

Proposed Western Renewable Energy Zone

August 2025

A renewable energy zone is proposed in western Victoria as part of the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan. The zone consists of 2 sections, which were formerly known as the Grampians Wimmera and Wimmera Southern Mallee draft proposed renewable energy zones.

The proposed Western Renewable Energy Zone also includes new areas that were not previously identified in the draft Victorian Transmission Plan (see map on page 4). Before being officially declared by the Minister for Energy and Resources, there will be a further chance to provide your feedback. See page 9 for details.

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.

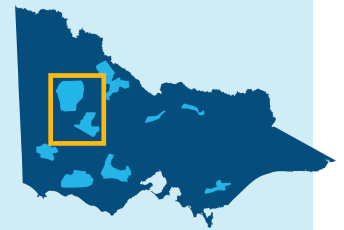
Why do we need renewable energy zones?

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 renewables projects should be built.

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



Have your say

The proposed Western Renewable Energy Zone will soon be placed on public notice for 6 weeks to provide the opportunity for comments and submissions. The Minister for Energy and Resources must consider any submissions when determining whether the renewable energy zone should be officially declared. For more information, see page 9.





The proposed Western Renewable Energy Zone

The proposed Western Renewable Energy Zone has changed from being 2 separate draft proposed renewable energy zones (Grampians Wimmera and Wimmera Southern Mallee) to being a single zone with 2 sections. While the sections are separate, they are both considered to be part of the proposed Western Renewable Energy Zone.

The proposed zone sits within the Registered Aboriginal Party boundaries of the Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

The eastern section (the former Grampians Wimmera zone) is located between Stawell and Donald, with its southern boundary following an existing 220 kV transmission line and its eastern boundary following the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) corridor. It is mainly located within the Northern Grampians Shire and also intersects with Yarriambiack and Pyrenees local government areas.

The western section (the former Wimmera Southern Mallee zone) is located north of Horsham, between Dooen and Hopetoun. It is located within the Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh, Buloke and Horsham Rural City local government areas.

The western section has been expanded from what was previously identified in the draft Victorian Transmission Plan. VicGrid heard consistently through the consultation process from energy industry stakeholders that our modelling for future energy demand did not have sufficient contingency built in and greater size and flexibility was needed to enable the development of technically and commercially viable renewable projects. We also heard from some landholders in the region, calling for more opportunity to benefit from hosting infrastructure.

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 Western 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.

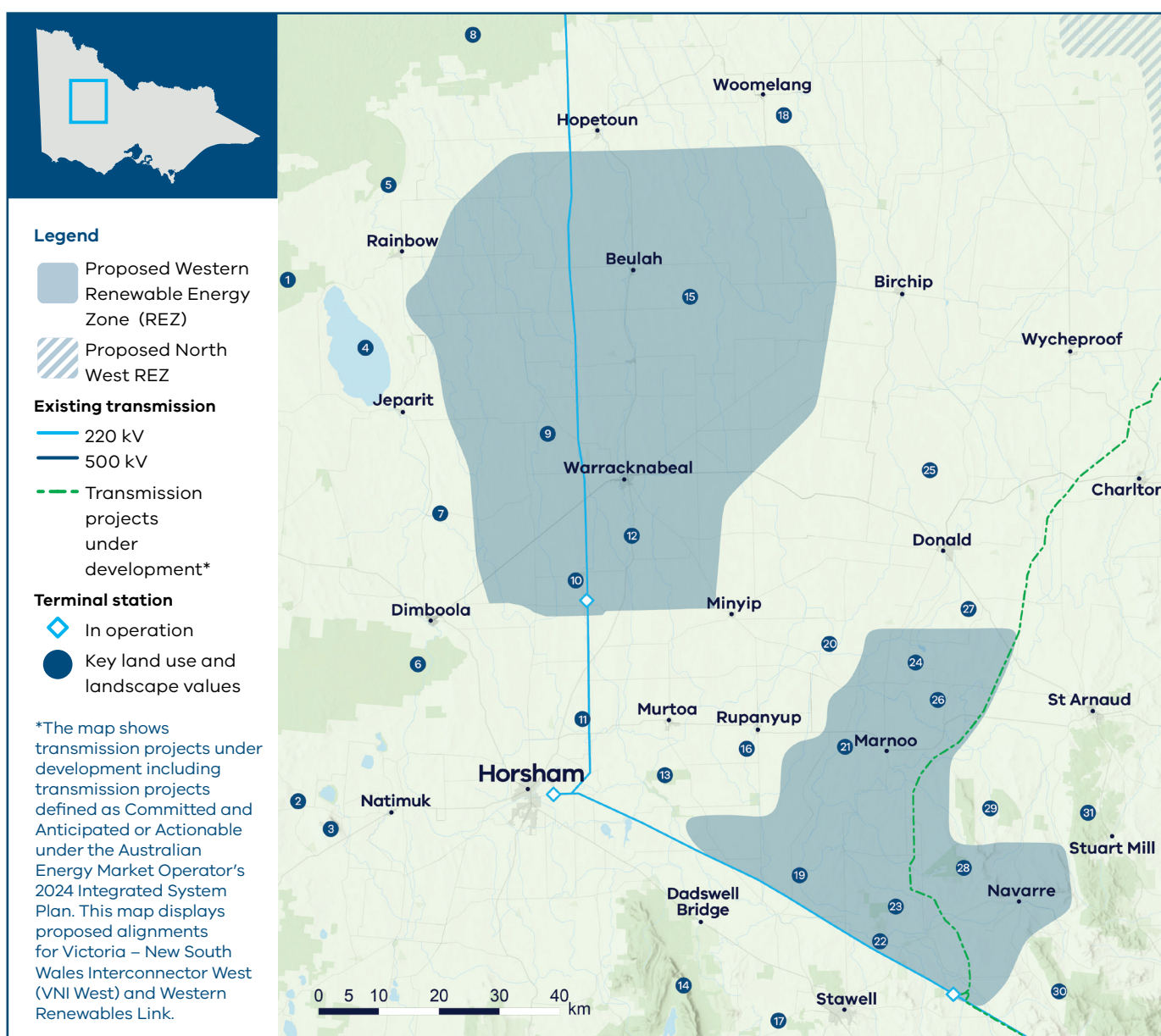
We are proposing to set access limits for each zone at the maximum amount that can be managed by the planned build-out of the transmission network.

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

How to read the map

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

The proposed Western Renewable Energy Zone



Key land use and landscape values

- 1 Biodiversity/community:** Big Desert State Forest
- 2 Biodiversity/cultural:** Multiple parks, reserves and wetlands, including protected biodiversity areas, home to native flora and fauna
- 3 Cultural/biodiversity/community:** Mount Arapiles (Dyurrite Cultural Landscape) – significant landscape with high cultural, biodiversity and tourism values for the region
- 4 Biodiversity/cultural:** Lake Hindmarsh and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 5 Biodiversity:** Lake Albacutya Ramsar-listed wetland
- 6 Biodiversity/community:** Little Desert National Park
- 7 Biodiversity/cultural:** Wimmera River and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 8 Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Wyperfeld National Park
- 9 Mining:** Heavy mineral sands deposits
- 10 Biodiversity:** Protected biodiversity area
- 11 Mining:** Mining tenement and mineral sands deposits
- 12 Biodiversity/cultural:** Yarriambiack Creek and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 13 Biodiversity:** Barrabool Flora and Fauna Reserve and Marma State Forest, including protected biodiversity area, home to native flora and fauna
- 14 Biodiversity/cultural/community:** The Grampians (Gariwerd Cultural Landscape) National Park – significant landform and landscape with high cultural, community and biodiversity values, including significant viewpoints of the region
- 15 Agriculture:** Significant broadacre cropping across this region potential to be compatible with co-locating renewable energy infrastructure in appropriate locations
- 16 Mining:** Minerals retention licence
- 17 Biodiversity:** Conservation reserves and wetlands, home to native flora and fauna
- 18 Mining:** Heavy minerals sands deposits
- 19 Mining:** Minerals retention licence
- 20 Mining:** Mining licence application and retention licence
- 21 Biodiversity/cultural:** Richardson River and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 22 Biodiversity/cultural:** Wimmera River and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 23 Biodiversity/cultural:** Glynwylln State Forest and surrounding remnant bushland and reserves connecting areas to the northeast, west and southwest towards The Grampians (Gariwerd Cultural Landscape) and home to native flora and fauna
- 24 Biodiversity/cultural:** Wetlands including Lake Batyo Catyo and surrounding lakes
- 25 Biodiversity/cultural:** Lake Buloke and surrounding areas of sensitivity
- 26 Flooding risk:** Floodway and land subject to inundation
- 27 Biodiversity/cultural:** Wetlands including Lake Cope Cope and Waltons Lakes
- 28 Biodiversity/cultural:** Morri Morri Nature Conservation Reserve, protected biodiversity area for native flora and fauna
- 29 Biodiversity/cultural:** Mount Bolangum and Big Tottington Nature Conservation Reserves, home to native flora and fauna
- 30 Biodiversity/cultural:** Pyrenees State Forest and Landsborough Nature Conservation Reserve, home to native flora and fauna
- 31 Biodiversity/cultural/community:** Kara Kara National Park

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 agricultural land, particularly areas with highly productive soils.
- Consider the impacts of renewable energy infrastructure on the use of advanced farming technology in the north-west.
- Negative experiences with previous and planned generation and transmission development.
- Interest in understanding how renewable energy and transmission development could bring economic and social benefits to the region.
- Concern about potential impacts on Horsham Airport's expansion plans, and the importance of protecting the surrounding flight descending zone.
- The need to protect biodiversity and the valued natural environments.
- The need to protect significant landscapes in the south of the region including the Grampians (Gariwerd Cultural Landscape) and Mount Arapiles (Dyurrite Cultural Landscape) and important parks, reserves and conservation areas.
- Concerns about potential flood risk and impacts on surface water flows.
- Cumulative impacts of competing land use, including the Victorian to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) project, generator interest and mineral sands mining activities.
- Some landholders in this area have provided clear feedback that they do not wish to host renewable energy infrastructure on their properties.
- Other landholders were supportive of expanding renewable energy zone borders to allow greater participation.
- Industry feedback stressed the need to increase the size and capacity of renewable energy zones overall to meet future energy demands.



What we did

Why the Grampians Wimmera and Wimmera Southern Mallee were combined

- By combining the zones, access to the electricity grid will be allocated across both sections combined. This will provide more flexibility in where renewable energy projects such as wind farms are developed.
- For communities, this will mean developers can more easily avoid sensitive areas, reduce pressure on any one town or region, and look for sites that offer the best local benefits, including new jobs, community partnerships and improved infrastructure.



What we did – western section (formerly draft proposed Wimmera Southern Mallee renewable energy zone)

- The boundaries of the western section have been expanded due to the need to provide greater opportunities for project developers to participate. We have heard from industry stakeholders that the size of zones and the amount of energy generated from each needed to be at a level that enabled the development of commercially viable renewable projects. The expansion of this zone reflects this need and has been supported by further land-use assessment, which identified relatively fewer land constraints when compared to other areas of the state.
- This will mean that the proposed zone will include more farmland, which we know will be of concern to some community members.
- Research has shown that dryland broadacre cropping and grazing may be more compatible with renewable energy infrastructure than other forms of farming. Also noted is that we have heard from the agriculture sector that all farms are unique and the impacts on landholders may vary and need to be considered by any proposed project development.
- It should also be noted that it remains the choice of individual landholders to host renewable energy generation projects such as wind and solar farms and we encourage people to discuss their views with their neighbours.

What we did – eastern section (formerly draft proposed Grampians Wimmera renewable energy zone)

- There has been no change to the footprint of the former Grampians Wimmera draft proposed renewable energy zone.
- When originally designing this section of the zone, we avoided many sensitive landscapes and landforms with high cultural, biodiversity and community significance, including the Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park, Kara Kara National Park, Lake Buloke, the Wimmera River and natural conservation reserves around Stawell, Avoca and St Arnaud (east of the Victorian to New South Wales Interconnector West project).
- We have heard, and continue to hear, the depth of community feedback and concerns about renewable energy development in this region. VicGrid will continue to work with local communities to explore these issues further and to minimise impacts to the region throughout the planning and development of REZs.
- Given the significant cultural, biodiversity and community (tourism) values of The Grampians (Gariwerd Cultural Landscape) and Mount Arapiles (Dyurrite Cultural Landscape), VicGrid will continue to assess and seek feedback on these significant landscapes and areas in refining the renewable energy zones.
- This section of the proposed renewable energy zone is designed to harness the strong wind resources in the region while reducing the need for new transmission and associated impacts on energy bills.



Transmission network upgrades

The 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan also proposes 7 transmission infrastructure investment programs needed over 2025-2040, to enable development of renewable energy zones and offshore wind energy.

In this VTP, we are proposing 4 new transmission projects across 3 programs: a second radial line and tie in loop in Gippsland to facilitate offshore wind, a new line between Sydenham and Tarrone, a new line between Truganina

and Deer Park, and an additional short line between Hazelwood and Yallourn. The remaining projects across the 7 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 at vicgrid.vic.gov.au

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 hosting new 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.

The final Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan is set to be released in coming months. Learn more at engage.vic.gov.au/vtif-rez-community-benefits

Next steps

Communities within proposed renewable energy zones can continue to provide feedback and seek more information about renewable energy zones, including through face-to-face meetings with VicGrid.

We will invite formal feedback about the proposed Western Renewable Energy Zone as part of the official declaration process. There will be 6 weeks of consultation, to begin in coming weeks, which will give landholders, communities and Traditional Owners another opportunity to provide feedback and shape decision-making.



Email updates

To stay up to date about the renewable energy zone declaration process and VicGrid's work, subscribe for our email updates at **vicgrid.vic.gov.au**



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