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Powerline Bushfire Safety Program

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| Private Overhead Electric Line Scheme  Application Guidelines |

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| Acknowledgment  We acknowledge and respect Victorian 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 partner, and meaningfully engage, 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. |
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What is the Private Overhead Electric Line Scheme?

## Overview

These Application Guidelines provide information on the eligibility requirements for the Private Overhead Electric Line (POEL) Scheme.

This document provides information on the application process and how planned works will be carried out.

The POEL Scheme is a component of the Powerline Bushfire Safety Program (PBSP), and is overseen by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

## Scope

The POEL Scheme is open to all eligible POELs in 26 targeted LGAs across Victoria which contains areas of high powerline bushfire risk.

## Background

The POEL Scheme builds on the success of the Powerline Replacement Fund (PRF) which ran between 2013 and 2019. The $200 million PRF program increased community safety by utilising specialist bushfire risk analytics to target POELs identified in high-risk locations across Victoria. The PRF closed in May 2019 after replacing High Voltage powerlines and POELs in 33 priority LGAs.

The Project was completed two years ahead of schedule and within budget. The PRF project:

* Replaced 798 POEL projects, undergrounding 192.8 km of bare-wire powerlines
* Delivered 65 High Voltage projects, undergrounding 541 km of bare-wire powerlines.

## Objectives

**Key objectives of the POEL Scheme**

* Assist in the recovery of bushfire affected areas, including those impacted by the 2019-20 summer bushfires.
* Increase community safety by reducing the risk posed by bare-wire and defective powerlines.
* Stimulate bushfire affected economies by generating local jobs.

Who can apply?

**Interested applicants who wish to apply for the POEL Scheme must meet the following requirements:**

Own a POEL on a property within the LGAs of either: Alpine, Ballarat, Baw Baw, Benalla, Colac Otway, Corangamite, East Gippsland, Greater Bendigo, Hepburn, Indigo, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mansfield, Mount Alexander, Moyne, Murrindindi, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Southern Grampians, Strathbogie, Surf Coast, Towong, Wangaratta, Wellington, Wodonga and Yarra Ranges.

The POEL must be in active use (connected and energised).

The POEL must be either:

fully or partially bare-wire (uninsulated), or

subject to a current urgent or significant defect notice from AusNet Services or Powercor (e.g., for a deteriorating or condemned power pole or for failing insulation).

The POEL is located in a High Bushfire Risk Area as designated by the Country Fire Authority.

**Applicants will be ineligible in the following situations:**

Where it is reasonable to conclude that the POEL has been rendered defective due to damage directly caused by the owner or occupant of the property, or persons acting on their behalf.

Works cannot commence within the timeline of the POEL Scheme.

The POEL is already undergrounded, in the process of being undergrounded or where you have already contracted a Registered Electrical Contractor to commence the works.

What are the funding details?

## What will be funded?

The following will be funded under the POEL Scheme:

* The cost of removing an existing eligible overhead POEL.
* The cost of replacement with a powerline which conforms with the appropriate legislation and regulations.
* The cost of site remediation works directly related to undergrounding the POEL.

*Note: Where it is not feasible to put the powerline underground, or where the total costs of doing so including site remediation would exceed $75,000 (excluding GST), the POEL may instead be replaced with an insulated overhead powerline as allowed under the legislation and regulations.*

## What will not be funded?

The POEL Scheme will not fund the following activities:

* The purchase of land.
* Routine or ongoing maintenance activities.
* Activities or works which have already commenced or are complete.
* Where duplicate services are in operation or planned for a community which is participating in the scheme.
* Recurrent operating costs, for example, rent and utility costs, or activities establishing expectations of ongoing funding.
* Activities or works located outside of the local government areas targeted by this POEL Scheme or the state of Victoria.
* Regeneration of the land above an undergrounded line.

# Assessment of Applications

DEECA will assess applications.

All applications will be assessed against the eligibility criteria detailed in the ‘Who Can Apply’ section above. Applications will be assessed as they are received.

What are the funding conditions?

Funding is made available on a ‘first-come, first-served’ basis subject to all other requirements set out in these guidelines. DEECA reserves the right to close the expressions of interest period before the advertised date should the allocated program funding be exhausted.

Electrical works must be undertaken by an electrical contractor registered by Energy Safe Victoria (Registered Electrical Contractor or REC). Works will be inspected by an electrical inspector licensed by Energy Safe Victoria (Licensed Electrical Inspector or LEI). The relevant electricity distributor will carry out de-energisation and re-energisation of the powerline.

These additional contractual relationships are generally managed by the REC as part of their quote. **DEECA will not be involved in contractual arrangements between the POEL owner and the REC, or in assisting the applicant or the REC in organising such matters.**

The applicant must meet all the criteria to be deemed eligible. Successful applicants will receive a notification email from DEECA outlining the next steps and will also receive a list of approved RECs for consideration.

# What is the Application Process?

To apply for the POEL Scheme, applicants will need to fill in the application form, located on the DEECA Energy website: <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/electricity/powerline-replacement-fund>.

Applications must be submitted through the Grants Online Portal.

# What is the notification Process?

If your online application is successful, you will receive an email notification from DEECA. All decisions are final and are not subject to further review. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed as to the reason for the outcome.

![A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated]()

Figure 1. High level overview of application and notification process

# Key Dates

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| Application period | O Open now until 24 February 2023, or until funds are exhausted. |

# Checklist

Read these guidelines and the information about this program, including the FAQ, at: <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/electricity/powerline-replacement-fund> before applying and complete the following checklist.

Have you:

 read these guidelines carefully?

 confirmed that you are in an eligible LGA?

 checked if you are eligible for support, including that you have a POEL?

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