

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

AusNet is working with Traditional Owners of the lands on which the proposed Western Renewables Link will operate. Our vision is for the transmission lines and associated infrastructure, once constructed and operational, to be on Country that is in good condition and actively managed to protect the values, and promote the laws, culture and rights of each of the Traditional Owner groups.

Aboriginal Places

Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for thousands of years and, over time, physical evidence of activities remain as cultural heritage sites or places. For example, Aboriginal Places include scatters of stone artefacts, oven mounds, stone quarries, fish traps, rock art sites, scarred trees and burial places. Aboriginal Places have deep cultural significance to Aboriginal people.

There are Aboriginal Places located across Victoria and many are found near waterways and bodies of water, such as near creeks or the coast. Archaeological remains may or may not be found, as a historical place could be the location of a significant historical event at which no physical remains survive. These places are identified through references in historical records, information arising from archaeological investigations, or via oral history provided by Aboriginal people.

Protection for Aboriginal Places

In Victoria, Aboriginal Places and artefacts are protected by law. It is illegal to disturb or destroy an Aboriginal Place without legal permission, and artefacts should not be removed from their locations. The presence of Aboriginal Places on private land does not impact property ownership or prevent existing land uses from continuing, provided they do not impact or harm the Aboriginal Place and comply with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic).



Purpose of field surveys

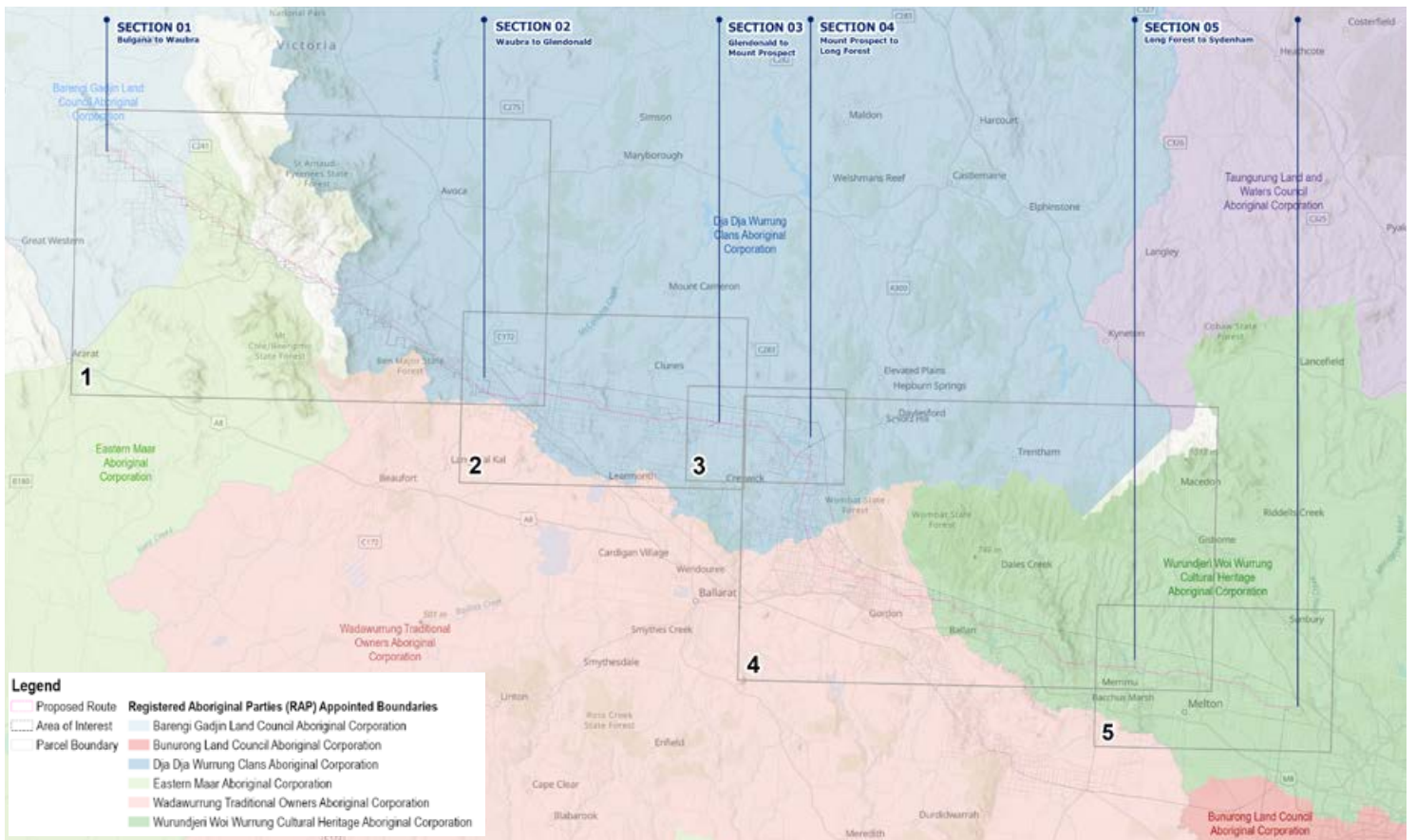
For the Western Renewables Link project, Traditional Owners, cultural heritage advisors and archaeologists are continuing to conduct field surveys and investigations to identify whether evidence of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is present; assess the extent, nature, and significance of any material impacts to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage within and surrounding the proposed route; and ensure appropriate measures are taken to protect heritage.

How field survey information is used

The information that is being gathered in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage field surveys and investigations is being used to inform planning and design of the proposed Western Renewables Link. It will be included in the Western Renewables Link Environment Effects Statement and is also used to support the development of Cultural Heritage Management Plans.

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Cultural Heritage Management Plans

As the proposed Western Renewables Link requires an Environment Effects Statement, the project must also have approved Cultural Heritage Management Plans.

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan is a written report prepared by a heritage advisor. It includes results of an assessment of the potential impact of a proposed activity on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. It outlines measures to be taken before, during and after an activity to manage and protect Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in the activity area, which are developed during collaboration with the Traditional Owners.

In addition, the project's Environment Effects Statement requires assessment of impacts to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, both tangible and intangible, and measures to avoid, mitigate or manage potential impacts on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

Management of impacts on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Victoria's *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* requires impacts to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage values to be identified and managed through the development and implementation of Cultural Heritage Management Plans.

Cultural Heritage Management Plans are being prepared for the Western Renewables Link project, in partnership with the recognised Registered Aboriginal Parties of the Barengi Gadjin (representing the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Peoples), Eastern Maar, Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung), Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Traditional Owners Corporations as well as First Peoples - State Relations Victoria, which represents the interest of Country yet to be assigned to a Registered Aboriginal Party.



What is Aboriginal Cultural Heritage?

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) defines Aboriginal Cultural Heritage as Aboriginal Places, Aboriginal objects, and Aboriginal ancestral remains. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage encompasses tangible and intangible elements, and truth-telling and recognition of past events.



Discovery of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

There are protections under law for significant discoveries including Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, historic heritage and certain flora and fauna species. If an Aboriginal Place is discovered, following verification, we will:



Record and register the Place with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register (VAHR).



Record and register the place with First Peoples – State Relations (formerly Aboriginal Victoria).



Work with relevant Registered Aboriginal Parties, local Traditional Owners and First Peoples – State Relations to develop management strategies for the Aboriginal Place with the aim of avoiding or minimising harm during future planned works.

We are working with all Registered Aboriginal Parties along the proposed route to develop a process with each of them for when an Aboriginal Place is found on their land.

If something significant is found on a property during field surveys for the proposed Western Renewables Link, we will provide the landholder with as much information about the discovery as possible, guided by Traditional Owners on what is culturally appropriate to share. We will work with the landholder and the local Traditional Owners to design management strategies to protect the site or place. In some instances, this may mean relocating and protecting the cultural heritage elsewhere. Aboriginal Objects should not be disturbed before management conditions are determined.

General findings from surveys and investigations will be included in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment as part of the project's Environment Effects Statement. The impact assessment will not include detailed findings for individual properties and locations.

Planning and approvals

We are working toward finalising and submitting the Environment Effects Statement to the Victorian Government. We expect the Environment Effects Statement public exhibition and inquiry, which includes a public hearing, will take place throughout 2025.

There will be opportunities for landholders and the community to submit feedback on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment and its findings during the public review of the Western Renewables Link Environment Effects Statement and the subsequent public inquiry and advisory committee process. Details about how to make a submission will be advertised before the exhibition period.



More information

First Peoples – State Relations is a Victorian Government agency that works to protect Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and support Traditional Owner corporations. More information about Cultural Heritage Management Plans, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register, and how heritage is managed, protected and enforced, is available at: www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-cultural-heritage.

Detailed information about land access for field surveys is available on the Western Renewables Link's website, resources page: [Landholder-Guide-Land-access-for-field-surveys-and-investigations.pdf](#) (westernrenewableslink.com.au).

Information about the Western Renewables Link Environment Effects Statement and draft planning scheme amendment, including timing and public exhibition dates when available, can be found on the project website, www.westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Barengi Gadjin Land Council
(www.bglc.com.au)

Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans
Aboriginal Corporation
(djadjawurrung.com.au)

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
(easternmaar.com.au)




Wadawurrung Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation
(www.wadawurrung.org.au)

Wurundjeri Woi wurrung Cultural
Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
(www.wurundjeri.com.au)

More information

Visit the project website
westernrenewableslink.com.au
for the latest project information.

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