

VicGrid

# Proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone

April 2026

A Central North Renewable Energy Zone was proposed as part of the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan.

The proposed zone has two sections – a western section between Bendigo and Tatura and eastern section between Shepparton and Glenrowan (see map Figure 2).

This zone has not been formally declared and there will be an opportunity for locals to have their say and provide us with new information about sensitive areas. See section 'Next steps' below.

## What is a renewable energy zone?

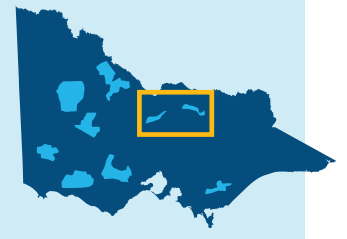
Renewable energy zones are areas identified as the best places to host wind and solar projects and batteries for storage. In designing these areas we've considered community and industry feedback as well as information about cultural heritage, existing uses of land, and quality of wind and solar energy in the region.

## Why do we need renewable energy zones?

Victoria's energy system is changing as coal-fired power stations are becoming unreliable and closing down. VicGrid is working to put in place a long-term plan to deliver the safe, reliable and affordable power Victoria needs to keep the lights on. Renewable energy zones will:

- Unlock new economic benefits for regional communities and Traditional Owners
- Limit the need for additional transmission infrastructure
- Help set clear expectations for how project developers engage and involve the community
- Provide greater certainty about how and where renewable projects should be built

Six proposed zones have been identified in regional Victoria. Together, they cover 7.9% of the state's land area.



## Next steps

The proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone has not been formally declared and there will be an opportunity for locals to have their say and provide us with new information about sensitive areas.

Communities within the proposed zone can continue to provide feedback, ask questions and seek more information, including through face-to-face meetings with VicGrid. The feedback we receive will help inform decisions.

We will also invite formal feedback about the proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone as part of the official declaration process, which includes the draft Ministerial orders for the declaration of the zone. This will be another opportunity for landholders, communities and Traditional Owners to help refine the zone boundaries before the Minister for Energy and Resources declares the zone.

# Central North



## The proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone

The proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone is in a location with diverse solar and wind resources that can provide flexibility in supporting Victoria's overall energy mix. The zone covers parts of the Campaspe, Greater Shepparton, Benalla and City of Greater Bendigo local government areas.

The proposed zone has two sections – a western section between Bendigo and Tatura along the existing 220 kV (kilovolt) transmission line from Fosterville to Shepparton and an eastern section between Shepparton and Glenrowan. The western section sits within the boundaries of Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Land and Waters Council. The eastern section sits within the boundaries of Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation.

The proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone predominantly avoids the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, overlapping a small part in the east. There are a number of sensitive wetlands, waterways and parks nearby or inside the zone that will require further consideration by individual project proponents.

It is important to note this zone has been split into two sections in response to feedback on the draft proposed zone about potential impacts on biodiversity, cultural values and irrigated agriculture west of Shepparton and interest in solar energy opportunities east of Shepparton. While the sections are separate, they are both part of the proposed zone.

Learn more about the **Central North Renewable Energy Zone** on our website.

### It's your choice

Developers must talk to landholders to get permission to build renewable generation projects (such as wind turbines, large scale solar farms or batteries) on their land. Landholders can choose whether or not to host a project.

Landholders who do host renewable generation projects will receive financial payments and benefits that they negotiate with the developer. Dedicated community benefits will also apply to projects developed in renewable energy zones. This ensures the whole community benefits from development.





### How much new energy are we planning for in the proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone?

Once renewable energy zones are declared, VicGrid proposes to run a competitive allocation process to decide which projects in each zone have the authority to connect the energy they produce to the grid.

We will consider:

- The amount of electricity Victoria needs to generate to meet expected demand as outlined in the Victorian Transmission Plan
- Ensuring the level of development inside each zone can be supported by available transmission lines
- The density of projects within each renewable energy zone
- How development can be coordinated to avoid the 'spaghetti effect' of many powerlines crossing the landscape
- Whether developers are meeting expectations for landholder, community and Traditional Owner engagement and benefits

This will ensure we ultimately produce enough energy to meet demand while also considering the impact on communities, Traditional Owners, agriculture and the environment.

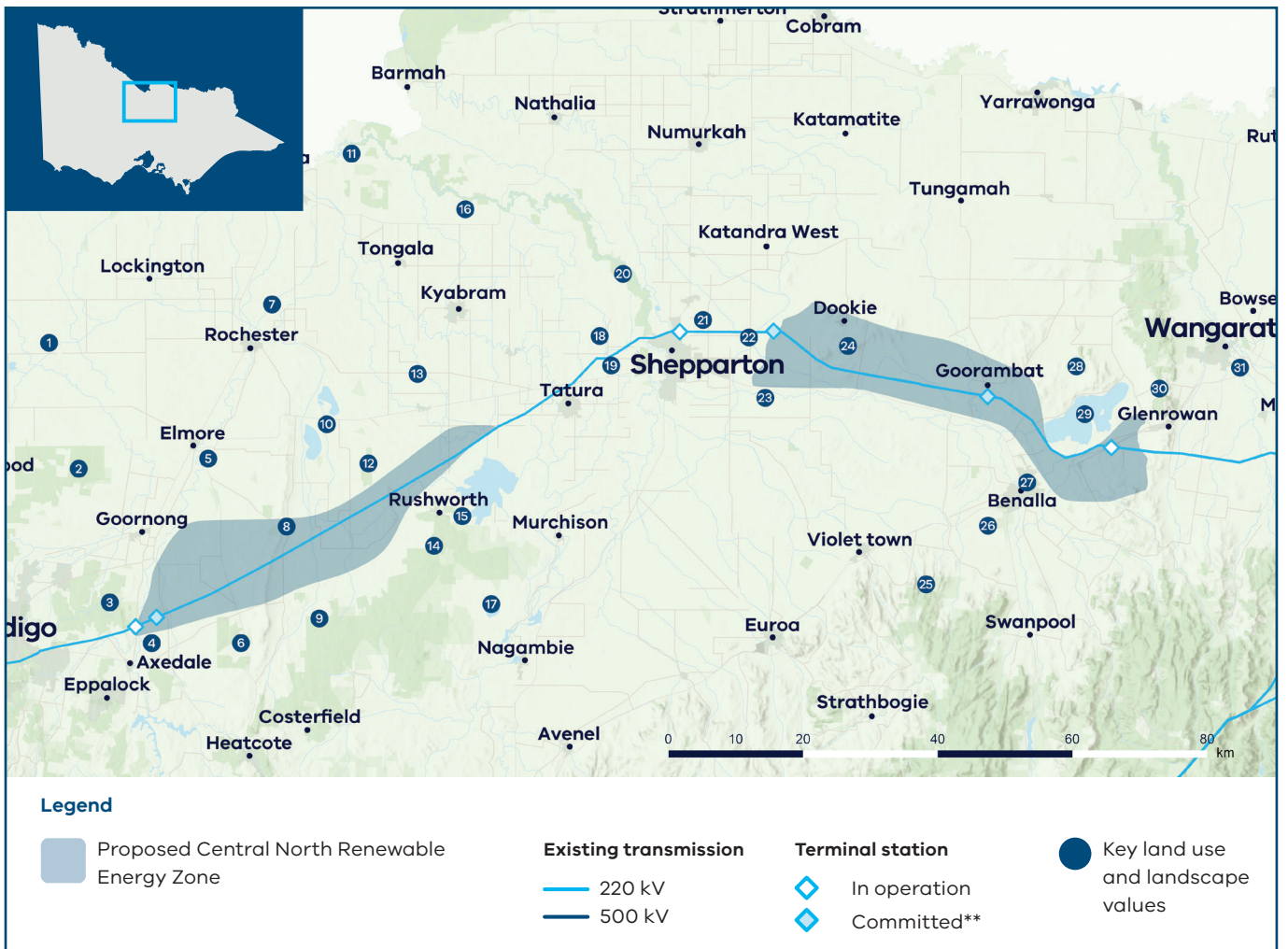
We are proposing to set access limits for each zone at the maximum amount that can be managed by the planned build-out of the transmission network.

This is not the level of development people should expect in each zone but is the maximum that the transmission network could support within the zone.

### How to read the map

This map shows the proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone, including some of the significant land use and landscape values that influenced its location, size and shape. The labelled values are a sub-set only and are not exhaustive of values present. For detailed descriptions of the labelled land use and landscape values in the region, see section 'key land use and landscape values', on page 5.

## The proposed Central North Renewable Energy Zone



\*\* The map shows committed terminal stations including new terminal stations on the Victorian Declared Shared Network that are proposed to be operational in the coming years, as identified by AEMO Victorian Planning in its Terminal Stations in Victoria report dated 2 September 2024.

## Key land use and landscape values

- 1 **Flooding risk:** Floodplain and land subject to inundation
- 2 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Greater Bendigo National Park and protected biodiversity areas
- 3 **Biodiversity:** Mount Sugarloaf Nature Conservation Reserve and surrounding parks and reserves, home to native flora and fauna
- 4 **Mining:** Active mine sites and Extractive Industry Interest Areas
- 5 **Biodiversity/cultural:** Campaspe River and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 6 **Biodiversity:** Parks, reserves and state forests, home to native flora and fauna
- 7 **Flooding risk:** Floodplain and land subject to inundation
- 8 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Corop Wetlands Cultural Waterscape, connecting significant waterways, wetlands and landscapes including the Corop wetlands complex in the north, extending south east to Reedy Lake and the forested hills around Rushworth and Whroo, and including the entire Mount Camel Range to the west
- 9 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Heathcote Graytown National Park and surrounding parks, reserves and state forests, including protected biodiversity areas for native flora and fauna
- 10 **Biodiversity/cultural:** Corop wetlands complex including Lake Cooper, Greens Lake, Gaynor Swamp, Wallenjoe Swamp, Mansfield Swamp and surrounding parks and reserves
- 11 **Biodiversity/cultural:** Murray River and surrounding sensitive landscapes
- 12 **Biodiversity:** One Tree Swamp and Two Tree Swamp Nature Conservation Reserves, including biodiversity protected areas
- 13 **Agriculture:** Agricultural productivity area within the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, particularly irrigated dairy and cropping
- 14 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Corop Wetlands Cultural Waterscape, see value 8 for full description of this waterscape
- 15 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Corop Wetlands Cultural Waterscape, see value 8 for full description of this waterscape
- 16 **Biodiversity/cultural:** Goulburn River and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 17 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Reedy Lake Nagambie Wildlife Reserve
- 18 **Community:** Area of higher aggregated dwelling density around Shepparton
- 19 **Agriculture:** Agricultural productivity area within the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, particularly irrigated dairy and cropping
- 20 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Lower Goulburn National Park and surrounding landscapes, including biodiversity protected areas
- 21 **Agriculture:** Irrigated agriculture within the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District
- 22 **Flooding risk:** Floodplain and land subject to inundation
- 23 **Biodiversity/cultural:** Broken River and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 24 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Mount Major
- 25 **Biodiversity/cultural:** Strathbogie State Forest, home to native flora and fauna
- 26 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Reef Hills State Park including protected biodiversity area for native flora and fauna
- 27 **Community:** Area of higher aggregated dwelling density around Benalla
- 28 **Biodiversity:** Mount Meg Nature Conservation Reserve, home to native flora and fauna
- 29 **Biodiversity/Cultural:** Winton Wetlands and surrounding areas of sensitivity, protected area and home to native flora and fauna
- 30 **Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Warby-Ovens National Park
- 31 **Biodiversity/cultural:** Ovens River and King River, and surrounding areas of sensitivity

## Acting on community feedback

Community and industry views have been crucial to the design of the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan.

VicGrid's role is to balance the need for new renewable projects that will deliver reliable and affordable power as coal closes with a range of other factors, including how we minimise impacts on landholders, communities, agriculture, the environment and power bills.

Not all community or industry requests have been adopted. The Victorian Transmission Plan reflects difficult choices, made by weighing up many factors to deliver a plan that best serves all Victorians. We have used the feedback received during engagement on the renewable energy zone study area and draft Victorian Transmission Plan Guidelines in 2024 and again during engagement on the draft Victorian Transmission Plan in 2025 to shape the size and location of the proposed renewable energy zone.

### What we heard

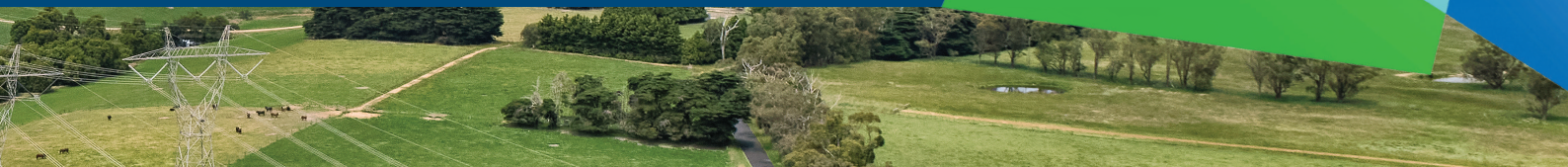
- Minimise impacts on agriculture and land use, particularly irrigated land and dairy farming.
- Protect the natural environment and biodiversity, particularly around Lake Cooper, the Mount Camel Range, Gaynor Swamp and One and Two Tree Swamp as part of the Corop wetlands.
- Consider natural hazard vulnerability, particularly flooding and how new infrastructure may impact future flood events.
- Avoid areas of high rural dwelling density and project growth areas.
- Sections of the community were concerned about the reliability of power supply in the region without sufficient transmission upgrades.
- Avoid broilga flocking grounds, which restrict the planning of renewable energy infrastructure.
- Consider expanding or relocating the zone towards Benalla and Glenrowan, an area with multiple solar projects in development and access to the existing transmission network.



### What we did

- We tried to avoid as much irrigated farmland as possible along the northern boundary in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District and other agricultural land. For farmland that is located within the proposed zone, minimising the impacts will be an important consideration of any future projects as they are developed.
- We considered flood risks, particularly in the north of the draft proposed renewable energy zone. These will require further project-level assessments.
- We avoided areas near Shepparton that have a relatively high rural dwelling density.
- We removed a large portion of the draft proposed zone to the north-west, given the complex land use constraints.
- We added an eastern section to the zone, between Shepparton and Glenrowan, in response to high solar interest in the area.





## Transmission network upgrades

The 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan also proposes seven transmission infrastructure investment programs needed over 2025-2040, to enable development of renewable energy zones and offshore wind energy.

The programs include four new transmission projects: a Gippsland offshore wind transmission stage two project, a new line between Tarrone in south west Victoria and Sydenham in Melbourne's north, a new line between

Truganina and Deer Park in Melbourne, and an additional short line between Hazelwood and Yallourn in Gippsland. The other projects across the seven programs range from augmentations within existing terminal stations to significant reconstruction of existing transmission lines.

Learn more about the transmission projects in the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan **on our website.**

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

If you live in or near a renewable energy zone, over time you will see more development of renewable energy generation and storage. You can choose whether or not to host new renewable energy such as wind turbines, solar farms or batteries on your property. It's your decision and we encourage you to talk to your neighbours about it.

Existing planning and environment controls will still apply. All proposed projects will continue to be subject to the planning and environmental approval processes under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

VicGrid will work with developers to coordinate new development and associated transmission to minimise impacts on landscapes and the environment. Only a small proportion of land in a renewable energy zone will be needed for development.

You will also see new community and regional economic benefits delivered over time as part of the Victorian Government's new Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan. This new approach will feature:

- The introduction of new Renewable Energy Zone Community Energy Funds to benefit regional and rural communities
- Payments for landholders who host transmission
- Guidance for payments for significantly impacted neighbours of new transmission
- A commitment to co-design a new approach to economic benefits for Traditional Owners.

Renewable Energy Zone Community Energy Funds are an opportunity to invest directly in projects that improve local outcomes and create other benefits for communities in regions hosting energy infrastructure. Local decision-making that responds to local needs and priorities will be a cornerstone of these funds and decisions about investments will be made in consultation with regional community reference groups with broad community and industry representation. In addition to government initiatives, developers of projects will be required to implement their own community benefits programs. Learn more about **community benefits.**

## Contact us



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