Hexham Wind Farm

Environment Effects Statement

WIND PROSPECT

Acknowledgement of Country

Wind Prospect respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our office and each of our projects are located. We also acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to the land and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We understand the importance of Country and culture to First Nations people. Since the commencement of the Hexham Wind Farm project (the project) extensive consultation has occurred with traditional owners including the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, who are the Registered Aboriginal Party for the project area.

This report provides a non-technical overview of the Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the project.

It also includes information on the public exhibition of the EES, how interested parties can make a written submission on the EES, and the availability of the EES documentation and relevant digital information. For detailed technical information on the project and to understand specific areas of interest, please refer to the main EES chapters and appendices containing the specialist studies.

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Introduction

Hexham Wind Farm is a proposed renewable energy project located in south-western Victoria, designed to power around 515,000 homes with clean, renewable electricity.

The Hexham Wind Farm (the project) is located within Moyne Shire, in the proposed South-West Renewable Energy Zone - one of the six zones identified by the Victorian State Government as having the greatest potential for renewable energy generation (shown in Figure 1). The project would include up to 106 wind turbines and associated infrastructure, plus an on-site battery to help deliver reliable electricity to homes across Victora.

The project has been in development for several years and has undergone continual refinement to avoid and minimise environmental and social impacts. During its construction and operation, the project aims to deliver long-term benefits to the local communities of Hexham, Caramut, Ellerslie and surrounding areas, while supporting Victorian and Commonwealth renewable energy targets.

Hexham Wind Farm Pty Ltd, owned by Wind Prospect Pty Ltd (Wind Prospect), is the project proponent. Wind Prospect is an Australian-based renewable energy developer with 25 years of experience in identifying, designing and developing projects nationwide.

Over this time, Wind Prospect has secured planning approval for 22 wind farms and three solar farms, more than 2,500 megawatts of which is now operational or under construction.Wind Prospect's business is built on strong, lasting relationships with landowners, communities and stakeholders, underpinned by open communication and a commitment to quality. The company focuses on sustainable energy development that creates long-term community benefits and minimises environmental impacts.

The project was referred to the Minister for Planning (the Minister) in March 2022 under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*. On 19 April 2022, the Minister determined an Environment Effects Statement (EES) was required due to the potential for the project to have significant effects on environmental and social values.

The EES includes a main report of 29 chapters, supported by 18 technical studies, and will guide the Minister's assessment of the project's environmental acceptability. It outlines the project's rationale, design, and nominated management measures to avoid and minimise potential environmental, social and economic impacts.

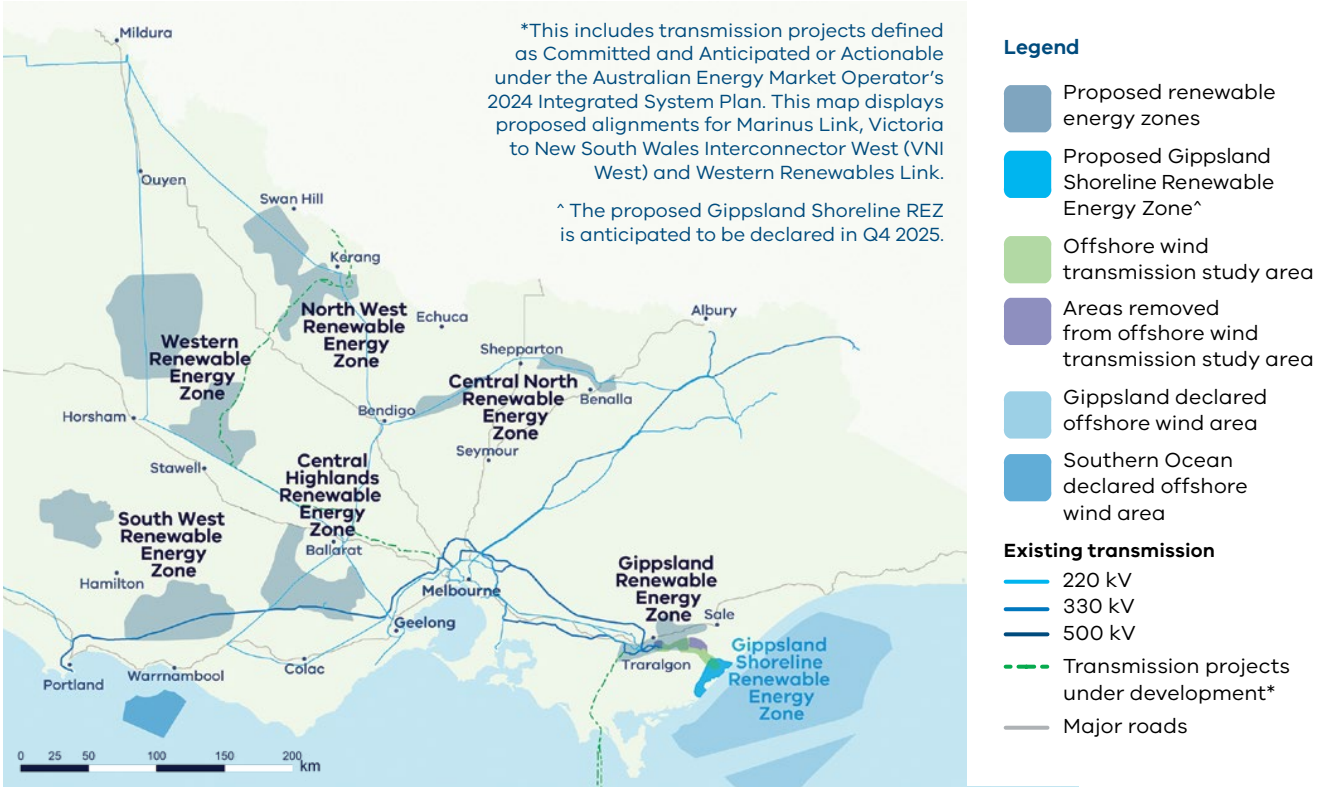


Figure 1. Renewable Energy Zones in Victoria *(Source: VicGrid, 2025)*

Designing the project

The project has been developed to consider existing natural and built assets and avoid environmental constraints within the site, limiting the potential for environmental, social and economic impacts.

Location

The project is located approximately 15 kilometres west of Mortlake and 15 kilometres north-east of Woolsthorpe. Locally, it is situated around 3 kilometres south-west of Hexham, 3 kilometres north-west of Ellerslie and 4 kilometres south-east of Caramut (Figure 2).

The site is bordered by the Hamilton Highway to the north, Woolsthorpe–Hexham Road and Hexham–Ballangeich Road to the east, Warrnambool–Caramut Road to the west and Gordons Lane to the south. The project site, defined as the area within the project boundary, covers around 16,000 hectares of mostly private agricultural land, primarily used for sheep and cattle grazing with some cropping.

The project site was selected as it offers **ideal conditions for wind energy generation**, including:

- **Strong, reliable winds**, making it highly suited for wind turbines.
- **Direct access to the Moorabool - Heywood 500 kV transmission line**, enabling connection via a proposed on-site terminal station which keeps all new overhead lines within the project boundary.
- **Low dwelling density**, reducing potential community impacts.
- **Open, cleared land with good vehicle access**, providing space for turbines and infrastructure.

Components

The project is designed to deliver affordable, reliable electricity by converting wind energy into electrical energy and feeding it into the National Electricity Market. The key operational components that make this possible are listed below and shown on Figure 2. Construction of the project will also be supported by temporary infrastructure, including a compound (parking, offices, amenities), seven concrete batching plants, and laydown areas for turbine components and equipment. A temporary on-site quarry is being investigated (as the preferred option) for the purposes of providing aggregate materials for access tracks and hardstand areas, and to minimise traffic movements on local roads during construction. A work authority will be sought under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*. To obtain a work authority, the project has prepared a draft Quarry Work Plan in accordance with this Act (refer to Attachment II – ***Preliminary draft Quarry Work Plan***).

Up to 106 wind turbines

Each with a hardstand area, foundations, tower, three rotor blades (maximum tip height of 260 metres) and nacelle.

Access tracks

About 147 kilometres of new tracks and upgrades to 16.5 kilometres of existing tracks for turbine access and site connectivity.

Underground cabling

About 139 kilometres of cables laid in approximately 86 kilometres of trenches, around one metre below ground.

Overhead powerlines

About 42 kilometres along an 18-kilometre route to connect turbines to the on-site terminal station.

On-site terminal station

Enabling connection to the Moorabool–Heywood 500 kV transmission line.

Battery Energy Storage System

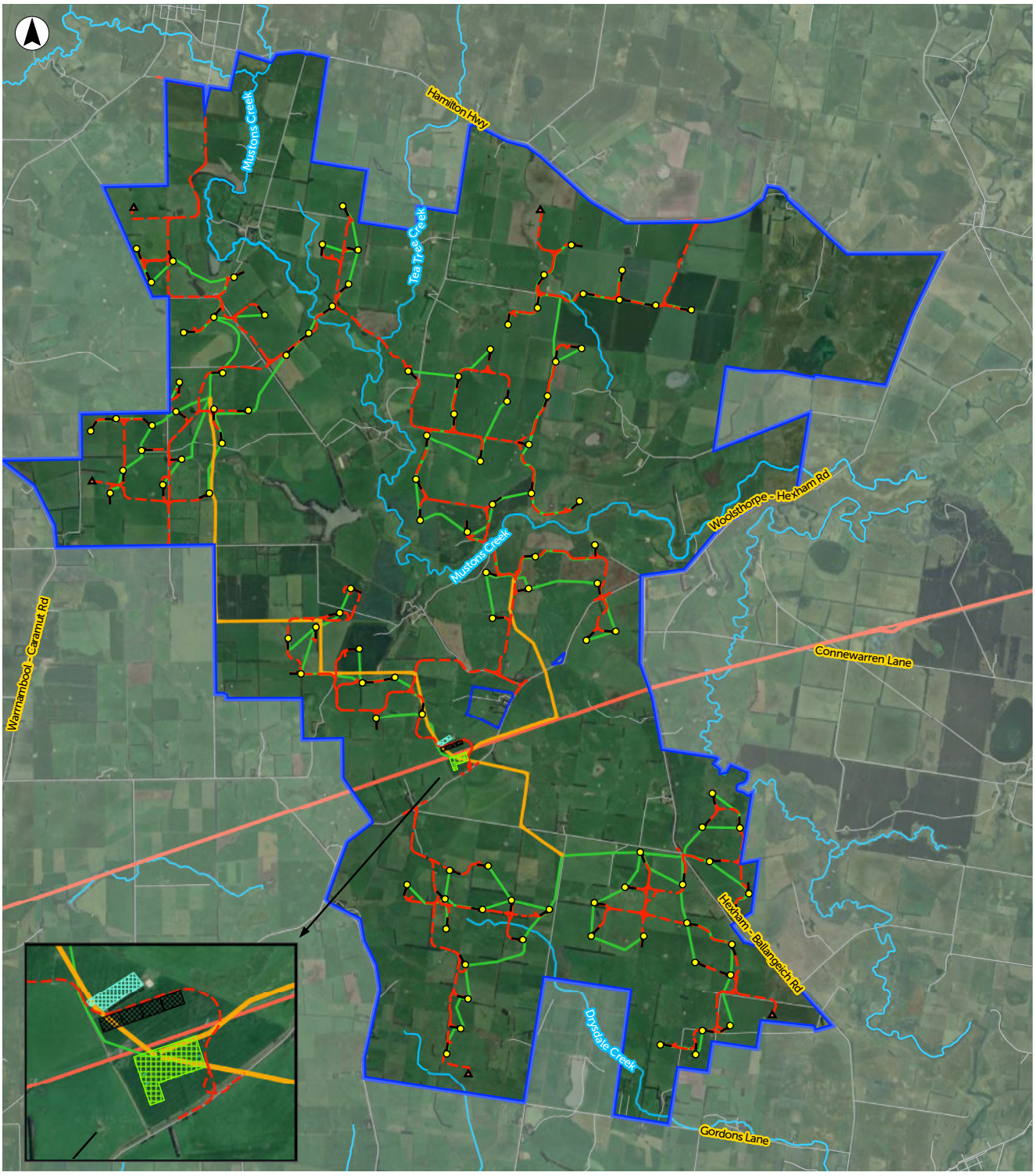
Providing up to 200 MW for energy storage and reliability.

Operations and maintenance facility

Located adjacent to the terminal station.

Up to five meteorological masts

For wind and weather monitoring throughout the project's life.



Legend

Proposed wind farm infrastructure

- Wind farm boundary
- Internal overhead powerline
- Wind turbine generator and hardstand area
- Site accessway
- Underground powerlines
- Permanent wind monitoring mast
- Site O&M facility and carpark
- Electrical terminal station
- Battery energy storage system

Existing infrastructure

- 500kV powerline

Scale

5.00 km

Data: State of Victoria (DECCA/Land Use Victoria), Commonwealth of Australia, Wind Prospect, and specialist studies/reports. Data is indicative only; accuracy and completeness are not guaranteed. © State of Victoria and other data providers

Figure 2. Project overview

Phases

Subject to receiving all planning and environmental approvals, permits and consents, construction of the project is estimated to take around two years and is anticipated to start at the earliest in the final months of 2027, with commissioning of the project in 2030. The project is planned to have an operational life of 25 – 30 years. Following this, the decision on whether to refurbish, replace or remove the wind turbines would be subject to an assessment of the economic viability closer to the time, in consultation with the landowners and relevant approval authorities.

Land use will change across the project phases, with areas being rehabilitated following construction.

The construction disturbance area is estimated to be 603.1 hectares (or 3.75% of the project site). **Of this, only 150.3 hectares (or 0.9% of the project site) will be used for the operational life of the project.**

The project consists of four discrete phases: pre-construction, construction, operation and decommissioning (described in Table 1). Potential impacts have been assessed across of the phases of development, where relevant.

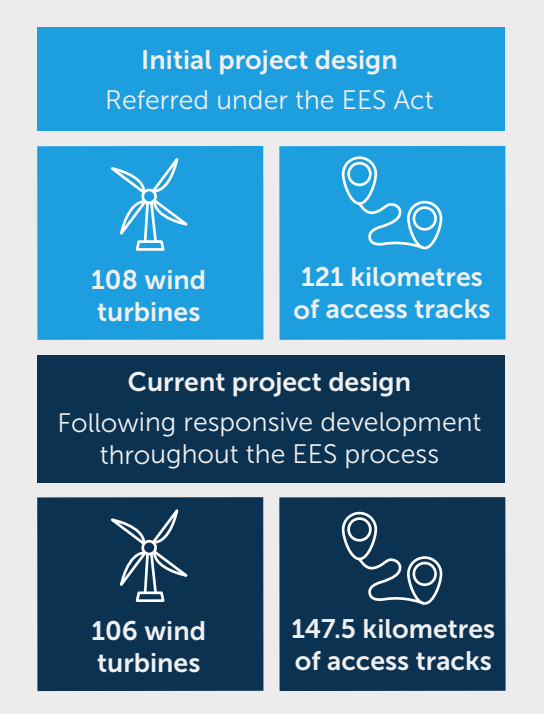
Table 1. Project phases

Phase	Duration	Key activities
Pre-Construction	12–18 months	This phase focuses on planning and approvals. Activities include securing grid connection, completing geotechnical assessments, tendering for turbine supply and civil works, and preparing environmental management plans. Financing and other commercial arrangements are also finalised.
Construction	~2 years	Construction involves enabling works such as road upgrades and site establishment, building turbine foundations, installing underground and overhead cabling, and constructing access tracks. Wind turbines are delivered, installed, and tested. Following construction, temporary facilities like batching plants and compounds are removed, and the site is rehabilitated.
Operation	25–30 years	The wind farm begins exporting electricity to the National Electricity Market. This phase includes ongoing operation, maintenance of turbines and infrastructure, and monitoring to ensure reliable performance.
Decommissioning	6–12 months	At the end of the project's life, turbines and above-ground infrastructure are removed. The site is restored in line with the Decommissioning Plan and in consultation with landowners and relevant authorities.

Project development

The project has been in planning and development since 2011 and considerable activity occurred between then and the submission of the EES referral in 2022 including landowner negotiations, consultation with neighbouring landowners and other stakeholders, environment and heritage surveys, and on-site wind monitoring.

When the project was made public, the project design was based on 125 wind turbines, with a maximum blade tip height of 250 metres and an associated total capacity of up to 700 megawatts. The project evolved to comprise up to 108 wind turbines. This was the concept design referred under the Victorian *Environment Effects Act 1978* and Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* in 2022. Following referral, the current design was refined (up to 106 wind turbines) in response to extensive engagement with landowners, the incorporation of environmental and social sensitivities and constraints from specialist studies, and due to advances in wind turbine technology.



Impacts to environmental and social values have been avoided and minimised through the application of buffers, reflecting community input and the findings of specialist studies.

Key values to which project buffers and other avoidance measures were applied include:

- dwellings and townships
- areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity, including areas containing known Aboriginal cultural heritage places or sites
- sites listed on the Victorian Heritage Register
- important breeding and foraging habitat for Brolga (*Grus rubicunda*), Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*), and Southern Bent-wing Bat (*Miniopterus orianae bassanii*)
- mapped threatened ecological communities protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and areas of native vegetation
- wetlands, watercourses, drainage channels and groundwater dependent ecosystems
- areas with a high probability of acid sulfate soils
- existing public roads, access tracks on Crown land and existing transmission lines.

The buffers nominated for the project have been informed by specialist studies, research, and best practice guidelines. The evolution of the project design is described in shown on the right and detailed in Chapter 5 – ***Project alternatives and design development.***

Project identification and refinement	Constraints considered
Extensive search for suitable wind farm locations within Victoria with a short list of potential sites selected	**Preliminary assessment of locations based on:** ▪ Wind resource ▪ Proximity to grid connection with capacity ▪ Low dwelling density ▪ Environmental constraints
Following detailed analysis to establish the suitability of the sites, Hexham was selected as the preferred project location with an initial design developed	**Detailed analysis to establish the suitability of the sites considering:** ▪ Supportive host landowners ▪ Potential for significant environmental effects ▪ Condition of road network ▪ Transport route to port for turbine components ▪ Avoidance of coastal areas (high amenity value and usually higher population density) ▪ Appropriate planning zone(s)
Concept design developed based on preliminary investigations, which was referred to State and Commonwealth Governments	**Preliminary on-site assessments of site constraints including:** ▪ Flora and fauna ▪ Aboriginal heritage ▪ Stakeholder engagement
Further project refinement based on technical assessments concluding with the design presented within the EES	**Detailed assessments of site constraints including:** ▪ Noise ▪ Landscape and visual amenity ▪ Flora and fauna ▪ Aboriginal heritage ▪ Historical heritage ▪ Traffic and transport ▪ Social and economic ▪ Hydrology and hydrogeology ▪ Aviation ▪ Electromagnetic interference ▪ Shadow flicker ▪ Landform and soils ▪ Air quality ▪ Land use and planning

Assessing alternatives

Alternatives for the project have been assessed at every stage of development. This includes reasonable changes to design, construction or operation that could provide a demonstratable positive effect while still enabling the project objectives in terms of generation capacity or commercial viability.

This included alternative wind turbine designs, project scales, internal cabling designs, and positioning of access tracks, the on-site terminal station and proposed quarry. Nominated design specifications for the project wind turbines are shown in Figure 4.

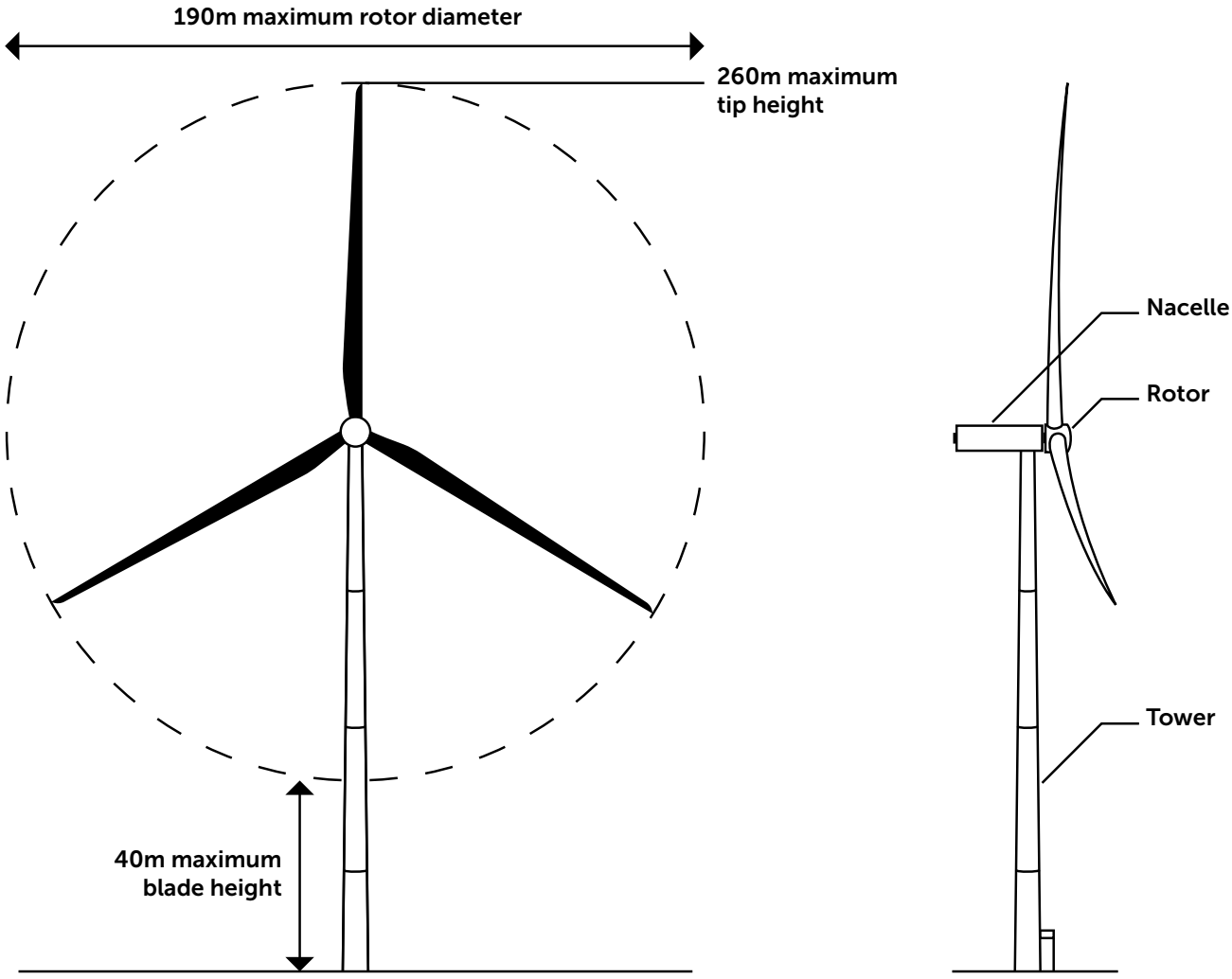


Figure 3. Wind turbine design

Project benefits

The objectives of the project will be achieved through anticipated positive environmental, social and economic benefits embedded in the project's design.

Several objectives have been nominated for the project that relate to its purpose and delivery, separate to the evaluation objectives set out in the EES scoping requirements. The objectives of the project are to:

- deliver affordable and reliable electricity to the grid
- support Victoria's Renewable Energy Target
- support the Commonwealth Government's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target
- improve network strength through the development of a firmed power supply
- minimise negative and maximise positive effects on the environment and communities
- support the local community and the local economy
- support participating and neighbouring landowners
- engage and work with community and other stakeholders to identify any potential environmental impacts and implement appropriate mitigation and management measures.

Employment

Renewable energy projects, including wind farms, generate significant employment opportunities to local communities. According to the Clean Energy Council (CEC), there are approximately 30,000 existing jobs in clean energy, with an additional 40,000 jobs expected to be created by 2030 due to the current pipeline of projects (CEC, 2025b).

The project would support the local and regional economy by providing around 360 direct full-time equivalent jobs during construction and an estimated additional 192 indirect full-time equivalent jobs through supply chains and local service industries.

Around 25 ongoing full-time equivalent maintenance jobs and seven indirect full-time equivalent jobs would also be created throughout the operation of the wind farm.

Economic benefits

The project is predicted to generate considerable economic benefits over its 25-year life, including:

- **capital expenditure during construction** of approximately $2.4 billion, with $249.8 million expected to be invested locally
- **operational capital expenditure** estimated at $31 million annually, with $13.4 million expected annually within the Moyne and Warrnambool local government areas
- **economic stimulus through the Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program**, expected to generate $1.2 million annually during operations
- **council rates**, expected to generate more than $1 million in rates income to Moyne Shire Council each year during operation
- **local and regional content requirements** in key project contracts, maximising employment opportunities in the Moyne Shire and surrounding areas.

Further details about the economic benefits can be found in Chapter 21 – ***Social-economic***.

Community

The project includes a **Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program** (Attachment IV) to share benefits more broadly with the local community, developed in line with recommendations from the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, Clean Energy Council, and the State Government. This program enables annual payments to eligible neighbouring landowners with a dwelling within six kilometres of a constructed wind turbine (excluding those landowners hosting infrastructure), including:

- a one-off construction payment of $1,000
- an annual neighbour benefit payment of between $1,000 and $30,000 annually (subject to eligibility criteria, including proximity of dwellings to constructed wind turbines)
- an energy cost offset of up to $2,000 annually (for occupiers of the dwelling or operating retail premises).

The program also includes a **Community Benefit Fund**, administered by a community-led independent fund committee, comprising $1,000 per year per turbine , for the operational lifetime of the wind farm. The Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program annual payments are indexed annually to the Consumer Price Index.

The total value of the Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program depends on the number and location of wind turbines, with current estimates at around $1.2 million annually for the life of the project.

Subject to sufficient interest from the local community, a **Community Co-Investment Program** will be developed. This will provide an opportunity for community members and organisations to invest in the operational project and participate in the financial benefits.

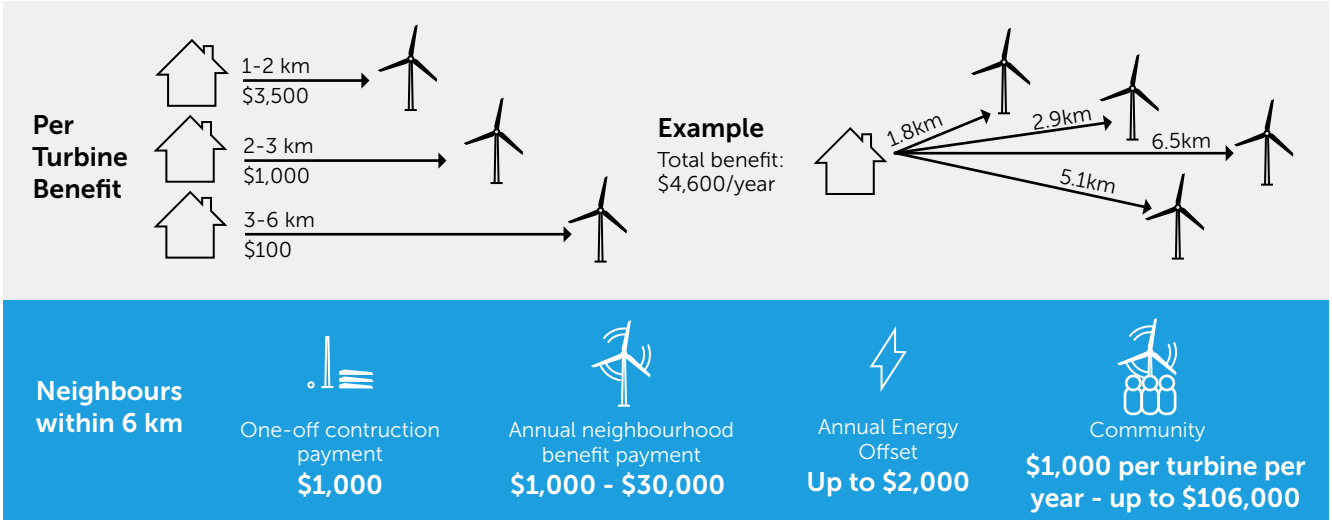
Environmental

By delivering clean and reliable energy to the electricity grid, the project will provide several environmental benefits from a global to a local level.

Australia has one of the highest per capita emissions of carbon dioxide in the world, and our population of more than 27.5 million people (ABS, 2025) is contributing significantly to human-induced climate change on a per capita basis. As more renewable energy generation is added to the grid, the emissions intensity of the electricity is reduced. The emissions intensity is the amount (in tonnes) of carbon dioxide emitted per megawatt of electricity supplied to the grid from all contributing generators.

If the project were to directly replace black coal generation, it would result in savings of around 2.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent annually. However, given the continued role of brown coal in the National Electricity Market generation supply mix, the emissions savings could be even greater if the project's output displaces brown coal generation.

The project would also contribute significantly to both the Commonwealth and Victoria's renewable energy generation target of 65% by 2030 and 95% by 2035.



Planning for the project

On 19 April 2022, the Minister for Planning determined that an EES was required due to the project's potential for significant effects on the local community and environment.

The reasons for this decision included potentially significant effects to:

- biodiversity values, including threatened species and communities listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- native vegetation and the ecology of terrestrial environments and freshwater environments, including wetlands and creeks
- Aboriginal cultural heritage
- landscape and visual amenity.

The Minister's decision also noted that further assessment was required to understand potential effects on historic heritage, traffic, shadow flicker, soils, groundwater, electromagnetic interference, aviation, amenity and socioeconomic values. Due to other proposed, approved and operating wind farms in the region the project was also identified as having the potential for cumulative impacts.

The EES process is Victoria's most rigorous environmental assessment process and requires a transparent and integrated assessment of the potential environmental, social and economic impacts associated with a project. It is administered under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*, which provides for the assessment of projects that are capable of having a significant adverse effect on the environment. The EES aims to provide sufficient information to enable the Minister to prepare a final assessment on the effects of a project. This assessment guides other decision-makers on whether the project's environmental impacts are acceptable and enables them to make informed decisions.

The final EES scoping requirements for the project were issued in September 2024, following consideration of the EES referral and public submissions on the draft requirements. They outline the matters to be investigated and documented in the EES and include evaluation objectives for each topic, shown below.

Biodiversity and habitat	To avoid, and where avoidance is not possible, minimise potential adverse effects on biodiversity values within and near the site including native vegetation, listed threatened species and ecological communities, and habitat for these species. Where relevant, offset requirements are to be addressed consistent with state and Commonwealth policies.
Catchment values and hydrology	To maintain the functions and values of aquatic environments, surface water and groundwater quality and stream flows and avoid adverse effects on protected environmental values
Landscape and visual	Avoid and, where avoidance is not possible, minimise and manage potential adverse effects on landscape and visual amenity.
Amenity	To minimise and manage adverse air quality and noise and vibration effects on residents and local communities as far as practicable during construction, operation and decommissioning having regard to applicable limits, targets or standards.
Cultural heritage	Protect, avoid, or minimise where avoidance is not possible, adverse effects on historic heritage values, and tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage values, in partnership with Traditional Owners.
Land use and socioeconomic	To avoid and minimise adverse effects on land use (including agricultural and residential), social fabric of the community (with regard to wellbeing and community cohesion), local infrastructure, electromagnetic interference, aviation safety and to neighbouring landowners during construction, operation and decommissioning of the project.
Traffic and roads	To avoid and minimise adverse effects on roads and road users during construction, operation and decommissioning of the project.

The key steps in the EES process are shown below.

Minister's Decision & EES Scoping

In April 2022 the Minister required an EES to be prepared under the Environment Effects Act 1978. Final scoping requirements were published in September 2024 to guide the development of the EES.

Establishment of the Technical Reference Group

The Department of Transport and Planning, who manage the EES process on behalf of the Minister, convened a Technical Reference Group to provide advice on the development of the EES to ensure it responds to the EES scoping requirements.

This consisted of organisations that have an interest in matters affected by the project, including Victorian Government agencies and regional authorities, as well as the Moyne Shire Council and Representative Aboriginal Party.

Preparation of the EES and ongoing refinement of the project design

Eighteen specialist studies were undertaken to enable the development of the EES, which explored:

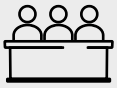
- key issues associated with (or risks posed by) the project
- aspects of the existing environment that could be impacted by the project
- avoidance and management measures that would mitigate the potential for environmental impacts in the design
- the likely effects of the project before and after the mitigation and management of impacts and evaluation of their significance.

During this time the design of the project was refined to avoid and minimise impacts and key risks, based on the findings of specialist studies and input from the Technical Reference Group.

Public Exhibition

The EES is on public exhibition, where members of the public are invited to review the EES documents and make written submissions. Notice of the planning permit application is also given, in accordance with the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, concurrently with exhibition of the EES. Objections and submissions on the application must be considered by the responsible authority before making a decision.

We are here



Establishment of the Inquiry and Advisory Committee

An independent inquiry will be appointed to consider and report on the environmental effects of the project. It is intended that the inquiry will also be asked to consider the project's Planning Permit Application. As such, it would form a joint Inquiry and Advisory Committee.

Public Hearings

The Inquiry and Advisory Committee will conduct a public hearing, which provides an opportunity for those who have made submissions on the EES or those who have had their objection or submission to the planning permit application referred to the Inquiry and Advisory Committee to give presentations on their objection or submission.

Following the conclusion of the hearing, the Inquiry and Advisory Committee submits its report to the Minister to inform the Minister's assessment of the project.

Minister's Assessment

The Minister's Assessment is prepared, determining whether the project's environmental effects will be acceptable having regard to the overall project outcomes.

This takes into account the Inquiry and Advisory Committee's report, all submissions on the exhibited EES, and any supplementary material provided to respond to the public hearing

Informed Approvals

The Minister's Assessment will be provided to relevant decision makers to enable them to make informed decisions on the project. The primary approvals for the project include:

- Commonwealth approval under theEPBC Act
- Planning Permit under the Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Cultural Heritage Management Plan under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
- Work Authority under the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990

Community involvement

Gaining community and key stakeholder support is fundamental to the project's success. As such, transparent and community-focused engagement has played an essential role in shaping the project.

Throughout project development, Wind Prospect has maintained a commitment to respectful and ongoing engagement with local communities and key stakeholders. This approach has facilitated community participation in the EES process so that local knowledge, priorities, and expertise inform technical studies and the EES process. Engagement has been delivered through a range of channels to keep stakeholders informed, consulted, and aware of how they can participate and influence project outcomes.

Community and stakeholder engagement for the project started in 2019 and included the distribution of newsletters to dwellings within 10 kilometres of the project. A neighbour doorknock of properties within six kilometres of potential wind turbines was carried out, and local organisations and businesses were contacted to inform them about the project. Engagement with the local community has continued throughout the preparation of the EES, including community information and drop-in sessions in Hexham, Caramut and Ellerslie.

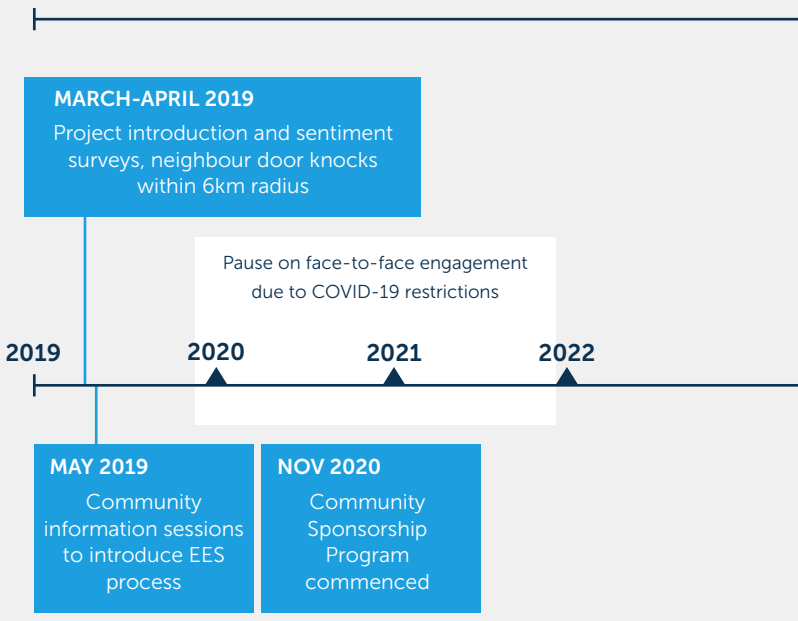
In 2019, Moyne Shire Council established a **Community Engagement Committee** for the project to provide a forum for direct engagement between the project team, representatives from the local community, and the Council.

Eighteen meetings with this committee have been held to date, with these expected to continue through all phases of the project as required.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic impacted the ability to carry out in-person engagement activities throughout much of 2020 and 2021. However, during this time, a virtual presence was maintained through the project website, email, phone calls, and project update newsletters.

Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the project team resumed face-to-face engagement, including community drop-in sessions focused on the EES scoping requirements, preliminary findings, and the proposed on-site quarry.

Host landholders and direct neighbours have been engaged on an ongoing basis by the project team through face-to-face and online meetings, phone calls and email correspondence. Key stakeholder engagement has also included ongoing briefing with broader community members, neighbouring Council representatives, local special interest groups and businesses. This engagement is detailed further in Attachment I – ***Stakeholder Engagement Plan***.



These activities represent the formal community engagement activities for the project only. Ingoing engagement with neighbours and other key stakeholders was conducted in addition to these activities. Activities were complemented with ongoing communications including emails, newsletters, fact sheets, website, updates and more as described in this chapter

Engaging Traditional Owners

Wind Prospect understands the importance of Country and culture to First Nations people. Extensive consultation has occurred since the commencement of the project with traditional owners including the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation who are the Registered Aboriginal Party for the project area.

The layout of the project has been developed by avoiding registered Aboriginal places and minimising potential impacts on areas of Aboriginal cultural sensitivity. A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (no.19602) is currently being prepared in partnership with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, who are responsible for evaluating and approving the plan prior to commencing project construction.

The **Cultural Heritage Management Plan** identifies, assesses, and manages Aboriginal cultural heritage values within the project site to ensure they are protected. It enables cultural knowledge gained through engagement with Traditional Owners to be incorporated into project planning and decision-making.

18 meetings held with the Community Engagement Comittee between 2019 and 2025

Community information sessions to introduce project

MARCH 2025
Near neighbour engagement on proposed temporary on-site quarry

Further information sessions and targeted consultation planned during exhibition of the EES

2023 2024 2025 2026

Community information sessions to advise on release of scoping requirements EES and outline how to provide inital community input

MAY 2025
Community information sessions to share preliminary findings from EES

AUGUST 2025
Near neighbour meetings - findings of LVIA, Noise, Avitation Assessments

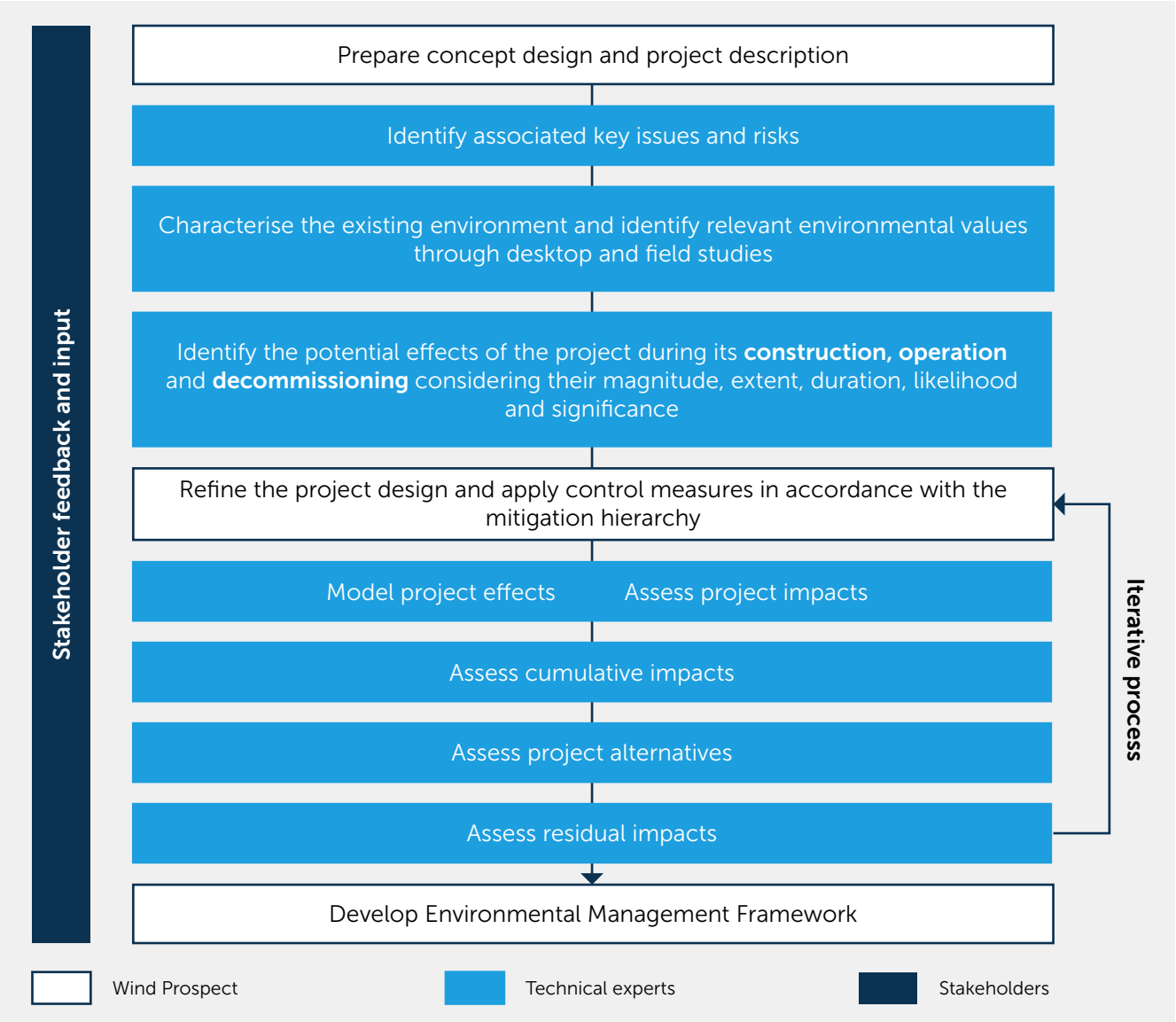
Potential impacts and management

Specialist studies were undertaken in accordance with an assessment framework to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to evaluating potential impacts on people and the environment.

The assessment framework for the project, detailed in Chapter 4 – ***Assessment Framework*** and summarised below, required that potential impacts of project construction, operation and decommissioning on identified values be assessed both before and after the implementation of design mitigations and environmental management measures. Where potential impacts were found to be of moderate significance or higher, alternative project designs and/or construction methods were considered.

Potential impacts will be avoided, minimised or effectively managed in accordance with the environmental management measures and compliance with all relevant environmental laws, approvals, approval conditions, and environmental management plans and procedures.

These obligations and the full suite of environmental management measures are provided in Chapter 28 – ***Environmental management framework***.



Biodiversity and habitat

Chapter 8 – *Biodiversity and habitat*

Chapter 9 – *Bats*

Chapter 10 – *Brolga*

Extensive vegetation, flora and fauna surveys have been conducted for the project over more than a decade. Most of the project site has been highly modified by agricultural practices, with native vegetation largely restricted to roadsides, waterways and wetlands.

The project would result in the removal of between 8.238 and 8.533 hectares of native vegetation, including up to nine large trees and six scattered trees. This includes impacts to the following threatened ecological communities:

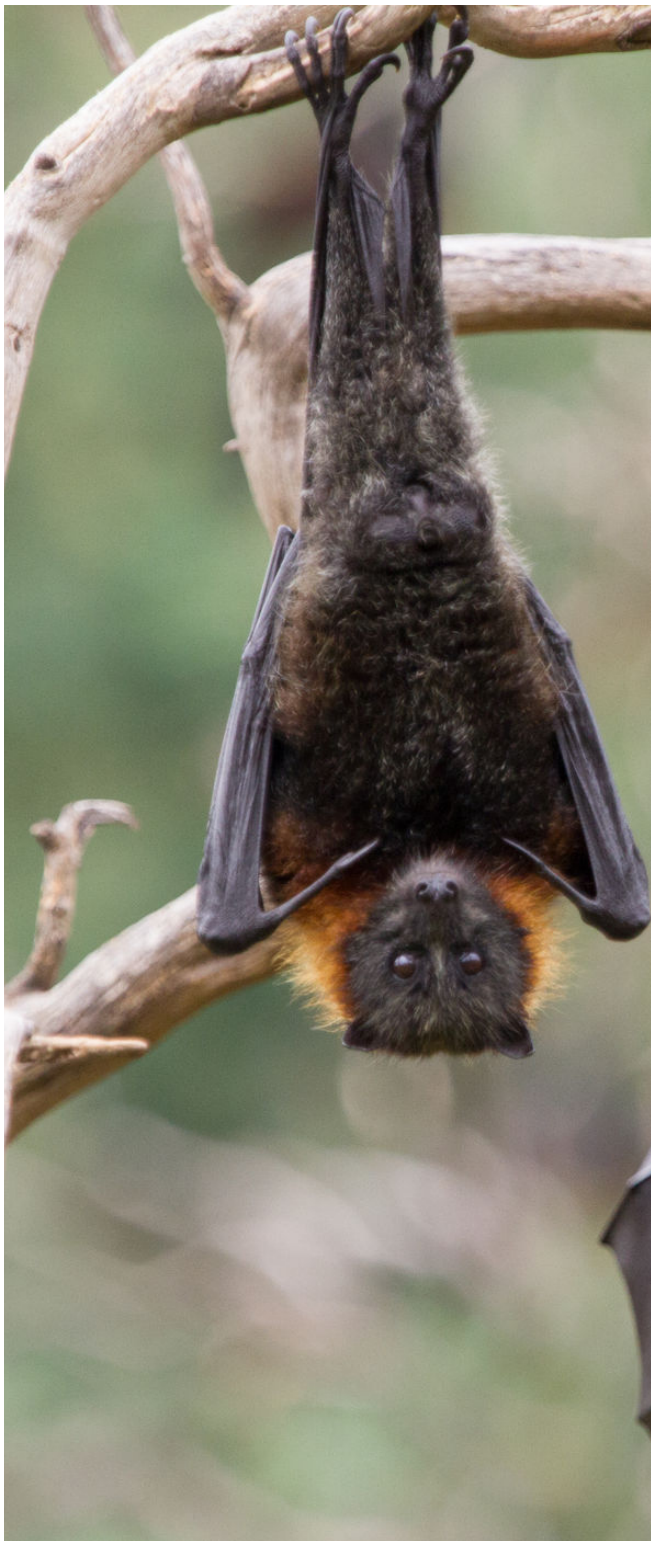
- 0.247 hectares of Grassy Eucalypt Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain
- Up to 0.605 hectares of Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain
- Up to 0.808 hectares of Western (Basalt) Plains Grassland Community
- Up to 0.007 hectares of Western Basalt Plain (River Red gum) Grassy Woodland.

The significance of the residual impact from the removal of these mapped ecological communities is considered low, with less than 3% of each community within the investigation areas proposed to be impacted. A low to moderate impact to Purple Blown-grass, is also expected with up to five endangered individuals impacted (depending on the preferred transport route).

Overall, 1.4% of native vegetation within the construction disturbance area would require removal.

A range of threatened and migratory fauna species are known or likely to use the project site and transport routes. Impacts to these species are assessed as very low to moderate following design mitigations (habitat buffers) and environmental management measures including seasonal scheduling of works and monitoring. Bird collision risk will be managed through the *Bat and Avifauna Management Plan*, reducing residual risks to very low to moderate.

Surveys recorded calls from nine bat species, including Southern Bent-wing Bat and Yellow-bellied Sheath-tailed Bat. The collision risk during project operation is considered low with the implementation of turbine micro-siting, curtailment strategies and adaptive management measures detailed in the ***Bat and Avifauna Management Plan*** (Attachment V). To minimise the impact of the project on the Brolga population, habitat-based turbine free buffers have been applied. A Brolga Compensation Plan will offset predicted impacts in accordance with Victorian guidelines, ensuring no cumulative impact on the population.



Catchment values and hydrology

Chapter 11 – *Groundwater*

Chapter 12 – *Surface water*

Chapter 13 – *Landform and soils*

To avoid and minimise impacts to groundwater users and ecosystems, the project has been designed to include buffers around groundwater dependent ecosystems, watercourses and wetlands - except at watercourse crossings where these areas cannot be avoided. The proposed on-site quarry will operate as a zero-discharge site, and impacts from quarry dewatering are considered very low. Following construction, the quarry will be rehabilitated, and groundwater levels are anticipated to return to existing levels. Any proposed dewatering activities will be managed through a Water Management Plan and detailed in the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

The greatest likelihood of impacts to surface water is from watercourse crossings and, to a lesser extent, general construction activities which may cause streambed disturbance and water quality impacts. Design mitigations including wetland and waterway buffers, minimising watercourse crossings, and designing site drainage in accordance with best practice have been incorporated, and monitoring will be undertaken in accordance with the Sediment, Erosion and Water Quality Management Plan. Residual effects will be localised and temporary, with the significance of impacts ranging from very low to low.

Construction activities may also impact landform and soils through earthworks, quarry development, and access track construction, potentially resulting in erosion and ground settlement. Residual impacts are generally assessed as very low to low, with potential low to medium impacts if pavements and hardstands are prepared during wetter months.

Landscape and visual

Chapter 14 – *Landscape and visual*

Chapter 15 – *Shadow flicker and blade glint*

The physical presence of project infrastructure, including night lighting on wind turbines and ancillary structures, has the potential to impact landscape character and visual amenity from public viewpoints and private dwellings. While the wind turbines will be discernible from some nearby townships, they will not dominate views, and existing vegetation and built form will screen many views. Given the highly modified landscape, the broader character of the area is expected to remain intact.

Design measures for the project include a 1.5-kilometre buffer around non-stakeholder dwellings (i.e., neighbouring dwellings not participating in the project) and landscape screening. With these measures, residual visual impacts at non-stakeholder dwellings will be significantly reduced and are considered acceptable following the establishment of vegetation. Sequential views of multiple wind farms may occur along some roads, and the project is likely to be perceived as an extension of the nearby approved Mt Fyans Wind Farm. However, these views will be limited by roadside vegetation and speed of travel.

Shadow flicker from rotating wind turbine blades has been minimised through the responsive design of the project. All non-stakeholder dwellings comply with the Victorian Government Planning Guidelines for Development of Wind Energy Facilities, and any exceedances at stakeholder dwellings are subject to agreement. A pre-construction assessment will confirm compliance, and if shadow flicker exceeds limits at non-stakeholder dwellings during operation, management measures such as strategic planting will be implemented.

Amenity

Chapter 16 – *Air quality and greenhouse gas*

Chapter 17 – *Noise and vibration*

Construction activities such as access track works, excavation, foundation construction, turbine erection, and heavy vehicle movements may generate noise, vibration, and dust. Additional sources of noise, vibration and dust include from the temporary operation of the proposed on-site quarry and batching plants during construction.

A detailed assessment of construction noise was undertaken in accordance with EPA Victoria Publication 1834.1: Civil construction, building and demolition guide, and operational noise modelling was completed in accordance with New Zealand Standard Acoustics – wind farm noise (NZS 6808:2010) and EPA Victoria Publication 1826.5: Noise limit and assessment protocol (the Noise Protocol). The proposed wind turbines are predicted to comply with applicable noise limits for all receivers, and operational noise from ancillary infrastructure is also expected to meet relevant standards. Vibration impacts during construction were assessed as below relevant thresholds, and monitoring is not expected to be required. With identified management controls, residual noise and vibration impacts are generally anticipated to be low, except for medium impacts arising from off-site traffic noise, which will be addressed in the Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan.

Air quality impacts during construction will primarily result from dust generated by earthworks, quarrying, and vehicle movements. These impacts will be managed through dust suppression measures documented in the Air Quality Management Plan.

Greenhouse gas emissions will also occur during construction, operation, and decommissioning, primarily from fuel use and embodied energy in materials. A Sustainability Management Plan, containing measures to meet sustainability targets, will be developed and implemented to manage emissions during construction and operation. The impact significance of annual, unmitigated emissions from the operation of the project would initially be considered moderate due to operation of the battery energy storage system (with emissions generated when electricity is lost in the charge/discharge process). However, as grid decarbonisation continues, emissions from the use of grid electricity will progressively reduce and this impact will reduce to negligible.

Cultural heritage

Chapter 18 – *Aboriginal cultural heritage*

Chapter 19 – *Historical cultural heritage*

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (no. 19602) has been prepared in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and will be submitted to the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation for consideration prior to the commencement of construction. This plan consisted of desktop, field, and subsurface assessments, which identified five stone artefacts of low archaeological significance. Intangible cultural values such as the Wedge-tailed Eagle, Southern Bent-wing Bat, and culturally significant flora and wetlands were also identified, in consultation with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation.

The project has been designed to avoid the identified Aboriginal places and further protection measures would be implemented during construction, operation and decommissioning. Through this, harm to identified Aboriginal places will be avoided and residual impacts are assessed as negligible.

The project design also avoids all identified historical (European) heritage sites, including two nineteenth-century stone mileposts located within the project site. As such, residual effects are assessed as negligible. An Unexpected Finds Protocol will be implemented during construction to manage any unknown heritage values.

Land use and socioeconomic

Chapter 20 – *Land use and planning*

Chapter 21 – *Socio-economic*

Chapter 22 – *Aviation*

Chapter 23 – *Fire risk*

Chapter 24 – *Electromagnetic interference*

The project has been designed to minimise land use impacts through refinements undertaken in consultation with landholders, retaining property access during construction, and locating the on-site quarry and batching plants away from dwellings. While the total area available for agriculture will be reduced during construction, these impacts are minor as they affect a small percentage of the project site and are short-term, reversible, and localised. Grazing and cropping would continue alongside wind turbines and underground cabling, resulting in negligible operational impacts. Potential impacts from the proposed on-site quarry will be managed through an approved Quarry Work Plan, and the quarry will be rehabilitated as an irrigation dam following use.

Given the scale of the project, social and economic impacts (both positive and negative) are anticipated, associated with decreased amenity during construction, changes to visual character, and the presence of the construction workforce. However, the workforce would likely benefit local and regional businesses, with the project expected to invest $249.8 million into the local economy during this phase. Management measures, such as an Accommodation and Employment Strategy and the Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program, would reduce impacts, resulting in an overall low to medium level of impact.

There are limited radiocommunication services in the area, and consultation with providers concluded that no or negligible impacts are expected. Signal strength surveys will be conducted prior to construction to confirm this, with any identified impacts addressed as required.

While the project will introduce new obstacles in the airspace, the overall risk to aviation safety is low. Impacts to aerial agriculture are also considered low, and aerial firefighting operations will not be adversely affected. Depending on final turbine specifications, the 10 nautical mile Minimum Safe Altitude of the Warrnambool Aerodrome may need to be raised to 2,300 feet to maintain safety factors.

Traffic and roads

Chapter 25 – *Traffic and transport*

Wind turbines and ancillary project components, such as battery and terminal station infrastructure, would be transported from Portland and or Geelong to the project site via the regional road network. Both routes have been assessed to support the selection of a preferred route.

Traffic around the project site and along the chosen transport route will increase traffic during construction, creating potential safety risks and road wear from heavy vehicles.

Within the project site, internal access tracks have been designed and located to reduce the use of public roads. The project would also upgrade roads (as required) to provide access for the oversized project infrastructure components such as wind turbine blades and tower sections. These upgrades would also improve the road conditions for local road users in the longer term.

A Traffic Management Plan would address road safety, maintenance agreements, and coordination with bus services to avoid delays, including limiting heavy vehicle movements during school bus times. With these measures and proposed upgrades, the road network can safely accommodate project traffic, and residual impacts are expected to be negligible or minor.

How to get involved

As required by the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and the decision by the Minister, the EES and Planning Permit Applications will be placed on public exhibition.

During this time the public are invited to review the EES documents and Planning Permit Application and make written submissions. This provides an opportunity to have your views considered as part of the assessment of the Hexham Wind Farm.

Exhibition

The complete EES documentation will be on public exhibition for 30 business days. During this time, the EES and supporting documentation can be downloaded from the project website: https://www.hexhamwindfarm.com.au/

Hard copies of the EES and Planning Permit Applications will be available at the following locations during normal opening hours:

- **Mortlake Moyne Shire Council Office**
  1 Jamieson Avenue, Mortlake
  - *Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm (Closed 1pm-1.30pm)*
- **Port Fairy Moyne Shire Council Office**
  Princes Street, Port Fairy VIC 3284
  - *Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 4.45pm*
- **State Library Victoria**
  328 Swanston Street, Melbourne
  - *Monday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm*
- **Department of Transport and Planning**
  1 Spring Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
  - *Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm*

A USB flash drive will be sent to any stakeholder at any time during the public exhibition period upon request. Hard copies of the EES can also be obtained from Hexham Wind Farm Pty Ltd by contacting:

Tel: 1800 934 322

Email: info@hexhamwindfarm.com.au

Notice of the Planning Permit Application

Notice of the Hexham Wind Farm planning permit application will be undertaken in accordance with section 52 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (PE Act), and the application documents will be available online while the EES exhibited. Any objections or submissions received on the planning permit application must be considered by the responsible authority before making a decision.

Submissions on the EES

Submissions on the EES must be made in writing and lodged via the online form on the Victorian Government's Engage Victoria website: https://engage.vic.gov.au/Hexham-IAC

If you do not have internet access and are unable to lodge a submission online for the EES, contact Planning Panels Victoria (PPV) through the Customer Call Centre on 136 186 (select Option 6) and request a hard copy submission coversheet. Each hardcopy written submission on the EES must be accompanied by a completed coversheet issued by PPV.

All submissions on the EES must state the name and address of the person making the submission.

Submissions on the EES will be treated as public documents and published on the Engage Victoria website.

To protect your privacy, do not include personal information in the body of your submission (such as your email address, phone number, or photos or people, particularly children).

For more information about the EES submission process, contact Planning Panels Victoria:

Online: https://engage.vic.gov.au/Hexham-IAC or scan the QR code below:

Submissions on the Planning Permit Applications

Objections and submissions for the Planning Permit Applications are being collected by the Minister for Planning who is the responsible authority.

Any person who may be effected by the granting of the permits may object or make other submissions to the Minister by using either of the following methods:

Post: The Minister for Planning, C/- Department of Transport and Planning, GPO Box 2392, Melbourne 3001

Email: development.assessment@transport.vic.gov.au.

Unlike submissions on the EES, objections or submissions on the planning permit application will not be published online. Objections and submissions can be inspected in person at Department of Transport and Planning's offices at 1 Spring Street, Melbourne or requested electronically. Regardless of how a document is made available, the responsible authority must comply with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* obligations where these do not directly conflict with any requirement of the PE Act.

An objection or submission must be made to the responsible authority in writing, include the reasons for the objection or submission and state how the objector or submitter would be affected. Any person who makes an objection or submission on the planning permit applications will be contacted by Planning Panels Victoria and offered the opportunity to make a request to be heard at the Public Hearing to speak in support of their submission.

Why is planning approval required?

The project requires a planning permit due to its location in the Farming Zone and the nature of proposed activities, including the use and development of a wind energy facility, removal of native vegetation, use of signage, and creation of site access points.

Planning approval for the project is being sought via a Planning Permit Application under the ***Planning and Environment Act 1987***, which is exhibited alongside the EES. This application will be reviewed by the Inquiry and Advisory Committee appointed for the EES who will provide advice to the Minister for Planning. The Planning Permit is subject to approval by the Minister for Planning, as outlined in Chapter 3 – ***Legislation and policy framework***.

Next steps

Your input will help inform independent review of the project's environmental effects and play an important role in shaping the Minister's assessment. Following public exhibition, the next steps provide opportunities for community input to be heard and considered through the public hearing process.

Joint Inquiry and Advisory Committee hearing

The Minister has stated in his EES referral decision that an independent Inquiry will be appointed to consider and report on the environmental effects of the proposal through a public hearing. It is intended that the Inquiry will also be appointed as an Advisory Committee to advise on the project's Planning Permit Applications, of which notice is given at the same time as the EES.

The Inquiry and Advisory Committee will conduct a hearing, which provides an opportunity for those who have made submissions on the EES or Planning Permit Applications and indicated they would like to be heard at the hearing to speak in support of their written submission. Following conclusion of the hearing, the Inquiry and Advisory Committee will submit its report to the Minister to inform their assessment of the project.

If you want to present at the panel hearing, you will need to submit a written submission on the EES or the Planning Permit Applications and indicate that you would like to be heard.

Minister's assessment

The Minister for Planning will conclude the EES process by issuing a written assessment of the project's environmental impacts under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

The Minister's assessment is not an approval in its own right, but will recommend whether the project's environmental effects are acceptable, and may set out modifications or further management measures that the Minister thinks are appropriate.

The Minister's assessment is authoritative statutory advice that needs to be considered by relevant decision makers of project approvals. The Commonwealth Minister for the Environment will also use the advice provided by the Minister in deciding whether to approve the project under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and what conditions will apply to that approval.