

MARCH 17 2021 - 4:00AM

Western Victoria Transmission Network Project: Community angst as drop-in sessions begin

<https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/7169727/community-angst-as-powerline-project-drop-in-sessions-begin/>

Alex Ford



Clarks Hill and District Power Alliance members Vicki Johnson and Helma Slater in front of the Miners Rest information session. Picture: Lachlan Bence

Drop-in information sessions for the proposed Western Victoria Transmission Network Project have begun, with mixed reactions from community members.

Inside the Miners Rest Community Hall on Tuesday, AusNet representatives sat down with attendees one-on-one to answer questions and explain the Environmental Effects Statement process.

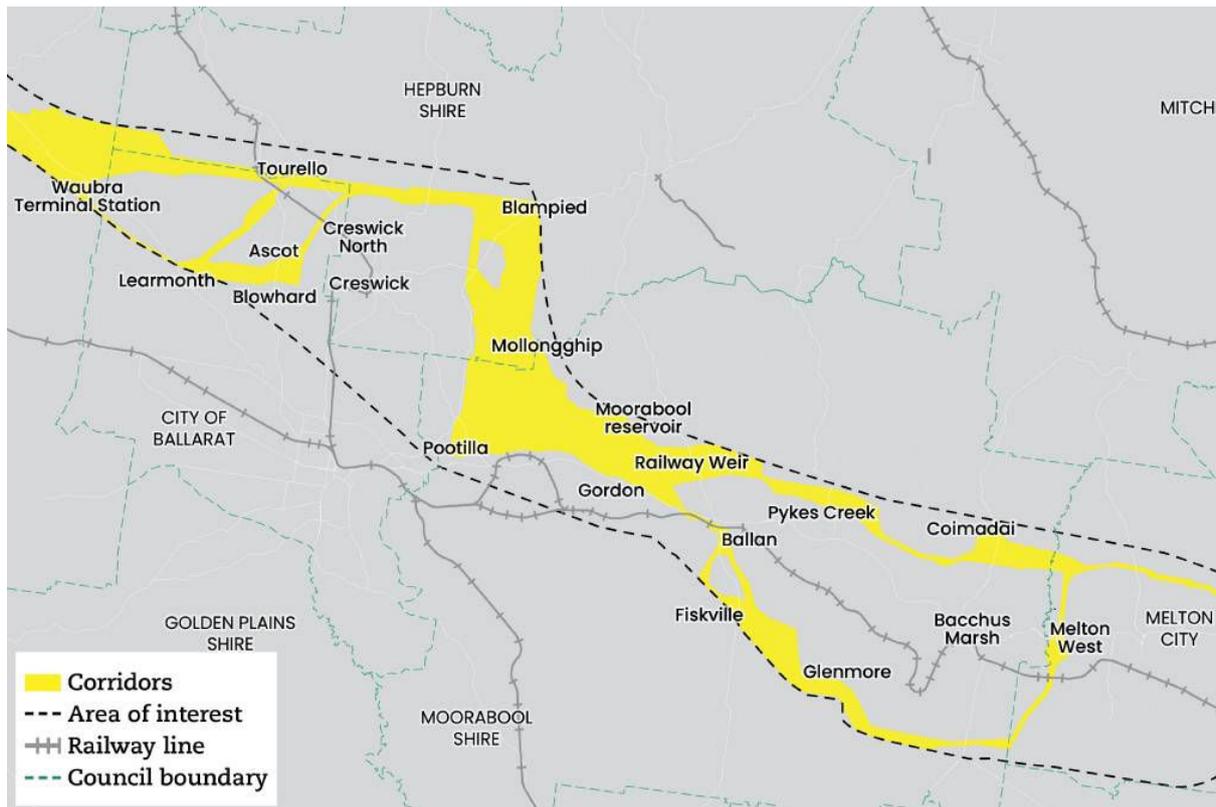
While there was no new information on the project, the timeline for narrowing the current area of interest was reiterated as being expected mid-year.

READ MORE: [Concerns continue after narrowed map release](#)

Outside, community opposition groups handed out flyers and signed up residents for mailing lists - the prevailing mood was of scepticism.

Vicki Johnson, from the Clarks Hill and District Power Alliance opposition group, said the sessions were an opportunity to build connections.

"The biggest thing is to try and connect with the people on this western end of the line - the eastern side is part of the Moorabool and Central Highlands group, they work as a big umbrella group.



[Click the map to see the full interactive version](#)

"There's an awful lot of work and connection being done that we're concerned this side doesn't know much about, and we're trying to connect with the community here, help them, support them, resource them, help them find their voice."

Ms Johnson said there was about an hour-long wait outside Monday's session in Newlyn, where more than 130 people attended.

"I find it's a tick-a-box exercise, they frame it by saying 'we want to listen to your concerns' - now, they've had sessions, they've been getting emails, they've been getting lobbying from politicians, there were over 3500 pins put on the interactive map with all our concerns," she said.

"If they haven't heard our concerns yet, they're never going to.

"People are saying the same stuff, they're getting frustrated, they're asking the same questions and getting very squirrely answers."

The Western Victoria Transmission Network Project aims to connect new renewable energy generators past Ararat to the grid with high-voltage powerlines stretching to Sydenham.

The consultation process has been repeatedly criticised by landowners and councils across the entire area of interest, which covers prime agricultural land.

The five-year project is currently undergoing an Environmental Effects Statement study which will require sign off from the state government.

All drop-in information sessions will run from 2pm to 7pm, at the following locations:

- March 17: Gordon Recreation Reserve
- March 18: Victoria Park Pavillion, Daylesford

- March 22: Joel Joel Hall
- March 23: Balliang East Soldiers Memorial Hall
- March 24: Myrniong Hall
- March 29: Darley Park
- March 30: Waubra Football Netball Club
- March 31: Melton Community Hall