

Draft Victorian Transmission Plan Guidelines Interim Engagement Report – What We Heard

September 2024



VicGrid 

VICTORIA
State
Government

Acronyms

Term	Definition
AEC	Australian Energy Council
AEMC	Australian Energy Market Commission
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
AMEC	Association of Mining and Exploration Companies
CEC	Clean Energy Council
CEIG	Clean Energy Investor Group
CFA	Country Fire Authority
DEECA	The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
ENA	Energy Networks Australia
EUAA	Energy Users Association of Australia
IAP2	The International Association of Public Participation
ISP	Integrated System Plan

Term	Definition
MCA	Multi-criteria analysis
NEM	National Electricity Market
REZ	Renewable energy zones
SEC	State Electricity Commission
SLUA	Strategic land use assessment
TCV	Treasury Corporation of Victoria
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office
VFF	Victorian Farmers Federation
VNI West	Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West
VTIF	Victorian Transmission Investment Framework
VTP	Victorian Transmission Plan
WRL	Western Renewables Link

Contents

Executive summary	3
Engagement results overview – Community and local government.....	6
Engagement results overview – Traditional Owners	8
Engagement results overview – Industry	9
How this feedback will be applied.....	10
Introduction	11
Methodology	14
Guiding principles insights	16
Guiding principles weighting	16
Community feedback	19
Thematic insights	21
Traditional Owner feedback	25
Industry feedback	26
How this feedback will be applied	30
Next steps	35
Appendix 1 – Engagement events	36

Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

We acknowledge and respect Victoria's Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partnering and meaningfully engaging with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.





Executive summary

This interim report primarily addresses feedback on the Draft Victorian Transmission Plan Guidelines. Full feedback on the renewable energy zone study area will be the focus of a final engagement report to be published by 31 October 2024.

VicGrid is the Victorian Government agency responsible for planning and developing new infrastructure to transport energy generated by renewables to the electricity grid. VicGrid is developing and implementing a new statewide approach for how renewable energy and transmission infrastructure is planned. This new approach includes delivering a long-term strategic plan for renewable energy infrastructure and transmission development in Victoria – the Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP). Central to this approach is giving landholders, communities and First Peoples a real voice in the process.

In developing the 2025 VTP, VicGrid will demonstrate its commitment to partnering with First Peoples and delivering place-based engagement with landholders and local communities. VicGrid is also committed to working with the energy industry to explore how we can effectively work with generators and developers to incorporate local insights and values in the detailed design of future transmission projects. Incorporating industry and community views early and often means we can make better decisions that minimise impacts and maximise benefits for local communities.

VicGrid released the draft VTP Guidelines (the guidelines) on 22 July 2024. The guidelines document describes how VicGrid will produce the 2025 VTP. It also includes a renewable energy zone study area map, showing the parts of Victoria that VicGrid will investigate further as it works to identify potential future renewable energy zones.

The guidelines will be updated over time and used for future VTPs.

The release of the draft VTP Guidelines commenced a formal 5-week community and industry engagement consultation period for the guidelines (from 22 July to 25 August 2024) and a 10-week consultation period for the study area (from 22 July to 30 September 2024).

Engagement opportunities included:



In-person community drop-in sessions and events



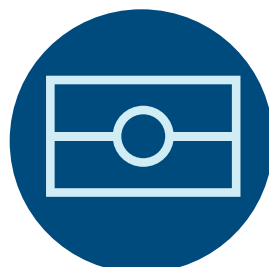
Online community and industry webinars



Feedback forms



Opportunity to provide feedback via email and a purpose-designed contact centre



Briefings with Victoria's Registered Aboriginal Parties



Briefings with peak bodies, local government authorities and other key stakeholders



Submissions

We received almost **800 feedback form responses**, more than **170 submissions** and held conversations with more than **350 community members** during drop-in sessions.

Thank you to those who gave their time to be involved and provide feedback. These responses provided us with valuable insights that we will continue to draw on throughout the development of the Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP).

In total, we received the following engagement responses:

381

Total guiding principles feedback form responses

413

Total study area feedback form responses

28

Total generator survey responses

171

Total submissions

34

Total email queries

8

Total contact centre queries

25

Total community events



Engagement results overview

Community and local government

Responses to the community feedback forms, submissions and feedback from the community drop-in sessions revealed themes across the following key areas. The themes are in order from most common to least common feedback:



Impact on regions

We heard concerns about impost on regional areas to service metropolitan energy demands, socio-economic concerns related to energy and community division, and prior experiences.



Agriculture and land use

Respondents raised concerns about impacts on use of farmland and socio-economic concerns related to agriculture.



Biodiversity and natural environment

We heard concerns about impacts on biodiversity and water systems, including endangered species' habitats.



Natural hazard vulnerability

Feedback also raised concerns about infrastructure development in relation to natural hazards, including bushfires and flooding.



Regional opportunity

We heard concerns about and support for how regions will benefit economically from hosting generation or transmission, and doubts about the actual benefits communities may receive.



Engagement approach

We also received feedback about the channels we used to engage with communities, how we raised awareness about engagement opportunities, and doubts about the impact feedback will have on the VTP.



Previous engagement experiences

Feedback was received about negative prior engagement experiences for renewable energy infrastructure and the impact this has had on communities and how that influences sentiment towards current and future engagement efforts.



We received significant feedback on the **impact of the energy transition on regional communities**. This ranges from a feeling that regional communities are bearing the brunt of the transition, to experiences of community division stemming from some previous renewable development. Examples included instances of some community members receiving undisclosed benefits while neighbouring properties were burdened with impacts.

Impact is felt differently across regions depending on experience with previous generation and transmission projects. Feedback from communities associated with the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector (VNI) West (VNI West) and the Western Renewables Link (WRL) is very focused on specific experiences related to those projects. Other communities experiencing strong interest from generation developers focused feedback on those interactions and associated impacts.

There is a strong concern from communities that hosting more renewable generation will significantly impact their sense of place and community, wellbeing, culture, ways of living and connection to Country as a result of transmission and generation infrastructure dominating the landscape. There was some support for alternative energy sources, most frequently nuclear, with the view it could be built on the sites of existing coal-fired power stations as an alternative to building new transmission. While other themes tend to show a greater degree of regional nuance, this theme is consistent across the state and expresses a sense that regions are shouldering the burden of the transition and are feeling that their region already has its share of projects.

Feedback relating to **agriculture and land use** expressed a strong commitment to protecting valuable farmland given the importance of food and fibre production to Victoria's economy, rural communities and rich heritage. This theme was more prominent in the north-west of the state.

Biodiversity and natural environment also featured strongly with many responses calling out biodiversity and environmental values of specific regions such as Ovens Murray and Goulburn, and the habitats of several endangered species including the brolga, the giant Gippsland earthworm, and a species of legless lizard.

There were many concerns raised about **natural hazard vulnerability**, specifically bushfires. We heard questions about whether generation and transmission infrastructure would contribute to the risk of bushfires as well as questions about the impact new energy infrastructure might have on fighting bushfires. Feedback differed across regions, with more bushfire-prone areas raising these issues more frequently.

Feedback about **regional opportunity** included both support for the benefits communities could receive from hosting generation and transmission as well as doubts about whether benefits would truly be delivered. Many participants expressed doubt that communities would reap the rewards and fears that profits would flow to overseas ventures. Scepticism about benefits was often linked to past experiences with projects such as WRL or VNI West.



Engagement results overview

Traditional Owners

Feedback themes from ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners and First Peoples and dedicated briefings on the draft VTP Guidelines include:

- the need to map cultural heritage to minimise impact on Country;
- the need to engage with Traditional Owners and First Peoples on ways to create benefits for communities through the energy transition; and
- the limited capacity and resourcing of groups to engage with the energy transition.

VicGrid is committed to walking with First Peoples to develop energy infrastructure planning and projects in a way that protects Country and supports shared benefits for communities. We heard there is a need to support Victoria's Traditional Owner groups to build capacity within their communities and organisations, so they can participate in this work.

Feedback highlighted the need to engage early in the process, in alignment with principles of free, prior, informed consent.

Feedback from engagement with Traditional Owners has highlighted the importance of mapping cultural heritage across Victoria to protect sensitive and significant sites. Concerns about impacts on biodiversity and water systems have also been raised. Registered Aboriginal Parties across the state noted the difficulty in resourcing this important cultural heritage mapping work and limitations in their capacity to engage with VicGrid in a way that supports a self-determined approach with communities.

Engagement results overview

Industry

Submissions, feedback from industry and peak body briefing sessions, and responses to a generator and developer survey revealed themes across the following areas:



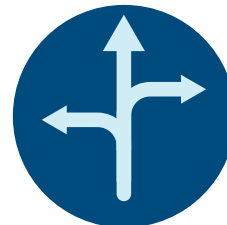
Need for holistic engagement

We heard that industry requires information about a range of related policy areas including network access, connections and community benefits to enable decision-making and foster confidence.



Appropriateness of scenarios

Feedback focused on the robustness of the scenarios, in particular scenario 3, which deals with potential delays to infrastructure delivery across the National Electricity Market (NEM).



Flexibility of the VTP process

This feedback related to the frequency of updating the VTP and related impacts on accounting for uncertain futures including emerging technologies.



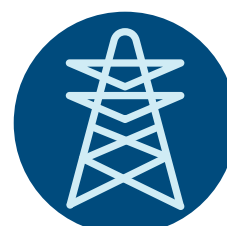
Modelling

We received suggestions for modelling and comments on the role it plays in developing of the VTP.



Engagement feedback

Comments about VicGrid's engagement approach stressed the importance of genuine and transparent engagement.



Transmission planning

We heard feedback about the urgency to deliver appropriate transmission to support the transition.



Process for identifying draft proposed renewable energy zones (REZs)

Feedback related to how VicGrid will investigate parts of the study area and the process for narrowing it to draft proposed REZs, including suggestions and input into different areas of the state.



Developer confidence

We heard the importance of providing developers with confidence to promote investment in transmission projects.



Regulatory complexity

Concerns were raised about the complexity of approvals processes at both state and federal levels delaying timely investment decisions and alignment between state and federal planning processes.

How this feedback will be applied

The purpose of consultation on the draft VTP Guidelines and study area was to gain insight into concerns, values and sentiment from communities, local councils, Traditional Owners and industry.

The feedback received and presented in this report has been used to shape the final VTP Guidelines, and will also inform decision-making as the study area is narrowed to draft proposed renewable energy zones (REZs).

- **Feedback on the draft VTP Guidelines:** The draft VTP Guidelines outline the methodology for developing the 2025 VTP. Communities and industry were invited to provide feedback through a submissions process, in-person drop-in sessions, online webinars and a guiding principles feedback form. The feedback received has been robustly examined, and has resulted in some changes to the guidelines, outlined in the 2024 VTP Guidelines Changes Summary report. Further explanation, context and consideration has been provided in this interim report.
- **Preliminary feedback on the study area:** Much of the feedback, particularly from communities, is place-based and focuses on the study area. This ranges from information about land use, biodiversity concerns, natural hazard vulnerability, existing projects and community sentiment. Some feedback expressed support for renewable energy development in certain regions, naming the positive regional development opportunities. All feedback will be taken into consideration as parts of the study area are investigated further and during the process to narrow down and identify draft proposed REZs.

We will continue to seek to partner with First Peoples to honour and protect Country, and engage early and often with landholders, communities and industry throughout the development of the 2025 VTP. Through this engagement, we will collect valuable insights and ensure feedback is effectively incorporated into policy decisions.

Please note: This interim report primarily addresses feedback on the draft VTP Guidelines. Full feedback on the study area will be the focus of a subsequent final report.



Introduction

Victoria's energy system is changing. Our ageing coal-fired power stations are becoming increasingly unreliable and are retiring. Victoria urgently needs to change its power grid to carry energy from new renewable sources across the state to Victorian homes, businesses, hospitals, schools and other vital services.

VicGrid is developing and implementing a new statewide approach for how we plan for renewable energy and transmission infrastructure. This new approach includes delivering a long-term strategic plan for renewable energy infrastructure and transmission development in Victoria – the Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP).

Prior to developing the 2025 VTP, we will publish guidelines that outline the methodology used to develop the plan. As legislated in the *National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005* (the Act), the guidelines will be published no later than 30 September 2024. The draft VTP Guidelines provides an important opportunity for input to shape the 2024 VTP Guidelines, by partnering with First Peoples and consulting with landholders, communities and industry.

A draft of the first Victorian Transmission Plan will be published in early 2025. It will ensure Victoria has the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time to support the transition to renewable energy. It will also ensure we are not building more than Victoria needs – so we can maximise the benefits of the transition to renewables, while minimising the impacts to communities and minimising costs to energy users. The planning and development of renewable energy zones (REZs) will enable a coordinated approach, beyond the constraints of traditional network planning, that will help enable Victoria's strong pipeline of new power supply to be built and operating in time to provide reliable power when large ageing coal-fired power stations retire.

The draft VTP Guidelines include:

- a study area showing what parts of Victoria we may investigate further for suitability to host potential future renewable energy zones
- how we will determine how much energy is needed, and when
- how we will determine what transmission projects are needed to support new energy generation
- how we will partner with First Peoples and engage with landholders, communities and industry.



Key to this approach is giving landholders, communities and First Peoples a real voice. The development of the 2025 VTP will demonstrate VicGrid's commitment to partnering with First Peoples and delivering place-based engagement with landholders and local communities. VicGrid is also committed to working with the energy industry to explore how we can effectively work with generators and developers to incorporate local insights and values in the detailed design of future transmission projects. Incorporating industry and community views early and often means we can make better decisions that minimise negative impacts and maximise benefits for local communities.

As such First Peoples, community and industry will be consulted throughout the development of the draft and final 2025 VTP. The next round of formal public engagement will take place after the 2024 VTP Guidelines are released.

The purpose of consultation on the draft VTP Guidelines was:

- to inform Victorians about the VTP, the draft VTP Guidelines and how these will support identification of renewable energy zones, and future transmission
- to gather feedback on the draft guidelines and to understand specific concerns, needs, and expectations of different stakeholder groups in order to refine the final guidelines
- to inform Victorians about the purpose and role of VicGrid.

The VTP Guidelines are part of a set of reforms to support the state's energy transition under the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework (VTIF). These reforms are guiding new policies that will cover network access, connections, procurement, community benefits and associated regulatory arrangements.



These new policy instruments include:

- **New Victorian network access arrangements:**

The existing open access regime under the National Electricity Rules allows renewable energy generators to connect to the grid at almost any location. In some cases, a generator's location means it is not adding usable new energy to the grid or impacting other generators already connected. The new Victorian Access Regime will improve investor certainty and support the timely coordination of investment in transmission, generation and storage infrastructure. We will be consulting on the implementation of the new access arrangements and connections reform.

- **A new procurement framework:** All of us pay for energy infrastructure through our power bills, so it is important that we make sure we are getting value for money. That is why VicGrid is putting in place a fit-for-purpose procurement framework for the delivery of major transmission projects identified in the VTP. This new framework will be developed through consultation and be in place in time for the 2025 VTP.

- **A new approach to community benefits:** The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring positive outcomes for communities that host new infrastructure as part of the energy transition. That is why VicGrid is putting in place new arrangements to support landholders, neighbours, First Peoples and communities as part of the Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Community Benefits Plan. The draft plan introduces new REZ Community Energy Funds that will see energy developers contribute to funds to benefit regional communities. Decisions on investments from the funds will be made in consultation with local and regional communities in each area. We consulted with community and industry from May to June 2024 to develop the details of this new approach, and the final plan is expected to be released in late 2024. We are also partnering with First Peoples to co-design models of dedicated benefits for Traditional Owners.

VicGrid strongly values public consultation, and we will be undertaking a range of engagement activities during 2024 and 2025 on these elements, including about details of the new access arrangements, the new procurement framework and the final REZ Community Benefits Plan.



Methodology

From July to August 2024, VicGrid ran a suite of activities to seek feedback on the draft VTP Guidelines and study area¹. This included community and industry events, Traditional Owner engagement, answering enquiries, and receiving feedback via forms and submissions. Consultation on the draft VTP Guidelines closed on 25 August while feedback on the study area remains open until 30 September. As such this report covers feedback on the draft VTP Guidelines and only preliminary insight into study area feedback.

Community events

VicGrid held 25 community events, including 23 community drop-in sessions and pop-up events across 14 regional towns and cities and 2 community webinars. Events were designed to give community members an opportunity to learn more about the draft VTP Guidelines and the VTP, to ask questions and to provide feedback directly to VicGrid staff, or through online or paper feedback forms.

More than 350 community members attended the drop-in sessions, and 94 community members attended the community webinars.

Traditional Owner engagement

VicGrid has engaged directly with Registered Aboriginal Parties, including dedicated briefings on the draft VTP Guidelines, with a focus on how VicGrid can more thoroughly consider Aboriginal cultural values in the strategic land use assessment and protect Country by avoiding places of cultural significance.

Industry events

VicGrid held 13 industry events, including 2 pre-briefings, 10 briefings (including peak bodies) and an industry webinar.

These events offered an opportunity for industry to learn more about the draft VTP Guidelines and the VTP, to ask questions and to prepare for submissions. It also allowed VicGrid to strengthen relationships with industry by demonstrating a commitment to on-going consultation.

More than 150 industry participants attended the industry webinar.

Enquiries

Feedback was also received via email and a dedicated phone contact centre. The contact centre received minimal phone calls, and a steady stream of emails were received throughout the engagement period.

¹ See Appendix 1 for a full list of events

Feedback forms and submissions

- A **guiding principles feedback form** asked respondents to score guiding principles based on importance with the opportunity to provide free text feedback on reasons for the scores and other information. This information supplements the **Renewable Energy Planning Survey**, which was open from November 2023 to February 2024 and helped gain an understanding of the diverse community views and values towards renewable energy and transmission development across Victoria. Community feedback about the guiding principles will help shape the assessment process as the study area is investigated and narrowed to draft proposed REZs.
- A **renewable energy zone study area feedback form** asked respondents to provide feedback on their chosen geographic area/s. This supplements feedback received via an **interactive mapping activity** which ran from November 2023 to February 2024 and sought community views on important land use and landscape values in their area.
- A **generator and developer survey** asked for information on the potential location and volume of new generation and storage that could be expected in Victoria in the next 15 years. The survey aimed to gauge developers' key considerations when investing in generation infrastructure to ensure the eventual proposed REZs are viable from a developer perspective.
- Feedback was also received via submissions with a total of 168 received from community members, shires and councils and industry.
- In addition, a range of briefings were held with peak bodies, government bodies, local government authorities, advocacy groups and associations.

Engagement principles

Our engagement framework across all stages of developing the VTP, including consultation on the draft VTP Guidelines, is modelled on existing best-in-class frameworks for public consultation and engagement for public sector entities.

We adopted the core principles of public engagement as outlined in the Victorian Public Sector *Public Engagement Framework 2021–25*, namely that all of our engagements are and continue to be:

- **Meaningful:** The process of public engagement is genuine and informs the final decisions.
- **Inclusive:** The engagement is respectful, inclusive and accessible.
- **Transparent:** The engagement is clear and open about what the public can and cannot influence.
- **Informed:** The engagement provides relevant and timely information to the public.
- **Accountable:** The engagement is high quality and responsive to the public.
- **Valuable:** The engagement creates value for the community and government. This can include social, economic, and environmental value.

We also draw heavily on the VAGO *Public Participation in Government Decision-making*, influenced by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

Guiding principles insights

Community-informed guiding principles will help shape our approach to narrowing the study area to draft proposed renewable energy zones.

Victorians were invited to provide feedback about these guiding principles through a feedback form. The guiding principles had been shaped by previous community engagement, including feedback and input received through planning for the future of offshore wind in Victoria, the Renewable Energy Planning Survey, and engagement on the draft Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan.

Guiding principles weighting

Respondents were asked to *“Give each guiding principle a score out of 100, based on how important you think each is when planning energy generation and transmission development.”*

The principles were:

- avoid over-developing renewable energy in a region to minimise cumulative impacts
- minimise costs to keep power bills low.
- minimise land use, cultural and environmental impacts from development
- contribute to regional development.

“Minimising land use, cultural and environmental impacts from development” received the highest average rating. This applied broadly across regions although the Mallee, Ovens Murray and the Central Highlands gave higher ratings to *“Avoid over-developing renewable energy generation in a region to minimise cumulative impacts.”*

Figure 2: Feedback, grouped by region, on each guiding principle based on the importance when planning energy generation and transmission development.

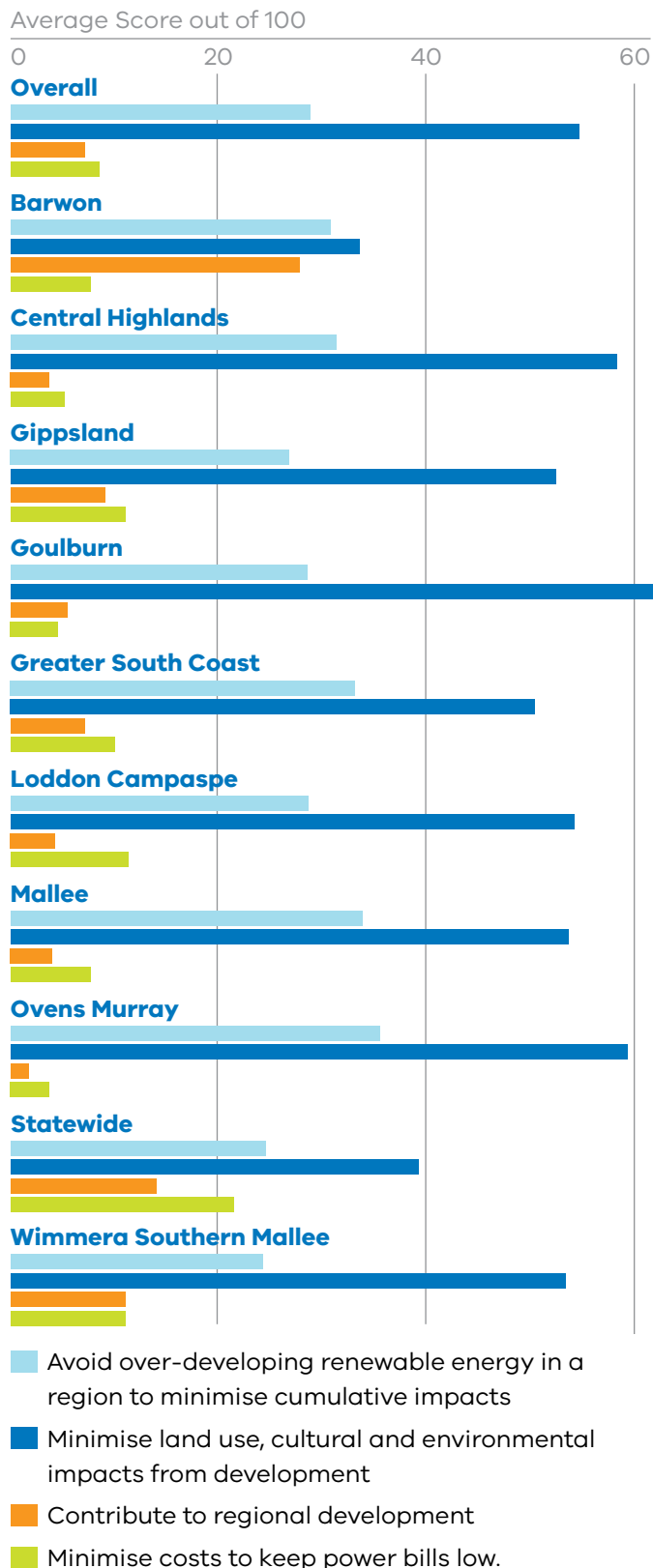
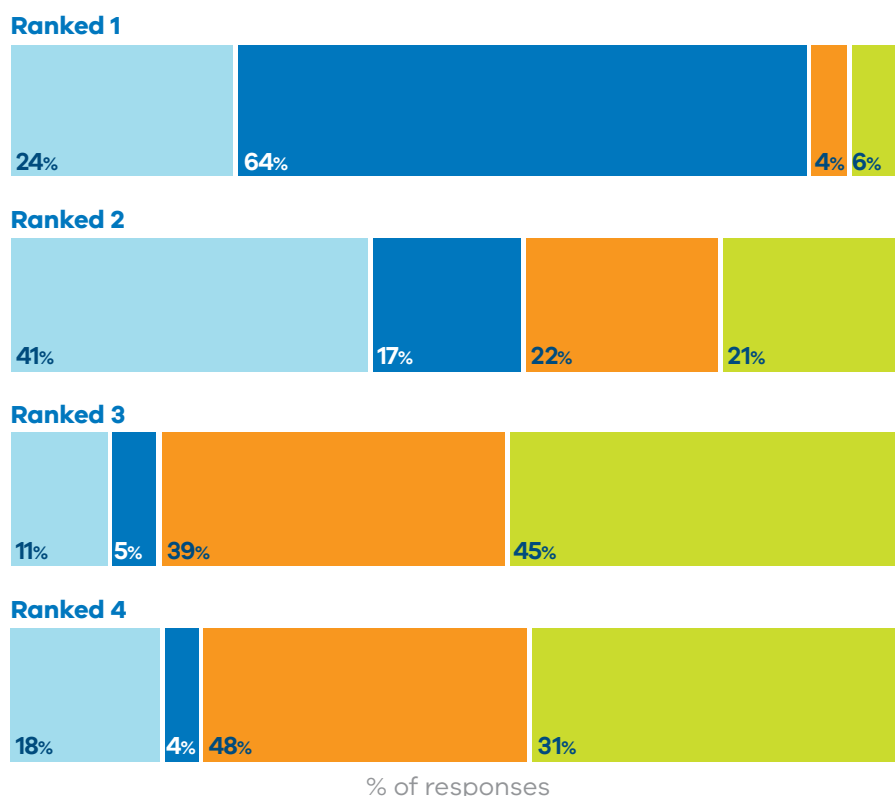


Figure 3 illustrates how the guiding principles were ranked by respondents, showing which guiding principle has been ranked most frequently as first, second, third and fourth in terms of importance when planning energy generation and transmission development. When considered in terms of weighting, it is again evident that *“Minimising land use, cultural and environmental impact”* is the most highly weighted principle, with 64% of respondents giving it the highest weighting. *“Avoid over developing renewable energy to minimise the cumulative impacts”* is most often weighted second highest, with 41% of respondents giving it the second highest weighting. *“Contributing to regional development”* and *“minimising costs to keep power bills low”* are more typically weighted lower.

This is largely in line with the findings from the Renewable Energy Planning Survey with the top 5 ranked factors including:

- protecting Victoria’s natural environment, including national parks and wetlands
- minimising impacts on water systems such as water supply areas, lakes and rivers
- protect identified areas of valuable biodiversity
- minimise impacts on agricultural land
- keep power bills as low as possible.

Figure 3: Ranking of guiding principles by respondents based on the importance when planning energy generation and transmission development.



- Avoid over-developing renewable energy in a region to minimise cumulative impacts
- Minimise land use, cultural and environmental impacts from development
- Contribute to regional development
- Minimise costs to keep power bills low.

“Impact on existing land uses needs to be a high priority. Need to minimise the impact of regional areas to power the city.”

Goulburn

“Put environmental matters and species protection first, look carefully at historic impacts by wind farms over the past 20 years and start to tell the truth about the impact they are having on the brolga. Australia’s GHG emissions are half of one per cent of world emissions, and electricity generation is only 30% of that. Stop destroying the environment and forcing species such as brolga into extinction on the claim that the wind farms will save the planet. They will have absolutely no impact on world emissions at all.”

Central Highlands



The first 4 factors identified in the Renewable Energy Planning Survey broadly map to minimising land use, cultural and environmental impacts from development. This survey was conducted among 2,015 community members across 7 regions in Victoria from 17 November 2023 to 16 February 2024. The survey was conducted both face to face and online, aiming to explore community and stakeholder views and values towards renewable energy and transmission development. The Renewable Energy Planning Survey supports VicGrid's Victorian Transmission Investment Framework reforms and the first Victorian Transmission Plan, providing a baseline view of attitudes and values across the state to support VicGrid's activities in planning Victoria's REZs. It provides insights into what people know and think about renewable energy and VicGrid, and how they feel about different renewable energy choices. It also shows how the community views land use suitability, impacts, benefits, engagement experiences, relational measures, distributional fairness, governance confidence, and trust in VicGrid and renewable infrastructure developers.

When responding to the current guiding principles feedback form to weight the guiding principles, participants were given the option to provide more context to their choices. When the accompanying comments are themed, just over half the comments relate to biodiversity and natural environment concerns and just under half relate to agriculture and land use.

This suggests that the weightings used in the strategic land use assessment largely reflect both the Renewable Energy Planning Survey and the current engagement feedback. In response to feedback about the guiding principles, which shows the importance of considering land use values and cumulative impacts, the 2024 VTP Guidelines has provided more details about how land-use data will be considered in the methodology to identify potential future REZs. We will also consider the size and location of in-service and committed generation projects. This will ensure the overall level of development in a region is considered when determining the most appropriate locations for siting future REZs across the State.

The other factor ranked among the top 5 principles in the Renewable Energy Planning Survey was:

- Keep power bills as low as possible.

This receives the lowest rating in the current engagement with many participants assigning it a zero. Taking only the current engagement findings, one might assume that this is not an important consideration. However, in the Renewable Energy Planning Survey it is routinely ranked in the top 5 across all regions except Ovens Murray. This difference may be due to variances in sample size, as the current engagement feedback predominantly comes from a subset of self-selected participants.

Community feedback

Community feedback from the feedback forms, submissions, direct enquiries and community events was analysed to identify overarching themes. These themes were consistent with feedback received from local government areas through the process.

Themes



Impact on regions

We heard concerns about impost on regional areas to service metropolitan energy demands, socio-economic concerns related to energy and community division, and prior experiences.



Agriculture and land use

Respondents raised concerns about impacts on use of farmland and socio-economic concerns related to agriculture.



Biodiversity and natural environment

We heard concerns about impacts on biodiversity and water systems, including endangered species' habitats.



Natural hazard vulnerability

Feedback also raised concerns about infrastructure development in relation to natural hazards, including bushfires and flooding.



Regional opportunity

We heard concerns about and support for how regions will benefit economically from hosting generation or transmission, and doubts about the actual benefits communities may receive.



Engagement approach

We also received feedback about the channels we used to engage with communities, how we raised awareness about engagement opportunities, and doubts about the impact feedback will have on the VTP.



Previous engagement experiences

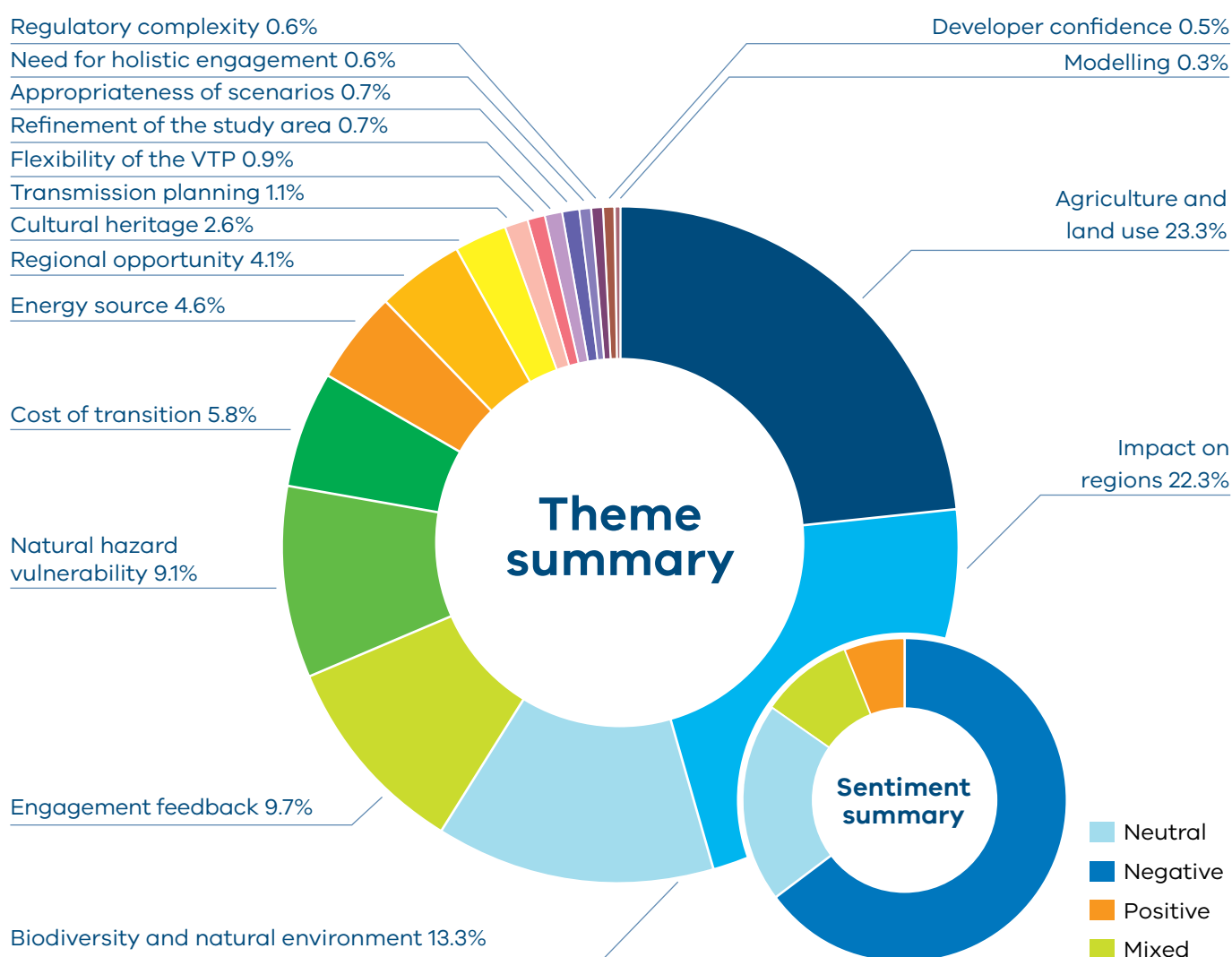
Feedback was received about negative prior engagement experiences for renewable energy infrastructure and the impact this has had on communities and how that influences sentiment towards current and future engagement efforts.

The major themes statewide across all channels centre on agriculture, impact on regions and biodiversity. While there is some support for the transition to renewables, sentiment towards hosting renewable energy infrastructure is still largely negative, indicating significant engagement work is required to address community questions and concerns, and help build understanding and support.

Reports from VicGrid's community events do show some willingness to support a new way of planning that carefully considers community and land use concerns. There is some support and appreciation for VicGrid's role and ambitions though there is a general feeling that coordination of development and genuine engagement should have come sooner. Communities are often focused on the projects

that are impacting their region. For example, in the Barwon sessions, feedback centred on WRL, and at Birchip negative experiences with developers drove feedback. This highlights the importance of place-based engagement to draw out regional nuance and to integrate community when planning for generation and transmission. Regional concerns will help inform decisions as we identify draft proposed REZs. Community feedback will also contribute to design of future engagement and additional policy considerations.

Figure 3: Major themes and sentiment from all channels



Thematic insights



Natural hazard vulnerability

This theme relates primarily to bushfire concerns and fears that properties won't be able to be protected by the Country Fire Authority (CFA). There are also some references to flood risk. This is a theme that also appeared during the draft Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan engagement. This theme is particularly prominent in the Ovens Murray region with concerns raised about battery fires and a planned battery storage project in the region. Questions raised by respondents include whether transmission lines will hinder firefighting efforts and the impact of potentially noxious fumes on the region, waterways and evacuation routes. Undergrounding transmission lines is also often cited as a preference to mitigate bushfire risk. Concerns about insurance are also raised.

"Fires are notorious in Western Victoria and without fire support, farms will be decimated, resulting in a significant risk to lives, food production and animal mortality. Many communities on the map, including Mortlake, will be at risk of being indefensible in the event of fire, putting half the State of Victoria at risk of harm."

Greater South Coast

"Apart from the lack of data, the process has not listened to the community telling them that our farm is on a proven flood plain."

Wimmera Southern Mallee

"I am asking for energy facilities should not be installed on a flood plain where access roads, crane pads and relocating soil post construction could impede the free passage of flood water."

Goulburn



Biodiversity and natural environment

This theme covers concerns about biodiversity and water systems, including endangered species' habitats. Feedback ranges from information about specific addresses and locations to broader regions. Specific priorities include the visual amenity, endangered species such as the brolga and giant Gippsland earthworm and regional status as tourist areas. Many of the key callsouts align with the previous interactive mapping exercise and work is under way to align both engagements.

"Korumburra and surrounds also have a protection overlay for our Giant Earthworms, which even David Attenborough has visited and made a documentary on, why is this not a red flag?"

Gippsland



Agriculture and land use

This theme covers feedback about the impacts on the use of farmland, and socio-economic concerns related to agriculture. It reflects a sentiment that productive agricultural land should be preserved for farming and food and fibre production rather than energy generation and transmission. Feedback raised concerns that some areas considered highly productive had been classified as tier 1 in the study area. Questions were also raised about the compatibility of different types of farming with different types of energy infrastructure, and how this would be considered in developing the VTP. This theme is more prominent in the Central Highlands, Wimmera and Mallee regions and also conveys the proud tradition of generational farming. This theme also includes broader land use feedback such as concerns about buffer zones, housing density and collaborating with councils to consider local planning schemes and policy development.

"The land is in limited supply. It is imperative that this be retained and set aside, especially for food production. The ability to grow food and provide for ourselves and overseas buyers is power to our country."

Mallee

"Now you want to cover our most productive farmland in renewable energy and transmission lines to feed it back to the city. Where do you think, our food is going to come from in the future to feed the people in the cities?"

Gippsland

"It needs to be acknowledged that many local governments will be embarking on critical local planning and policy development in response to the draft Housing Targets released in June 2024. This presents difficulties in VicGrid's ability to leave sufficient flexibility for residential growth targets to be met at a local level, as well as municipal councils' ability to adapt to growth challenges over the 15-year lifespan of the first VTP."

Local Shire



Impact on regions

This theme relates to concerns about the impact on regional areas to service city energy demands, and any socio-economic concerns related to energy. It also captures the division in communities as a result of existing and planned projects, the feeling of 'haves' and 'have nots' and the impact of prior experiences and poor engagement by developers. This is the theme that shows the highest degree of consistency across regions. While other themes show regional variation, this theme more often relates to regions feeling aggrieved that they are forced to shoulder the burden of the transition to feed the city. This theme relates to the guiding principle of avoiding over-developing renewable energy in a region to minimise cumulative impacts. Many participants note there is already significant generation in their area and feel they have already contributed enough. There was feedback requesting reassessment of certain regions or tier assignments within a region. This included advocating for certain regions and mentions existing buffer zones and wind exclusion zones.

"A recent proposal to install a wind energy facility in Nanneella/Koyuga has caused a great deal of anxiety across our community and for good reason."

Goulburn

"We don't want our homes industrialised. Put all this stuff near the cities where the power is required"

Mallee

"Many hold the view that the region should not have to generate power for Melbourne, and that Melbourne should host future renewable energy developments and transmission infrastructure. View that Melbourne should shoulder more of the energy transition burden, and southwest Victoria should not have to continue to generate power for Melbourne."

Greater South Coast



Regional opportunity

This theme relates to feedback around how a region will benefit economically from hosting generation or transmission. Some feedback recognises the benefits to communities but doubts of long-term benefits prevail. There is a general feeling that benefits generally flow to overseas developers and questions about who will cover end-of-life costs. This is largely driven by prior experiences, which have bred distrust. This highlights the important role of community benefits initiatives and providing clear, trustworthy information.

Swan Hill Shire Council expressed their optimism for the economic development opportunities the renewable energy transition represents for their communities.

Mallee

Landholders were concerned about workforce displacement and that future development in the region would increase demand for an already small market of available employees. It was believed agriculture would be unable to compete against renewable energy companies to attract, retain and remunerate staff.

Mallee



Engagement feedback

This theme relates primarily to feedback about engagement channels, awareness of engagement and doubts about the impact feedback will have on the VTP. Some feedback includes concerns about the length of the consultation period and allowing ample time to understand the guidelines and prepare submissions.

"Community consultation not taking into consideration the aging population in the area with limited access to internet or access to town - consider letterbox drops for future engagement."

Gippsland

"Council only became aware of current consultation on the Guidelines covering an arbitrary 30-day period, shortly before the process commenced. With existing limited resources and in lead up to upcoming caretaker period in September 2024 and local government elections in October 2024, the timing has been undesirable and limits opportunity for detailed review, briefing and alignment with Council meeting cycles."

Greater South Coast

"We also consider that the limited timeframe allowed for the initial consultation (noting the first VTP is to be published in July 2025) may limit the capacity for meaningful feedback and collaboration from stakeholders, particularly in consideration of rural councils, who are often under-resourced in their capacity to provide considered strategic feedback/documentation."

Central Highlands



Previous engagement experiences

This theme includes a significant amount of feedback about prior engagement experiences. There are many references to negative experiences with existing and planned projects. Community division is attributed to these experiences and they have also resulted in doubts about current and future engagement and doubts about the opportunities for regional development.

"It now appears that cowboy operations can create division and angst within rural communities by contacting individual landholders re access to their land for turbines for a proposed wind farm, whether the areas are in a REZ or not. It also appears that they can totally ignore the impact such a development would have on the cohesiveness of the impacted local communities. Such behaviour is untenable."

No region selected

"The way the process of development of wind 'farms' by unscrupulous and sometimes quite shady businesses, has had no regulation or code of conduct imposed on them by the state. It is hard to think of another practice that is as unregulated as this."

No region selected

"Frustration with wind farm developer behaviour. Wind development in Victoria so far has caused anxiety and division within communities. There is a lack of information about where projects will be built and how they will connect to the grid."

Greater South Coast



Traditional Owner feedback

Over the past 2 years, VicGrid has participated in various roundtables, conferences, and had ongoing engagements with Traditional Owner groups, hearing about the barriers and opportunities for First Peoples and Traditional Owners in the energy transition.

Feedback themes include:

- the need to map cultural heritage to minimise impact on Country;
- the need to engage with Traditional Owners and First Peoples on ways to create benefits for communities through the energy transition; and
- the limited capacity and resourcing of groups to engage with the energy transition.

Feedback from engagement with Traditional Owners have highlighted the importance of mapping cultural heritage across Victoria to protect sensitive and significant sites. Concerns about biodiversity and water systems has also been raised. Registered Aboriginal Parties across the state noted the difficulty in resourcing this important cultural heritage mapping work and limitations in their capacity to engage with VicGrid in a way that supports a self-determined approach with communities. It has been highlighted that while Registered Aboriginal Parties and First Peoples communities hold information on sensitive sites, much of Victoria's cultural heritage has not been mapped and this presents challenges for protecting cultural values.

Feedback from engagement with Traditional Owners and First Peoples has highlighted that the energy transition presents opportunities to better care for and heal Country, while ensuring meaningful, long-term benefits for First Peoples communities. Feedback highlighted the need to engage early in the process, in alignment with principles of free, prior, informed consent.

There is a need to enable Victoria's First Peoples to walk together with VicGrid to uplift capacity to progress energy infrastructure planning and projects in a way that protects Country and maintains cultural and spiritual values and heritage.

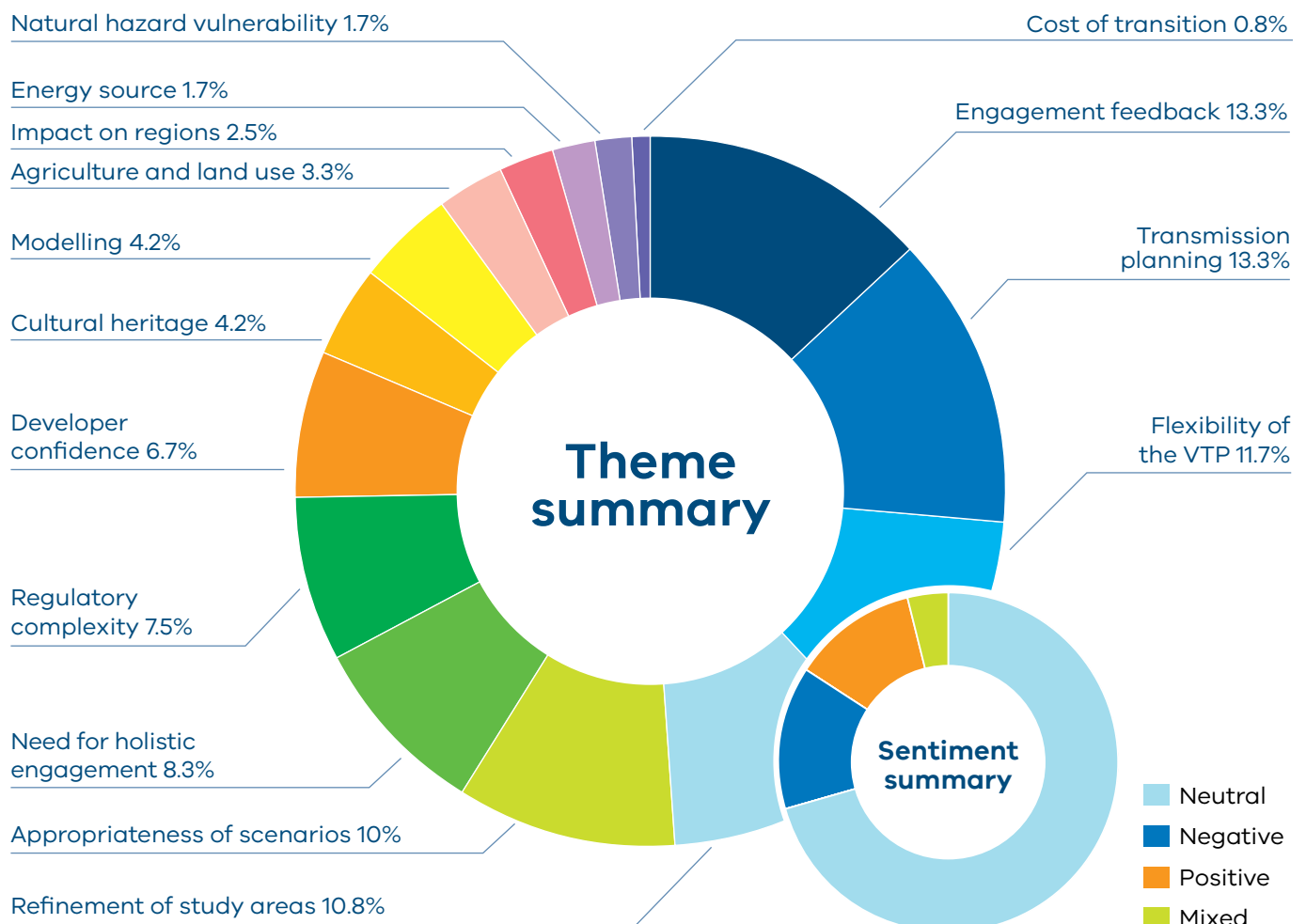
VicGrid is seeking to partner with Registered Aboriginal Parties to understand the support groups will need to input meaningfully into the process, including investigating the study area and narrowing it to draft proposed renewable energy zones.

Industry feedback

We received 47 submissions from industry providing a rich body of feedback and insight into energy and broader industry needs and experience. Feedback from industry was broadly supportive of the VTP, offering various suggestions. Some of these related specifically to the guidelines and some to the study area.

Key themes include feedback on engagement, transmission planning, the flexibility of the VTP, the methodology to identify draft proposed renewable energy zones (REZs) and the appropriateness of engagement. There are also many comments about the need for holistic engagement, issues with regulatory complexity and fostering developer confidence.

Figure 4: Major themes and sentiment from all channels



Industry themes include:



Engagement feedback

There were several concerns raised about the robustness of engagement across community and Traditional Owners. This includes questions on how feedback will be applied, guardrails in place to ensure transparency and suggestions for frameworks and methods to conduct engagement. Industry expressed concern about the impact if engagement was not undertaken on a genuine basis, with the intent that it be incorporated into the 2025 (and subsequent) VTP. There was also some appreciation for the scope and style of engagement.

"Provide further information about how VicGrid's community engagement model and associated objectives will be operationalised. For example, the engagement model could describe how it will facilitate an ongoing conversation with communities in addition to engaging within prescribed windows typical of standard consultation practices. It could also share what commitments VicGrid could make to provide accessible information to communities to 'myth bust' why energy infrastructure is required and how that infrastructure may or may not impact them."



Modelling

This covers feedback and comments on the modelling methodology. Suggestions included assessing marginal loss factors and including renewable generation costs at the long-run marginal cost of each technology. This theme also encompasses the sentiment that modelling is an important tool in the planning process, but VicGrid should not be overly reliant on it.

"While such modelling is important in the planning process, we therefore recommend that VicGrid not be overly reliant on this modelling."



Transmission planning

This theme expresses an urgency to deliver transmission to support the transition. It included feedback that lack of visibility on future transmission solutions impacts developer confidence. Also included in this theme are suggestions about including non-network solutions as a complimentary solution to new transmission.

"We recommend that VicGrid assess the location, capacity and timelines for the transmission build and be flexible and allow developers to determine the location and type generation to be connected to each REZ."



Regulatory complexity

There was feedback from generator developers about the complexity of approvals processes at both state and federal levels delaying timely investment decisions and the importance of alignment between state and federal planning processes.

"We recommend that the Victorian Transmission Plan considers a coordinated approach with other jurisdictions regarding the timing and commercial structures of projects brought to market, ensuring alignment and optimal resource allocation."



Flexibility of the VTP process

There was feedback received about how future developments, including emerging technologies, generation mix variations, and high-impact-low-probability events could be addressed by the VTP. This includes questions about the frequency of the VTP, its intersection with other key documents such as the Australian Energy Market Operator's Integrated System Plan (AEMO's ISP) and the Victorian Annual Planning Report (VAPR).

"The implementation of innovative technologies like SmartValve in Victoria's electricity network offers a promising path for grid enhancement. In recent years, this technology has been used in other states, such as NSW. This technology provides a cost-effective and efficient method for increasing grid capacity, ensuring reliable power delivery to Victorian consumers while advancing the state's sustainability goals. VicGrid should review the recent projects, emerging network and renewable energy zone plans of other jurisdictions to ensure that innovations such as SmartValve are integrated to the future VTP wherever possible."



Process to identify REZs

This theme covers feedback focused on how the study area will be narrowed down to draft proposed REZs, including suggestions and input about different areas of the state. Some submissions advocated for reassessing certain regions or tier assignments within a region, mentioning existing buffer zones and wind exclusion zones. Others pointed to the need to balance infrastructure requirements, land use, community sentiment and network access arrangements to ensure Victoria's REZs are conducive to investment. There were also suggestions for establishing a co-design process with developers, similar to an approach used in NSW.

"To promote the plan's effectiveness, the criteria for selecting REZs should be broad and include community sentiment, where the energy resources are, and where generators want to locate. The VTP should also include the necessary transmission investment to ensure that electricity generated in the REZs can reach demand centres."



Need for holistic engagement

Many industry submissions noted the guidelines did not contain information about other issues or concerns such as access, connections and community benefits. Feedback also asked for further information about the relationship between the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and VicGrid, and how existing projects would be considered.

"The details of access arrangements are therefore important inputs to the development of potential projects located inside and outside of REZs. To ensure that industry can continue to progress potential project developments in Victoria, VicGrid should engage with stakeholders early on potential access schemes under the VTP. This includes consultation on the proposed grid impact assessments for projects connecting outside of REZs, and any access arrangements that would apply to offshore wind projects connecting onshore to the Victorian grid."



Developer confidence

This theme covers feedback related to the value proposition of REZs and the importance of providing developers with confidence to promote investment. Developers are seeking commitment about curtailment, to provide some assurance about the revenue potential of their investments. Feedback also raised the importance of knowing where network capacity exists. There is also reference to the material complexities of developing projects in Australia, such as connections, onerous planning processes, social licence concerns and significant competition from other international jurisdictions for limited capital.

The importance of understanding benefits arrangements is also stressed as a key driver for developer confidence.

"When designing Victorian REZs we recommend that VicGrid consider the specific value proposition for developers to locate in a REZ. Driving investment in a REZ comes down to value for money, which is effectively the trade-off between the access fees levied and the various benefits to locating in a REZ."



How this feedback will be applied

Below is a summary of how feedback from different stakeholder groups has been applied. Please see the [2024 VTP Guidelines Changes Summary report](#) for detailed information regarding changes.

As mentioned, feedback on the study area is open until 30 September. A more detailed final engagement report will be published by 31 October 2024, sharing what we heard about the study area and how it will be considered in the process to identify draft proposed renewable energy zones (REZs).

Application of community feedback

Guiding principles feedback

- Feedback about the guiding principles will inform the multi-criteria analysis in step 2 of the VTP methodology. This analysis enables quantitative and qualitative factors to be considered alongside energy market modelling as the study area is narrowed to draft proposed REZs. Guiding principles feedback showed the importance communities place on minimising land-use, cultural and environmental impacts. While land-use values have been considered as part of the strategic land use assessment to identify the initial study area, land-use constraints are also being factored into the multi-criteria analysis, alongside community preferences, generator interest and regional development indicators. The guiding principles feedback will also be used to assign weights to the factors considered in the analysis.
- Feedback also showed the importance communities place on avoiding overdevelopment to minimise impacts on regions. Communities asked for more information about how existing generation projects would be considered in developing the VTP. In response, we've included more details about how in-service and committed generation projects will be considered in the multi-criteria analysis.
- Respondents also provided additional feedback about the guiding principles, including why they had chosen their scores, and additional information. This has been collected and centralised and will be used to make more granular regional and local decisions about the geographic location and development of REZs and input into the development of the 2025 VTP and beyond.

The strategic land use assessment was applied to create the study area map as the starting point for investigations. As such, it has served as a tool for interested stakeholders to provide further insight about the study area.

Study area feedback is still open. The section below describes how the feedback will be used once all feedback is received. Feedback will also be directly addressed in a final engagement report to be published by 31 October 2024.

The purpose of the place-based engagement on the draft VTP Guidelines and study area was to gain important insights and understanding about regional concerns, values and sentiment. Feedback on the study area is still being collected and will be considered during the process, as parts of the study area are investigated and narrowed to identify draft proposed REZs. This feedback will be used in a number of ways:

- Place-based feedback, specifically agricultural land use, will be considered as we investigate parts of the study area. There is also work under way to consider the compatibility of different types of farming practices and energy generation and transmission infrastructure. Concerns relating to buffer zones and housing density are being further considered as the study area is investigated.
- Concerns about region-specific biodiversity, including endangered species, will also be considered when investigating smaller areas within the study area. Meanwhile, there is work under way to further investigate the use of datasets for specific species and collaboration with other government departments as part of a whole-of-government approach to protecting Victoria's biodiversity.
- There was a body of feedback concerning natural hazard vulnerability, specifically fire and flood events. This ranged from region-specific insights to concerns about firefighting and renewable energy infrastructure. Natural hazards and climate vulnerability were integrated into the strategic land use assessment and this additional feedback will be tested against existing datasets. Concerns about firefighting around renewable energy infrastructure point to opportunities to work with regional stakeholders and the CFA to investigate and address these concerns.
- There was a bulk of feedback about the cumulative impact of generation project development and the need to take existing and planned energy projects in a region into account. In response, more detail has been provided in the guidelines, explaining how the methodology will take into account the size and location of in-service and committed generation projects. This will ensure the overall level of development in a region is considered when determining the most appropriate locations for siting future generation across the State.
- There was doubt expressed that hosting renewable generation and transmission would benefit communities. VicGrid is currently working through feedback on the draft REZ Community Benefits Plan, which introduces initiatives to help address this issue. Community engagement on the draft plan was undertaken from 14 May 2024 to 25 June 2024 and the final plan is in development. More information about the proposed benefits has now been included in the guidelines. The proposed REZ Community Benefits Plan is a framework for allocating direct benefits to communities hosting new transmission and renewable energy infrastructure. This involves coordination of financial contributions from transmission, storage and generation projects developed across the state. VicGrid's approach incorporates community views from the start to help make better decisions, minimise impacts and maximise tailored benefits for communities. Community benefit initiatives aim to establish and maintain positive long-term connections between new energy projects and local communities contributing to the future of the regions where projects are located.
- There was significant feedback on prior experiences with renewable generation and transmission projects. This relates to one of VicGrid's key purposes and VicGrid will continue to work to provide better outcomes for communities

Engagement feedback

- There was a range of feedback on engagement including about style, duration, location, feedback form structure, and advertising and awareness of community events. All feedback has been recorded and will be applied to enhance future engagement.
- There were also questions on how feedback will be applied throughout VTP development. A section outlining engagement opportunities has been included in the draft VTP Guidelines. To maintain timely and transparent feedback processes, VicGrid remains committed to providing updates to stakeholders using channels such as this interim engagement report, a more comprehensive final engagement report and individual briefings as appropriate.
- Local councils stress the need for ongoing collaboration with councils to align on local planning and policy development. VicGrid remains committed to collaborating with local councils throughout the development of the VTP.



Application of Traditional Owner feedback

Feedback has highlighted the importance of mapping cultural heritage across Victoria to protect sensitive and significant sites. A clear message was that the available information used to understand areas of cultural heritage is incomplete.

Feedback from First Peoples and Traditional Owners on renewable energy and transmission development is a vital input in the process. For example, on cultural heritage mapping, feedback from First Peoples and Traditional Owners will be used as an input to the strategic land use assessment model to progressively include relevant tangible and intangible Aboriginal and historical cultural values to help avoid places of cultural significance. This will be done in conjunction with the more detailed assessments for proposed REZs and any new transmission projects for the 2025 VTP, and processes following publication of the 2025 VTP.

Note, the strategic land use assessment does not replace regulatory requirements. The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic) and the Heritage Act 2017 (Vic), along with other relevant State and Commonwealth legislation, still applies to any future works.

Feedback providing insights into specific sites and areas of significance will be applied as parts of the study area are investigated and narrowed to draft proposed REZs.

VicGrid will continue to work with Traditional Owners and First Peoples to support and empower them to assist in mapping and assessments.

Application of industry feedback

The feedback from industry has been robustly examined to identify potential impacts to the draft VTP Guidelines, the 2025 VTP and related policy matters. Please see the 2024 VTP Guidelines Changes Summary report for detailed information regarding changes in the guidelines and considerations.

Need for holistic engagement:

- In response to calls to provide information about related policy areas, the guidelines have been updated to provide reference to related policies such as community benefits and network access arrangements, and the associated ongoing engagement with stakeholders.
- The relationship between VicGrid and AEMO is highlighted in the guidelines. VicGrid will continue to make ongoing efforts to communicate pertinent matters to industry through our established engagement methods, including briefings, one-on-one meetings and webinars.

Appropriateness of scenarios

- VicGrid notes the feedback on scenarios, specifically regarding scenario 3 and the potential for greater delays in delivering infrastructure projects across the NEM. Feedback on scenarios has been considered and changes have been made to cover high-demand situations with additional supporting justification. Scenario 2 has been updated to reference the data sources for load demands and to incorporate Marinus Link Stage 2. The call for offshore wind to be included in planning is also noted. VicGrid will also take the feedback to inform its weighting of the 3 scenarios and sensitivity analysis.

Flexibility of the VTP

- While the VTP will remain on its legislated timeline, it is part of a broader set of complementary planning documents including AEMO's ISPs and the Victorian Annual Planning Report. The timing and sequence are designed to allow for a balance between providing certainty for community and investors about renewable energy development and flexibility to respond to evolving circumstances and strategic integration of renewable energy sources as they are commissioned. The planning cycle allows for integration with existing planning documents allowing them to inform each other.

Modelling

- Feedback on modelling included suggestions for using single optimised models through to specific inputs that should be considered, and comments on the reliance on modelling. This has all been noted but does not require a change to the methodology outlined in the guidelines.
- It should also be noted that energy market modelling is one input into the process to identify draft proposed REZs. A multi-criteria analysis will enable quantitative and qualitative impacts relating to land use, community preferences, regional development and developer/generator interest to also shape the process. It is a dynamic process that aims to actively incorporate feedback received through ongoing engagement with communities and industry stakeholders.

Engagement feedback

- VicGrid remains committed to working in partnership with First Peoples as distinct rights holders to Country and Sea Country. In addition, VicGrid is committed to implementing a new way of planning energy infrastructure that gives landholders, communities and industry a real voice.
- Feedback has been considered and many of the suggestions such as approaches to engagement with First Peoples, place-based engagement, the creation of industry reference groups, and use of the IAP2 framework are all part of our engagement strategy and approach. Wording in the guidelines about engagement has been uplifted to clearly reflect this.
- Documents such as this Interim Engagement Report - What We Heard and the more fulsome final engagement report (to be published by 31 October 2024) aim to provide additional assurance of VicGrid's commitment to ongoing engagement efforts and meaningful consultation.



Transmission planning

- Concerns about the urgency of delivering transmission infrastructure and how this influences developer confidence has been noted and will be considered in the broader engagement planning process and in the role VicGrid plays in guiding interactions with developers. This feedback will be considered as we work to provide certainty for communities and investors in renewable energy, and flexibility for transmission planning to respond to evolving circumstances.

Process to identify draft proposed REZs

- Industry feedback about attributes of specific parts of the study area will be included as part of the multi-criteria analysis which will help assess the study area as it is narrowed to draft proposed REZs. Specifically, responses to the generator and developer survey have been noted and will be considered. Industry feedback will be considered in conjunction with the existing data sources and community feedback.

Developer confidence

- Alongside strengthening community engagement, the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework reforms that guide VicGrid's work aim to foster confidence and a strong investment environment for renewable energy infrastructure. The policy reforms aim to drive timely coordination of investment in transmission, generation and storage infrastructure across Victoria's REZs, tailored to Victoria's energy needs. The concerns about how to encourage, and not erode, developer confidence have been noted. While they aren't reflected with changes in the 2024 VTP Guidelines, the concerns will be an important consideration in ongoing policy development and engagement. In addition, the 2024 VTP Guidelines more clearly explain the value proposition to developers of locating a project in a REZ.



Next steps

The feedback received on the draft VTP Guidelines has been applied to the guidelines and will continue to shape decisions as the draft 2025 VTP is developed. Please see the 2024 VTP Guidelines Changes Summary report for details of the changes.

- Feedback on the study area is open until 30 September 2024. A more comprehensive Final Engagement Report - What We Heard will be published by 31 October 2024, which will detail the feedback received and how it will be considered and applied as we narrow the study area to draft proposed REZs. This process will consider factors including economic costs, land use values, community preferences, regional development opportunities, generator interest, existing levels of development and resource potential. For each area being investigated we will identify how much wind or solar capacity to build, how much battery storage capacity each needs and when those projects should be brought online.
- Next, we will identify what upgrades and new transmission infrastructure will be needed to support the new generation capacity that will be connecting. We will also identify the order transmission projects should be developed. Combinations of projects will be assessed under different scenarios – or potential futures. Scenarios take into account the Victorian Government's energy policies, energy demand, the adoption of consumer energy resources (such as solar panels, batteries and electric vehicles) and the closure of existing power stations. The combination of transmission projects that is most robust across all scenarios will be identified as the draft optimal pathway, and released for feedback as part of the draft 2025 VTP.
- Community and industry feedback will shape the final optimal pathway, which will be published in the final 2025 VTP in mid-2025. The 2025 VTP will outline the transmission infrastructure projects required to enable renewable energy zone development over the next 15 years.

We will continue to seek to partner with First Peoples, work closely with communities from a place-based perspective, and engage with industry throughout the planning, investment, and development stages of Victoria's energy transition.

Appendix 1

Engagement events

Community events

Type	Location	When	Type	Location	When
Drop-in	Warracknabeal	29 July	Drop-in	Sale	7-8 Aug
Webinar	Community webinar 1	29 July	Drop-in	Stawell	8-9 Aug
Drop-in	Birchip	30-31 July	Drop-in	Colac	8 Aug
Webinar	Community webinar 2	1 Aug	Drop-in	Ballan	12-13 Aug
Drop-in	Horsham	1-2 Aug	Drop-in	Korumburra	14-15 Aug
Drop-in	Sheepvention	4-5 Aug	Drop-in	Rochester	14-15 Aug
Drop-in	Mortlake	6 Aug	Drop-in	Shepparton	15-16 Aug
Drop-in	Kerang	6-7 Aug	Drop-in	Foster	22 Aug

Traditional owner

Type	Location	Type	Location
Briefing	Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation	Briefing	Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
Briefing	Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation	Webinar	Traditional Owner Briefing
Briefing	Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation	briefing	Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
Briefing	Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation		

Industry events

Type	Location	Type	Location
Briefing	AEMO briefing	Briefing	AEC member briefing
Briefing	VFF briefing	Briefing	CEC internal briefing
Briefing	TCV briefing	Briefing	EUAA internal briefing
Webinar	CEIG member briefing	Briefing	SEC Briefing
Briefing	AEC briefing	Briefing	CEC Member Briefing
Briefing	ENA briefing	Briefing	AMEC Briefing
Webinar	Industry webinar		



Contact us



Phone: 1800 418 341

Email: vicgrid@deeca.vic.gov.au

Deaf, hearing or speech impaired? Please contact the National Relay Service on 133 677 or communications.gov.au/accesshub/nrs



Need an interpreter? Contact Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450 (within Australia) or visit www.tisnational.gov.au

ISBN 978-1-76136-931-5 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-76136-932-2 (pdf/online/MS word)

Disclaimer: The information in this document is current at the time of printing, may be subject to change and should not be relied upon. Please visit vicgrid.vic.gov.au for the latest updates.

