

North West Renewable Energy Zone

Updated
September 2026

The Minister for Energy and Resources has formally declared the North West Renewable Energy Zone located between Kerang and Swan Hill, with boundary adjustments that include the exclusion of Leaghur State Park and Lake Meran.

What is a renewable energy zone?

Renewable energy zones are areas identified as the best places to host wind, solar and battery storage projects.

Renewable energy zones will:

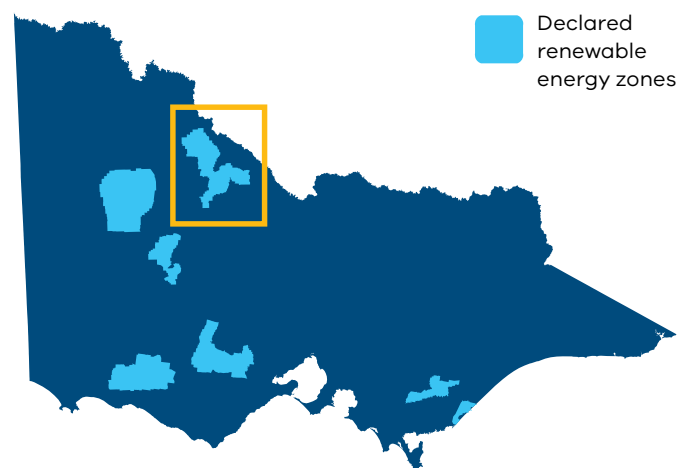
- Help coordinate renewable energy projects and reduce the need for unnecessary transmission infrastructure
- Enable VicGrid to set clearer rules around how projects gain access to the grid, including expectations for how developers engage with communities
- Provide more certainty about how and where renewable energy projects are developed
- Unlock new economic benefits for regional communities and Traditional Owners

The 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan proposed six renewable energy zones in regional Victoria. The Victorian Government has now declared five of these zones, with some changes to proposed boundaries. You can learn more about each of the renewable energy at vicgrid.com.au/transmission-planning/renewable-energy-zones

The introduction of renewable energy zones doesn't alter what is allowed to occur on land under existing land use zones or overlays, such as the Farming Zone or Rural Activity Zone.

All proposed projects will continue to be subject to existing planning and environmental controls, including approval processes under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

Figure 1: North West Renewable Energy Zone Location



The North West Renewable Energy Zone

The declared North West Renewable Energy Zone includes parts of the Swan Hill, Gannawarra, Loddon and Buloke local government areas.

The zone sits within the Registered Aboriginal Party boundaries of Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, and across areas of Country to the east that do not have a formally recognised Traditional Owner Group.

When identifying this zone we aimed to carefully balance community concerns about the potential impacts of uncoordinated widespread development with developer interest and the pressing need to position renewable energy zones with access to strong wind and solar energy and near existing transmission lines.

This zone will help contain development and coordinate connections to the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) project and existing lines, and ensure regional benefits are delivered to those experiencing the impacts of infrastructure development.

Changes to the zone over time

Following feedback on the draft 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan, the final plan included a small expansion in the south-west of the zone along the VNI West corridor, providing more options for future generation projects to connect to VNI West.

In response to consultation on this zone as part of the declaration process, some areas of high biodiversity value have been excluded. As these areas are not suitable for generation, their removal will not affect renewable energy investment in this zone.

How decisions will be made about new renewable energy projects in this zone

The Victorian Government is setting new rules to manage how renewable energy projects, such as wind and solar farms, gain access to the state's transmission network.

Under the current open access regime, developers can connect their projects almost anywhere on the transmission network, as long as they meet technical and environmental planning requirements.

Under the new approach, known as the Victorian Access Regime, developers will apply for access and VicGrid will oversee a competitive process to decide which projects can connect within each zone.

Each zone will have a set access limit for how much new renewable energy can be connected. We are proposing to set access limits to reflect how much electricity the network can carry at a given time, based on current infrastructure and planned upgrades.

In determining how much of the access limit is allocated, we will consider:

- The amount of electricity Victoria needs to generate to meet increasing demand
- The size of the zone and the density of projects
- Whether developers are meeting expectations for landholder, community and Traditional Owner engagement, and adding social value through initiatives and economic development

This process will ensure Victoria produces enough energy to meet demand, while minimising the impact on communities, Traditional Owners, agriculture and the environment.

Renewable energy project developers must talk to landholders to get permission to build renewable generation projects on their land. Landholders can choose whether or not to host a wind, solar or battery project.

Landholders who choose to host projects will receive financial payments and other benefits negotiated directly with the developer.

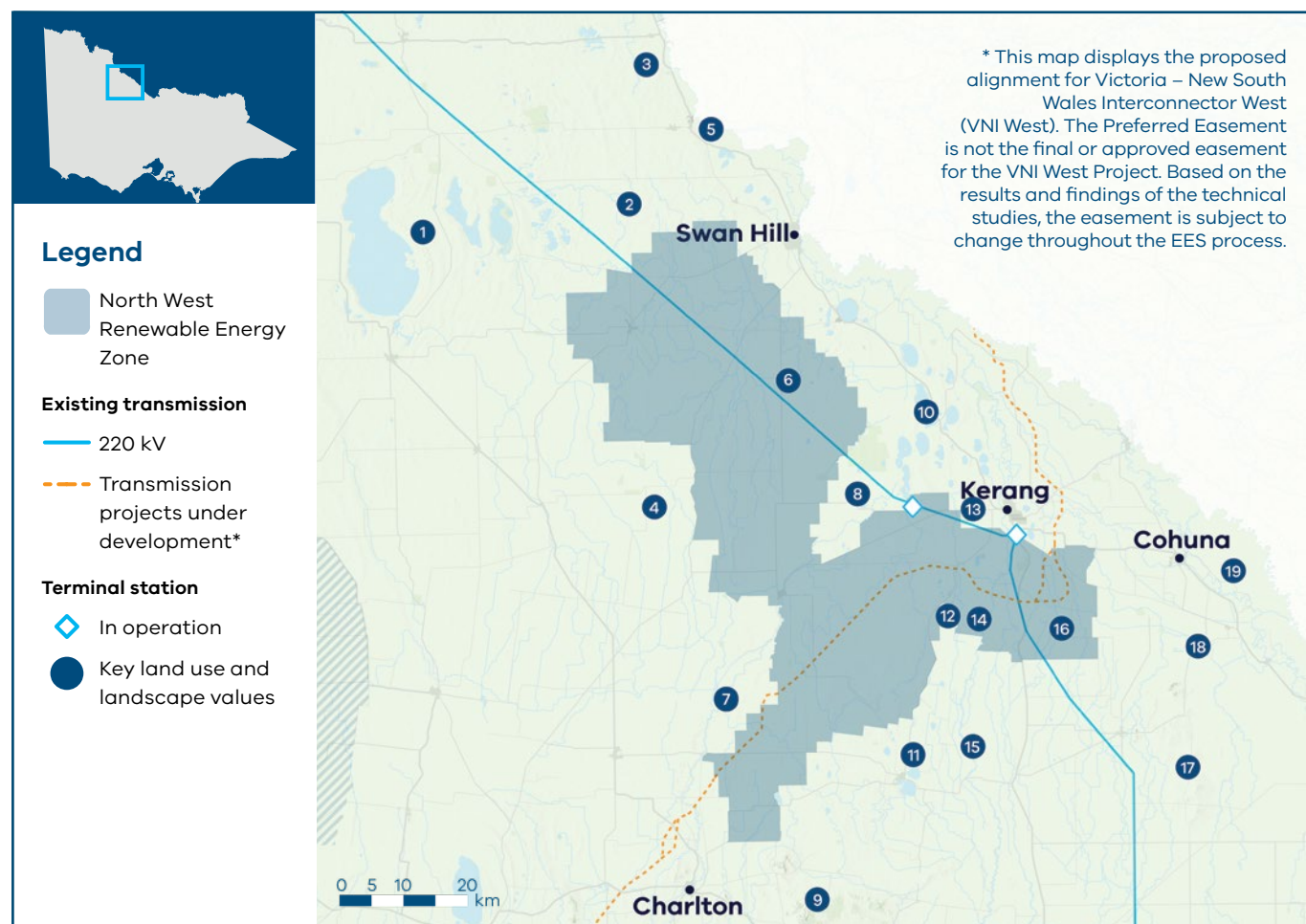
Project developers will also work with neighbouring properties to address impacts and negotiate financial benefits.



How to read the map

The map in Figure 2 shows some of the significant land use and landscape values that influenced the zone's location, size and shape. The identified values are a sub-set only and do not represent all of the values present.

Figure 2: The North West Renewable Energy Zone



Key land use and landscape values

- 1 Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Lake Tyrrell and surrounding sensitive landscape
- 2 Mining:** Minerals retention licence
- 3 Agriculture:** High agricultural productivity area with irrigated horticulture, dairy and cropping along the Murray River
- 4 Biodiversity/cultural:** Lalbert Lake, Lalbert Creek and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 5 Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Murray River and surrounding sensitive landscapes
- 6 Biodiversity/cultural:** Avoca River and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 7 Mining:** Mining licence applications and retention licence
- 8 Biodiversity:** Protected biodiversity area for native flora and fauna
- 9 Biodiversity/cultural:** Wychitella Nature Conservation Reserve, home to native flora and fauna
- 10 Biodiversity:** Kerang Lakes Ramsar-listed wetlands
- 11 Biodiversity/cultural:** Wetlands and parks surrounding Boort
- 12 Biodiversity/cultural:** Leaghur State Park and Meran Lakes Complex, protected biodiversity area for native flora and fauna
- 13 Biodiversity:** Protected biodiversity area for native flora and fauna
- 14 Flooding risk:** Floodplains across the Loddon River catchment area
- 15 Biodiversity/cultural:** Loddon River and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 16 Agriculture:** High agricultural productivity area with irrigated horticulture, dairy and cropping within the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District
- 17 Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Terrick Terrick National Park
- 18 Biodiversity/cultural:** Wetlands and waterways with surrounding areas of sensitivity, including protected biodiversity areas
- 19 Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Gunbower National Park and surrounding sensitive parks and wetlands (swamps)

How feedback shaped the zone

We carefully considered all feedback, but not all community or industry requests have been acted on. The 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan and the renewable energy zone declarations reflect difficult choices, made by weighing up many factors to deliver a plan that best serves all Victorians. These decisions balance energy needs, land use, environmental impacts and community concerns.

To shape the North West Renewable Energy zone, we undertook engagement as part of the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan development. This commenced in 2023 and was delivered across multiple consultation phases. Further engagement was then carried out as part of the renewable energy zone declaration process, between November 2025 and March 2026.

Renewable energy zones are broad strategic areas identified for potential development. We recognise that the declared zone includes sensitive areas that are not appropriate for development. These will be carefully considered in future project level planning, design and environmental assessment and planning approvals.

Below is a summary of previous consultation findings and how we have responded through the zone refinement. You can learn more at vicgrid.com.au/transmission-planning/renewable-energy-zones



What we heard as part of preparing the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan



- Protect important agricultural land
- Address concerns about widespread uncoordinated development, including cumulative impacts associated with the VNI West project
- Protect local wetlands and habitat for many species, including the wedge-tailed eagle
- Protect local lakes and forests, including Lake Meran and Leaghur State Park
- Strong opposition to renewable energy generation in parts of the broader region
- Some support to extend the renewable energy zone north of Kerang and calls from developers, landholders and councils to increase the generation capacity of the zone to accommodate pipeline projects

What we heard as part of the renewable energy zone declaration consultation

- Continued concerns shared about the combined impacts of development on the region and communities
- Minimise impacts on high value biodiversity areas, particularly wetlands, waterways and habitats supporting threatened and migratory species
- Concerns about the compatibility of agriculture and renewable energy, including impacts on productivity, irrigation and long-term land viability
- Requests to expand the zone along planned and existing transmission corridors to improve project viability

What we did as part of preparing the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan



- Avoided irrigated farmland along the Murray River
- Positioned the zone along an existing 220 kilovolt (kV) line
- Avoided areas of high environmental value, including rivers, lakes, wetland systems, parks and reserves, particularly near the Murray River, Koorangie Wildlife Reserve and Korrak Korrak Nature Conservation Reserve
- Sized and located the proposed zone to balance developer interest and community concerns
- Added a small expansion south-west along the VNI West corridor, providing more options for future energy generation projects to connect to VNI West

What we did as part of the renewable energy zone declaration consultation

- Removed Leaghur State Park and Lake Meran from the zone
- Made no changes in response to requests for boundaries to be adjusted for specific projects or landholdings

We recognise there are still rivers, lakes, wetland systems, parks and reserves within this zone that are not suitable for development. Environmental and social impacts will be considered at the project level through consultation, planning, design and environmental assessment and approvals.

What will it be like living in a renewable energy zone?

If you live in or near a renewable energy zone, you can expect to see the development of renewable energy infrastructure over time, including wind, solar and battery projects.

The development of projects is limited by the available space on the transmission network and only a small proportion of land is expected to be used. The vast majority of land will continue to support existing uses such as farming.

VicGrid will coordinate development of projects to reduce impacts on communities, landscapes and the environment, while all projects will still need to meet existing planning and environmental approval requirements.

Engagement and the delivery of social and economic value

Renewable energy zones will drive economic development in regional Victoria and enable new economic benefits over time through the Victorian Government's draft Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan.

The introduction of new Renewable Energy Zone Community Energy Funds will support initiatives that create benefits from the energy transition and improve energy and biodiversity outcomes in regions hosting renewable energy zones and new transmission infrastructure. These benefits will be in addition to any benefits provided directly by renewable energy developers. Local decision-making that responds to local needs and priorities will be a cornerstone of these funds. Decisions about investments will be made in consultation with regional community reference groups, with broad community and industry representation.

The final Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan is being developed and will be released once finalised. Learn more at vicgrid.com.au/community/community-benefits

The Victorian Government will soon release the Community Engagement and Social Value Guidelines. The guidelines set out the minimum expectations of developers in how they engage with communities and create social value and economic benefits.

Developers will be expected to engage early and meaningfully with host landholders, neighbouring and nearby landholders, Traditional Owners and communities surrounding their project.

Developers will be expected to integrate feedback received from these groups into project design, including initiatives that support economic investment in the region, recognise impacts on communities and deliver community benefits.

What happens next

Declaring renewable energy zones is not the end of the process. Over the next 12 to 24 months, VicGrid will do the following:

- Finalise the rules that renewable energy and storage projects must follow to develop within a zone, including the requirement to meet the expectations that will be outlined in the Community Engagement and Social Values Guidelines.
- Set limits on how much new renewable energy generation can connect to the network within each zone.
- Work with existing projects seeking connection to the network to meet community expectations.
- Monitor the performance of projects who gain access and review if they are meeting the conditions of their connection agreement.
- Support the creation of community energy funds and work with communities on how those funds are spent.
- Continue planning the necessary transmission projects and work with generation and storage projects to coordinate their infrastructure and minimise environmental and community impacts.

Throughout these steps, we will continue to engage with communities, landholders, Traditional Owners, industry and local government. The feedback captured to date will continue to help shape these processes as Victoria progresses towards a coordinated and fair energy transition.

You can learn more about the new rules and guidelines that will enable this work at vicgrid.com.au/industry/access-and-connections

Contact us



Phone: 1800 418 341

Email: enquiries@vicgrid.com.au

Deaf, hearing or speech impaired? Please contact the National Relay Service on 133 677 or communications.gov.au/accesshub/nrs



Need an interpreter? Contact Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450 (within Australia) or visit tisnational.gov.au

Disclaimer: The information in this document is current at the time of printing, may be subject to change and should not be relied upon. Please visit vicgrid.com.au for the latest updates.



Stay up to date and subscribe to our newsletter.