

Additional Q&A

AusNet Services provided written responses to unanswered questions that were submitted during **Community Session 1: Understanding the Environmental Effects Statement (EES) process** held online on Wednesday 23 September 2020.

Q1: How do we know if the transmission line/easement will affect our individual property?

A: We appreciate that many people are anxious to hear whether they will be impacted by this project and when they will know. To avoid causing undue stress to landowners we want to ensure we have considered all relevant information, including feedback from landowners and the community, before confirming corridors for further study.

A fact sheet about the process for Easement Acquisition and Compensation can be found in the below link: <https://www.westvictnp.com.au/53188/widgets/276428/documents/182782>

Q2: How many alternatives need to be considered in particular the route, as it could be that 3 are chosen but really only a preferred path is really only viable as all other viable options are not considered?

A: There is no set number of alternatives that need to be considered. There is still a lot of work to do to determine our preferred route.

The work to refine the Area of Interest down to study corridors, of approximately 400 metres wide, involves reviewing a broad range of information on social, environmental, economic and cultural values of an area. We are in the process of completing a comprehensive analysis on possible corridors, including discussions with the Technical Reference Group (TRG) to confirm we have considered all relevant information.

We will announce the corridors for further study and field work as soon as we have completed the comprehensive analysis. Confirmation of project study corridors is a key step in the EES process. A preferred route will be confirmed once detailed on ground assessments have been completed to understand the environmental impacts.

Q3: Where is the alternative route that they're investigating?

A: We know many stakeholders are concerned as they feel that the transmission line route has already been decided without a detailed assessment of the whole area of interest. This concern is understandable given that, as yet, we have only contacted the landowners along some potential corridors. We are currently undertaking studies to understand the constraints and opportunities across different areas to identify the best corridor. This process includes working with landowners and communities to identify areas of social and environmental sensitivities as well as economic impacts.

Q4: Surely in this case the scoping must include true alternatives? This means alternatives including alignment (e.g. road or railway easements), using existing power easements (e.g. via

Geelong) and form (e.g. above & underground)? At their presentations AusNet constantly refer to the preferred alignment to shut down discussion of genuine option, so this being genuinely included in the scope appears critical for the process to have any integrity at all.

A: The project needs to determine a feasible route within the Area of Interest that is economically, environmentally and technically feasible, to link Bulgana, Waubra, and Sydenham Terminal Stations, via a new terminal station north of Ballarat.

The development of the EES, which describes the project and its potential environmental effects requires AusNet Services to document the design development process leading up to the preferred route for the project. The draft EES Scoping Requirements require AusNet Services to consider feasible alternatives within the Area of Interest and include an explanation of how specific alternatives were shortlisted and discounted for evaluation. The EES will document the likely environmental effects of the feasible alternatives, particularly where these offer a potential to minimise and/or avoid environmental effects whilst meeting the objectives of the project.

Q5: Why does Area of Assessment (AoA) not include an already existing power easement that runs via Geelong? If it is due to cost, did that cost assessment that led to the narrow AoA consider the total cost / loss of value and productivity?

A: We are currently undertaking studies to understand the constraints and opportunities across different areas to determine a feasible route within the Area of Interest that is economically, environmentally and technically feasible, to link Bulgana, Waubra, and Sydenham Terminal Stations, via a new terminal station north of Ballarat.

The Area of Interest was determined, starting with a straight line between each component of infrastructure that the transmission line needs to connect from the existing terminal station at Bulgana in the west and the proposed North Sydenham Terminal Station in the east. Between these two points, the proposed transmission line needs to also connect via Waurbra terminal station and a new terminal station to the north of Ballarat. The process was then to broaden out as far as possible from the straight line to where major constraints are located, which included large areas of forested public land and large areas of residential areas.

The Area of Interest ranges from approximately 25km in width at its widest point, along the existing Ballarat to Bendigo transmission line between Pootilla in the south and Blampied in the north, to approximately 5km at its narrowest point along the north east side of the existing Ballarat to Horsham transmission line between Bulgana in the north west and Waubra in the south east. There are several existing infrastructure corridors that have been highlighted to us, including one along the Western Highway. We are considering the viability of all of these within our assessment to identify feasible alternatives.

The challenge is that typically when corridors like this are built, they are only built to support the infrastructure required at the time they are built. The power easement that runs via Geelong is not within the Area of Interest identified for new infrastructure between Bulgana and Sydenham.