complaint register throughout the development phase of the Project. This will be informed through activities and outcomes resulting from the implementation of this Plan.

Where prescribed, e.g., through condition of approval, complaints management during the construction and operational phases of the Project will be managed in accordance with the prescribed requirements. Where requirements are not prescribed, an appropriate complaints management process will be necessarily adopted to ensure issues continue to be tracked, addressed, and efficiently and effectively closed out.

4 Key Messages

4.1 Overview

As the Project evolves, RES will develop and adapt key messages for communication to targeted stakeholders and communities. Key messages will be developed in line with the principles and commitments outlined within **Section 1** of this document and will be developed to share information related to the Project, including the current status and current and pending activities. Key messages will also be progressively updated to capture content specific to stakeholder issues, concerns and interests as identified throughout development of the Project and the implementation of this Plan.

Key messages will be developed to address the following key objectives:

- Provide clear and consistent information relating to the Project.
- Afford meaningful participation and avoid misinformation and confusion.
- Clearly articulate aspects of the Project.

For the inital consultation phase, key messages (for external purposes) have been developed and refined, around four message categories. These will be used to inform the initial engagement strategy and associated material development:

1. **The proponent** – who is RES?
2. **The Project** – what is the Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project? Why was this site location chosen? Including details on the site and plans, 'quick facts' and profiles of the proposed Project
3. **The process** – the planning approval and EES process, including required community consultation and key milestones.
4. **Impacts and opportunities** – key issues in relation to the Project i.e., potential social and environmental effects, stakeholder concerns, opportunities and benefits, engagement preferences and information requirements.

4.2 Who is the proponent - Renewable Energy Systems (RES)?

- Established in 1981 in the United Kingdom, RES Group has grown to become the world's largest independent renewable energy company. Active in the development globally of both onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage and transmission and distribution, RES' project portfolio extends to over 20GW of renewable energy projects.
- RES is a family-run business, committed to the principles of openness and transparency across its projects and their operations.
- RES is committed to understanding each project's local setting and ensuring that this knowledge informs the development of its projects. Further, RES understands that every project is different and that integrating local considerations is essential in developing successful projects for both the community and RES.
- Active across 10 Global markets, RES was established in Australia in 2004and has quickly gained a strong reputation for high quality and well considered renewable energy developments. To date RES has successfully progressed the Taralga Wind Farm (NSW), Ararat Wind Farm (VIC), Murra Warra Wind Farms (VIC), Emerald Solar Farm (QLD), Dulacca Wind Farm (QLD) and Avonlie Solar Farm (NSW projects).

- In addition to the successful development business, RES offers specialist construction management and asset management services. With a local operational asset management portfolio of 3GW, and a Global portfolio of over 9GW, RES has quickly progressed to become the largest independent asset manager (by MW under management) in Australia.
- RES has a development pipeline of wind, solar, and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) projects across Australia totalling more than 5GW.
- RES' specialist wind, solar and battery storage teams, both in Australia and globally, includes highly experienced professionals in development, technical, engineering, construction, network / grid connection and commercial areas of development and construction. In Australia, RES are able to draw on the knowledge of more than 2,000 people that work for RES globally.
- RES offers development and construction of wind and solar projects, as well as ongoing asset management for both RES and third-party assets.

4.3 What is the Project – Watta Wella Energy Project

- The proposed Project comprises a solar farm, wind farm and battery energy storage System (BESS), located in the Northern Grampians Shire Council, approximately 16 kilometres north-east of Stawell, Victoria.
- If developed, the Project would involve the construction, operation, and maintenance of a 376MW wind farm, 85MW solar farm and 400MW/1200MWh battery storage facility. The potential site for the Project is approximately 5,200-hectares and would generate enough electricity to supply more than 200,000 homes. This site is located approximately 16 kilommetres north-east of Stawell and is hosted by 13 landowner groups.
- The connection point for the Project is via the existing Bulgana Terminal Station. The substation and associated transmission line are being upgraded as part of the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP).
- Infrastructure on the project site may include two substations and transmission connections, which will enable connection of the proposed generation infrastructure to the 220kV transmission corridor.
- The Projects would contribute to Australia's domestic and international commitments of renewable energy development, including Victoria's target of 40% renewable energy by 2025.
- To enable the transfer of energy, other relevant infrastructure will be positioned across the site, such as inverters, transformers substations and switching yards, as well as a number of temporary construction and permanent operational and maintenance buildings.
- Access to the site for construction would likely be from either Joel Joel Road or Stawell-Avoca Road. The access plans will be developed throughout the technical assessments of the Project.

4.3.1 Reasons for site selection

The key factors contributing to the suitability of the project site to accommodate the proposed renewable energy facility include:

- Availability of a strong and consistent Victorian wind resource.
- High annual solar irradiance levels.
- Accessibility to the existing transmission network via connection to AusNet's 220 kV transmission network line at Bulgana Substation.

- The project site is currently used for agricultural activities and as such, much of the project site has historically been cleared of native vegetation and has reduced ecological value.
- The current agricultural land use of the project site, including the planning zone and overlay provisions are compatible with the Project.
- The Project has limited environmental impacts due the existing land use, and through siting and design, the Project seek to avoid key environmental and social constraints.
- Supportive host landowners.
- Townships or settlements are located over 10 kms from the project site.
- Available access to the project site from surrounding major roads, avoiding the use of local roads.
- Considerable buffers between the proposed turbine locations and non-associated dwellings (at least 1.5 kilometres).

4.4 What is the approvals process?

- RES is currently undertaking ongoing assessment of the Project in support of the Federal and state referrals that will be submitted in July 2022. This will determine if the Project requires formal assessment under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Ahead of this process RES undertook preliminary environmental and heritage assessments to understand both the potential impacts and opportunities the Project would presents to local communities and the environment.
- RES is seeking feedback on the Project from key stakeholders and local community members through the commencement of active engagement, including community information events. The information gained from the community information events, along with impacts identified through more targeted community and stakeholder consultation, will feed into the planning and environmental application process for the Project.
- A Ministerial planning permit application/s or Planning Scheme Amendment for the Project will be lodged with the Victorian Minister for Planning and will be assessed against the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Through this process DELWP will coordinate engagement with statutory stakeholders to inform the outcome of the application process, and to inform any conditions of approval (if granted).
- Should the Project require an EES under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*, the public will have the opportunity to view the EES referral decision notice and Scoping Requirements issued by DELWP, and once completed the EES will go on public exhibition for comment for a period of 20 to 30 business days.
- Under the requirements of the EPBC Act, the public will have opportunity to comment on the EPBC referral application lodged by RES for the Project. Pending the outcome of the referral process, RES may be required to secure environmental approval under the EPBC Act. Where the Project is determined to be a 'controlled action' it can be anticipated that a public submission process will apply to the approval process.
- Comprehensive assessments have been, and will continue to be, completed to identify the potential impacts of the Project. RES will continue to seek specialist consultant advice and take learnings from the industry on the best processes through which potential impacts from the Project can be avoided, remedied, or mitigated.
- The post-approval detailed design of the Project will be informed by these studies and the conditions of any environment and planning approvals granted with respect to the Project (including any required

additional assessment), to ensure that the potential impacts that may arise from the construction and operation of the Project are mitigated as far as reasonably and feasibly possible.

- The first round of community engagement commenced in May 2022 with two community drop-in sessions held in Stawell. Ongoing consultation with the community is expected from mid-2022. Community members can also learn about the Project through the website and project newsletters, or direct engagement via the website form or the dedicated hotline and email.

5 Implementation Plan

An overview of planned engagement activities and associated staging across the environmental planning and approvals phase for the Project is outlined in Table 5.

5.1 Referral Phase

Table 8 Referral Phase (Round 1 Engagement)

Item	Detail	Responsibility		Attendees	Timing
		Development Manager	Community Support		
Preparation					
Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)	To guide internal process	Review and approve	Prepare		March 2022
Project description	Included in SEP to guide preparation of materials for community newsletters and info sessions	Review and integrate	Prepare		March 2022
Key messages and set up script	Included in SEP to be used for staff attending community info sessions	Review and approve	Prepare		March 2022
Stakeholder mapping	For targeted communications	Review and approve	Prepare		May 2022
Project Information Sheet (1)	To be distributed to neighbours and local community via mail drop	Provide critical inputs, e.g., contact details to include, review and approve	Prepare, design and circulate		May 2022
Webpage/hotline/email address development and set up		Provide input into content development	Prepare, set up and manage		May 2022

Item	Detail	Responsibility		Attendees	Timing
		Development Manager	Community Support		
Project briefing: DELWP	Online (MS Teams/Zoom)	Organise and attend	Support		April 2022 and ongoing
Project briefing: North Grampians Shire Council		Organise, prepare presentation/material, conduct and attend	Support	MK, DC, BH	Meeting held 27 May
Website launch	http://wattawella-renewableenergy.com.au/	Review and approve	Prepare, set up and manage		May 2022
Aboriginal consultation	Meetings with Barengi Gadjin and Tardis (Consultant)	Organise	Assist as required		August 2021 and ongoing
Meeting with consultants engaged by Council to investigate local procurement	Online (MS Teams)	Attend	Organise and assist as required	MK, DC, BH, Simon Coutts Jonathan Anstey & Michael Wheelahan	Meeting held on 8 June 202
Community Information and Feedback Session (1)	Advertising in local paper and via unaddressed mailout	Assist with content development, conduct and attend	Prepare posters, storyboards and run sheet, book venue, advertise and organise, record outcomes. Attendance as required.	MK, DC, BH, SF, LT	2 x community info sessions held 27/28 May
Proximal neighbour meetings	Initial project information sent via Aus Post mailout – further targeted engagement to follow	Identify neighbours, conduct meetings	Manage database and records, support in meetings as required		Ongoing

Item	Detail	Responsibility		Attendees	Timing
		Development Manager	Community Support		
Community groups	Benefit sharing discussions/survey	Attend as required	Organise, facilitate, record outcomes		July 2022 & ongoing
Local environmental groups	Benefit sharing discussions, procurement opportunities	Organise, facilitate, record outcomes	Attend as required		July 2022 & ongoing
Outcomes					
Stakeholder Database and Engagement Register	Document all Round 1 & 2 engagement activities and outcomes	Review	Compile records and undertake outcomes analysis and summaries		June 2022
Reporting, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement		Review	Manage database and records, privacy and reporting obligations		ongoing
EES Referral submission		Development Manager			July 2022

5.2 Planning Approval and Determination Phase

The detailed Implementation Plan for Round 2 Engagement will be developed following the completion of Round 1 and in alignment with the outcomes of the EES and EPBC Referrals. The current implementation plan below assumes no EES is required, and a no controlled action decision is made.

Table 9 Planning Approval Phase (Round 2 Engagement)

Item	Detail	Responsibility		Attendees	Timing
		Development Manager	**Community Support**		
Project updates: DELWP	Online (MS Teams/Zoom)	Organise and attend	Support		Ongoing
Website updates			Prepare, set up and manage		May 2022
Consultation with BGLC & CHMP	Meetings with BGLC & Tardis Archaeology	Organise	Assist as required		To be set up once site testing completed
Project update: North Grampians Shire Council		Organise, prepare presentation/material, conduct and attend	Support	MK, DC, BH	To be set up following further engagement activities
Project briefing: councillors		Identify Councillors and arrange meetings	Assist as required		To be set up
Proximal neighbour meetings	Initial project information sent via AusPost mailout - further targeted engagement to follow	Identify neighbours, conduct meetings	Manage database and records, support in meetings as required		To be set up / ongoing
Agency Project briefings	List in Referral document	Complete agency list and contact details, prepare presentation, attend as required,	Support as required		Ongoing

Item	Detail	Responsibility		Attendees	Timing
		Development Manager	Community Support		
		receive and review outcomes,			
Community groups	Benefit sharing discussions/survey	Attend as required	Organise, facilitate, record outcomes		To be set up
Local environmental groups		Organise, facilitate, record outcomes	Attend as required		To be set up
Local accommodation providers		Organise, conduct, attend, record outcomes	Attend as required		To be set up
Project Update Information Sheet (2)	To be distributed via mail drop	Provide critical inputs, e.g., contact details to include, review and approve	Prepare, design and circulate		Following EES and EPBC referral outcomes
Round 2 - Community Information and Feedback Session	Advertising in local paper and via unaddressed mailout	Assist with content development, conduct and attend	Prepare posters, storyboards and run sheet, book venue, advertise and organise, record outcomes. Attendance as required.	TBC	TBC – prior to the submission of planning approval documentation

Appendix 1 – Community Info Session Feedback

Two informal drop-in sessions were held on 27 and 28 May to provide feedback regarding the preliminary technical assessments of the Project, as well as the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures under consideration to minimise negative and enhance positive impacts of the Project.

Fifty community members attended the sessions over the two days. Feedback received was varied, with some community members providing positive comments. There were some concerns, particularly from project neighbours, around visual impacts, noise, construction impacts, fire risk and land use. The Project Manager will follow up with these neighbours to provide photomontages and increased communication.

There were also enquires regarding community and neighbour benefit programs as well as employment and procurement opportunities. These opportunities will be investigated further through community surveys and work with particular interest groups.

Feedback from the sessions has been recorded in Darzin and will be used to inform the Social Impact Assessment and social licence strategies, as well as to understand the range of community views, concerns, interests and feedback provided on the Project to date. Please see Darzin feedback reports below:

Watta Wella

power for good

R98 - Classification Category Sentiment

Date Range :	27 May 2022 - 28 May 2022
Classification :	Enquiries,Benefit Sharing,Community Fund,Neighbour Program,Recommendation,Employment,Sponsorship,Supplier,Feedback,Behaviour,Contractor Behavior,Staff Behaviour,Compliment,Engagement,Adequacy,Timing,Escalation,External,Internal,Limited Response,Objection,Formal Submission,Stated Intent,Positive,Request,Safety,Vena,Impact,Access,Accomodation,Aviation,Construction,Cumulative,Decommissioning,Devaluation,Ecological,Electromagnetic Interference,Fire Risk,Heritage,Land Use,No Impact,Noise,Social,Traffic,Visual,Waste,Water,QUESTION,Land,Agreement,Draft,Final,Approval,Expiry,Negotiation,Termination,INDIGENOUS
This report is generated for :	Interactions

Watta Wella

R33 - List all classified comments by individual Interaction

Date Range :	16 May 2022 - 27 May 2022
Direction :	In and Out
Zone :	
Methods :	

1: Info Session #1 Shop 108

27 May 2022

ID: 912 **Direction:** OUT

30 attendees

Method: Information Session **Attendee:**

Classification 1: *Feedback - Objection - Stated Intent*

Bulgana may have ability to protest how close turbines are. Don't want Justn to lose turbines.

Classification 2: *Impact - Visual*

x2 moderate concern

Classification 3: *Impact - Land Use*

Not close but interested in the project.

Classification 4: *Impact - Noise*

Noise x1 no concern

Classification 5: *Impact - Noise*

The project will cause significant noise nuisance to the area.

Classification 6: *Impact - Noise*

x2 moderate concern

Classification 7: *Impact - Water*

There are reports that solar farms impact weather by decreasing local rainfall. Can you confrm whether these tests have been completed for Wata Wella? Gibson)

Classification 8: *Feedback - Engagement - Adequacy*

Confrmaton that discussions will contnue about local stock movements following fnalisaton of trafc assessments.

Classification 9: *Impact - Devaluation*

Property devaluaton - concern raised about an INCREASE to property value, impactng rates (as a negatve impact)

Classification 10: *Impact - No Impact*

Renewables support x 10

Classification 11: *Impact - No Impact*

Renewables support x 10

Classification 12: *Impact - No Impact*

Noise x1 no concern

Classification 13: *Impact - No Impact*

Visual x1 no concern

Classification 14: *QUESTION*

There are reports that solar farms impact weather by decreasing local rainfall. Can you confrm whether these tests have been completed for Wata Wella?

Watta Wella

R33 - List all classified comments by individual Interaction

Date Range :	28 May 2022 - 28 May 2022
Direction :	In and Out
Zone :	
Methods :	Information Session

1: Info session #2 Shop 108

28 May 2022

ID: 936 **Direction:** IN

Method: Informaton Session **Attendee:** 20 attendees

Classification 1: *Enquiries - Employment*

Employment x 2 Neutral

Classification 2: *Feedback - Behaviour - Contractor Behavior*

Contractor behaviour x 1 moderate concern

Classification 3: *Impact - Traffic*

Traffic x 2 moderate concern

Classification 4: *Impact - Traffic*

Transport x 2 very concerned

Classification 5: *Impact - Visual*

Visual x 2 very concerned

Classification 6: *Impact - Visual*

Visual x 1 moderate concern

Classification 7: *Impact - Ecological*

Flora and Fauna x 2 very concerned

Classification 8: *Impact - Noise*

x1 moderate concern

Classification 9: *Impact - Noise*

Noise x 2 very concerned

Classification 10: *Impact - Construction*

Procurement x 2 moderate concern

Classification 11: *Impact - Construction*

Construction x 2 very concerned

Classification 12: *Impact - Access*

Access x 2 very concerned

Classification 13: *Impact - Access*

Access x 2 very concerned

Classification 14: *Feedback - Engagement - Adequacy*

project neighbours have many concerns (listed above) they were also unhappy with not being contacted personally and earlier in the project - didn't receive project fyer via Aus Post.

Classification 15: *Feedback - Engagement - Adequacy*

Decision making x 2 moderate concern

Classification 16: *Feedback - Positive*

Renewables support x 2

Classification 17: *Impact - Fire Risk*

Fire Risk x 2 moderate concern

Classification 18: *QUESTION*

Employment x 2 Neutral

Classification 19: *Enquiries - Benefit Sharing - Community Fund*

Benefit x 2 moderate concern

Appendix 2 - FAQ's / Issues Discussion:

Who is RES?
RES is the world's largest independent renewable energy company. At the forefront of the industry for 40 years, RES has delivered more than 22GW of renewable energy projects across the globe and supports an operational asset portfolio exceeding 7.5GW worldwide for a large client base.

Who owns RES?
RES is a privately owned family business – established in the UK in 1981. The Australian business was established in 2004 and employs over 100 staff nationally.

How big is the project?
The Project layout has been optimised to 47 turbines, 152,000 solar panels and 480 battery containers covering 5200 hectares.

How much power will the project produce?

- The Wind Farm will produce up to 376MW – enough to power approximately 190,000 homes per year
- The Solar Farm will produce up to 85MW – enough to power approximately 43,000 homes per year
- The Battery will store up to 400 MW of energy for up to three hours. It will be used to provide grid ancillary services such as frequency support, as well as storing energy from the wind or solar farm.

What is the planning and approval process for the Project?
To proceed, RES will be required to submit a referral to the Victorian Minister of Planning to determine whether the project will require formal assessment and approval under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC). If the Project is referred, an Environment Effects Statement will need to be prepared, however it is not anticipated the Project to be referred. Following this, we'll aim to seek planning approval in the form of a Ministerial planning permit application/s or a Planning Scheme Amendment. by December 2022.

Is it possible for me to host the project on my land?
The Project is well advanced in terms of the existing studies we have conducted, and we may not be able to expand the project boundary at this stage. We're still happy to discuss at a high level, depending on the location and impact to the existing studies and constraints.

How big are the turbines/solar panels/battery containers?
The Project will utilise bi-facial solar modules to generate energy from both the front and rear of the panels. Panels will be mounted on single axis trackers to track the sun from east to west. The tracker tables are approximately two metres high and ten metres apart, arranged in rows. This distance between rows allows for ongoing use of the land for grazing or existing agricultural activities.

What other infrastructure will there be on the site?
The project site will require some additional infrastructure to support the ongoing operations and maintenance of Project. This is expected to include the following:

- Access tracks with erosion and sediment control.
- Site office/ warehouse building and operation & maintenance facilities.
- Car parks and temporary laydown area.
- Substations (wind & BESS)

This infrastructure will be contained within the project site and is not anticipated to generate any impacts. All details of any additional infrastructure will be shared with our neighbours as the development process progresses.

Is the project going to cause a fire risk?
The operational project will be low risk from a fire perspective. The turbines are constructed on cleared hardstanding areas. Each turbine and building on the project site will have an Asset Protection Zone established around it and vegetation in these areas will be maintained during the operation of the project. Water tanks will be installed as part of the construction of the project.

The project specific EMP will include bushfire management measures to address potential fire risks during construction, operation and decommissioning. When operational, the Project will be monitored. On-site staff will implement local Emergency Management protocols in the event of a fire in the area.

What are the benefits to the local community?
The Project will require approximately 250 workers onsite during construction and approximately 25 full time site roles during the operation of the project, plus the creation of indirect and supply chain investment and employment. We will work with the local community to explore benefit sharing options and target areas for contribution and support. A Community Fund will be established for the project and will commence once the project is operating. Funding will go towards community projects, local community groups, and local community organisations.

How long will the Project be there and what happens at end of life?
If the relevant planning and environmental approvals are obtained, is anticipated that the Project will operate for around 30 years. Towards the end of the life, RES will seek input from relevant stakeholders regarding management of the next phase for the established site and look to either decommission or re-power the site. As the world's largest private developer of renewable projects, RES has a wealth of experience in the successful decommissioning of renewable projects internationally. Decommissioning costs of the Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project will be factored into the financial modelling for the Project, with specific requirements and obligations for decommissioning being formalised as part of the current design process. These obligations will be structured to be transferred to any future owner of the Project.

Where is the concrete coming from for the project?
Concrete will be batched at a temporary batching plant located on the project site.

Where will gravel for the roads come from?
Sources of gravel are currently being assessed.

Will the project introduce weeds to the local area?
The project will comply with its obligations under the Biosecurity obligations. Controls including vehicle washdowns will be implemented to manage the potential for the introduction of weeds to the project site.

How close is the project to houses?
State regulations require a minimum separation of 1000m between houses and turbines, however RES have designed the project with a minimum 1500m buffer between houses and turbines.

Will property prices be affected?
No correlation has been demonstrated between wind turbines and declining property values. This has been demonstrated through a number of studies, including the Urbis study in 2016 undertaken on behalf of NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) in 2016. As a key conclusion of this study, Urbis stated: "it is our expert opinion that windfarms may not significantly impact rural properties used for agricultural purposes."

Will the project impact on agricultural land?
In practice the wind farm project will occupy approximately 2% of the total land area. Existing agricultural use will continue to occur around the Project (i.e., the turbine hardstand area is approximately 6000m^2 – total about 28ha, which is 0.5% of the project area).

Will the project kill birds and bats?
Detailed bird and bat surveys continue to be undertaken at the project site. The studies have concluded that very few birds fly at the RSA (rotor swept area) height where collision typically occurs. The site has been demonstrated through these surveys to be a low risk to bird and bat species. The operation of the project will be subject to a Bird and Bat Management Plan which includes a number of management measures, including ongoing surveys for the first two years of operation.

What are the health impacts of wind/solar/battery projects?
Solar, Wind, Battery energy is a safe, effective and sustainable form of energy generation. RES is a responsible family-owned organisation and we take our obligations to the community extremely seriously. With all our activities we are guided by statutory requirements and by advice from leading authorities such as peak bodies. The solar panels that will be installed at Watta Wella are essentially the same as solar panels that are used for domestic energy production in millions of homes across Australia and are not considered to present any health risks to project neighbours or the community.

Will trees need to be cut down?
The site is historically heavily cleared for agricultural activities. The Wimmera bioregion is one of Victoria's most cleared bioregions – estimated to be 83.1% cleared since European settlement. RES design their projects to have as little impact as possible to the existing environment. Turbines are placed in areas away from trees, tracks are designed around existing access roads and existing clearings are used for infrastructure wherever possible. The project has just undergone a careful detailed design review to reduce the impact to existing native vegetation.

How will visual impacts be managed?
A Visual Impact Assessment will be undertaken for the Project. If impacts are identified they can be managed by visual screening, such as vegetation (existing or new plantings) or even the installation of window coverings at residential dwellings.

Will the solar farm have adverse impacts on neighbouring properties or throughout the region? For example, from flooding or soil erosion?
Erosion potential and localised flooding and drainage will be assessed as part of the EES referral preparation. The project is not anticipated to significantly alter the existing land contours. It is important for the site stability to ensure overland flows are controlled and managed to ensure safety to the assets and lower ongoing maintenance costs during operation.
An Environmental Management Plan will be prepared that ensures measures are appropriately implemented and monitored throughout construction and operation so that there are no unacceptable impacts on the local area.

Are there any other environmental impacts that need to be managed?
The Project's Environmental Management Plan (EMP) will provide a comprehensive framework for managing all environmental issues associated with the project.

Will this mean cheaper electricity for the local community?
The energy market, including energy pricing, is managed by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO). This means that, even if a large amount of electricity is being produced by a local energy source such as a Wind or Solar farm, it doesn't necessarily mean that local communities will get access to cheaper electricity, however studies have shown that increased levels of renewable energy generators in the market will substantially reduce electricity prices.

Aren't solar panels/wind farms/batteries expensive and inefficient compared to other types of energy sources?

- The Levelised Cost of Electricity (LCOE) for wind and solar energy projects are much lower than the LCOE of any other form of generation. That means that the cost to build and operate a renewable energy project far outweigh the cost to build and operate coal, nuclear and gas projects (3 to 4 times cheaper). https://reneweconomy.com.au/solar-and-wind-keep-getting-cheaper-and-crush-coal-gas-and-nuclear-on-costs-lazard/
- The advantage of building a large solar or wind farm is that it creates economies of scale, making it much more efficient to generate electricity on a large-scale basis.
- The advantage of battery storage is in its space efficiency and ability to be easily installed to renewable energy generators.

Will planes be affected by reflection and glare from the solar panels or wind from the turbines?
There will be no impact to planes as a result of the Project. RES has been working closely with Aviation consultants and nearby airfield owners to discuss the project impacts. An Aviation Impact Assessment has been undertaken and concludes that there will be no risks or untenable impacts.

Will the site disrupt local weather patterns?
No evidence has been presented to support the suggestion that development of local infrastructure assets such as wind or solar farms can have any impact on local weather patterns.

How will you consult with the community?
RES is committed to clear, honest, and transparent community engagement through all stages of a project lifecycle from initial site selection through to planning, construction and operations. The company's approach to engagement is heavily influenced by and consistent with the Clean Energy Council's (CEC) Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Development. We have developed a Community Engagement Plan and will seek feedback from the local community on our planned engagement process.
Consultation activities may include:

- Community Information sessions;
- Newsletters;
- Surveys;
- One on One meetings with adjoining residents (face to face or remotely); and
- Community Liaison Meeting (following planning approval).

How will RES manage impacts from construction?
RES is committed to identifying potential construction impacts and managing them responsibly. A Construction Management Plan will be developed for the Project that will reflect proposed control measures to minimize impact to the environment, adjoining neighbours, road users and the broader public.
We aim to reduce the impact of our works on the community and the environment with:

- Standard construction hours and scheduling of work
- Well-maintained equipment and plant
- Monitoring and management of all construction activities, ensuring all standards and guidelines are met
- Regular project updates for our neighbours and the community, including information on any changes to local traffic conditions
- Listening to feedback and suggestions on how local impacts might be reduced

What will the impact to local roads be?
A Traffic Impact Assessment will be undertaken to determine construction and operational traffic impacts associated with the project. It is anticipated that the increase in traffic volume during the construction of the Project can be accommodated within the existing road network without adversely impacting existing infrastructure. A Traffic Management Plan will be developed in consultation with and in accordance with Council and Department of Transport and Main Roads requirements.

Where will local workers be accommodated?
To the extent possible, accommodation will be sourced locally, however we are aware of the existing accommodation shortages in Stawell. RES will work with the local council to determine the best accommodation options for the project.

Will construction or operation of the Project need to use additional water?
Water will be required for numerous construction activities such as concrete batching as well as personnel amenities. Water may also be required for dust control and equipment cleaning during construction. Ongoing water usage is minimal with solar panels only being cleaned as necessary if there is excessive dust and not enough rain to self-clean the array.

Will there be any disruptions to local power supply?
There may be some extremely limited interruption (through scheduled outage) to local power supplies at the time the Project is connected into the transmission line, however there will be no long-term impacts on local power supply as a result of the Project supplying power to the grid.

Will the Project effect or interfere with mobile telecommunications during construction?
RES would work directly with Telstra (the internet service provider) to ensure that there is ample connectivity during construction should the project go ahead.

Will the commitments to the community be upheld if the project is sold?
Financial and in-kind commitments to the community that are formalised in the development of the project will transfer as obligations to a new project owner. Community benefits, decommissioning and property costs are built into the financial model of a project.

Will there be economic opportunities for local people?
It is likely that the skills and numbers of workers required to deliver the Project may not be available locally or from close proximity to the site. RES will work with its selected contractor to examine the potential for local employment and to identify areas where learning and upskilling can occur to maximise the possibility. Other possible indirect opportunities to create economic benefit from the project may include property rental, catering, coffee carts and other enterprises subject to council approval.

Appendix 3 – Key Stakeholders

Federal Government

Stakeholder	Contact	Interests / concerns	Contact	Engagement methods / channels
Minister for Climate Change and Energy	The Hon. Chris Bowen MP	Energy policy Emissions policy	02 6277 7120 Chris.Bowen.MP@aph.gov.au	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates
Minister for the Environment and Water	The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 Native Title Act 1993 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984	(02) 6277 4404 Tanya.Plibersek.MP@aph.gov.au	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government	The Hon. Catherine King MP	Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	(02) 6277 4407 Catherine.King.MP@aph.gov.au	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates
Federal Member for Mallee	The Hon. Dr Anne Webster	Development, Construction, Planning, Environment	(03) 5021 5987	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates Meetings
Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner	Andrew Dyer	Standards, Compliance, Complaints Handling, Information Handling, Community Engagement/Social Licence.	1800 656 395	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates
Regional Development Australia – Grampians	Stuart Benjamin – Chairman	Development, Construction, Planning, Environment, Employment & Procurement Opportunities		Briefing Letters Project website Project updates

State Government

Stakeholder	Contact	Interests / concerns	Contact	Engagement methods / channels
State Premier	The Hon. Daniel Andrews	Planning, Development	(03) 9651 5000 Daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Action	The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio	Environment, Development, Renewable Energy	(03) 9422 5171 Lily.dambrosio@parliament.vic.gov.au	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates
Minister for Planning	The Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn	Development, Planning, Applications	(03) 9354 9935 Lizzie.blandthorn@parliament.vic.gov.ai	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates
Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. Harriet Shing	Development, Construction, Planning, Economic benefits	(03) 5134 8000 Harriet.shing@parliament.vic.gov.au	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates
Member for Ripon	Louise Staley	Planning, Applications, Development, Economic benefits	(03) 5461 1255 Louise.staley@parliament.vic.gov.au	Briefing Letters Project website Project updates Meeting

Local Government

Stakeholder	Contact	Interests / concerns	Contact	Engagement methods / channels
Northern Grampians Shire Council	Tony Driscoll - Mayor Liana Thompson - CEO Vaughan Williams - Director Corporate & Community Services – Trenton Fithall - Director Infrastructure & Amenity Tony Caccaviello – Acting Manager Economic and Community Futures Rachel Whittaker – Community Development Officer Councillors Lauren Dempsey (Stawell) Murray Emerson (Stawell) Rob Haswell (Stawell) Kevin Erwin (Central) Trevor Gready (South West) Dr Eddy Osarcevic (Kara Kara)	• Community Engagement • Benefit Sharing Program • Impact of construction workforce on Shire amenities and assets • Scope of assessment • Community values, trends and issues • Local employment and training needs • Workforce recruitment, management and accommodation • Changes to the housing market • Local supply issues • Road safety and community safety issues • Provision of and effects on community facilities and service access	(03) 5358 8700 councillor@ngshire.vic.gov.au tony.caccaviello@ngshire.vic.gov.au 03 5358 0571 Rachel.whittaker@ngshire.vic.gov.au councillor@ngshire.vic.gov.au (03) 5358 8700	Project website Project updates Meetings

Government Agencies

Stakeholder	Contact	Interests / concerns	Contact	Engagement methods / channels
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)	Robert Piccinin – Principal Advisor Impact Assessment	Planning, Applications, Development, Environment Impact Assessment		Phone & Email, Meetings
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment		EPBC Act Referral		Phone & Email, Meetings
VIC Roads / Regional Roads VIC	New contact being established	Works within/over Highway		Phone & Email, Meetings
Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA Victoria)	New contact to be established	Environmental Impact, Pollution, waste	contact@epa.vic.gov.au	Phone & Email, Meetings
Country Fire Authority	Ararat – Daniel Ramsdell Stawell Joel Joel Navarre	Environment, Development, Construction Activities, Bushfire risk	0407 542 368 Captain@araratfirebrigade.com.au 1800 240 667	Project website Project update Phone & Email Meetings
Police - Stawell		Public and road safety Crime and justice Workforce behaviour Changed traffic conditions Increased demand due to workforce	(03) 5358 8222 9 Patrick Street Stawell	
Victoria Farmers Federation	Jane Lovell – CEO Annabel Mactier – Senior Policy Advisor – Transport & Infrastructure Georgia Tsebells – Policy Advisor, Planning	Change of land use, Water quality and changed water flows, environmental impact, removal of vegetation	1300 882 833 vff@vff.org.au	Project website Project update

Other Agencies

Stakeholder	Contact	Interests / concerns	Contact	Engagement methods channels
Ausnet	Amada Vonarx – Land & Planning Manager	Connection into Ausnet network		Phone & Email Meetings
VicGrid	Alistair Parker – Interim CEO	Coordinating Vic REZs	REZDevelopment@delwp.vic.gov.au	Phone & Email Meetings
Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO)		Planning, Approvals, Grid connection		Phone & Email Meetings
Wimmera Catchment Management Authority	Bryana Bisset – Project Management Officer	Change of land use, Water quality and changed water flows, environmental impact, removal of vegetation		Phone & Email Meetings
Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) / Air Services Australia	Through Aviation Projects	Impact to airspace, blade height, panel glare, construction impact, traffic impact		Project website Project update

Local Stakeholders

A list of local project neighbours and community organisations has been compiled as part of stakeholder mapping for the Project. This list can be provided in support of permit applications under agreement of strict compliance with relevant privacy legislation.

Stakeholder	Contact	Interests / concerns	Contact	Engagement methods / channels
Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (Native Title RAP)	Darren Griffin	Cultural Heritage, Environmental Impact, Access, Land Use, Employment & Procurement Opportunities	0437 447 159 darren.griffin@bglc.com.au	Phone & Email Project updates Cultural Surveys
Immediate neighbours	List saved in CRM	Construction impacts (noise, dust, access, visual amenity)		Phone calls Letters

		Operational noise impacts Visual impacts Removal of vegetation Glare from solar panels Perceived negative impacts of electromagnetic radiation from the transmission line and transformer station Change of land use Water quality and changed water flows		Meetings Project updates Project website Online Engagement Local newspaper advertising
Community & local interest groups	List saved in CRM	Construction impacts (noise, dust, access, visual amenity, traffic), Benefit Sharing, Employment & Procurement opportunities		Meetings Project updates Project website Online engagement Local newspaper advertising
Road users		Construction impacts		Project updates Project website Online engagement Local newspaper advertising
Broader community		Impacts associated with short-term construction workforce including increased demand on local amenities and services, safety Change of land use		Project updates Project website Online engagement Local newspaper advertising