

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P002

**Name:** [WITHHELD]

**Location:** Hepburn, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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There are so many reasons why increasing the High Voltage transmissions lines across our rural region is not supported in this area:

- \* The current lines provide well for the local requirements
- \* The visible stain of the towers on the lovely rural landscape is ugly
- \* Installation impact alone will cause significant damage and a scar
- \* this is a tourist destination celebrating wide natural vistas visited as a destination by travellers far & wide and the ugly legacy will destroy the landscape
- \* The increased danger for fires in a fire-prone area covered by both natural and cultivated forests
- \* High ambient radiation impacting grazing stock and produce within proximity of the towers

If it is so very important to complete your power grid, please provide evidence as to why a trenched solution would not be a better solution - with less impact on flora, fauna, landscape, & low firehazards.

Some concession to the local community is required here.

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P003**

**Name:** Gary Saunders

**Location:** Stawell, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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I am a resident of Stawell and have read about the proposed options and I am convinced that option 5 is the best.

Thanks for the opportunity to have input into this important protect.

Sincerely,

Gary

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P004

**Name:** Darma Yeomans

**Location:** Blampied, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Response to AEMO'S Victoria New South Wales Interconnector West (VNIWest) Project

While it is a positive move that AEMO has moved the terminal station from Mount Prospect, the planned route through the Hepburn Shire remains unchanged. In fact the outcome of this route has worsened with significantly larger 500Kv towers now being proposed

It is clear to me that the community is still not being listened to.

As a landowner and resident, I strongly oppose AEMO'S (Ausnet's) high voltage transmission line of 500 kv transmission towers, proposed to go through my local community of Blampied and Kingston.

I have written before, outlining my concerns that this route will impact my land, which is part of Ausnet's Northern Option around the Hepburn Lagoon and part of a designated Significant Landscape Overlay(SLO), assessed by the Hepburn Shire to protect State Significant landscape from inappropriate development, and to conserve this environment for future generations.

This is an area of outstanding volcanic outcrops and the AEMO/Ausnet corridor ignores this overlay. The proposed easement would cover 20% of my land and continue across neighbouring land, also part of the overlay. And it impacts the Hepburn Lagoon, a significant wetlands of natural unspoilt beauty.

Trees planted within proposed easements (including on my land) can be destroyed, negating efforts to create wildlife corridors, biodiversity and carbon capture to reduce green house emissions.

With the newly proposed 500Kv towers, I would feel extremely vulnerable living in a high bushfire area, (with historical fires and frequent fires all Summer and Autumn) The CFA cannot fight under these lines, helicopters will not fly above them and the towers themselves have a history of falling over and starting fires. (The cost of the Cressy collapse of \$25.04million was passed onto energy consumers). The recommendations from the Bushfire Royal Commission are for all power lines to be underground.

These areas of rich volcanic soils in Hepburn Shire are recognised as highest value Class 1 productive agricultural land, which feeds Victoria, Australia and exports worldwide. Farmers's ability to run their farms will be adversely affected due to restrictions imposed on farming near these towers. Local farmers, including cropping and potato, have estimated their production loss at around 30%. Thousands are employed in Ballarat related to this agricultural production and jobs and incomes are predicted to be lost.

The Central Goldfields area is the best historically significant goldfields left in the world. This area is proposed for a UNESCO World Heritage Listing because of its uniqueness. The Victorian government is supporting this bid, yet the Towers would ultimately destroy the very same landscape.

AEMO/Ausnet also ignores inconvenient findings re cancer health risks in powerline studies examining EMFs. The distance of the proposed corridor from my land is less than half the recommended minimum 600m. Many people within AEMO/Ausnet's proposed corridors are similarly affected.

I would not be able to remain on my property. I am recovering from a recent major operation for cancer and could not further risk my health living in close proximity to high voltage powerlines.

This presents me with a huge financial problem: The value of lifestyle properties has trebled in recent years but real estate agents say my property would be reduced to land value, and at 4 ha this would be very little. Ausnet compensation is known to be pitiful and does not reflect property market value (or loss of future earnings).

Effectively, people like me are subsidising this cheap project with their life-savings. We are also losing the home, environment and work that we love. The true cost of AEMO and Ausnet's project and their cheap tender should include the \$millions that are being stolen from small disenfranchised individuals.

There are other options for a high voltage transmission line....suggestions have been made of alternative routes using existing easements and not going through highest value agricultural land, nor significant landscape. A transmission station should be in an industrial site in a major rural town. I understand that Geelong, would welcome the transmission station.

There are electricity infrastructure projects in Gippsland that will use undergrounding for the land component. Why doesn't Western Victoria deserve similarly best practice? Moorabool Council's independent report concludes undergrounding HVDC cables is a technically feasible, more reliable and efficient alternative to WVTNP.

The cheapest tender is not always the cheapest nor the best for present or future generations when the true costs are considered: human, economic, environmental and food security.

I implore AEMO to be an Australian leader in power transmission innovation and look at alternatives. Transmission of green energy should be done in an equally green and sustainable way, not at the expense of present and future generations who will be severely impacted.

I believe this project has been ill-considered from the beginning and this latest version does nothing to address the Project's considerable flaws. It needs to go back to the drawing-board.

Yours sincerely,

Darma Yeomans

## **ADDENDUM TO SUBMISSION**

Adding to my last response to this latest design:

I find it extremely disappointing that major electrical grid infrastructure decisions, affecting present and future generations of Australians appear to be made without intelligent research, let alone common sense.

In the latest version of AEMO's VNI West design, the Western Renewables Link route remains the same through prime farmland and high bushfire prone land and with towers of considerably increased height. This does nothing to address the considerable problems I have outlined in previous correspondence to AEMO and the Ombudsman.

(Perhaps part of this poor decision-making process is AEMO'S outsourcing of route research and design to a subcontractor..Ausnet, who has clearly demonstrated from the beginning, their incompetence... which continues. I can only assume that their's was the cheapest tender?)

It is not too late to reconsider the whole route design and project.

For instance, a route through state and community owned lands should have been considered, which would be more straight-line, offering not only shorter route benefits but creating increased protection for communities from improved control over bush fires. This would be achieved by allowing an access for the heavy equipment needed to safely fight fires and also give safe access for the basic protection of backburning to reduce fuel loads that would save lives (human and animal), as underlined by Royal Commissions into killer bush fires in both 2009 and 2020.

The shortest distance to allow this connection is for the transmission line to be routed from Bulgana southward to meet the existing high-capacity transmission lines.

This change would reduce project cost considerably, take the least time for delivery, would traverse country of lesser intensive agricultural quality and scenic value and with significantly larger property size than that in the proposed project.

It would also strengthen the Victoria / South Australia links enabling improved stability in the grid during irregular draw needs of either state.

And would also allow a connection target for the future planned off-shore wind farms connection to the grid.

Without apparently considering other design ideas, AMEO accepts the premature retirement of coal fired power stations

The only part of existing coal fired power stations that produce the offending CO<sub>2</sub> gas is the steam boiler. The remaining Turbines/Generators, outgoing electrical substations and transmission lines all are capable of continuing operation if the steam boiler was substituted by a steam supply unit not coal fired. Such a substitution would have substantial economic benefits including, continued employment, far less needs for new transmission lines, and would supply the critical identified need for large rotating generator sets to supply inertia for grid stability and security. Upgrading coal fired boilers to Supercritical steam performance would reduce CO<sub>2</sub>, followed by gas retrofitting the boilers which would halve any CO<sub>2</sub> per electrical unit generated and then finally replacing the boilers with Small Nuclear reactors which reduce CO<sub>2</sub> output to zero as the government requires by 2050.

Small nuclear reactors have been in wide use in submarines and ships for many years and are now being used in remote locations. Small reactors are available for retrofitting to coal fired Power Stations with units able to supply steam to support around 1000MWe now being marketed. An example is the Nuscale VOYGR-12 unit, designed particularly for such coal fired station needs, see <https://www.nuscalepower.com/en/products/voygr-smr-plants>

The recent AUKUS agreement won general community acceptance, underlined by South and Western Australian governments now anticipating future benefits from housing service facilities and future construction possibilities. These developments would appear to clear the way for use of small nuclear reactors at existing coal fired power station sites.

I believe this project has been ill-considered from the beginning and this latest version does nothing to address the Project's considerable flaws. It needs to go back to the drawing board.

Yours sincerely,

Darma Yeomans

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P010**

**Name:** Salv Salanitri

**Location:** Lexton, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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My land is in Lexton,

I have 2 towers proposed on my land.

I was suspicious of the project when it was first proposed and stated back then that the towers and line would end up being much larger.

I was right.

I have only one request, PUT THE LINES UNDERGROUND.

I doubt anyone will even note this submission, I expect we will be steamrolled by the very government we voted for.

Salv Salanitri

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P012**

**Name:** Trevor McGurk

**Location:** Yeungroon, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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To Whom it may Concern,

It is with great sadness I share, that the last 3 weeks of my life has been turned upside down, since learning of the proposed VNI West Interconnector power line coming through our area. I, along with my family live on our family farm in Yeungroon East in the Buloke Shire. We are fourth, fifth and sixth generation, continually farming since 1874. We proudly operate a 1600 hectare mixed farming business, predominately broad acre cropping.

We are merely an average sized farm, and the thought of this massive infrastructure traversing our property will have a massive impact on both our daily operations and overall mental health.

To compound the initial shock of this announcement, we have been given virtually no information or detail of what is proposed. It is obvious that we are classified as the few expendable for the supposed gain of many. It is UNASHAMEDLY APPARENT THAT WE DON'T MATTER. The feeling in our community has shifted from being stunned, to anger and now to a sinking feeling of despondency, bordering on depression. I am fearful that the few young families that have returned to our communities to follow their passion for farming, to develop and care for the land and environment, may return to the work and life they gave up. Some farmers are now actively discouraging their next generation to pursue another career path. This is potentially far more devastating for our farming communities than any droughts, floods, fires, plagues and depressed commodity prices that we have endured. Our resilience is under threat, we suddenly feel irrelevant. In the 'VNI West Consultation Report', released by AEMO and Transgrid, significant weighting was placed on social impact in their multi criteria analysis. The social impact of this proposal and the unknown is rapidly escalating. With no hint of any support, the obvious community reactions are unanimously all negative, with the thought of having our pristine landscape (the same landscape that for generations we have proudly guarded and cared for) wilfully destroyed. For one short moment, PLEASE try to look through our eyes.

With our son, daughter in law and their young family returning to our farm, we have been redesigning the property to facilitate the new technology we have embraced. That is auto steer machinery, probably soon to be autonomous tractors, drones, etc. BUT with the prospect of newly fenced paddocks, being divided by a huge 100 meter easement with massive steel towers to negotiate, this technology we have introduced will become



unworkable. Areas around these huge towers will be an obvious harbour for noxious weeds, who will have to undertake this maintenance? Contaminated heavy machinery entering farmland is an obvious way to introduce new weed species. The compaction following heavy machinery will destroy the fragile soil structure.

Coupled with the many unsolvable working problems come the devaluation of farmland, the common figure we keep hearing is 30% or upward. We could easily lose 60, plus hectares of prime agricultural land (current value\$750,000) and with paddocks divided, these difficult to work areas soon become unprofitable, hence unattractive for potential buyers. With the many seasonal challenges we face, farming is often marginal, this proposed disaster will render these areas unviable. With loss of production and the exit of families, the knock on effect to the local service towns is obvious. Declining populations compound, with shops and businesses closing, school numbers decline, a growing struggle to maintain sporting clubs, service clubs and the many social groups these towns soon disappear, hence YOU contribute to another ghost town filled with empty shops and closed businesses.

Farmers are proud custodians of the land. We honour and cherish all history. We safeguard all cultural heritage and environment, especially indigenous scar trees and other native flora and fauna. It is with a depressive sadness that we visualise these huge structures crossing our landscape and forever destroying all that we have worked so hard to protect and develop.

In summary, the cultural, economic, social and environmental impacts this will have on the many rural communities, could easily be their death knell. Our communities are proud and work hard in challenging times to survive. It is vital that those whom we look to in power, 'strive to support us' and 'not have on their conscious', that they have 'caused our demise'.

Eagerly awaiting your reply.

Yours sincerely

Trevor McGurk.

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P013**

**Name:** John Moloney

**Location:** Lexton, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Hello,

I wish to make the following submission:

I oppose the proposed VNI west and WRL projects in their current form. If the VNI west terminal station is built at Bulgana this will mean a 500kv power line running directly past my property at Lexton as part of WRL

It will ruin the view from my new house and will significantly devalue it also.

If this project had to go ahead at all I would much prefer to see the lines placed underground

I have attached a photograph of the view from my home with the front yard fence in the foreground. Towers from the existing 220kv Waubra-Ararat line that was built in the 1960's are visible and serve as a great visual guide on how 80 meter tall towers might look on the landscape given that the existing ones are only about 40 meters tall. There are much better ways of transmitting electricity around the state than using 60 year old technology.

Regards,

John Moloney

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P014

**Name:** Mark Payne, Cherie Bridges

**Location:** Newlyn, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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We write as impacted property owners/residents.

We live in Newlyn Victoria on a 30 acre property, where we are fortunate enough to enjoy peace privacy and views.

Since the announcement of the Western Renewables tower project we, our neighbours and the surrounding community have suffered a great deal of angst at the prospect of the beautiful countryside being breached by severe ugliness.

This is an area of great significant beauty and history, a richly fertile food bowl in which resides the highest per square km number of volcanoes. It also has the Kingston Ave of Honour established just after WW! a 4 Kilometre Avenue of Elm Trees - moving tribute to the fallen, maintained by volunteers.

Our property and many others in the region have environmental significance overlays over half of our land, on which no buildings can be erected, due to the ancient volcanoes, beauty, eagle eyries etc.

Renewable energy is important and so is significant visual beauty.

It is almost impossible to imagine (though we have all tried many times) the incredible overload of brutal ugliness on a stunning environment that a long line of 80 METRE TOWERS would produce. People come to this Shire and this area

for peaceful environs, for country drives, to stay in, walk in, cycle in, horse ride in a beautiful natural environment.

We feel that there is a form of NIMBYism going on. It is that the decision makers, politicians, management looking for shareholder returns etc., have no connection to this area, it is not in their backyard, so easy to make the decision without considering the irreversible long term damage down to the beauty of the area and the spirit of the residents impacted by it and fighting so hard for sense to be seen before it's too late.

Please try to imagine that this is your outlook (we bought our place as empty land, planted hundreds of plants and relocated a 1910 home from Melbourne which was destined by landfill to enable an apartment block.

Imagine the impact of 80 meter towers in the foreground.

Thank you for your consideration

Cherie Bridges & Mark Payne

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P015

**Name:** James Stewart, Larissa Koroznikova

**Location:** Blampied, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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VNI West Consultation Report Input Letter.

We are owners of the property at (WITHHELD) Blampied, Vic 3364.

Your proposed transmission line in VNI West Consultation Report – Options Assessment, February 2023 (the Report) runs either on, or close to, our property. The result of this option being actioned will destroy the economic, productive options and life style values of our property. Our following comments demonstrate the failure in accepting input from us and the lack of care and thoughtfulness contained in that report.

- “critical to maintaining reliable and affordable energy for consumers ... improve electricity reliability for all Victorians” – is stated in <https://aemo.com.au/newsroom/media-release/government-order-supports-community-input-for-vni-west> dated 21/02/2023.

We note that all Victorians are specified and hence we are entitled to assume that all Victorians will suffer the negative impacts of options detailed in the VNI West Consultation Report. It is normal practice for any project to list the positive and negative aspects of any selected outcome, no negative impacts are presented in the report.

For instance, a route through state and community owned lands should have been considered, which would be more straight-line, offering not only shorter route benefits but creating increased protection for communities from improved control over bush fires. This would be achieved by allowing an access for the heavy equipment needed to safely fight fires and also give safe access for the basic protection of backburning to reduce fuel loads that would save lives (human and animal), as underlined by Royal Commissions into killer bush fires in both 2009 and 2020.

- From 2020 - AEMO’s Energy 101 Series sheet on Frequency Control - if the frequency goes too far away from this 50 Hz mark, the system can become unsafe, and generators and consumer might have to disconnect to protect themselves from any damage. The more inertia in a power system, the easier it will be to ride-through

some system disturbances and keep the power system going. Inertia is provided by electricity generators with large spinning rotors.

From the report, page 3 - The integration of renewable generation and adoption of new technologies continues to shift the characteristics of electricity supply and is essential for the Australian economy to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Both statements suggest a faulty focus by AMEO on accepting coal fired power stations retirement, from whatever cause.

The only part of existing coal fired power stations that produce the offending CO<sub>2</sub> gas is the steam boiler. The remaining Turbines/Generators, outgoing electrical substations and transmission lines all are capable of continuing operation if the steam boiler was substituted by a steam supply unit not coal fired. Such a substitution would have substantial economic benefits including, continued employment, far less needs for new transmission lines and supply the critical identified need for large rotating generator sets to supply inertia for grid stability and security. Upgrading coal fired boilers to Supercritical steam performance would reduce CO<sub>2</sub>, followed by gas retrofitting the boilers which would halve any CO<sub>2</sub> per electrical unit generated and then finally replacing the boilers with Small Nuclear reactors which reduce CO<sub>2</sub> output to zero as the government requires by 2050. Small nuclear reactors have been in wide use in submarines and ships for many years and now being used in remote locations. Small reactors are available for retrofitting to coal fired Power Stations with units able to supply steam to support around 1000MWe are now being marketed. An example is the Nuscale VOYGR-12 unit, designed particularly for such coal fired station needs, see <https://www.nuscalepower.com/en/products/voygr-smr-plants>

The recent AUKUS agreement won general community acceptance, underlined by South and Western Australian governments now anticipating future benefits from housing service facilities and future construction possibilities. These developments would appear to clear the way for use of small nuclear reactors at existing coal fired power station sites.

- From June 2018, AEMO's first Integrated System Plan – Page 3 [https://www.aemo.com.au/-/media/Files/Electricity/NEM/Planning\\_and\\_Forecasting/ISP/2018/Integrated-System-Plan-2018\\_final.pdf](https://www.aemo.com.au/-/media/Files/Electricity/NEM/Planning_and_Forecasting/ISP/2018/Integrated-System-Plan-2018_final.pdf)

AEMO's scenario analysis findings are largely constant, and provide the foundation for transformative changes occurring in the energy sector.

From Consultation Options report, page 119 - While the shortest route between the start and end point of the proposed transmission line would typically represent the most cost-effective option...

Accelerating coal plants closure and sudden government decrees for urgent CO<sub>2</sub> reductions from major emitter's would suggest a need to reconsider the fundamentals offered in the report.

The increased threat of accelerated closure of the brown coal stations in the Latrobe Valley, may result in the present load on the high-capacity lines feeding the state's major load (10%+) at the Portland Aluminium Smelter

reducing substantially. This possibility would require a review of a more urgent transmission line need to access the planned Western Renewables Link than that presented in the report. The shortest distance to allow this connection is for the transmission line to be routed from Bulgana southward to meet the existing high-capacity transmission lines.

This change would reduce project cost considerably, take the least time for delivery, would traverse country of lesser intensive agricultural quality and scenic value and with significantly larger property size than that in the proposed project.

It would also strengthen the Victoria / South Australia links enabling improved stability in the grid during irregular draw needs of either state.

It would also allow a connection target for the future planned off-shore wind farms connection to the grid.

- Communication History on This Matter.

As an indication of how AEMO have treated past inputs from us on their high-capacity transmission line plannings we have attached our correspondence with them during December 2021, January 2022, June 2022 with the AEIC (Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner <aeic@aeic.gov.au>), June 2022 AEMO finally respond, and our final communication in July 2022.

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P017**

**Name:** Daila Krumins

**Location:** Gunbower, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Hello,

I'm writing to object to the plan to run a high voltage power line through this environmentally and culturally significant area of northern Victoria.

I, along with my community object to the proposal to run a high voltage power line through our homes and I know that we will be prepared to fight this as one. We suggest you find another route, perhaps in the less populated more marginal farmland to the west.

There are many culturally significant aboriginal areas, burial grounds in the Gunbower/ Murray River lagoon network and direct evidence of aboriginal relics such as scar trees and other sites of cultural significance.

The wetland and lagoon systems of the gunbower Creek / Murray River are of significant environmental value and would also be degraded by this power line. These are the homes of many different species of flora and fauna, some particular only to this area.

Patho Plains is also environmentally significant and home to the rare and endangered Plains Wanderer. This power line will also threaten the habitat of this species.

And further to this, the people who live here or visit will be unduly affected. The region between Gunbower and Echuca might not look like anything special but this area is not only high value dairy country but also an area frequented by tourists and locals alike who come to enjoy the Murray River camping, in holiday stays such as the river caravan parks and holiday homes and all of these will be affected negatively by the running of the power line.

Sincerely

Daila Krumins



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P018

**Name:** Ken Pattison, Reg Holt

**Location:** Wedderburn, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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### INTRODUCTION

The opportunity which is unfolding due to the need to reduce the Carbon footprint of the Australian Community provides a potential economic outcome not often achieved.

To maximise the benefit to all stake holders it is inherent that the planning of the routes and opportunities for the development of the region utilize all of the natural resources available.

The design of this VNI5a - interconnector must be designed to have sufficient capacity to enable the development of significant power generation opportunities within the profitable economic distances along the whole length from Waubra to the NSW boarder.

This capacity factor must be understood in relation to the potential of the Waubra area to greatly increase power out put through the upgrade of the initial turbines to the capacity of the new technology at the time of refurbishment.

There is significant areas of Wandella Clay land soil type which is economically difficult in and around Kerang which has transitioned from Irrigation to dryland production. Owners of this land are eager to engage in a profitable activity such as solar farming.

To gain the support of the communities affected by the construction of the VNI-West infrastructure (option 5) the Community contract needs to be agreed to and everyone needs to be comfortable with the positive benefits that they will receive.

With this in mind our submission will cover not only mapping but a list of possible benefits which we consider are of importance but are not necessarily exclusive.

### REGION

The proposal of Option 5a (VNI-West) is an very high voltage Electrical Link which needs to begin in the Waubra area and not Bulgana in the South culminating in Kerang in the North. (Refer to the submitted Dja Dja Wurrung map). To try to extend the VNI towards Echuca and not utilize the existing High Voltage easement currently in existence will cause significant delays, Community disharmony and a huge additional cost both financially and in time.

Our proposed pathway is largely broad acre farming with cropping and livestock husbandry as the major land use Industries. (Again refer the submitted Dja Dja Wurrung Map)

This is therefore, a low human population density zone, sporadically punctuated by small hamlets and towns largely devoid of peri urban lifestyle communities.

The VNI 5 - North pathway is not determined at this time and there are inherent obstacles with some of the routes that are being proposed by the desktop studies.

There are however opportunities, with the correct incentives, to achieve a pathway that will be economically attractive and largely acceptable to the affected Communities.

#### 1. Suggested Route For The VNI 5a-West Connector

Please refer to the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement Area Map which has already been submitted to the representatives of AEMO at the Wedderburn Information Day. The Orange line is a broad brush conceptual proposal with the final pathway to be determined via a detailed engineering appraisal.

#### 2. Highways

Please refer to the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement Area Map. The Highways are the blue coloured lines on the map.

The Highways are:-

(a) High Vehicle density traffic both domestic and Industrial ranging from Motorcycles to Heavy Multi-Articulated Trucks and Farm Machinery.

(b) Highways, going forward for the future, into the next Century and longer, will need substantial upgraded design of the transmission lines to enable the rapid charging of power packs to enable the transport of goods and services to the population. Battery technology is rapidly advancing to include super capacitors which will charge up in minutes. This demand for power necessitates high voltage and high current.

(c) The location of our proposed Interconnector Intersects the highways at approximately the 200km range from both Melbourne and Geelong. This is a strategically useful distance to develop a feed in location for the grid to

support the rapid charging needs of a modern electrified transport system. The energy can flow both in a Northern and Southern direction.

(d) The Battery transfer station is approximately half way along the Interconnector which will facilitate the accumulation of energy from Solar panels in the North and Wind Turbines to the South and providing the necessary buffering required to smooth out any fluctuations in capacity due to unforeseen circumstances. It will also provide the booster power to the highway grid only a relatively short distance from feed in locations.

### 3. Wind Turbines

(a) The location of the VNI-5a pathway that we have proposed will enable an enormous number of new Wind Turbines to be established to provide power 24 hours per day as opposed to the solar generation of 12(daylight) hours. Solar generation also behaves according to a Sine Wave with low generation at both the beginning and the end of the daylight hours.

(b) The wind speeds above the hill lines along the pathway of the proposed Interconnector have been measured for a period of over 6 years with an average wind speeds of +8 metres per second(as recorded by a SODAR wind speed measuring device) which is precisely the requirement for best generation.

(c) The production percentage of the already established turbines is of the order of 70% efficiency in this area compared to the industry average for the viability of wind turbine feasibility studies of only 40%.

### 4. Soil

(a) Gravel Rocky Soils are not as agriculturally productive as other soil types.

(b) Topical land use surveys will denote the least productive soils and planning to incorporate the pathway of the Interconnector along these zones and to incorporate the towers would be sensible.

(c) The potential for acceptance of the Interconnector given, adequate financial incentive to the above landowners', would be a higher probability with less altercation and dissention.

### 5. Aboriginal:

(a) There is significant opportunity for Native Title Areas to be included in Wind Turbine development. These area are co-managed with Aboriginal groups and the State Government.

(b) Income from these shared lands could be divided between the Aboriginal Community, Local Government and Conservation Groups (maybe a focussed program to fence out the Wychitella State Forrest with vermin proof fencing and eradicating foxes, cats and wild dogs from the area so that the Mallee fowl can have a safe area to survive and flourish). This would create employment opportunities to conduct environmental tours outlining the relationship of the Aboriginal Community to land.

(c) Independent income for the Aboriginal Community through employment opportunities managing the wellbeing of the Conservation zones.

(d) Improved self-worth for the Aboriginal Communities from income from land use benefitting the whole Australian Community rather than being recipients of Government grants thus fostering a sense of independence and pride.

6. Lease of Land:

(a) Land used for the Transmission Lines must be leased from the Landowner at an attractive Dollar amount, indexed to inflation and into perpetuity.

(b) If the line is no longer required then the land must be restored to its original state with all construction materials, wires, ancillary equipment, anchor points and concrete removed.

(c) Land Values are appreciating significantly.

(d) Agricultural Commodities are appreciating due to world population growth.

(e) Rental/Lease agreements need to be calculated on a per hectare basis per year. A 100metre buffer area by one kilometre long is 10 Hectares(25 Acres).

(f) We are not suggesting the destruction of or the reduction of productive capacity of pristine agricultural land but establishing the VNI-Interconnector Link on land with challenging Agricultural Costs relative to the productive capacity of that land.

Community Benefits:

This Project will not progress to meet the short imperative timeline requirements of Government if the Communities that are exposed to the visual pollution of the Transmission Lines and the immediate physical/production impact of the change in land use and access, for the current owners/occupiers of the land is not mitigated.

To achieve the co-operation and support of the community we propose that the following points be given serious consideration.

1. Rates:

Landowners where the VNI transmission lines traverse their property have their Shire Rates paid for that title for the life of the Transmission Line.

2. Power:

Landowners where the transmission lines traverse their property get their power for their domestic use paid for by the responsible authority.

### 3. Tower Compensation.

The compensation payable by the authority to the Landowner must be indexed to inflation and to be for the life of the transmission line and towers. If the VNI-West is discontinued then all of the infrastructure must be removed and the land returned to its original productive capacity, with all of the cost to do so borne by the relative authority.

### 4. Community Benefit:

(a). The opportunity for the establishment of significant numbers of additional Wind turbines in the Wedderburn area alone, along the pathway once the VNI 5a -West is constructed, we believe will exceed 1000MWatts.

With the already proposed 200MWatt solar farm in the Terrick area and the Solar farms already in the Gannawarra Shire that cannot currently connect to the grid the proposed VNI 5a Interconnector will quickly be unable to cope with the generation capacity available if it is constructed to the proposed limit of 3.4GigaWatts.

To avoid the mistake made by Malcolm Turnbull and the Liberals to the proposed Labor NBN network these Labor Governments(State and Federal) and AEMO must design and build this VNI 5a Interconnector with the future squarely in its sights for the Victorian and National Interests.

The proposed VNI-5a Interconnector must be a minimum capacity of 6 GWatts.

This additional energy substantiates our proposed VNI-5a pathway as per the Dja Dja Wurrung map and will generate not only supply more reliable power supply to the National Grid but will add significant amounts of regional income thus adding to the local economic viability.

(ai). The measured average wind speed of in excess of 8 metres per second over 5 years has been measured by a SODAR trailer mounted device by Bay WA. This confirmed the data recorded by WINDLAB using a similar SODAR device within the same location approximately 3 years prior to Bay WA.

(b). To optimize this generation and to provide smoothing of the generation peaks and troughs we suggest that a substantial Battery Storage Transfer Terminal be constructed in the Wedderburn area to take advantage of the Solar potential in conjunction with the Wind Generation.

(c). Indigenous areas of importance must be included in the planning. A positive approach to including their shared areas of responsibility with the State Government is essential.

(ci). There is a once in History opportunity for Wind Turbines and Solar Generation to be established on the shared State Land, returning valuable income to first Nation people through their Associations.

(cii). The opportunity for First Nation People to set the standard for the whole of the Australian society to embrace this World Wide ecological need.

(ciii). Victorian Aboriginal people will be seen as leaders for Indigenous peoples across the Globe.

(civ). This will provide the opportunity to decorate the Wind turbine towers with Aboriginal Art and establish tourism trails for visitors from all over the World to come and embrace their culture and to enjoy the dreamtime tales.

(cv). This will create employment for many generations of First Nation descendants and will lift the profile of the Indigenous members of our Community.

(d). Local Government needs additional funds to be able to provide Community benefits such as:

(di). Child Care is a major issue within this region with many mothers unable to embrace employment to support their families due to the unavailability of affordable child care.

(dii). Mental Health Support is a problem that doesn't receive a lot of recognition but the effects of economic stress due to the variability in the climatic conditions experienced by the Rural Communities takes a toll which is not only confined to the Farming Community but all members of the wider Community are impacted. The provision of specialist counselling services to assist sufferers deal with a wide and diverse range of triggers is needed as a matter of urgency.

(diii). Sporting facilities are expensive to construct and to maintain. All the Shires along the VNI route need funds to provide the Communities with Sporting facilities of a modern standard to enable members of the communities to maintain healthy exercise.

(div). Emergency Services are sometimes overwhelmed with the tasks that they are asked to deal with. Economic support for these services is always needed.

(e). If Land Tax is to be levied on the owners of the Land where the VNI 5a Towers are to be located then the responsibility for the payments of these Taxes and Charges must be borne by the Responsible Authority.

Legal Fees:

All Legal Fees associated with this VNI project should be fully funded for the affected landowners by the relevant authority to ensure that all aspects of their rights and responsibilities are documented and represented.

Funding Landowner Agreements:

The Landowner Agreements under our submission have the ability to be partly funded by the income that the Government will earn from the installation of Wind Turbines and or Solar Panels on Land which has shared ownership with the Aboriginal Community and the Government.

This will require a substantial change in the Government attitude and maybe some legislation amendments to enable the construction of Wind Turbines and Solar Panels on Shared Government Land.

#### Compensation:

The current compensation amount is calculated at a paltry 1.4% of the proposed construction costs of the NVI Connector. If the cost of the project blows out then the percentage of the compensation agreement will fall in proportion.

It is absurd to only be contemplating a compensation package that will not provide for a positive benefit to those people whose lives are being detrimentally affected by this development.

In any free market situation a business who wishes to rent land from an owner of a fee simple titled land package, has to offer a price which the owner of that land deems to be to their financial advantage.

The funds set aside to deal with the landowners in this VNI route needs to be at least at 5% of the capital costs and appreciate in accordance with any construction cost blowout.

#### Questions That Need To Be Addressed

1. Why is the Interconnector Link from Buangor to Waubra being costed in the Northern VNI 5a-Connector when it is already proposed for the supply direct to Melbourne via the Bacchus Marsh link?
2. How much extra will it cost to increase the capacity in the Link to enable additional Wind and Solar Farms to be established to 6 GWatts up front?
3. What size Battery bank will be needed to enable the required smoothing of the production peaks and to supply the grid for a 6 GWatt Interconnector?
4. How long will the Battery storage last during periods of low generation to supply the grid?
5. How much area of land will be required to establish the necessary battery bank?
6. Why is there an emphasis to add to the supply with solar in NSW rather than making the most of the generation opportunities through wind turbines and Solar here in Victoria?

7. What is the projected annual maintenance budget for the Inter-connector and the Battery complex?
8. What fire suppression provisions are being undertaken as part of the construction and on-going maintenance?
9. How much will this major project add to the cost per kilowatt hour of power consumption?
10. When will the environmental impact study begin?
11. Will a Native Title assessment be undertaken before construction?
12. Will Private Fee Simple Land be devalued as a result of construction of transmission towers on said land and if so how is this economic harm going to be addressed.
13. Will banks lend at the same level to Owners and or purchasers if a transmission line crosses their property?
14. Will the Responsible Authority provide Public Liability Insurance to the Landowners for any mishap/incidents as a result of any VNI 5a Connector Towers or Lines constructed/crossing their land.
15. What would be the increased cost and/or the productivity loss associated with putting this VNI 5a Connector underground.



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P019

**Name:** Saviour Attard, Pauline Attard

**Location:** Myrniong, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Good morning

My email is non confidential.

My husband and I have been greatly impacted by the proposed western link .

About three and a half years ago we bought a property on [WITHHELD] in myrniong and six months later we found out that these towers are going to cut through our property.

We bought this land to start a cattle farming business (which we already did ) and live on the property.

We put our home on the market to make the move to myrniong but this project halted our plans.

As we won't live under power lines, we had to withdraw our house from the market and still have not made the move to myrniong.

While we still are running our cattle business, it's heartbreaking that we can't built our home on the land in myrniong.

Since this all started, the towers were moved on our boundary fence instead of through our property but the impact has not changed because I won't put our health in jeopardy and won't live in fear of what the towers can do to our health.

Another impact is that the value of our property which will go downhill while we are still paying off our loan.

Why are ausnet ruining so many lives when by putting the transmission underground all land owners will continue to live happily on their properties.

Kind regards

Pauline and saviour attard

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P020

**Name:** Marta Czosnowski

**Location:** Mollongghip, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to communicate the impact the WRL project will have on myself, my family and our community. My husband, 2 kids and myself are personally impacted. Our address is [WITHHELD] Mollongghip VIC 3352. This is not a confidential email and can be shared.

Our peaceful Mollongghip home is 1km from the proposed towers. We earn a living by running an artist retreat business out of our property which will be severely impacted by the towers. Our property has beautiful views of the central highlands region and the wombat state forest and hosts Melbournian artists who come here to escape the city and work on their music in a peaceful setting. With the towers coming right into our view, we know the appeal of our "peaceful, nature retreat" will be compromised and we will lose income. We expect a 50% drop in business. As such we may be forced to leave Mollongghip, a place and community we love and would be devastated to leave.

We also moved out of Melbourne to Mollongghip to enjoy the benefits of nature on our mental health. The last 2 years have been very stressful as we learned of the project and its proposed route and assessed the impact it would have on us. Our mental health has declined with my husband now taking medication. We don't believe we'd stay in this area if our business was compromised and our enjoyment of nature and the views we have from our property were ruined by transmission towers. Many neighbors feel the same, and therefore transmission towers would not only forever tarnish the visual and mental appeal of living here, but also negatively impact the vibrant central highlands community with many people leaving the region to escape its industrialisation. Lack of community would be another blow to our mental health as we need people to feel connected and fulfilled.

Please respect us and our regional communities by finding a less destructive transmission alternative. The negative impact on people, business, community, desirability, future growth of our region, beautiful unspoiled scenery, local agriculture security, is too large to ignore.

Marta, Living in beautiful Mollongghip

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P022

**Name:** Matthew and Alena Olive

**Location:** Yeungroon, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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To the Reviewer of the VNI West Submissions,

We are writing to you as land owners from Yeungroon Victoria whom live and work within the 30km corridor marked for the possible construction of the VNI West Transmission Line. Our property covers several thousand hectares and our family farming business consists of cereal and legume crops, fodder, wool and meat for both export and domestic markets. The Yeungroon Creek runs directly through our property on its way to the Avoca River.

Our family have lived, cared for and farmed our property for countless generations, in fact, spanning well over 150 years in total. The love we hold for this land is bred into every generation. Our children are keen for, and have been looking forward to a very promising future in the farming industry.

The devastation we feel on hearing of VNI West's plan to erect transmission lines through our area is immense. To us, it is not only the huge financial loss in land value and future income that is concerning, it is the long-term damage to our community that this project will cause.

Apart from the proposed transmission lines being a complete blight on the landscape, the anxiety and stress felt by all in our community is very real and highly concerning. The lack of consult and transparency offered by VNI West is very insulting to landowners. Why has it been so hard to get information regarding this project? And when information did become available, it was at a very late stage, not giving landowners much of a chance to ask questions and receive reasonable answers in an adequate timeframe.

We are very blessed to live and farm in such an incredible food bowl and the thought of industrialising such a wonderful and rich asset is incomprehensible to our family and neighbours. It is very hard to imagine the next generation wanting to live and farm within close proximity to these monstrous and unsightly towers. The damage that will be caused to both human and livestock health, and to land viability can only be devastating.

Yeungroon has some of the best farming land you will find, the soil is highly fertile and extremely productive, producing high quality grain and fodder with excellent yields. The graziers in the area consistently produce high calibre wool, and top-quality meat including both lamb and beef.

Land values will decrease overnight. Very few potential buyers would want to buy a farm with a huge 80-100 metre easement through, while having no access for weed control by either air or ground. For those like us who use modern farm machinery, the limited safe clearance distance between the power line and land will impact everyday farming practices. The easement area will be rendered useless. It is extremely heartbreaking to think of such rich and viable land turning into an unusable wasteland.

A real issue of concern is the disruption and inconvenience to the GPS systems in today's farm machinery. This includes not only tractors and harvesters but also windrowers and crop sprayers. Having to adjust software to work around towers is both inconvenient and impractical. The use of drones to monitor land and livestock will be greatly impacted and with autonomous technology just around the corner, navigating towers is going to cause huge problems for operators in the near future. Farmers spend huge amounts of money to modernise their equipment to keep up with production and should not be financially penalised because of the short sightedness of a select few not connected in any way to our farming community, or way of life.

Following the Victorian government guidelines for the agriculture industry, we invest a lot of time and effort ensuring our farm is protected with a strict biosecurity action plan. This is fundamental in reducing the risk of pests and disease which could potentially devastate our agriculture sector and livestock industry. Vehicles accessing our property (the initial project construction and ongoing maintenance vehicles) will bring in noxious weeds such as bindi eye and wheel cactus causing massive loss in productivity while increasing our weed control expenditure. Livestock then walk this noxious seed all over the paddock causing a terrible spread of unwelcome weeds. We see this now on a much smaller scale with Powercor vehicles doing power pole maintenance which carry in bindi eye seed on the tyre tread. They then drop this seed inside gateways and along paddock tracks causing unnecessary expense to our farming operation to eradicate these weeds. These new transmission lines are massive infrastructure and have a huge footprint to maintain compared to the old timber SEC power pole found out in the middle of a paddock.

The VNI West transmission line project cannot proceed without causing extreme damage to the environment as the removal of trees and destroying ecosystems would be inevitable. Yeungroon has a wonderful indigenous history which includes the significant burial site of the Jaara Baby (please search online for this child's story). Also, by having many scarred trees throughout the area, we can ascertain how the indigenous people lived and survived their daily life. To risk losing any living history would be so very shameful on VNI West's behalf.

Trying to farm around these towers is both risky to human life and potentially damaging to expensive machinery. There also has to be huge insurance issues around liability.

The fire hazard level will be extremely high due to heavy dust on the lines increasing the chance of an arc. Under certain circumstances, the risk of death to a human or livestock from an arc is very real. Just by standing on the

ground, going about daily business, a person can lose their life. This is fact. The risk of fire is extremely high with the hot, dry conditions our area experiences, and could have catastrophic outcomes for local community life including the lives of our CFA crew. Helitankers and water bomber planes can only be restricted, as well as air ambulance which again puts our community and firefighters at greater risk.

How disappointing it is that VNI West are wanting to sacrifice a wonderfully productive area of land for what? That renewable green energy can be sent to city folk so they can pat themselves on the back for their efforts in saving the planet. Why is our community asked to sacrifice our clean way of living for people who choose to reside in overcrowded unclean cities and towns. This is not a trade we, or our future generations want to make.

Our country towns are crying out for new people to come and give country life a chance as declining towns will often be the first to lose services to hospitals, schools, retail businesses, tourism and more. And, in effect, when small outer lying farming communities fail, so will the town's small businesses, sporting clubs, social clubs, school enrolments, banks and so on.

These kinds of infrastructure projects bring absolutely nothing to small communities except to cause stress and anxiety.

Farming is a wonderful yet laborious livelihood, yet we are so dependent on outside factors going our way to be able to stay and make a living for our families. If we are not in flood, we are usually in drought. If it's not mice or snails decimating crops, it's a crop disease carried in on the wind. If it's not hail destroying crops, it will be frost. As farmers, there are so many factors we have zero control over, it would be nice to know we have a voice on the future prospects of our property, livelihood and legacy for future generations.

We believe in doing what we can to minimize our footprint on this planet, and in late 2002 our family hand planted and watered in 10,000 trees along our Yeungroon Creek flats with trees that were native to our area. At that same time, thousands more were also direct seeded into the ground, and with the right amount of love and care, are flourishing today abundant with all different kinds of wildlife inhabitants. These trees had water kept up to them through one of the toughest droughts ever seen in Victoria at that time. It is a legacy we are proud to leave behind for our children and future generations and to have this legacy under threat is causing us great distress.

We are not against renewable energy; however, we are against our rights as landholders being taken away.

A family cannot hold onto a piece of this earth for more than 150 years without knowing, nurturing and understanding the heart and bones of the land. We, as caretakers have a responsibility to protect and care for this land which has kept our family housed, fed, clothed and educated over several generations through time.

One day, when all our abundant food bowls are destroyed by people who have zero knowledge or interest in the farming sector, and our country families have had to leave due to the lack of viable land and opportunity, how are

the city folk going to feed themselves? To us practical country people, it is a very concerning thought and something we ALL need to care about.

Regards,

Matthew and Alena Olive

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P023**

**Name:** Tanya Watts

**Location:** Slaty Creek, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Dear AMEO

I have become aware of the Victorian Government and AEMO's proposal to construct a 500kv double-circuit overhead transmission line from Bulgana to New South Wales.

The corridor for this proposed transmission line includes farmland that my family operates business on and land that we live on. I am concerned by the potential negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on my families farming operations and the lives of people who live here and future generations.

If the transmission infrastructure was to be built in this district and potentially on our farmland, I have many concerns;

\* \* There is very limited information available for the answers to many questions local community members have and who are entitled to have answered as ultimately it will be there land the power lines will be on which will directly affect their business and lives of themselves, their family and the community they live in.

\* \* I was only made aware of this decision recently and I don't believe enough genuine consultation with local community members has been had. Without answers to basic questions we have been blind sighted by this proposition.

\* \* Our farm is in it's 6th Generation of ownership. This farm will be handed down to the next generation, we were hoping to hand it down in better condition than previous generations. Potentially due to these double-circuit overhead transmissions lines our land will be devalued and there will be many negative effects to our farming operations (spread of weeds, increase risk to biosecurity, inability to spray, fertilize or use any equipment under the powerlines.)

\* \* Our local Coonooer Bridge CFA fire station is solely run by volunteers. With the additional restrictions and dangers associated while fighting fires in the vicinity of transmission lines; we will lose many of these much-needed volunteers. This puts our personal safety and that of our land and stock in danger especially during fire

periods. Fires being a regular occurrence especially in the summer months with lightning strikes in crops and while harvesting as crop stubble & hay is highly combustible. The addition of double-circuit overhead transmission lines will increase the likelihood of electrical strikes to this land.

\* \* There are concerns that the close proximity to transmission lines would lead to losses with livestock due to the potential health risks associated. Reports from farmers who are unfortunate enough to have transmission lines built nearby, have witnessed low birth rates and other health issues with their stock.

\* \* Why is there not alternate conversations had about renewable energy? Supporting more coal-fired energy is not the answer for our future. This is well documented in scientific data that proves coal base energy is a major contributor to global warming, loss of species, increased catastrophic weather events, rising sea levels and many more negative outcomes for the planet. Installing new coal base energy system is not supporting our future generations regardless of where it's been built.

Prior to the announcement on 20 February 2023 that the corridor for the VNI West project would change, I had no knowledge of the proposed project and no understanding of it potentially

impacting my community, family or farm business. Direct and definite answers to basic questions need to be given so community can make a more informed decision.

Since researching this further and reflecting on the potentially disastrous outcomes this project will lead to I am of the strong belief that this project will bring nothing but negative consequences to our community, surrounding businesses future families for generations to come.

Regards,

Tanya Watts



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P024**

**Name:** Mary Nolan

**Location:** [Unidentified]

## Submission

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Dear Sir/Madam

I am forwarding you this email to expose the depth of concern which has affected our family in a way of which it has changed our lifestyle and mental wellbeing.

My Son and his wife together with our two beautiful grandchildren have purchased a 45 acre property adjoining the family farm. My son has been granted a planning permit for his property and progressed with a site cut, bore and road access for his new dwelling which will be next door to our farming residence.

The transmission lines will be extremely close to our sons build together with the health issue of the power lines he has decided that he will no longer pursue his dream. With that said the effect now is he will be forced to move away with his family hence the contact that we have with him and our grandchildren will now be diminished in such away that we will have limited access to our son and grandchildren. The amount of stress and health issues I have endured over the last 2+ years has been immeasurable.

I have expressed my concerns to the relevant authorities but feel the democratic process of my feelings have been totally ignored.

In response to your consultation process I hope my voice will be finally heard this time

Mary Nolan

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P025**

**Name:** Rhonda Cotsell

**Location:** Creswick, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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To whom it concerns,

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission re concerns I have re the 2023 'Consultation Report on the further analysis taken for the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) project.

My name is Rhonda Cotsell and I live in Creswick, a small town in the area which will be affected. I travel the region regularly as it is the beauty and small towns feel of the area that attracted me in the first place. It is something that will be changed significantly by the erection of the towers, however that is not the main subject of this response as I think much of that has been covered by others.

In the AEMO Consultation Report Summary I am responded to concern as invited

under the heading 'We want your feedback' where you list Community under those you want feedback from. This resulted from 'lessons from similar projects have reinforced the importance of early and meaningful engagement with all stakeholders, including Traditional Owners, communities and landowners'. (quoted taken from the Report Summary itself)

As a Community member the particular concern that drives me to respond here is that I cannot find anything in the Consultation Report Summary which refers specifically to potential health issues from towers, and specifically Electro Magnetic Fields (EMFs) - something I think meaningful engagement would require.

The basic position in the science world is that no harm has been proven but that is qualified in all that I have read by reference to the fact that neither has their safety been conclusively proven, and that it continues to be under investigation by many scientists. The statement that no harm has been proven simply means that the research done so far has not been conclusive. It does not mean it is safe, or unsafe. For that, conclusive research is needed.

What has been found is that there have been some health issues discovered, not no health issues. There are also reports of issues involving health issues health in relation to breeding stock and wildlife however I will not go into them here as they are separate issues involving environmental damage and the economic health of the regions

involved and I want to concentrate on concerns re human health. For similar reasons I am also not looking at the danger to health by the huge stress it causes, and the danger of bushfires that the presences of the towers causes but would like to record here that those matters are also relevant to damage to health caused by the towers regardless of which version it is.

This is also important given there is also no reference to the more preferred, and safer, option by many of installing underground cables rather than above ground towers which would not expose anyone to EMFs.

A.

WHO (the World Health Organisation) International Agency for Research on Cancer (2001) classified EMFs as 'possibly carcinogenic to humans' based on a consistent statistical association between EMFs and a doubling of risk of childhood leukemia, as reported by the Electric and Magnetic Fields Research and Public Information Dissemination Program (EMFRAPID 2002) A review of recent scientific literature shows many health effects being implicated as probable or definite links to Electromagnetic Fields and Extremely Low Frequency vibrations (low hum) associated with high voltage overhead power lines when in proximity to human and animal/bird populations. (See References below for how to access this article)

B.

As early as 1991 The Gibbs Report, Inquiry into Community Needs and High Voltage Transmission Line Development, commissioned by the NSW Government, an extensive enquiry resulted in the following conclusion:

2.11 in the report,

It has not been established that electric fields or magnetic fields of power frequency are harmful to human health, but since there is some evidence that they may do harm, a policy of prudent avoidance is recommended.

4

The Australian and Victorian Governments on this issue decided that since since there is some evidence that EMFs may do harm, a policy of "Prudent Avoidance'is recommended" however it also needs to be kept in mind that this enquiry was carried out over 30 yrs ago and much has happened since then including massive increases in electromagnetic devices from small to large, so should be read with caution.

Prudent Avoidance was also described as looking systematically for strategies which can restrict EMF exposure and hence is still relevant here.

EMFs are not emitted from buried cables and any magnetic field is reduced in intensity and distance of impact, hence reducing negative health effects on humans, and also animals, birds and bees.

C.

In a Public Health Fact Sheet (details to full Sheet below) under the heading 'How can I reduce my EMF exposure?' - within the home it is advised that we stay at arms length from some devices (eg alarm clock when in bed), that we use electric blankets only to warm the bed, not to sleep with it on, that we ensure faulty wiring is repaired as that may general higher than usual EMF, and that some devices (TVs, computers) be turned off when not it use.

If these smaller devices are better turned off, or kept at arms length, and requiring someone in the home have the ability to judge the condition of all the wiring, how much more worrying are massive towers that cannot be turned off, cannot be kept at a distance, and which will require checking of far more wiring, carried out by anonymous others.

Further on in the Fact Sheet there is the heading 'What are Best Management Practices (BMP's)' which opens with the statement 'When new power lines are constructed, they have the potential to increase EMF levels in an area.', and then goes on to advise the role of the relevant body to ensure exposure to EMF is kept to a minimum. The Fact Sheet is American but I am assuming such a body exists in Australia also, and again that AusNet has been through that process despite no mention of it in the consultative process.

D.

The main point I wish to make is that if caution is to be used in the family home how much more important is it that AusNet is able to prove it has carried out the steps necessary to protect the Community from potential health issues from massive towers when the safer underground cabling is a viable alternative.

If a genuine and open exchange of information between AusNet and Community is intended then discussion of health and safety is needed re the absolute safety of the towers by including it in any summary by Ausnet of what it is proposing. In order to communicate fully with community details need to be included by AusNet making it clear that there are no negative health consequences before work commences on installing the towers across Central Regional Victoria. It would be need to be based on science and independent of AusNet, carried out by people with appropriate scientific backgrounds, and based on research findings that are peer reviewed and which clearly identify any potential vested interest.

Providing this would ensure the correct decision is made in terms of community health and safety while applying for approval, and for potentially affected communities in the future if the AusNet application is approved. It is also vital to whether installations are best under or above ground.

References.

(NOTE: copy and paste full DOI or doi line provided after the source into google to read full articles)

Moulder, JE (2000) The electric and magnetic fields research and publish information dissemination (EMF-RAPID program). In Radiation Research, 2000 May, 153 (5 Pt 2) 613-616

[https://doi.org/10.1667/0033-7587\(2000\)153\[0613:teamfr\]2.0.co;2](https://doi.org/10.1667/0033-7587(2000)153[0613:teamfr]2.0.co;2)<[https://doi.org/10.1667/0033-7587\(2000\)153\\*0613:teamfr](https://doi.org/10.1667/0033-7587(2000)153*0613:teamfr)>

Connecticut Department of Public Health Environmental Health Section. Environmental and Occupational Health Assessment Program. Fact Sheet. Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMFs): Health Concerns. (available online)

Further Readings:

Text in italics are a direct quote from the section of the research results that precedes it.

1. Editorial. Health effects of Radio frequency Electromagnetic Fields (RF EMF) in Industrial Health (2019), vol 57, 403-405 (available online)

Conclusion

The problem of health effects of RF EMF has not been definitively resolved, but due to the results of previous research on possible health effects of RF EMF, it seems necessary to use precautionary principles and ALARA (As Low as Reasonably Achievable) principles, when the new sources of electromagnetic emissions will be planned and installed.

2. Impact of electromagnetic field exposure of pain, severity, functional status and depression in patients with primary fibromyalgia syndrome. (2021) In The Egyptian Rheumatologist, vol 43, 331-335 (available online)

[doi.org/10.1016/j.ejr.2020.10.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejr.2020.10.001)<<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejr.2020.10.001>>

Abstract: This study highlights a possible pathological link between fibromyalgia and exposure to electromagnetic radiation. Excess exposure to electromagnetic devices could be one of the underlying or at least augmenting factors of fibromyalgia symptoms.

3. Discovering the spatial locations of the radio frequency radiation effects around mobile towers, (2023) In International Journal of Electric and Computer Engineering (IJECE) vol 13 (2023), 1629-1638

DOI: 10.11591/ijece.v13i2.pp1629-1638

Note: contains the following in text:

EMR from different radio frequency sources has been monitored using an especially designed monitoring system to continuously measure near and far field radiation in urban and rural areas. Through the results it was found that the radiation level exceeded the minimum safety conditions on the high density base transceiver site. (p. 1630)

Concern here is that the regular monitoring system failed to capture the true levels of radiation, and that though the areas around towers would be going through are not currently high density there is no guarantee that parts

will not be in the future given the growth of cities and towns all over Victoria. Erecting the towers therefore has the potential to change future growth and development in the area and, if already built, this cannot be reversed, whereas if underground, will not be a problem.

4. The different sources of electromagnetic fields: Dangers are not limited to physical health: Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine: Vol 39, No 2 (tandfonline.com<<http://tandfonline.com>>)

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15368378.2020.1737811><[Abstract: The impact of electromagnetic waves on health has been clearly established by many studies in recent decades.](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://doi.org/10.1080/15368378.2020.1737811__;!!HKeyBm8!Uy0trcn-E322eymutauYklh51SwrCMg1oEBhrV9uNzdszPTr1QoKPt7Xn5HMuwgmv25yWWFzmdK-Je9w_YbD$></a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Introduction: Increase in all kinds of pathologies, human, animal and floral losses are linked to levels of electromagnetic fields that are constantly rising. Thousands of publications show that we must change or stop moving on this path...

Under a paragraph headed 'Effects on the biology of artificial electromagnetic fields'

... a considerable number of publications demonstrate the destructive effects on health (cancers, neurodegenerative diseases, genotoxicity, DNA damage, alteration of the blood-brain barrier, oxidative stress, inflammatory factors, autism ...) of EMFs generated at low and high frequencies.

(this is followed by a list of references to support this statement)

...information from cell and human studies show biological effects that pose risks to human health at levels of exposure that are often exceeded in daily life.

In conclusion - and acknowledging the need for a energy transmission system to that will cope effectively with the energy demands now and in the future - it is also important given there is also no reference to the more preferred, and safer, option by many of installing underground cables rather than above ground towers which would not expose anyone to EMFs.

Rhonda Cotsell

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P026**

**Name:** Kevin Nolan

**Location:** Bunding, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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To whom it may concern

I would like to express my concerns with the 500 kva transmission towers which are proposed to be adjacent to my property.

The amount our stress and duress which I have endured over the Ausnet Transmission Lines has affected not only my health but my ability to effectively go about my daily duties/life and make positive and informative decisions.

Not only has my health been effected but I worry about the future of my family and the people exposed to the high voltage cables in respect to my immediate family and my grandchildren.

The information that has been put out by Ausnet started with lies for example::::: they had permission to enter private property which was proven to be a complete lie. It was very distressing for me to drive down Stonehut Lane Bunding Ballan to find security guards had blocked off the road so I could not access my back paddock without any formal notification. This was to prevent any disruptions to illegal surveying of private property and the prevention of people doing their daily activities which I believe was a total abuse of power.

Our family farm is set on approximately 500 acres of rolling pastures and lush Werribee River flats abutting the Wombat State Forest and adjacent to the proposed towers.

I personally have spoken to the CFA Command Centre that if there is a fire caused by the transmission lines or a fire within the Wombat State Forest adjoining our property we will have no aerial support what so ever because aircraft will not operate within the vicinity of the transmission line that would encompass our Family home, outbuildings and stock. This in itself could be Catastrophic

I understand the need for power to reach Melbourne but there are alternatives, and they should be addressed rather than destroy our Communities and Countryside and we are constantly told it is to expensive to go underground which is just another fabrication of the truth, because the State Government wrote off 1 billion dollars on the East West tunnel that was terminated with not one sod of dirt being turned. Costs will never

substitute for the well being of the Victorian farming communities as it makes us look unappreciated to the State of Victoria

I hope this does not fall on deaf ears.

Kind Regards

Kevin Nolan



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P027**

**Name:** Paul Bartlett

**Location:** Yeungroon, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Submission on the VNI West - consultation report

Myself along with my wife , 3 school age children and my parents who are in there 80s all live in Yeungroon and run a grain farm supplying “clean green grain“ Canola , wheat and barley to not only Australians but the world.

It was only a few weeks ago that we became aware of the plans to put these monster lines thru our community and like all others in our peaceful and close knit community we are horrified at the thought of such a blight on our skyline The division’s that this would inevitably cause between some town’s folk who may be for this “green energy” and the farming community who will have to bear the brunt of the damage that it will cause to our land.

Not only that but it will put farmer against farmer as everyone will be pushing for the

“ not on my land approach “ it is a toxic and divisive thing for any community.

We own land both in the Yeungroon area , between 7 mile road and 9 mile road as well as land just to the south east of Charlton which would be classed as flood plain country. This brings up the obvious issues with not being able to access towers or lines if the need arose for weeks or even months at a time due to flooded paddocks.

Last year we had to do all of our fungicide spraying by air as the country was to wet to support machinery which makes me wonder if towers and lines were to come through how would arial application of chemicals work? Obviously a no fly zone would exist around the lines and by the maps supplied they would go diagonally across the paddocks which would cause huge issues and on the ground as with technology these days all our farming is done on controlled traffic lines running north - south or east - west which cannot be just changed to suit a power line going across the paddock.

That being said back in Yeungroon its self we have a very close knit community with many houses close together and the thoughts of having such lines anywhere near (within a few kms) of a house is just absurd ! a big No No ! Just imagine the distress it will cause to families.

I also pose a question to you , all of us farmers burn stubble paddocks for the control of weeds and pest management eg (snail eradication) i am led to believe that heavy smoke can cause issues with the electricity and arcing , is this correct? If so then be prepared for some real issues going through cropping areas.

I once again have to say that further east into grazing country would negate these risks.

As for the compensation that is being offered it is truly an insult to us. No level of compensation could ever cover the scarring of our country by such a monstrosity but the loss of income by losing so many hectares or prime productive land is way more than the token gesture being offered.

It was only last week a news story was telling of the near 30% of farmers who had thoughts of self harm or had attempted to suicide and now we are all facing weeks , months , years of uncertainty and then the unlucky ones who end up with these monsters on their land or god forbid close to there house their mental health will be seriously affected and the value of their land will drop by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

I just hope these things are taken into account with this wonderful “green energy “ path we all seem to be getting led down.

My personal thoughts are if this option 5 has to go ahead in order to please city voters so they don't have to be inconvenienced by these lines is to push it as far east as possible and keep it to the grazing country closer to the hills. Cropping country is just to precious and valuable to our future prosperity to be lost to a power line. At least that way sheep can graze under the line to reduce fire hazard where as if its in cropped country weeds will proliferate and cause more issues for the farmer to try and control. Was there not key findings from the bushfire royal commission that said all future electricity projects should go under ground?? Well this is certainly one that this ruling should apply to for safety in so many different ways, and definitely the only way we would ever let such a thing come thru our property.

Please reconsider this planned route.

Paul Bartlett.

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P028**

**Name:** Sandra & Bernie McIntyre

**Location:** St Arnaud, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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To Whom it Concerns

Bernard John and Sandra Joan McIntyre of Arnaud North strongly oppose the construction of the Power lines that are planned for our area. Corridor 5 . We have lived here for 53 years, my husband born here in 1944. We have recently leased our farm to neighbours and know it will subject the terms of our lease significantly, should it pass through thee surrounding areas. We may not be able to control the growing problem of kangaroos if we are closed off from certain areas of our farmland. We attended the meeting at St.Arnaud and felt we did not get the answers we deserved. We have worked extremelly hard and raised 5 children here to give them something to be proud of and not full of large power towers.

Yours faithfully Sandra AND Bernie mCiNTYRE

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P029**

**Name:** Peter Knights

**Location:** Gre Gre, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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I hereby lodge the following submission as a rejection of the Option 5 proposal within the VNI West Consultation Report.

I am a farmer, with my family, of some 4,500 acres and a business owner in nearby towns of St.Arnaud and Rupanyup. Our family has farmed here since 1872 and my grandchildren are 7th Generation.

As an accountant to many other small businesses and farmers I believe I have a good sense of local sentiment and there is a genuine resentment and anger at both the certain and probable impacts of this proposal, and the lack of consultation and short time frame for negotiation or objection.

The proposed area intended under this option to accommodate the route of 500kV transmission lines, very roughly indicated in the Consultation report and subsequent propaganda, is predominantly land actively operated as dryland cropping for grain production, interspersed with livestock, mostly sheep grazing. The systems for conducting these enterprises are impeded by the construction of such lines and will ultimately result in loss of production and revenue to multiple parties, well in excess the compensation being offered.

New risks are created such as the restrictions to safe fire fighting and irrigation, and inadequate proposed arrangements regarding the practical use and movement of large agricultural equipment utilised throughout this area.

Our area has significant flood impact and is home to culturally significant sites and areas.

As our area is largely flat, there are few areas which represent low productive value as is the case in more elevated areas. I am extremely fearful that the main driver of Option 5 as the preferred line is to eventually provide the means of connecting new wind tower projects all along this line. I have seen the project at Murra Warra, constructed on similar land to ours, and am at a loss how we could continue to live here if we were surrounded by something similar. I genuinely believe such projects built on flat land, rather than following elevated areas or at sea, creates a horrid environment as the towers are visible from further, are more imposing and their sound and vibration travels further.

I believe wind towers, and the imposition of this new transmission line, will create enemies of neighbours or community members and disrupt that crucial harmony to ensuring our district can prosper.

Our farms and towns need to provide a future for our children based on what it is good at producing, not as a stock yard for the unsustainable wind energy industry which is existing only to appease the creators of Australia's unattainable Greenhouse Gas Emission Targets. Australia will never achieve these for as long as these measures are population based, and the countries with mega populations and no regard for the environment can continue to operate unchecked.

I am available to discuss further if required.

Sincerely

Peter Knights

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P030

**Name:** Clinton & Carolyn Olive

**Location:** Yeungroon, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Submission on the VNI West Consultation Report.

Our broadacre family farm of cropping grains and fodder, as well as a merino sheep operation is located at Yeungroon, in the path of Option 5 as described in the PACR. We currently have two generations living and working on the farm and hope to have a third come home soon.

Prior to the Victorian Minister for Energy's announcement on the 20 February 2023 we had no knowledge of the proposed route and its effects, and despite the consultation period many questions remain unanswered. The Drop-in Session at Charlton provided three generic AEMO fliers, and staff that were unable to answer questions. They did take written questions on notice that were meant to be replied to in 48 hours, but I am still waiting for a reply. While the webinar was informative many of my neighbors were unable to log in. Some of the unanswered issues I believe will affect our business include.

- Inability to operate ever increasingly large broadacre machinery under/around power lines.
- Inability to use new technology, GPS, drones.
- Loss of production.
- Damage to our property during construction.
- Decreased land value, destroying farm equity.
- Inability to use aircraft for crop spraying and firefighting.

Option 5 delivers the least amount of renewable energy, on the longest line, and is not the most economical. I feel this option was only considered on the false assumption of a higher degree of social acceptance, and the discounting of our communities and the people in them. Options to the east that provide more renewables to the grid and connect to the growing communities around Bendigo are more appropriate.

While we understand the need for a connection to NSW for the transition to renewable energy, we feel our community will be unnecessarily affected by an inadequate option designed for a political fix rather than a technical one.

Clinton and Carolyn Olive.

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P031

**Name:** Anthony and Carolyn Stewart

**Location:** Buckrabanyule, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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We operate a 5000-acre 6th generation mixed grazing and broadacre cropping farm enterprise spread across both the Loddon and Buloke Shires from Yeungroon, through Woosang and into Buckrabanyule. Our family has been farming in this region since 1884 with a monument erected at the site of the original selected land "Cannon Hill" at Richmond Plains, Woosang testifying to the fact that the Stewarts have a long and deep connection to the area. With 3 children all planning on continuing our farming legacy we plan to remain connected to this region for generations to come.

As a potentially impacted Landholder in the proposed corridor for the Victorian Government and AEMO's proposal to construct a 500kv overhead transmission line from Bulgana to New South Wales, we strongly object to the proposed VNI project, particularly the Route 5 option, due to many factors including but not limited to; the loss of amenity, detrimental social and environmental impacts, and the cost to agriculture and tourism and cultural heritage values.

Agricultural production is a crucial part of the Australian economy and food security for all its citizens. Australia's agricultural land is a finite resource with just 6 percent of Australia being arable, a high percentage of that land being in Victoria. Common sense dictates that the goal should be to maximise the use of the scarce and precious fertile soils for food.

Fragmentation of productive agricultural land affects the capability to produce the optimal yield and in a sustainable manner. Agricultural land is already threatened by degradation and urbanisation, don't add further unnecessary obstacles and inhibitors to an already challenging industry by installing High Voltage Powerlines through this highly productive broadacre farming area.

With the rapid rate of population growth, the pressure is on to Primary producers to generate the quantity required to ensure a reliable food supply to sustain the masses. Covid has shown us the consequences of not being able to access international markets and the effects of lack of availability or supply of goods. After such a reality check it would be reasonable to assume that Politicians would prioritise the preservation of good agricultural land as an essential and protected commodity. We need a forward thinking, innovative government

who can recognize this and focus on planning for food as much as, if not more than, climate mitigation and energy supply to ensure a strong safe food supply for the state.

Relying on production from further afield will lead to an increase food prices with reliance on expensive long haul transport and chemicals, irrigation and other expensive and environmentally damaging inputs and processes to grow food in less fertile areas to satisfy supply for the state. This will have more of an impact on the cost of living for Victorians and their quality of life than any other factor. In addition, the cost of the proposed VNI project will also be borne by the taxpayer further exacerbating the cost of living crisis.

The length of the proposed route 5 seems to have been miscalculated and is in fact longer than AEMO has stated and therefore more expensive thus increasing the cost to taxpayers significantly. Additionally, route 5 bypasses Bendigo, a location that will eventually need to be connected anyway to meet their increasing energy supply needs, creating a misleading position that this 'preferred route' is more cost effective. Furthermore, the resistance to the proposal from the majority of residents in this region will add considerable time delays and cost blow outs.

The National Food Plan 2013 report commissioned by the Labor Government stated that the Australian Government wanted the food industry to "seize the opportunities of the Asian century and become a larger part of our national economy, providing rewarding careers for Australians and strengthening our regional communities" and that ensuring the production of food "is also in our national interest-food security is an important element in social and political stability in our region."

The loss of production on farms due to the large footprint of these giant transmission towers will not only impact food supply and demand, it will also lead to a loss of tax and GST revenue from the very industry that generates in excess of \$300 million in agricultural production in this area alone. It will also personally affect us and our Primary production business through loss of income and loss of efficiency and autonomy over our own land requiring permits for many activities and operations we now have full control over.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of rural town, providing a large percentage of the regions jobs with many other industries depending on it for survival. The unsightly powerlines will not only traverse highly productive farmland but will also span areas with high visual landscape significance and adversely impact the local tourism businesses that rely on the wide open spaces and our "Big Sky Country" drawcard to attract both domestic and international visitors to our region.

Damaging or diminishing agriculture and tourism in this area will have negative flow on effects both socially and economically. The issue of the towers being installed has the potential to further damage these rural towns through the social divide that the differing views will create and the mental health impacts it will have on the high numbers of those opposed to the proposed route. Social isolation and poor mental health is already a concerning factor in these rural areas, adding further social pressures to the minority residents that may support or benefit from the towers, and further stressors to those that vehemently oppose them would further increase that



isolation and may lead to self-harm or suicide. After weathering significant floods in the past decade, this area does not need further emotional and collective trials and tribulations.

Our communities are instead wanting to progress and grow our area in positive ways and take advantage of the opportunities to enhance our strengths through supporting our expansive Agricultural industry and burgeoning tourism industry.

As part of the National Food Plan 2013 the Vision of the plan was for a food system that is "a sustainable, globally competitive, resilient food supply supporting access to nutritious and affordable food. Australia will produce food sustainably and will have adopted innovative practices to improve productive and environmental outcomes." Farmers in our region are also actively supportive of the essence of this vision and actively seek out opportunities to improve farm practices through innovation.

The Internet of Things (IOT) project was enthusiastically taken up by our farming business as an opportunity to explore and begin to implement available technology to improve our farming practices without the prohibitive cost barrier. The ability to expand and implement additional technology to have an even greater impact on production and further reduce environmental impact is in jeopardy through the installation of the towers as it will inhibit the use of some of these technologies, such as the use of drones to assess crop stress to enable the targeted use of chemicals and inputs rather than the traditional blanket method currently used. Farmers like us are wanting to adopt these technologies to help mitigate climate change effects, please don't hinder their use by installing literal roadblocks through our farms.

The low hanging lines will literally divide farms in half as the hang of 4.3metres is lower than the height of most modern farm machinery. Increasing the height of the towers to allow for tall vehicles to pass would add significantly to the cost of the project which has not been taken into account. Not raising the height would further fragment farm parcels with farmers not being able to access both sides of their paddocks. However, neither of these situations are ideal for either the project cost or the landowners.

What we need is a progressive government who recognises the need to invest in a new way to achieve the same goal. Undergrounding lines in existing easements at a depth or in an area such as transport corridors that does not interfere with food production would be the minimum. A truly progressive government wanting to leave a legacy that the nation and their families can be proud of, would take the opportunity to investigate more suitable options that do not also suspend investment in further renewable energy projects during construction. Investment in research to find more effective ways to harness and save power in place, or investigation of the innovative practices already being implemented in other countries such as Germany where they have eliminated the need for High voltage transmission lines to zig zag across the country above ground.

Serious consideration should be given to whether the link is actually even needed anymore and if there are low-impact alternatives available to solve the project in the timeline required. For this reason, the VNI should be put on hold/or abandoned in favour of investment into more renewable generation and storage options and exploration of already existing preferable options.

Interestingly, The National Food Plan contains the following statement regarding Consultation and transparency- 'We will engage with stakeholders when developing policies that affect our food system. We will be transparent and accountable in decision-making.' Given that this new proposed Route 5 has only been communicated to a select few in the region in the last couple of weeks leaving a short 2 week turn around in which potentially affected stakeholders could make submissions, this is not only unacceptable and a gross failure to undertake adequate community engagement but it appears that it also contradicts the proposed commitment of the government's own values and expectations for transparent and accountable policies.

The threat to Australia's food production through Biosecurity risks is one that is widely known and will only be exacerbated through this project. Throughout Buckrabanyule and the surrounding region, Wheel Cactus, a weed of national significance, is a substantial problem. The movement of vehicles, machinery and people throughout the area during the project will further spread the highly invasive weed further. Wheel Cactus poses a significant threat to agriculture and native flora because of its highly invasive nature and is an extremely difficult plant to kill due to its drought resistance properties and ability to regenerate.

Numerous Landcare groups, farmers and local residents including ourselves have fought for years to eradicate this weed, we do not need or want to have increasing opportunities for this weed to be spread prolifically throughout the region and further afield, undoing all the hard work that has been put in to contain it.

People in this region are proud and protective of their heritage. The majority of Farms in this region are still owned by descendants of the original settlers of the area and have been continually owned by families for 6 or 7 generations. Anything that affects the land that they hold precious and have a strong connection to is offensive and will be met with strong resistance. Being told that this route was chosen as "there will be less people to complain" feels like the route is being pushed simply because AEMO thinks it will be easier to get the project through and is not based on the actual merits and suitability (or lack of) of the route. The submitter who suggested this, and in turn AEMO, have seriously underestimated the strength and the resourcefulness of the people in this region who will stoically and collectively fight the construction of these towers for as long as it takes. This proposed route adversely affects a lot more people who won't get any benefit out of the project to appease a few from an area that will get a benefit from it.

Our communities are also respectful and protective of cultural heritage in the region which is reflected in the names of the surrounding agricultural districts which honour the legacy of the First Nations <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous\\_peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples)> inhabitants: Barrakee, Buckrabanyule, Woosang, Wooroonook and Yeungroon. Buckrabanyule is home to several areas of Indigenous cultural significance with Mt Buckrabanyule, home of Mindi/Binbiyal, the rainbow serpent, being at the centre. The Dja Dja Wurrung people together with Bush Heritage Australia currently manage this area who are planning further biological and archaeological studies, to increase understanding of the conservation and cultural values of the site as well as those in the immediate area. Putting these transmission lines anywhere near Mt Buckrabanyule would be highly opposed from a cultural heritage point of view. The installation of the GWM pipeline also uncovered other significant sites and documented scar trees, cooking mounds and artefact scatters etc. What consultation has occurred with the

Djaara, Dja Dja Wurrung and Yung Balug and other clans from the region to assess the cultural heritage values in the area?

Another point that seems to have been overlooked is the bushfire risk in this region and the additional difficulties controlling a fire outbreak would be with the addition of Transmission Lines. Like a most regions in this area Buckrabanyule is in a designated bushfire prone area. The Hilly, rocky outcrops are not accessible by local CFA Appliances and instead there is a heavy reliance on Aerial water bombing to control grass and bushfires. To illustrate the importance of being able to aerial bomb you only need to look at the fire that broke out on the Code Red Day in November 2019 that happened to be ignited by a spark from a transformer. Had the option to aerial bomb been taken away due to the existence of powerlines, the resulting consequences of the fast moving fire would have been catastrophic. The approximate 18 firefighting vehicles that attended struggled to contain the blaze in those conditions and had it not been for the helicopters, the fire would have quickly run rampant destroying everything in its path and devastating surrounding communities. The presence of the thermal imaging equipment on a second helicopter enabled hotspots to be quickly identified and extinguished to remove the threat of the fire re-igniting in areas that were unable to be seen such as underneath infrastructure and underground.

The Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP) states under 13.02-1S Bushfire planning that "This policy must be applied to all planning and decision making under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 relating to land that is: Within a designated bushfire prone area..." The objective of the strategy of the provision is to "Give priority to the protection of human life by: Prioritising the protection of human life over all other policy considerations... Reducing the vulnerability of communities to bushfire through the consideration of bushfire risk in decision making at all stages of the planning process."

This sparsely populated community is already vulnerable to bushfire due to the limited resources and volunteers able to fight fires. With less density in population comes higher negative impacts of bushfire due to the lower population available to service Country Fire Fighting outfits and the reliance on Aircraft for aerial bombing to control the spread of even the most benign grass fires. More densely populated areas have access to more firefighting resources including paid career firefighter and are not at the mercy of the availability of volunteers to man appliances and a high level of consideration should be given to the additional risk these powerlines represent to this community. Reducing the ability for CFA to access aerial bombing around transmission lines will further increase the community risk dramatically and unacceptably and certainly not in keeping with "Prioritising the protection of human life over all other policy considerations".

Please recognise and value the importance of our agricultural land and preserve and respect our communities and reject the proposed route 5 - The true cost to our region is too great. You can't replace good productive farmland but you can replace and explore alternative options for energy and climate solutions.

Regards

Anthony and Carolyn Stewart, Buckrabanyule.

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P032

**Name:** Samantha Herald

**Location:** Darley, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Dear VNI West team

I live in the regional town of Darley, which is an area north of Bacchus Marsh. I am not a landowner directly impacted by the WRL but I am a neighbour to this proposed transmission project. I understand the current consultation process is in relation to moving the terminal station from north Ballarat to Bulgana but I have concerns, as previously expressed to Mr Westerman, that this highly populated scenic township is being completely ignored. The knowledge AEMO has altered the course of the VNI West project and terminal station to lessen the impact on farming regions leaves a bitter taste in my mouth as there is no valid reason why this beautiful area should suffer the consequences while others are considered more important.

My partner and I moved to Darley many years ago to appreciate the stunning views over the Lerderderg State Park. This park is soon to become the Wombat-Lerderderg National Park because of its significant beauty. This high-value landscape has great significance to Victoria and it is quite appalling that AEMO selected this area for the proposed WRL. It is clear the decision to use this alignment was made by AEMO due to the original location of the Ballarat North terminal station. I am aware of other options that AusNet was not allowed to consider due to competitive advantage. This is an absolute shame as if this project proceeds, it will desecrate this region forever.

I have already been told by a local real estate agent that even though I am not hosting any transmission lines, the value of my property will take a massive hit due to how close the transmission lines will be. I have calculated I will see at least 14 transmission towers between me and the Wombat-Lerderderg National Park. This is devastating to consider. Who would ever want to buy my home with this horrible view when the time comes for me to sell?

Given how close the transmission lines will be to the Park and my home, I wonder how AEMO plans to protect my home and the transmission lines should a huge fire break out in the National Park. This is one of the highest risk bushfire prone areas in Western Victoria and I cannot believe you would consider it appropriate, for my life or the reliable supply of electricity to Victoria, to select a corridor so close to a Park and thousands of people. I am not a network planner but even I know this is a ridiculous decision to make. I urge you to reconsider.

Regarding the consultation process. It was not long enough, transparent enough, or informative enough to allow me to adequately respond to the information presented. I was not able to attend any drop-in sessions because none were near me and my work commitments prevented me from attending any webinars. From all accounts, I didn't miss much as they were more of a presentation than a helpful discussion.

Despite various media claims, I understand the North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected. This is not a win for regional Victorians. All this change has done is shift the problem somewhere else and force the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers. These decisions did nothing but increase the impacts on the region and for this, I am most disappointed. It is clear that no consideration has been given to the people of Victoria.

I would like to let you know that despite the requirement, I do not believe RIT-T has been applied in a way that is credible, which reduces the scope for misunderstandings and disputes. According to the Australian Energy Regulator, the documents must have a focus on providing transparent, user-friendly data to stakeholders. I did not find any of the documentation easy to read, understand or transparent about what projects are to come if these ones are built.

I believe the Multi-criteria analysis is flawed because it did not seek to understand what I, or the rest of the communities value, or what is important to us. It seems like it was just a desktop study by people who have never spoken with the people impacted or even bothered to visit this region. If the multi-criteria analysis is so important to AEMO and the Government, then it must also be applied to the WRL to determine the least-impact solution. What you are currently proposing is not least-0impact, especially around Darley.

If you had been to the area where I live, you would now that the geographical area of the current proposed WRL alignment is peri-urban and traverses areas that are environmentally sensitive, have established land uses, includes a growing amount of high value landholdings, has materially populated towns, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is not suited to transmission development. This results in a high degree of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated. These impacts will exist for many generations to come and it is extremely concerning. You have not made any effort to avoid Darley in any way.

I have been told by network engineers that the current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would cause the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced. This would severely impact system security. I don't understand how this can be good for Victoria's energy security. How will we keep the lights on?

I really feel that AEMO is not listening and your failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition. Many in my local community are sad, anxious, depressed but are ready to stand up for their rights until someone does start listening. The mental harm you are causing is just not fair. No one, let alone an organisation, should be allowed to treat any other person with such blatant disregard.

I really do hope you understand the impact you are having and find a better solution quickly. I support the transition to renewables but I do not support the physical and mental impacts you are forcing on me and others in my community. I love where I live and I ask that you do no harm to it or me.

Warm regards

Samantha Herald

Darley, Victoria

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P033**

**Name:** Sammut Family

**Location:** Gordon, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Hi Aemo and VNI West team.

I'm a land and home owner in Gordon. I'm a father and a husband and your projects are detracting from the ability to reside on our property and live the life we have worked so hard for. Below are my thoughts on VNI west and WRL projects.

The consultation process was not long enough, transparent enough, or informative enough to allow me to adequately respond.

We as a community know the North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected and that this was not a win for regional Victoria. All this did was shift the problem somewhere else and force the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers. These decisions did nothing but increase the impacts on the region.

The RIT-T was not applied in a way that is credible, which reduces the scope for misunderstandings and disputes. The documents must have a focus on providing transparent, user-friendly data to stakeholders.

The Multi-criteria Analysis is flawed because it did not seek to understand what we value and what is important to us. It was a desktop study by people who have never spoken with the people impacted.

If the multi-criteria analysis is so important then it must be applied to the WRL to determine the least-impact solution.

The geographical area of the current proposed WRL alignment is peri-urban and traverses areas that are environmentally sensitive, have established land uses, includes a growing amount of high value landholdings, has materially populated towns, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is not suited to transmission development. This results in a high degree of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated.

The current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would result in the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced which would severely impact system security.

AEMO are not listening and your failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition.

We believe the Victorian Government and AEMO should consider undergrounding the proposed project (using HVDC) alongside existing transport corridors or on public land to ensure minimal disruption to farm businesses in the region.

These projects need to go back to design and consider modern day transmission technology.

Regards,

Sammut family.

Gordon VIC.



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P034

**Name:** Allison Backhouse

**Location:** Darley, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Hello,

I write today as a resident who has been fully impacted by the lack of consultation for the WRL.

I was notified my 25 acre equestrian property was direct in the preferred route 3 years ago and still have no clarity of the situation. The emotional stress is unbelievable. This property is my life's work and the possibility of losing it to the hideous and dangerous over-head powerlines is incomprehensible.

I have invited discussions with Ausnet and then told no, my property wont be in the preferred path, to then 6 months later, yes it is - oh and can we have your property to complete a photo survey of where the lines will go? That was the day I realised Ausnet and the whole project has no idea. The line was supposed to be 150m north, yet the 2 gentlemen focused on the south of my property (50m). Goodness did I make a stir that day! I had Stephanie McGregor (then CEO of Ausnet) hoping around - yet they did not contact me until 24 hours later! Wow this news could have tipped anyone over the edge and it took them 24 hours to come back to me with "the boys got it wrong". 2 weeks later there was a media announcement that they were in-fact looking to change the route - yes you guessed - it to the south of me! Stephanie McGregor visited my property and told me there was no change to the north alignment. What an absolute lie straight to my face!

I hope this displays the absolute farce that is the (dis) organisation of Ausnet in communicating to the landholders. There is no public consultation. They will say anything to convince otherwise but the truth does come out and it is usually a long way from the original discussion.

This project needs more transparency - not less! The recent court ruling preventing any action against the State government of Victoria is against everything democratic Australia is.

The RIT-T was not actioned in an user friendly way to us - the public! The credibility is therefore lacking and only increases the misunderstanding and the anger. You need security guards to ensure workers are safe - surely that signals that the community are not happy or on board!

My area alone is home to the mighty Wedge tailed eagle and I do believe I may have a nest of the rare green parrots. The environmental impact of the WRL is also of major concern. The fire danger (I know I have been told hundreds of times that the powerlines do not cause fires) is my biggest fear. North of me (where a fire from the Lerderderg gorge will approach) I will have 50m distance from where a tower may fall to my property - seconds to react to a life-threatening situation - that could be avoided. These lines belong under- ground - for the safety of everyone. Australia can be a world leader - we are a first world country - yet AEMO are choosing to use antiquated 'technology' and processes. Why???

The lack of listening to the community and understanding their needs is appalling and needs to stop. The angst and upset within the community is huge and AEMO should be doing all it can to turn this around. I agree with renewable energy - as long as it is TRULY renewable. The current path and process of the WRL is flawed and feasible alternatives need to be explored and communicated to us - the community. If you actually listened to the locals - you might just be surprised at the suggestions. The secrets and lies needs to stop.

I speak relevant to my experience. I live with this project literally on my door step every day. I don't want to invest in my property for fear that I do not receive due compensation - whether the lines are on my property or 150m - I will be impacted. How that transpires to my land value is the unknown equation. The potential for another 3 years wait? No, I don't think so. We want this solved, and it needs to happen now! The damage you are doing needs to stop. You have the power to do that.

Sincerely,

Allison Backhouse

Landowner Darley region.

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P035**

**Name:** Colin Ayres

**Location:** Darley, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Good morning.

My family are landowners who will be severely impacted by the erection of the proposed 500kv transmission lines from Bulgana to Sydneham.

If these towers go ahead as proposed it will destroy the amenity of the area, it will decimate our property value because we overlook the valley these

towers and lines will be traversing.

We specifically built in this area to take advantage of the pristine area in which we live.

The proposed route is 100m from our boundary.

Any advantages the proposed above ground development will bring will be greatly negated by the impact to the environment and community.

Please re-think the above ground option to undergrounding and build an infrastructure you can be proud of.

Not an eyesore which will be standing for 50 years plus.

This is not the 1950's lets get with the times and use the technology which is available.

To erect old tech towers and lines defeats the purpose of the whole renewable energy exercise of looking after our environment.

The community and I will 100% support an underground option.

Regards, Colin Ayres

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P036**

**Name:** Julie Edwards

**Location:** Darley, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Dear Sir/Madam

I live in the regional town of Darley, which is part of Bacchus Marsh. Myself and my neighbours each stand to lose tens of thousands of dollars and in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars due to the effect of the VNI West transmission towers on our property values and yet we have been given no consideration. We are by far the largest effected population across the whole corridor with two and a half thousand people estimated to be directly affected and this does not take into account the flow on effect to the rest of our town.

We, like our many of my neighbours chose to live in Darley for the scenic beauty this area offers. The hilly terrain offers thousands of us beautiful views of the Lerderderg State Park (soon to be the Wombat-Lerderderg National Park). We built our home in such a way so as to enjoy views of the State Park from nearly every room in our house. This will become views of transmission towers from nearly every room as we estimate we will see at least 12 towers.

I have calculated dollar values from statistics and people effected. 2500 people effected and say 3 people per household, that is 830 odd household effected. Average house price in Darley is \$700k (a premium is paid for properties with views, say 10%) and transmission towers effect house prices by 10% to 30%. Using the lowest option of 10%, we stand to lose \$64 million in the value of our assets. Why are we carrying this huge burden and not being considered? I personally stand to lose in excess of \$100,000. Why am I being asked to pay so much personally?

These towers are going on one of the most prominent positions in our area set on top of a hill in beautiful natural bushland, an area that has been deemed as significant landscape by the council because of its scenic value. The area these towers will span also includes conservations zones, geological sites of national significance, an area set to become a Nature Reserve, and one of the highest risk bushfire prone areas in Western Victoria. The towers will also be a focal point for the multi-million dollar Bald Hill Activation Project that will have sweeping views of transmission towers rather than uninterrupted views of pristine bushland.

The consultation process was traumatising. I attended a drop-in session and amongst some of the more ridiculous antidotes I was given, I was being told to grow trees in my yard to block out the towers, I pointed out that given the steep terrain this would take in excess of 30 years to achieve the height required. I was also told that areas near highways and freeways were not appropriate because of the bugs and insects that lived there, and yet the endangered Swift Parrot, threatened Grey-headed Flying Fox, Black Cockatoos and Wedged-tailed Eagles (one nest is directly in the path) seem to be of no concern.

The mental impact on the residents in our area is huge and we are being completely disregarded whilst being asked to bear a very high individual cost with no compensation or consideration.

Please consider the alternatives and don't destroy our area.

Yours Sincerely

Julie Edwards

Darley Vic 3340

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P038**

**Name:** Amanda Gray

**Location:** Blampied, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Dear AEMO

Our home and farm is in the proposed VNI route from Ballarat to Melbourne. This email is our response to your request for Stakeholder Submissions on the Consultation Report.

This project has had a massive impact on us. The lack of transparency, minimal consultation and vague information from both AEMO and Ausnet has caused us huge stress and devastation.

Threats of forced property entry, and forced property acquisition, have been deeply distressing to us, our neighbours and community. This has caused Mental Health to plummet in our community.

Moving the location of the North Ballarat terminal station is NOT a win for our Community - despite Ausnet and AEMO dressing it up as one. This simply moves some of the issues to another region, doesn't necessarily change the transmission tower route, and forces larger towers onto land.

The geographic areas of the current proposed WRL alignment tears through environmentally sensitive land. Land with long established useage. This is high value food bowl land. Land that feeds Australia. Land that is of outstanding natural beauty and high value tourist regions. Land with topography that is not suited to transmission development.

The current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographical diversity. A loss of this line would result in the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced. This severely impacts system security.

We believe this project should be underground (using HVDC), run along existing transport corridors or on public land to ensure minimal disruption to farm businesses in the region.

Sincerely

Amanda Gray, Blampied Farm, Blampied

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P039**

**Name:** Surinder Alles

**Location:** Blampied, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Dear AEMO,

My name is Surinder Alles, my wife and I run a small lifestyle mixed farming operation in Blampied 3364.

We bought this property to have a place to escape the city. We came here for the peaceful community, quite lifestyle, magnificent views and topography. We have spent huge amounts of money investing in this property. We have renovated improved the paddocks to make a safe, fertile, sustainable, successful and viable farm. We have spent huge amounts of money renovating our home and gardens as planned on being here for the remainder of our lives. This project will impact our ability to retire comfortably. This project will massively diminish the value of our property by its monstrous visual impact and the health implications like various cancers that have been attributed to overhead powerlines. We will be financially devastated by this project simply by being in its vicinity.

Please reconsider extending and deepening your consultation process. The consultation process was not long enough for impacted communities and individuals to respond to adequately. Most of us are not experts in the field and to properly respond to this consultation process takes time, research and resources. The short consultation process shows how little AEMO care about getting proper feedback. AEMO have shown that their community consultation process is a farce and a box ticking exercise.

Please make no mistake that by moving the terminal station north of Ballarat you have given regional Victorian a win. This was obviously done in order to increase the WRL project to 500kv with 80 meter towers to increase its capacity. This seems like you have done a favour to help impacted communities but the reality is you increased the impacts on affected communities. This seems incredibly devious and manipulative. The region will now be scarred by these embarrassingly technologically outdated 80 meter towers that will devastate our beautiful, fertile productive farms and amazing topography that is currently up for World Heritage listing.

The RIT-T was not applied properly. AEMO has deliberately chosen to do this to obfuscate the real negative impacts, social, economic and environmental. The poorly applied RIT-T has increased the scope for misunderstanding and disputes. I do not trust AEMO use of the RIT-T as it is currently applied. It seems like AEMO has done this deliberately. AEMO you must take the RIT-T process back to the drawing board. The document

provided by AEMO are not user friendly. AEMO must focus on providing transparent and user friendly data to affected stakeholders.

The criteria analysis is flawed you didn't seek to properly consult with communities to find out the true impacts, what we value, what is important and how this project will diminish our community. The study was conducted from a desk by people that have not spoken to affected communities impacted by this project. If multi criteria is so important why was it not applied to the WRL to determine the least harmful, least impactful solution and why has under grounding not been properly costed and investigated? Under grounding these lines would be the most financially, economically and socially responsible way to get the impacted communities to approve this project.

The Goldfields region is up for World Heritage listing. This region is topographical unique, ancient and magnificent in its beauty. The proposed WRL alignment will traverse peri-urban areas that are highly environmentally sensitive, highly fertile food bowl of the nation, high value tourism region and extremely valuable landholdings, materially populated towns and a topography not suited to this this transmission project. This project will cause untold impacts, socially, economically, financially and on our mental health. Pushing this project through without properly considering and consulting communities will cause high levels of impact that can no way be avoided or or mitigated.

The current proposed shard WRL and VNI powerlines creates a highly critical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would result in the majority of Electric city generation in western Victoria and imports from New South Wales to be drastically reduced which severely impact system security.

Ammo, you are not listening and your failure to explore feasible. Alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition. The Victorian government and ammo should consider under grounding the proposed project using HVDC alongside existing transport corridors, or on public land, to ensure minimal disruption to Farm businesses in the region.

On a final note, I would also like to comment on how this project has impacted on my mental health and wellbeing. This project has impacted me in my work, my family life and my day to day existence . I am finding it increasingly difficult to function as my mental health is not good because of the way this project has been conducted by AEMO and the Victorian government.

Please consider under grounding take this project back to the drawing board and start over. Give all Victorians a proper electrical network that benefits everyone in the community. Send the lines under ground!

AEMO you need to do better.

Regards

Surinder J. Alles

Blampied 3364



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P041**

**Name:** Hayley Plageman

**Location:** Colbrook, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Dear VNI West team,

I live in a small regional community of Colbrook in Victoria, which is an area north of Ballan, in the heart of the central highlands surrounded by beautiful forests. I am not a landowner directly impacted by the WRL but I am a direct, land owning, neighbour to this proposed transmission project. We are absolutely appalled that to this day we have not received any correspondence from AEMO nor AUSNET about the WRL, even though it has and will impact our lives so greatly. I understand the current consultation process is in relation to the VNI West and moving the route and terminal station from north Ballarat to Bulgana but I have many, many concerns.

I have lived in this community for most of my life, we are a very tight knit community of family, friends and neighbours, we look out for one another and work together to build and maintain a safe, healthy and productive community. My husband and I purchased our dream property of 200 acres 10 years ago and built our forever home to raise a family. Our property bounds the Wombat State Park which is soon to become the Wombat-Lerderderg National Park because of its significance. This high-value landscape has great significance to Victoria and it is quite appalling that AEMO selected this area for the proposed WRL. It is clear the decision to use this alignment was made by AEMO due to the original location of the Ballarat North terminal station. I am aware of other options that AusNet was not allowed to consider due to competitive advantage. This is an absolute shame as if this project proceeds, it will desecrate this region on so many levels. It would appear now that the VNI West has been rerouted, that this WRL project should now be obsolete, and would be a waste of taxpayers money.

We have already been told by local real estate agents and banks and it has been reflected in our council rates, that even though we not hosting any transmission lines, the value of our property has dropped, due to how close the proposed transmission lines could be. This will only become worse and further devalue our property should the transmission line be built. What if we wanted to refinance? Buy an investment property? How can we refinance or borrow against a property that is now not worth what is even owed? When the capacity was there 3 years ago before the WRL was thrust upon us. We are not alone in this situation, we are aware of many families along the proposed route, that are having serious financial struggles now, that have been brought about by the proposed WRL and VNI WEST.

We have a huge concern about fire risk to our property, home and community, given how close the transmission lines will be to the Wombat State Forest and that my family home situated between the State Forest and the transmission line. I wonder how AEMO plans to protect my property, my home, my family, my community and the transmission lines should a huge fire break out in the Wombat and Lerdederg State Park. This is one of the highest risk bushfire prone areas in Western Victoria and earmarked by the CFA as potentially the location of the next catastrophic fire event. I can not comprehend how you could consider it appropriate, to select a route as highly volatile as this, that will risk many communities and families lives and the reliability of supply of electricity to Victoria. I am not a network planner but even I know this is a ridiculous decision to make. There must be a better way!

Regarding the consultation process. It was not long enough, not transparent enough, there were many confusing mistruths told by AusNet's representatives in drop in sessions, was there enough precise informative given to allow us to adequately respond to the information presented. I was not able to physically enter into any of the drop on sessions, mostly due to overwhelming anxiety around the whole process. I stood with my friends family and neighbours out side of many drop in sessions. I am a busy mother, business owner and farmer, my work commitments prevented me from actively attending any webinars. From all accounts, I didn't miss much as they were more of a presentation than a helpful discussion.

Despite various media claims, I understand the North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected. This was not a win for regional Victorians, all it has done is thrust the problems onto other communities, and force the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers. These decisions did nothing but increase the impacts on the region and for this, I am most disappointed. It is clear that no consideration has been given to the people of Victoria.

I would like to let you know that despite the requirement, I do not believe RIT-T has been applied in a way that is credible, which reduces the scope for misunderstandings and disputes. According to the Australian Energy Regulator, the documents must have a focus on providing transparent, user-friendly data to stakeholders. I did not find any of the documentation easy to read, understand or transparent about what projects are to come if these ones are built.

I believe the Multi-criteria analysis is flawed and outdated, it did not seek to understand what I, or the rest of the communities value, or what is important to us or how we use and value the environment around us. It seems like it was just a desktop study by people who don't understand our region, our farming communities have never spoken with the people impacted or even bothered to visit this region. If the multi-criteria analysis is so important to AEMO and the Government, then it must also be applied to the WRL to determine the least-impact solution. What you are currently proposing is not least-impact, especially considering the amount of highly productive small landholdings, amount of agriculturally significant areas such as the unique potato growing areas, close proximity to significant forests, or the financial or mental implications projects of these magnitude have on communities and land holders.

If you would come to visit the area where we live, you would see the beautiful vast geographical area the current proposed WRL alignment is set to traverse. It is a very dynamic area from Sydenham to Bulgana, from dramatic heritage listed gorges and escarpments, to beautiful gently undulating country, to prime open broad acre farm land, small boutique landholdings, pristine waterways, forest covered highlands. The proposed WRL alignment travels through a mix of peri-urban, high intensity productive agriculture, environmentally sensitive, have many established land uses, including a growing amount of high value landholdings, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is just not suited to transmission development. This results in a high degree and range of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated. These impacts will exist for many generations to come and it is absolutely devastating. There have been many oversights when it comes to the planning of this project, one would hope they are oversights and not outright disregard.

Why is it that regional Victorians are left to bear all of the burden, to the benefit of our urban neighbours? We the regional Victorians are the suppliers of the produce, both food and fibre to fill the supermarket shelves, we hold such a crucial, integral card in the progression of society, yet we are the ones who are repeatedly disregarded. It really looks from the outside that AEMO are not listening and do not care about our communities. Your failure to explore feasible alternatives is resulting in continued and ever increasing opposition. So many in our wider community, and not just those immediately impacted, are depressed, anxious and very angry, we will continue to stand up for our rights and protect our precious homes, farms, communities and local environment until someone starts listening and acting in our best interests. The mental harm you are causing is just not fair and incredibly negligent. No one, let alone an organisation, should be allowed to treat any other person with such blatant disregard.

I really do hope you understand the impact you are having and find a better solution quickly. We support the transition to renewables but I do not support the physical and mental impacts you are forcing on us and our community. We love where I live and I ask that you do no harm to it or my family.

With Regards

Hayley Plageman

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P042**

**Name:** Trish Kevin Maze House

**Location:** Newlyn, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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I am making a submission to the VNI West consultation report, due 5 April (or 19 April) 2023.

Please advise of receipt of this submission.

I am a tourist operator at Mt Prospect, 3364.

We have a family owned and run tourist garden that is within 500m of the proposed transmission towers. The proposed route of the transmission line (northern pass around Hepburn lagoon) does a dog leg adjacent to our property, see we see the powerlines from 3 sides. Hence the tranquil rural setting of our business will be disrupted by ugly 80m high transmission towers and lines. This will equate to loss of business.

My feedback on the report are as follows:

I support option 5 - the moving of the Sub station to Bulgana. However I am concerned for the communities that have to house this in their district. Engagement with the community needs to be open, honest and sincere - the opposite of what has taken place here. And there needs to be sophisticated compensation that is acceptable to the community.

The current proposed powerline route is predicated on a terminal station at Mt Prospect. With Option 5 the situation has changed. So the route from Sydenham to Bulgana needs to be reviewed. Obviously there are more direct routes that would make transmission shorter and likely cheaper.

The project needs to learn from overseas experience and adopt modern technology, such as under grounding. Why is Australia the only developed country that is still considering such out dated technology? There are a myriad of reasons why under ground transmission is more acceptable - less impact on amenity and landscape, less impact on agricultural production and reduced foot print to name a few.

I can see scant reference to tourism and the potential impacts, particularly in regards to future land uses. Tourism is the second biggest earner in the Hepburn Shire and a growing industry. Other countries (eg. United Kingdom) are recognising the importance of aesthetics and tourism, putting overhead powerlines underground in important

tourism regions. Shouldn't we be learning from this? 80m high towers will have a massive impact on current and future tourism in the region. You need to consider ALL the costs of over ground transmission.

Regards

Trish Kevin

Maze House

10 mins from Daylesford, and

10 mins from Creswick

Dja Dja Wurrung country

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P043

**Name:** Grace, Charlie, Ayvah, Duncan Forbes      **Location:** Gre Gre, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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(Submitted via handwritten letter, transcribed below)

Dear submissions,

We are writing you this letter to do with power poles. We being 10, 11 and 12 year old kids would like to say we do not want this to happen because we don't want to see 85 metre power poles in front of our house or on our land.

We do not understand why it cannot happen underground or on the side of the road.

We would also like to mention that if we stand up and told you without warning that we were going to put an 85 metre power pole in front of your house or on your land you would not like it either.

Charlie did the math and you are paying us for 25 years when the power poles are going to last 40 years. How is that fair? It is a whole other generation.

So in conclusion, thank you for listening.

Most sincerely,

Grace, Charlie, Ayvah, Duncan Forbes

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P044**

**Name:** Leanne Lukies

**Location:** Darley, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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My name is Leanne Lukies.

“I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I live and pay my respects to elders.

I live across the road from the Lerderderg State Forest. I have views of the forest and up the Lerderderg Gorge from 3 sides of my house. The overhead power lines will be visible from all 3 sides. There has been no consultation with us in any way as to how this is going to affect us.

I have worked for many years to be able to live in such a beautiful place.

If the Western Victoria Transmission Network is allowed to go above ground it will set a precedent for power transmission around the rest of the state.

Australia will be crisscrossed with tens of thousands of kilometres of transmission power lines in this once in a century change to our electricity generation and distribution.

We should not short change our children and their children and generations to come with outdated technology for transmission. We should not put the landscape and environment at greater risk than we need to without a proper and full debate.

We cannot have future generations look back and say “Why did you saddle us with this dangerous destructive eyesore just because it was cheaper?”

Remember - the first cost is the best cost. Let’s get this right at the outset.

The consultation process was not long enough, transparent enough, or informative enough to allow an adequate response.

The North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected and that this was not a win for regional Victoria. All this did was shift the problem somewhere else and force the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers. These decisions did nothing but increase the impacts on the region.

The RIT-T was not applied in a way that is credible, which reduces the scope for misunderstandings and disputes. The documents must have a focus on providing transparent, user-friendly data to stakeholders.

The Multi-criteria Analysis is flawed because it did not seek to understand what we value and what is important to us. It was a desktop study by people who have never spoken with the people impacted.

If the multi-criteria analysis is so important then it must be applied to the WRL to determine the least-impact solution.

The geographical area of the current proposed WRL alignment is peri-urban and traverses areas that are environmentally sensitive, have established land uses, includes a growing amount of high value landholdings, has materially populated towns, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is not suited to transmission development. This results in a high degree of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated.

The current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would result in the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced which would severely impact system security.

You are not listening and your failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition.

I believe the Victorian Government and AEMO should consider undergrounding the proposed project (using HVDC) alongside existing transport corridors or on public land to ensure minimal disruption to farms, businesses and residents in the region.

Leanne Lukies.

Darley Victoria.



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P045**

**Name:** Dennis Bentley

**Location:** Blackburn, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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I take this opportunity to offer my input to the consultation process for the above.

I know well the Area of Interest within which you propose to erect an aerial power transmission system.

I note there is still no clear advice or reasoning behind the sideways push of your original Area of Interest further into the agricultural lands.

Like many other Victorians, I am both a consumer of our agricultural products and concerned at any restriction or avoidable restriction to the productivity of this sector of our economy.

Agricultural land is a prime asset, and limited.

Population growth, and therefore consumption, is not.

Powerlines and towers restrict, hinder, and reduce the productivity of the agricultural sector. This is at an ongoing cost to the Victorian consumer and needs to be factored into any picture of the real cost of the proposal.

Serious consideration must be given to the negative aspects of the powerline option.

- Loss of usable land both around and under the powerlines.
- Restrictions on the use and productivity of farming assets and machinery.
- Limiting the introduction and use of technologies such as Drones for mapping, spraying and property monitoring.

Drone investments are limited to 50 metres above ground level.

Towers and powerlines don't move out of the way.

- Obligatory easy, but disruptive, access would be needed for Fault and Maintenance issues.

- Emergency Services access to area

For example any powerline crossing the Wimmera Highway and the northern approach to St Arnaud airport may well restrict emergency use by the Vic Air Ambulance or the Vic Police Air Wing.

There may well be similar sites in your proposed area.

The better option to address all my concerns, and of those who live and work in the 'real world' farming environment of the area, is to install an underground transmission system. With minimal disruption during installation, all the available land is then again used for its prime purpose.

Cost comparisons may be touted as a factor.

What is lost at that cost is the important factor.

Dennis Bentley

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P047

**Name:** Daniel Dalton

**Location:** Colbrook, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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I live in the Ballan (Colbrook) area of Victoria with my wife and 4 children. This disaster has caused nothing but stress for my family and has left us very upset.

The consultation process was not long enough, transparent enough, or informative enough to allow you to adequately respond.

I know the North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected and that this was not a win for regional Victoria. All this did was shift the problem somewhere else and force the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers. These decisions did nothing but increase the impacts on the region.

The RIT-T was not applied in a way that is credible, which reduces the scope for misunderstandings and disputes. The documents must have a focus on providing transparent, user-friendly data to stakeholders.

The Multi-criteria Analysis is flawed because it did not seek to understand what we value and what is important to us. It was a desktop study by people who have never spoken with the people impacted.

If the multi-criteria analysis is so important then it must be applied to the WRL to determine the least-impact solution.

The geographical area of the current proposed WRL alignment is peri-urban and traverses areas that are environmentally sensitive, have established land uses, includes a growing amount of high value landholdings, has materially populated towns, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is not suited to transmission development. This results in a high degree of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated.

The current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would result in the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced which would severely impact system security.

You are not listening and the failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition.

I believe the Victorian Government and AEMO should consider undergrounding the proposed project (using HVDC) alongside existing transport corridors or on public land to ensure minimal disruption to farm businesses in the region.

This project is a disaster.

Daniel Dalton

Colbrook

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P048

**Name:** Aliesha Dalton

**Location:** Colbrook, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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I live in the Ballan (Colbrook) area of Victoria with my husband and 4 children. This disaster has caused nothing but stress for my family and has left us very upset.

The consultation process was not long enough, transparent enough, or informative enough to allow you to adequately respond.

I know the North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected and that this was not a win for regional Victoria. All this did was shift the problem somewhere else and force the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers. These decisions did nothing but increase the impacts on the region.

The RIT-T was not applied in a way that is credible, which reduces the scope for misunderstandings and disputes. The documents must have a focus on providing transparent, user-friendly data to stakeholders.

The Multi-criteria Analysis is flawed because it did not seek to understand what we value and what is important to us. It was a desktop study by people who have never spoken with the people impacted.

If the multi-criteria analysis is so important then it must be applied to the WRL to determine the least-impact solution.

The geographical area of the current proposed WRL alignment is peri-urban and traverses areas that are environmentally sensitive, have established land uses, includes a growing amount of high value landholdings, has materially populated towns, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is not suited to transmission development. This results in a high degree of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated.

The current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would result in the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced which would severely impact system security.

You are not listening and the failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition.

I believe the Victorian Government and AEMO should consider undergrounding the proposed project (using HVDC) alongside existing transport corridors or on public land to ensure minimal disruption to farm businesses in the region.

This project is a disaster.

Aliesha Dalton

Colbrook

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P050**

**Name:** Susanne Feeny

**Location:** Swanwater, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Good Afternoon,

I have a 960 hectare property @ Swanwater with my brother John which is within the Bulgana corridor where the Proposed Electricity Project may take place. It is difficult to put in a submission without knowing if this directly impacts us. The short notice given to send in submissions makes it hard to give a detailed submission.

The problems are as follows:

There was little or no consultation with farmers as to the details of the Proposed Electricity Towers Project.

Farmers have houses, barns, machinery sheds, shearing sheds, silos and other buildings on their properties. It is not clear what the compensation will be. The \$8,000 per year over 25 years for example will that be increased with CPI? As \$8,000 in 10 years or 25 years will not be worth what \$8,000 is worth now. What is the compensation for buildings and other assets?

Health and Safety Issues with heavy machinery such as Combine Harvesters as machinery is getting bigger and bigger all the time. Will it be safe to use near these powerlines? Farmers have other people working for them as well as themselves. This will present Health & Safety concerns. If you unable to use the latest machinery this would impact our ability to maximise our ability to earn a living. Powerlines will move in the wind and drop down or stretch in the Summer heat. The Summer period is when we harvest our crops.

Insurance concerns: Will I need to take out extra insurance to what I currently have? What insurance or Public Liability Insurance does AEMO or the power companies have? What does this cover and who takes responsibility for the towers and lines on our property? This is a very big concern for us.

Increased risk of fires due to power lines and towers in the paddocks which could be hit by lightening strikes and cause a fire. May also impact what insurance needs to be taken out.

Health and Safety and wellbeing of livestock in and around these towers. Powerlines will move in the wind not sure if this is a safe place for livestock to be.

Farmers now use Drones to provide information about weeds for example in order to find out what chemicals are required and how much and where it is required. Drones would not be able to be used in the flightpath of the powerlines. This would mean we are not able to use the latest technology and improve our farming methods.

What is the impact to current water pipelines and waterways? The Wimmera Mallee Water Pipeline goes through our property. What about other waterways?

The Proposed Towers are 450 metres apart will there be other proposed tracks or roads needed for maintenance to be carried out? How often will maintenance be taking place to maintain and check on these powerlines? Will the area under the lines need to be kept free for maintenance teams? What about the 100 metre easements under the towers? None of this is clear to me and how it will impact our property?

What is the impact to bird-life in the local area? We already have nesting sites for wedge-tail eagles.

What about remnant vegetation on the property?

Finally as I have stated previously I have had limited time and limited information to complete this submission. It therefore makes it difficult to give a fully detailed submission.

If any further information could be provided to us it would be most appreciated.

Regards

Susanne Feeny



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P051**

**Name:** Katherine Harris

**Location:** Darley, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Dear VNI West team

I live in Darley, which is the northern of Bacchus Marsh. The proposed transmission project will be located approximately 200 metres from our home. I am concerned about the visual as well as the electro magnetic radiation emitted from the wires particularly given that I am a recent survivor of cancer.

My husband and I moved to Darley many years ago to appreciate the stunning views over the Lerderderg State Park. This park is soon to become the Wombat-Lerderderg National Park because of its significant beauty. This high-value landscape has great significance to Victoria and it is quite appalling that AEMO selected this area for the proposed WRL. It is clear the decision to use this alignment was made by AEMO due to the original location of the Ballarat North terminal station. I am aware of other options that AusNet was not allowed to consider due to competitive advantage. This is an absolute shame as if this project proceeds, it will desecrate this region forever.

I have already been told by a local real estate agent that even though I am not hosting any transmission lines, the value of my property will take a massive hit due to how close the transmission lines will be located to my home. This is devastating to consider.

Given how close the transmission lines will be to the Park and my home, I wonder how AEMO plans to protect my home and the transmission lines should a huge fire break out in the National Park. This is one of the highest risk bushfire prone areas in Western Victoria and I cannot believe you would consider it appropriate, for my life or the reliable supply of electricity to Victoria, to select a corridor so close to a Park and thousands of people. I am not a network planner but even I know this is a ridiculous decision to make. I urge you to reconsider.

Regarding the consultation process. It was not long enough, transparent enough, or informative enough to allow me to adequately respond to the information presented.

Despite various media claims, I understand the North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected. This is not a win for regional Victorians. All this change has done is shift the problem somewhere else and force the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers. These

decisions did nothing but increase the impacts on the region and for this, I am most disappointed. It is clear that no consideration has been given to the people of Victoria.

I would like to let you know that despite the requirement, I do not believe RIT-T has been applied in a way that is credible, which reduces the scope for misunderstandings and disputes. According to the Australian Energy Regulator, the documents must have a focus on providing transparent, user-friendly data to stakeholders. I did not find any of the documentation easy to read, understand or transparent about what projects are to come if these ones are built.

I believe the Multi-criteria analysis is flawed because it did not seek to understand what I, or the rest of the communities value, or what is important to us. It seems like it was just a desktop study by people who have never spoken with the people impacted or even bothered to visit this region. If the multi-criteria analysis is so important to AEMO and the Government, then it must also be applied to the WRL to determine the least-impact solution. What you are currently proposing is not least-impact, especially around Darley.

If you had been to the area where I live, you would now that the geographical area of the current proposed WRL alignment is peri-urban and traverses areas that are environmentally sensitive, have established land uses, includes a growing amount of high value landholdings, has materially populated towns, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is not suited to transmission development. This results in a high degree of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated. These impacts will exist for many generations to come and it is extremely concerning. You have not made any effort to avoid Darley in any way.

I have been told by network engineers that the current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would cause the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced. This would severely impact system security. I don't understand how this can be good for Victoria's energy security. How will we keep the lights on?

I really feel that AEMO is not listening and your failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition. Many in my local community are sad, anxious, depressed but are ready to stand up for their rights until someone does start listening. The mental harm you are causing is just not fair. No one, let alone an organisation, should be allowed to treat any other person with such blatant disregard.

I really do hope you understand the impact you are having and find a better solution quickly. I support the transition to renewables but I do not support the physical and mental impacts you are forcing on me and others in my community. I love where I live and I ask that you do no harm to it or me.

Warm regards

Katherine Harris

Darley, Victoria

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

## SUBMISSION NUMBER: P052

**Name:** Norman Cameron

**Location:** Bendigo, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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VNI WEST CONSULTATION REPORT -OPTIONS ASSESSMENT-

FEBRUARY 2023 (AEMO) - FEEDBACK SUBMISSION-

TRANSMISSION LINE ROUTE OPTIONS

Please find enclosed a submission to the Options Assessment Report.

1. I believe the Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA; Table 13, page 65) and its Analysis (Figure 25, page 66) were critically limited and under-represented in scope and consequently, on later weighting. As a result the rankings were flawed and inadequate in all of the environmental, heritage, landscape quality and vista assessments, cultural tourism impacts, criteria pertaining.

2. Accordingly, the resulting rankings for each option -but in particular for options 1 and 1a- (Table 14, page 69) were inaccurate, relative to all the salient input constraint matters that should have been recognised, weighted and ranked. Properly assessed, weighted and ranked, I believe option 1 and 1a should have ranked between either 5 or 6, not rank 3 as in the report.

3. The most relevant of the matters, either omitted or under-weighted include:

a) The longstanding prospective World Heritage quality and probable future designation of the Victorian Goldfields Region should have been clearly identified, weighed and ranked as a 'key cultural heritage constraint' and accordingly, been 'avoided' (page 70, Cultural Heritage). Such status should have had the impacted area ranked as Very High or at least High in the 'Complexity Ratings' of the constraints 'Data Analysis Table' (Figure 25, page 66) not as Low or Very Low ranking.

b) Likewise, the unique assemblage of 'volcanic cones' with their Significant Landscape Overlays (SLOs) planning scheme designations in Clunes, Smeaton and Kingston should have been ranked a High as their visual vulnerability to a competing huge landmark transmission line feature would obviously be degrading and detrimental to visual

outlook and vistas. It is noted that only the tops of the volcanic cones are denoted as SLOs but obviously, the whole volcanic plain is visually involved.

4. The important cluster of heritage mine sites eg. North Berry etc. further add to the cultural environmental significance and heritage of the Kingston, Smeaton, Clunes locale. This should have been highly ranked along with the broad landscape vistas that are uninterrupted in this area.

5. Further visual amenity matters include the magnificent panoramic 30 km vista across the volcanic plain between Kingston and Waubra. This valued tourist and local vista should have been identified and ranked as a High constraint. A 500 kv transmission line (see point 2) would constitute an indelible monstrous scar to this prime view of tourism significance. In such visual amenity regards, tourism visitor impacts have been given little recognition, exposure or weighting in the report.

6. The proper, more comprehensive scoping and existing conditions approach that the VNI West Report should have generally followed is the comprehensive assessment criteria that will later be required for the future mandatory Environmental Effects Statement (EES). There is an existing comparable template for such matters and approach in respect to the current, related Western Renewable Link EES Statement (in formulation). The legitimate matters of concerns lacking in the VNI Report and raised in this submission have by contrast been properly identified in the Preliminary EES Information Sheets, in particular:

Existing Conditions Historic Heritage - November 2021

Existing Conditions Landscape and Visual Heritage - 2021

Existing Conditions Land Use and Planning - May 2022

7. In conclusion, option 1 and 1a should not be further considered as an optional route for the 500 kv transmission line as the assessments in my view are inadequate, the weightings inaccurate and hence the resulting rankings are fundamentally flawed.

8. This submitter intends to respond and submit to the future EES hearing process for the Western Renewable Link (WRL), in an endeavour to have this favoured transmission route (between Clunes and Kingston) relocated further to the south to less sensitive land for reasons similar to the above submission. Hopefully the EES findings arising from the information sheets and further information may well conclude that such relocation should occur in any event. Alternatively, for this Clunes/Kingston Corridor, undergrounding of this section of the transmission line should be proposed due to its 'exceptional circumstances' (page 96) which exist in this case as proposed in this submission.

9. In comparison to the categories and findings of the WRL reports, the VNI report has critical under-ratings and significant failings. For example, landscape and visual and cultural amenity matters (perhaps the most critical element) is relegated to a strange designation of 'social' and a criteria of amenity rather than visual, heritage and cultural landscapes. Further, such values are then limited to the concepts of 'area within SLO' (page 70). What

about pristine views, vistas, landscapes and tourism venues etc.? The statement (page 70) that: Social, 'all options performed moderately against the social criteria' clearly shows that the criteria are at best skewed, and at worse, are nonsense to the 'existing conditions' survey ground truth.

10. Finally, the blurred minuscule maps of the report are totally unreadable and not fit for purpose. A series of aerial photos (interactive maps) capable of enlargement and clearly showing transmission routes and locations should have been a prerequisite vital tool to properly and fully inform the stakeholder.

Norman Cameron

Urban and Regional Planner (retired)

30 years professional experience in the Goldfields Region, Planning, Heritage, Regional Development, Tourism, Landscape Planning

City Planner, City of Bendigo 1985-1995

Member, Federal Government Regional Development Taskforce (Kelty/Fox 1992/3) Developing Australia

Shire Planner, Central Goldfields Shire 1995-2015 Golden Way Heritage Trail and interpretive signage (1997)

Initial Goldfields World Heritage Bid 1989 (John Brumby, Professor Weston Bate)

Bendigo, 4th April, 2023

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P053**

**Name:** Randall Cape

**Location:** Darley, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Submission to AEMO

Re:- VNI West

This is a personal submission to AEMO regarding the VNI West project based on experience acquired as a member of Community Consultative Group for Western Renewables Link (WRL).

The observations made in this document will not be of a technical nature as one is not qualified to make detailed appraisals of what is proposed – there will be others who will be submitting detailed forensic analyses of the project who are totally qualified so to do. The purpose of this document is to encourage those with the task of planning and delivering the additions and amendments to Australia's transmission grid demanded by the switch from fossil fuel to renewable energy to look beyond the horizons of current thinking and embrace what future technology may bring as well as taking into account the needs and health of the community. There will also be some questions raised which only AEMO can answer.

There is no argument the task of transmitting electricity is essentially a logistics task except one uses cables opposed to road, rail sea and air used for physical goods. Firstly two fundamental questions and answers:-

1. In Australia, will people live in geographically different places than currently happens?

The answer is no – the population will increase but people will still live in the areas which are currently populated eg the Greater Metropolitan Areas of all the capital cities as well as the larger country centres.

2. Are all these centres currently connected to an electricity supply? The answer is yes which means the existing transmission easements throughout the country are doing the job for which they were constructed. They just need to be enhanced to keep pace with a growing population and advances in generation and transportation technology.

Let us consider what the above means for Victoria and the proposed VNI West transmission line. Given Victoria's geographical location in the roaring 40's wind generation in the south of the state is always going to be the most

obvious natural method of to produce power. As a result Victoria is in a position to be a nett exporter of power under a national integrated system. Both east and west of the state would appear to have plenty of scope to develop significant windfarms both on and off-shore to not only meet existing demand but of that into the future as well. With coal generation focussed in the Latrobe Valley the major transmission lines are naturally running east west with Melbourne acting as the natural junction to branch lines to the north. The Melbourne area could be the key to the whole transmission corridor given advances in technology in cable and battery infrastructure.

There is a good case to put up that existing transmission easements are totally adequate to meet the needs of the community for the foreseeable future. There is the line stretching from Gippsland all the way through to Portland with all other lines branching off that at 2 key points – Melbourne & Geelong. If the production centres are going to be moved from the Latrobe Valley to both East & West Victoria, all that needs to be done is to ensure the new production facilities are connected into the existing lines. In the west all production facility south of a Moorabool/Skipton/Dunkeld line is connected into the 500kva line that goes from Moorabool to Mortlake. Any facility north of that line connects into Bulganna/Moorabool line. In the east all production facilities would be connected into the facility where the Marinus Link is connected to the Victorian System.

All this would require upgrading of the existing route system in the short term by boosting the capabilities of the existing lines and installing batteries at the key points – Mortlake; Moorabool; a Melbourne site probably Sydenham and the junction of the Marinus link from Tassie. In the medium terms all upgrades would be made by undergrounding all lines using DC current with the long term aim to underground all lines existing and those extra deemed necessary.

The above plan also builds in system resilience. In recent times natural events have caused major power interruptions to transmission networks eg AusNet in Dandenong Ranges; the network in South Australia in two separate incidents, one in the mid North of the State and another near Tailem Bend. It is understood these incidents have cost hundreds of millions of dollars to the economy not only in the cost of repairs but also in lost productivity. If these lines had been underground, there would have been no loss of power and no cost to the economy.

AEMO are directed to some of the measures Western Power in Western Australia are adopting to build in resilience to their system which is subjected to some of the most extreme weather conditions in the world. Rather than keep repairing mile and miles of transmission lines across deserted areas of the state they now have stand-alone power systems which they plan to deploy more than 4000 across the state in the coming decade. For more information see [www.westernpower.com.au/our-energy-evolution/grid-technology/stand-alone-powersystem/](http://www.westernpower.com.au/our-energy-evolution/grid-technology/stand-alone-powersystem/)

There are more examples overseas of governments legislating and building transmission networks which have built in resilience of being underground - the Netherlands, a country of just 16.7 million people but with a population density of 397 people per square kilometer, chose underground cables for the transmission network. In February 2010, the Dutch government adopted changes to the Third Electricity Supply Structure Plan (SEVIII),

capping the total length of the overhead transmission and distribution (T&D) network. These days, every new kilometer of aerial line must be compensated by changing a corresponding length at a different location from aerial into underground cables—a compensation principle.

Regular evaluations determine if compensation impacts the implementation pace of new high voltage networks.

The Dutch approach is viewed as clear and consistent, overall, leading to the speedy implementation of many needed transmission lines. One downside is that some communities must tolerate more overhead lines than others.

Undergrounding was adopted by Germany as well, which has to meet the growing power demands of 82 million people across 357,000 square kilometers. The federal government recently approved a new energy policy to address this challenge. The policy includes the stipulation that the German grid must source 30 percent of its power from renewables by 2020, up from about 17 percent in 2010. Given that many of these renewable sources are offshore wind farms in the north of the country—a long way from some of the high population centers in the middle and south of the country—the new energy policy requires a 25 percent expansion of the transmission grid over the next ten years. That's the addition of 3,600 kilometers of extra high voltage lines to the German national grid by 2020.

Mental Health has been a significant factor amongst the landowners who have property along the proposed route of the WRL. A Japanese study published in 2006 examined the association between residential proximity to 60 Hz high voltage (22-500 kV) overhead transmission lines (HVOTLs) and mental health (MH). The subjects were 223 mothers with a mean age of 37 years. The distance from the subject's residence to the closest HVOTL was measured on a map. MH status was assessed by the SF-36 Health Survey, which was scored on a 0-100 point scale, and an individual with a score of 52 points or less was defined as having poor MH.

Logistic regression models were used to examine the association between the distance from the subjects' residence to the closest HVOTL and MH status. The prevalence of poor MH was 15%. Among the 223 subjects, 10 lived within 100 m of a HVOTL. The adjusted odds ratios (OR) for poor MH among those who lived 101-300 m or within 100 m from HVOTL were 1.29 (95% confidence interval (CI): 0.35-10.13) and 1.87 (95% CI: 0.35-10.13), respectively, against the reference category (300+ m). MH status was not significantly associated with the distance between the subject's residence and the closest HVOTL. In conclusion given the norm for adults suffering from mental health issues in the general population is approx. 25% then the proximity of HVOTL increases the likelihood of increased mental health issues in the population by 10%. Not acceptable in any circumstances.

Another significant factor relating to Mental Health is having the line of towers going through one's property. No amount of financial compensation can offset the feelings of loss and deprivation that is felt by people who are affected. Farmers whose property has been in the family's hands for generations feel powerless in having any say in altering what they feel is the inevitable march of government intransigence. People in residential areas see their properties devalued by having rows of towers outside their front doors. A 2018 study from the Journal of Real Estate Research found that vacant lots near high-voltage power lines sell for 44.9% less than equivalent lots



that aren't located near power lines. If you take a step back, a lot that is located within 1,000 feet of transmission lines tends to sell for 17.9% less. A 2021 Study completed by a group of American Mortgage Brokers concluded proximity to transmission lines decreased the value of residential property by 10 – 40%. For a purchaser that is fine; one is going into a transaction with all the facts in front of one but for a seller to suddenly have a row of towers appear in or by the property then the effect is devastating both financially and mentally. If the line was underground, apart from the initial disruption, the effect on the finances would be virtually nil.

In summary adoption of new technology along taking a long hard look at the existing easements is going to achieve the aim of bringing the full generation capability of renewable energy into the grid. The result is one ends up with a landscape totally devoid of towers and wires; built in resilience; socially acceptable; less wasteful of product generated and something which is going to serve the community for the foreseeable future. It also renders the need for major new transmission routes null and void by using existing easements and advances in technology to upgrade the existing network to meet the future needs and would render VNI West and WRL redundant.

Written and submitted by

Randall Cape

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P054**

**Name:** Dan Douglas

**Location:** Marnoo, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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I'm writing to express my concerns over the proposed Option 5 powerline. I farm at Marnoo East and have not received any information/ consultation from anyone regarding this proposal. I grow wheat, canola, barley, beans and livestock and I'm very concerned what impact any powerlines running through my property will have to me and my family's livelihood.

I live/farm in a very isolated community and feel very let down and bullied that any such proposal could take place without the correct empathetic consultation taking place.

Can you please keep me informed of your proposal and consider my family's future before you make any rash decisions

Dan Douglas

Marnoo East 3477

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P055**

**Name:** Michael Kronk

**Location:** Gordon, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Our property located in [WITHHELD] Gordon Victoria will be directly impacted by the proposed route of the Western Renewables Link where the towers are within 200m of our House and much closer to our boundary fence.

We will see the destruction of:

- \* Our views and local wildlife
- \* Our property values - already impacted and deteriorating
- \* Our neighbourhood and community cohesion

Most importantly to our family, the investment we have made in this property so that it can be accessible by our high needs 21 yo son, family and carers will be lost with the resulting damage to his and our wellbeing.

WRL and related transmission projects has already impacted the health of our family through stress and worry about the above consequences and to date we have had one phone call to inform us of a small move in the route directly behind us. The Consultation and engagement approach from this project is ineffective and a major cause of the stress in the community along this proposed route.

We agree that renewable energy is important to Australia's future and that the access to new and planned wind and solar infrastructure is one of the keys. Surely GOOD planning would utilise existing infrastructure to retired and soon to be retired power stations, existing powerline routes and routes using existing roads and other easements already supporting infrastructure rather than destroying lives, land and wildlife.

Use of Underground DC instead of Overhead HV as many other countries are now doing will also reduce the impact on habitat and most importantly the inherent risks that will arise from high winds and fire. If a full lifecycle TCO assessment was done then our belief is that this would in fact be the cost effective solution rather than the proposed solution and - the large multiples more that has been stated.

In 2020 more than 50 gum trees, many very large were uprooted in a single night by high winds on our 10 acre property, imagine the impact these winds would have on towers immediately adjacent to our block. Subsequent events in 2021 and 2022 whilst not as bad have occurred so likelihood of a repeat is near certain. Is this a Risk that has been fully assessed and costed into the business case? Have the impacts of disruption to this route truly been assessed?

There has not been a fire through this area in more than 30 years and fuel loads are high and we back into the Wombat state Forrest. Imagine the destruction that will result when these power line start a bushfire. Is this a risk that has been assessed and included in the business case?

Australian energy supply is now in crisis as our coal base load power starts to age out BUT destroying the land that produces our food, is home to our native wildlife and the land that enables many of us to get away from the city and enjoy our country is not the place for Solar, Wind or Transmission infrastructure. We believe greed and blind politics is driving decisions that future Australians will pay for, for generations to come.

It is time for a reset and a proper plan for energy security.

If the right planning, approach, solution design and community consultation had happened perhaps our Transmission infrastructure here and elsewhere in Australia would be being built out on time and in budget to meet all of our energy requirements for now and in the future.

In our view:

- \* The planning and costing did not use the right timeframe, risks and total lifecycle costs to inform the best cost option
- \* The consultation process was not long enough, transparent enough, or informative enough to allow reasonable responses from those impacted
- \* The North Ballarat terminal station move was not a win for regional Victoria. This shifted the problem to another community but also resulted in the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers making things even worse.
- \* The business case analysis did not seek to understand what we value and what is important to us. It was a desktop study by people who have never spoken with the people impacted.
- \* The geographical area of the current proposed WRL alignment traverses areas that are environmentally sensitive, have established land uses, includes a growing amount of high value landholdings, has materially populated towns, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is not suited to transmission development. This results in a high degree of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated.

\* The current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would result in the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced which would severely impact system security.

\* AEMO should consider undergrounding the proposed project (using HVDC) alongside existing transport corridors or on public land to ensure viable transmission infrastructure at the lowest overall lifecycle and community costs.

And most importantly it is time to consider the lives and livelihoods that these projects will impact now and also in the future when we find that we have indeed not future proofed our transmission infrastructure.

Regards

Michael Kronk

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P056**

**Name:** Bethany Hucker

**Location:** Gre Gre, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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VNI west powerline transmission Submission

I have only just become aware of the Victorian Government and AEMO's proposal to construct a power transmission line from Bulgana to New South Wales.

The pink blob on the map for this proposed transmission line includes farmland through my district. I am concerned by the detrimental negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on my health and the highly agricultural ran community that I live in.

We have not had any questions answered basically no consultation. 3 people out the front of the local town hall, who can't even answer a question as simple as how tall the towers are, is just not consultation at all.

- \* Can't fight fires underlines!! Just stupidity in the modern error of technology.
- \* What happens to the heritage sites!
- \* What happens to the cultural background!
- \* What happens to the towers when they condemn them?
- \* Where's the concrete in the ground go!
- \* Only to name a few of the basic destructive complications that the powerlines will have on the people who have to work and live with them!
- \* Everybody needs to be made aware of the social and environmental impacts that this will bring into the community.
- \* THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE. AND THE PEOPLE TO COME!

From a CFA point of view, if fires can't be fought near or under the transmission lines, it could burn acres and acres before it is brought under control.... We don't want another Black Saturday do we? This could claim the lives and homes of many vulnerable people and animals again!

I believe as a resident that option 5 isn't the answer for renewable energy transmission lines the Victorian Government and AEMO must put the lines underground along existing transport corridors not on highly productive farm land. That will rip communities and families apart.

I think it's disgusting the way you are just trying to railroad through the farmers land who primarily feed us. If you reckon you can, think again because our people are not the weakest link... This is just wasting everyone's time!! These powerlines are not being erected under any circumstance within the community I live in!!!

Name: Bethany Hucker

Location: Gre Gre

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P058**

**Name:** Michael McIntrye

**Location:** Marong, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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To Whom it may concern,

I have become aware of the Victorian Government and Aemo's proposal to construct a 500kv double -circuit overhead transmission line from Bulgana to New South Wales.

The zoned area detailed on the map for the proposed transmission line includes farmland on which we operate our business. We are concerned by the detrimental negative impacts that transmission infrastructure lines will have on my farming operations, business and country communities.

If the transmission infrastructure was to be built on our farmland I am concerned about what could be demanded by the transmission company before , during and after construction and what our rights would be.

Prior to the announcement on 20 February 2023 that the corridor for the VNI West project would change, I had no knowledge of the proposed project and no understanding of it potentially impacting on our farm business. We believe the community needs more time to respond to this project so a more accurate assessment of its costs and benefits can be made.

The response from the community discussion event held at the St Arnaud Town Hall lacked any reasonable response and confirmed there had been no thought put into how this construction may impact our country communities.

VNI West/AEMO have made no effort to provide any proper consultation with stakeholders or provide any alternative options to the community in relation to this matter.

The negative impact that these transmission lines will have is huge on so many different levels, a few items are listed below, but not limited to :

- \* Implications working under the lines safely.
- \* Implications operating machinery under the lines.
- \* Implications running stock under lines.



- \* Unable to fight fires under lines.
- \* Basic destructive complications that the power lines will have on the people who have to work and live with them.
- \* Mental health - Beyond Blue statistics note that male farmers die by suicide significantly higher than the general population and non rural males. This is going to have a greater impact on rural males mental health.
- \* Decreasing the value of land.
- \* Loss of productivity capacity.
- \* Damage to crops.
- \* Restricted/limited access to land.
- \* Bio security.
- \* Failure to comply with farm security.
- \* Affecting GPS systems in machinery working in the area.
- \* Materials left on site causing damage to driving machinery.
- \* Refusal to give notice or inform landholders what chemicals have been used on site causing issues with vendor declarations.
- \* Requirement for permits to use tractors and machinery under power lines.
- \* Compensation which does not reflect the impact on the land or landholders nor compare to compensation in other states.

I and my family have farmed this area since it was settled by my great grandfather and does obviously hold great emotional and cultural ties to this land for us. We as a family have held a wedding, birthdays and numerous family gatherings over the years. This family heritage will be destroyed if these high voltage power lines pass through our farmland.

Landcare was formed in our area. I and my family before me have preserved about 400 acres of bush with its trees, native grasses, indigenous flora and fauna. There are resident protected wedge tailed eagles, fat tailed nuffits, barking geckos, striped legless lizards, blind snakes, fairy shrimps and shell backs and tree frogs and others. Our family has taken special care to be guardians of our land and to preserve the natural bush and wildlife. These high voltage transmission lines will destroy our farm forever, all lost to the future generations.

I believe that transmission lines are not the answer for our area, the Victorian Government and AEMO must run lines underground along existing transport corridors and not on productive farm land. Constructing these transmission lines will have an enormous negative impact on our country communities. The negatives will override any positives the government aim to achieve through renewable power supply.

Name : Michael McIntyre

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P060**

**Name:** Sandra Attard

**Location:** Korobeit, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing this as an impacted property owner and community member. This letter is not confidential.

My family and I live at [WITHHELD] Korobeit 3341. The Western Renewables link has caused my family and community a great deal of mental stress over the last three years. The proposed transmission towers will surround my home and community. My family is at breaking point! This project has destroyed my family mentally, physically and financially. I am crying as I write this letter.

We chose to move to Korobeit and built an eco-friendly home. We chose to buy the parcel of land in Korobeit in 2018 because it was not connected to power or water. There is not a single power pole or power line along the whole of Pattinsons Lane. Pattinsons Lane and its surroundings are beautiful. The views, the air, the quiet. It is marvelous. To wake up to the sound of the kookaburra laughing is the best alarm clock. We then built our home which is completely off-grid and self sustainable. We run our home and farming business solely on solar power, battery storage and tank water. Our home is modern and new. We have used the latest technology to make it very energy efficient. My family has worked extremely hard in order for us to be able to purchase such a beautiful parcel of land and also to build a modern environmentally friendly home. Property value of my home and the values of thousands of community members right along the 190km of proposed transmission lines will plummet by up to 40%. It has already dropped and construction hasn't even started. My family will lose millions of dollars of money that we have invested in our dream home. According to the current compensation offered by the government we will not be entitled to any compensation because the transmission towers will be in my neighbours property on my boundary fence. My home is right next to the boundary fence. We are equally as impacted if not even more. We will have to stop farming while construction is happening, losing more money and we have to tolerate years of construction noise and people moving around our property. WE moved to Korobeit because we didn't want noise or pollution or power lines. This is the most ironic aspect of it all! THAT we live off grid and less than 200 meters from our house will be 80 meter high transmission towers.

We want our children to live in a peaceful community. We respect nature and want to teach our children environmentally friendly farming practices. The impact these towers will have on native fauna and flora will be

catastrophic. It is a disgrace that you want us and the Victorian community to believe this project is green energy, it couldn't be further from the truth.

We do not want our children exposed to electromagnetic fields from living close to high voltage power lines. There are numerous studies that link living close to transmission towers with terrible health conditions and illness. I already suffer from an autoimmune disease which has been made extremely worse by the stress of this project. Also the mental stress of the thought of my children being harmed is very real.

I strongly oppose AEMO's contract for AusNet to install towers and the Terminal Station through Western Victoria. My views and concerns are shared by my immediate and extended family, neighbours and landowners. Overhead towers and the Terminal Station are environmentally and socially unacceptable. Our stance is based on evidence, such as recent tower failures at Cressy, outcomes of the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission, local advice from the CFA, and coalesced feedback from affected parties. Those of us who choose to live in a rural setting accept the risk of bushfires and have plans in place to mitigate these risks. However, the addition of overhead transmission infrastructure which is proven to cause both bush and grass fires as well as significantly hampering the fighting of these fires is an unacceptable risk to the thousands of community members who will be impacted. Lives will be lost! The thought of losing my family to bush fire is terrifying.

I have made and continue to make the above objections clear to AusNet and the Australian Energy Market Operator. AEMO are markedly unresponsive and absent. It appears AEMO is leaving all community consultation to AusNet. The ever-escalating problem for all affected is that AusNet are proving at best under-resourced or incompetent, at worst deceptive. I have attempted to engage AusNet constructively via established feedback pathways. Taking in all engagement with AusNet to date, their message repeatedly boils down to 'the contractual scope we have with AEMO is to install AC transmission towers and the Terminal Station'. It is clear AusNet has either no interest or no mechanism to affect real change to genuinely address my concerns.

I ask you again to please stop AusNet's Towers and take the project back to the drawing board. DO THE RIGHT THING! Please my family and I can not take the stress any more.

regards,

Sandra Attard

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P061**

**Name:** Brad Sudholz

**Location:** St Arnaud, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Good evening AEMO team.

I am writing to you regarding recently publicised plans to build above-ground power transmission lines from Bulgana to NSW.

The proposed path through the Northern Grampians Shire has caused considerable angst within my childhood community. Several family members are facing the prospect of having their properties dissected by this development.

Concerns primarily focus on the increased risk of bushfires and grass fires, especially given that similar transmission lines have resulted in fires around the region in recent times.

There are also concerns regarding the loss of productivity and land value that would result from this project.

Also, please note there is a perception that this project is being deliberately threaded through non-Labor electorates. I understand this perception may not be correct, but it is certainly present in the community.

As such,

- I would like to voice my support for cancelling the project.
- Noting that the above may not be possible, I would like to voice my support for underground infrastructure where possible. Farmers may be willing to forgo compensation to avoid the proposed above-ground infrastructure.
- I would caution the AEMO executive to expect increasingly vocal political opposition, FOI requests, and allegations of political bias should the project be perceived to disproportionately thread through non-Labor seats.

Kind regards, Brad Sudholz

Past resident of the Northern Grampians Shire.

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P062**

**Name:** Stuart Vallance

**Location:** Mount Prospect, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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To Whom It May Concern,

My family has farmed at Mount Prospect for 110 years. We are significantly implicated by the suggested options of routes. The terminal station and above ground transmission at Mount Prospect would be catastrophic for our community (please visit [pissoffausnet - spud and spa](#) on Facebook which summarises the myriad of reasons why a terminal station and above ground towers are not appropriate in this region).

In regards to the report, why is undergrounding of the route not assessed? The above ground options are a form of rural theft. Your reports detail benefits to the end consumers and ability to transport electricity. However, where does the report list the cost to the land holders and the neighbours that will be hosting such infrastructure? Are the real capital losses of the landholder and their neighbours taken into account in these calculations. Potentially up to 50% loss of capital value according to banks. The current compensation suggestions are not even close to the true costs of this rural theft?

What happens to the rural communities when they have to compete with corporate entities for land so that they can farm? The family farm will lose out, and so will food production and the social fabric of the communities.

In the current form you will have to go to court, get your piece of paper, and we will see you at the front gate when you turn up with bulldozers. Read the signs - no access AEMO. You have significantly underestimated the strength and resilience of rural people. The passion for our properties and land is in our DNA. There is going to be a fight and it is going to be ugly. We have many volatile and emotionally fragile people in the community that are undergoing intense mental stress with all these options. This will drag on for years. As I said, we have been there for 110 years, we have time on our side. Stick your project underground down the western hwy.

Stuart Vallance

Mt Prospect, Victoria

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P065**

**Name:** Keith McPherson

**Location:** Gre Gre, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Submission on the VNI West – Consultation Report

Having reviewed the VNI West – Consultation Report it has become apparent to me that a number of material matters are lacking and have a significant effect on the most viable option going forward.

In consideration of these matters I believe you will find that Option 1 with some amendments is the most viable option for VNI-West.

The details of issues that need to be addressed I have listed and broken up into 5 topics.

### 1. Option 5 Issues

- The distance of 205 km listed for Bulgana to border is on Table 5 pg33 is simply too short this raises doubts about the accuracy of other distances listed.
- The comment “Option 5 line length on the Victorian side is lower than all other options,” is very misleading at best if not wrong in that the other options all include the additional 220 kV double-circuit connections from the existing terminal station at Bendigo to a new terminal station near Bendigo. This line is an add-on to VNI West Interconnector and using it in the metrics is misleading. Intuitively the distance between the start and end points is the primary need to understand the project. This is demonstrated in the Summary of Option 1 figures 27 & 28 where the 220 kv line to Bendigo is not shown.
- Due to the longer length of line from Sydenham to Bulgana the need for additional power flow controllers and series compensation components do not appear to have been factored in on the WRL. This extra cost needs to be factored in to option 5.

### 2. New Bendigo Terminal Station

- While the lack of a New Bendigo Terminal Station is identified in option 5 and the potential supplement actions to compensate for the lack of the Bendigo Terminal these factors are not costed or quantified into the bottom line.
- In scoring the MCA the inclusion of the New Bendigo Terminal and its connection to the existing Bendigo Terminal Station is identified with significant issues and has a bearing on the MCA scoring and most likely ranking.
- Since option 5 shows the new Bendigo Terminal Station is not absolutely necessary it is important to also assess all other options in the same way without this new Bendigo Terminal.

### 3. MCA Framework

- In reference to fire there is substantial weight put on bush fire areas, in comparison grass fires are not really considered to any real degree. Grass fires do happen and also cause loss of life and high financial losses. With reference to “Electricity Transmission Lines”/ “Bushfire Management and Community Safety”/ “Route selection”/ “higher standards for asset maintenance or replacement” for Bush fire areas this is a clear bias that many find offensive, the concept that areas outside of a Bush Fire area is to need a lesser standard is clearly an assault to using best management to prevent fires in all circumstances. Sadly this attitude by over emphasising of bushfire to non-bushfire areas within the report has been used and left many people upset and to add insult also been used to excessively score other option in a negative way compared to option 5.
- As Option 5 is rather new concept to most stakeholders and considering the earlier options have been canvassed for much longer there is a considerable deference as to the amount of discovery that has been made between the options.

This is clearly demonstrated when Hepburn Shire Council has already had considerable input into this project when my local Northern Grampians Shire Council are completely flat footed and had no knowledge of this project till 3 weeks ago.

This lack of discovery is concerning in that it will lead to more unknowns and less certainty regarding costs. The risk of a budget blow out is real and also a danger to investors and any possibility of gaining a social licence.

- The idea that this MCA will help build social licence is destroyed by its poor implementation with its lack of on ground understanding and in fact damages the perceived integrity of our government departments and regulators within the community.

### 4. Easement requirements

- While many easement details and requirements are not in the report it is important to understand that the broad acre farming areas will need a working height of 5.2 m under power line infrastructure. This 5.2 m height is required to align with VicRoads regulations as per the “Class O Field Bins” the assumption that a 4.3 m working

height implied from other sources is not acceptable to broad acre areas. This is certain to have an effect on construction costs that need to be included.

#### 5. Option 1 issues

- There is considerable variation within the alignment of Option 1. In assessing this option there will have been a substantial variation between a number of alignments considering the natural terrain and built infrastructure. The issue here is that using a desktop study and applying an average to the option as a whole will obscure the most economic route.
- Closer investigation of the various alignments are required within Option 1 considering both with and without the Bendigo Transmission station is needed to identify the most economic option.

In conclusion do away with the Bendigo Terminals and reassess all options with updated costs and risks as previously outlined. Find the best route in option 1 and go forward with it. Disregard the MCA until proper on ground assessment is done.

Keith McPherson

Gre Gre South



# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P066**

**Name:** Mal & Leanne Burge

**Location:** Woosang, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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Good morning,

Malcolm and Leanne Burge are farming landowners of 2800 acres at Woosang, situated in the Loddon and Buloke Shires.

We are aware Option 5 for the transmission line connecting Western Renewables Link to Bulgana may pass through some or all of our land.

The actual route (we are told) is not disclosed and won't be until after full consultation with all parties in the local areas affected.

All farmers have a love of the land and are caretakers of their land for now and future generations, realising that there is no production and then income if care and proper management is not taken. We wonder if this has been taken into consideration.

We have some other working concerns which currently are not being answered or addressed.

On an economic impact there will be less acres for production in cropping and livestock.

Paddocks become difficult for spraying and working in. There is not one open area for access.

Land values may reduce.

Whilst the powerlines are being erected will the paddocks become difficult to access?

Weed infestation can occur due to vehicles entering/leaving the paddock.

Damage to sown crops and pasture from work vehicles. Maybe paddocks won't be available for sowing crops whilst construction and maintenance is going on. Then a season of production is lost.

Is the compensation enough? How has this been calculated?

Is there an increase in fire danger? All local farmers are volunteer CFA members. Are more call outs required?

We realise and totally understand that there needs to be a project for future electricity use. What we don't understand is why information is withheld and questions unanswered at meetings and information sites.

It seems to me that it is human nature that people resist and feel undervalued when they don't know all the facts. This causes doubt and worry for the future. Please don't consider farmers as not knowing!

They are continually learning and skill building to keep up with the demands of modern farming. All farmers will cope and process the information they receive. That is how they are still farming after many years of drought, floods and business changes.

Regards

Mal and Leanne Burge

# Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

**SUBMISSION NUMBER: P067**

**Name:** Gerald Conroy

**Location:** Bunding, VIC, Australia

## Submission

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### Introduction

This paper is presented by Gerald Conroy, farmer, resident and impacted person of the proposed Westvic Transmission Line Project, VNI West or Western Renewable Project.

I make this submission since June 2020 to April 2023 I have been continually fighting to have my concerns addressed by the Victorian State Government and Ausnet who are the proponents of this project. The insurmountable toll this has placed on my family, friends, neighbours and the communities under consideration for this and future projects will put at risk the implied goal of this and other projects.

Our farm is located predominately in the upper Werribee River catchment adjacent to the Wombat State Forest. It is here that we have owned and managed the farm for 4 generations and in excess of 100 years.

We pride our commitment to the environment and a farming future. We have planted more than 30000 trees, fenced off wetlands and rivers and gullies to create a bio link that links the Wombat State Forest, the Werribee river and the East Moorabool river. This has created a unique environment where native animals and birdlife can safely traverse the landscape. The centre piece of our environmental work is the 20 hectare wetland and river system that has created a set of lungs for the upper Werribee catchment. It is here that the water slows down and overflows into the surrounding soils, bringing to life organisms and creatures that allows the river to provide an environment that supports native animals to return to pre settlement.

It currently accommodates platypus, wombats, grey kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, Rakali “water rats”, Black Fish, Frogs and Yabbies to name a few. These live below a myriad of birdlife that have nests on our property and are not restricted to Ducks including, Swans, Grebes, herons, Ibis, Brolgas as well as Wedge Tailed Eagles, Little Eagles, Falcons, Kites, Parrots including the Swift Parrot, Snipe etc etc.

Our work has been recognised by Conservation Victoria and we are in the process of transferring control of our biolink to them.

Currently the proposed alignment will destroy decades of work that our family has developed so as to protect the environment that we have lived in for greater than 100 years.

There is no consideration given to families and landowners like me in the planning of this energy infrastructure and our work or our future. The amount of time and money that has been undertaken to preserve and enhance cannot be measured or compensated as it has been developed to protect the future not the present.

I can see renewable energy developments within 30 kilometres of my place, the people who have this type of infrastructure have a choice to have it on their property and are well compensated financially for it. Under the current AEMO / Ausnet / State Government controls, we have no choice and are severely impacted in lifestyle, mental health, general health and financially. I have not bought a property under transmission lines but you seem intent to destroy me, my family and our environment and our future with this ill planned project by placing it over our heads.

You continually reinforce the need to rollout this infrastructure to the greater populated areas at the expense and health of the communities who are going to carry the burden and scar on our landscape and environment for hundreds of years.

Governments and bodies like yourselves should be making decisions and plans that consider everyone and not destroy the lives of the communities in the path of this destructive and soul-destroying project.

The whole consultation process has been constructed so as not to allow individuals and communities to respond, there is no transparency or informative or answers given to our concerns

Originally the North Ballarat terminal station was planned for the development of a new easement, now with the planned removal of the terminal station north of Ballarat, the whole project needs to be reviewed and that this was not a win for regional Victoria. All this did was shift the problem somewhere else and force the upgrading of the entire WRL project to 500kV and 80m high towers. These decisions did nothing but increase the impacts on the region.

Currently the RIT-T was not applied in a way that is credible, which reduces the scope for misunderstandings and disputes. The documents must have a focus on providing transparent, user-friendly data to stakeholders. A triple bottom line must be applied so that all economic impacts can be measured.

The Multi-criteria analysis is flawed because it did not seek to understand what we value and what is important to us. It was a desktop study by people who have never spoken with the people impacted and are still trying to have their concerns considered. If the multi-criteria analysis is so important then it must be applied to the WRL to determine the least-impact solution where upgrading existing easements would be the most cost effective.

As stated, the geographical area of the current proposed WRL alignment is peri-urban and traverses' areas that are environmentally sensitive, have established land uses, includes a growing amount of high value landholdings, has materially populated towns, is a high value tourism region and has topography that is not suited to

transmission development. This results in a high degree of impacts and constraints that cannot be avoided or mitigated.

The current proposed shared alignment of both VNI West and the WRL creates a supercritical single point of failure and limits geographic diversity. A loss of this line would result in the majority of generation in Western Victoria and imports from NSW to be drastically reduced which would severely impact system security.

I believe that you are not listening and your failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition and major delays or the project never starting or finishing

I believe the Victorian Government and AEMO should upgrade existing corridors with added capacity or underground DC electricity alongside existing transport corridors or on public land to ensure minimal disruption to farm businesses in the region.

#### Recommendation

To redesign the template for developing and connecting existing and new energy infrastructure along with the transmission of this energy. The AEMO sponsored RIT-T and PACR tests are outdated and does not take into consideration the rights of present and future communities under threat from these projects.

It would enable cost effective design and construction especially with the environmental protection, social cohesion, and economic growth of the affected communities.

With the phasing out of other energy sources, the reliance of new energy generation / electricity will need a reliable, sustainable and cost-effective solution.

To upgrade existing corridors with added capacity or underground DC electricity although dearer to establish would give security and sustainability to nation that will have a reliance on industry and dwellings that will be use electricity for cooking, refrigeration, heating and cooling and now electric vehicles.

#### 1.1 Objectives and Road Map of this Paper

This paper discusses internationally recognized best practices for assessing, avoiding, reducing, and mitigating the environmental impacts associated with the siting, construction, and operation of high-voltage electric power transmission lines and associated facilities such as substations and terminal stations. It also discusses the environmental assessment and mitigation requirements for transmission projects.

Section 2 of this paper contains a brief discussion of the types of environmental impacts associated with transmission lines. Note that this discussion refers only to the impacts associated with transmission facilities themselves, not to the system-wide impacts and benefits resulting from the interconnection of previously separate grids.

Section 3 of this paper discusses widely accepted approaches and methods for assessing and reducing transmission line impacts.

## 2. Types of Environmental Impacts Found in Transmission Projects

### 2.1 Characterization of Transmission Line Impacts

An extensive practical knowledge base exists on the types of environmental impacts associated with electrical transmission projects. The literature includes such sources as project environmental impact assessments and reviews, academic journals, textbooks, electric utility operations manuals, and regulatory authority

Much of the knowledge base on the environmental impacts of transmission rights-of-way is represented by what has happened in the past. With the advent of social licensing it is now more important to listen and act on community issues

The most common categories of environmental impacts appearing in this literature are described briefly in the following paragraphs.

### 2.2 Land Use Changes and the Agricultural impacts

The construction and operation of transmission lines can lead to significant land use changes in the transmission rights-of-way and on the grounds of associated facilities. Many industrial, commercial, and residential uses are incompatible with the requirement to keep transmission rights-of-way clear of obstacles and structures, and for reasons of safety and public health.

Agriculture will be affected, by the elimination of cropland, the temporary loss of crop production due to construction, and the incompatibility of certain crops and agricultural activities with transmission facilities. i.e. irrigation of crops by irrigators, fixed, lateral move or centre pivot.

Transportation can be affected by the placement of transmission lines and towers near airports, roads, and waterways.

The impact on livestock and the long-term effects of living under the electromagnetic fields of transmission lines and their saleability to open markets.

Planning schemes which currently allow dwellings to be constructed in rural zones will be unviable and unsellable due to the placement and installation of transmission lines and the ability to place a dwelling or commercial facility on a private property owners property in the future.

### 2.3 Forestry Impacts

Transmission line construction and maintenance can lead to the permanent removal of woody vegetation and in some cases to the complete conversion of strips of forest ecosystem into bare land or land covered by completely

different vegetation communities. Fragmentation, pesticide use, and invasive plant species within the right-of-way can also affect surrounding forest areas.

#### 2.4 Wetland and Riparian Impacts

Transmission line construction and maintenance can convert areas of wetland or riparian ecosystem outright, destroy or disturb plant and animal communities, and introduce invasive species. Soil compaction and soil erosion in wetlands and riparian areas can alter hydrology, changing the timing and magnitude of water and nutrient flows essential to ecosystem functions.

#### 2.5 Hydrologic Changes

Transmission line construction can alter hydrology by compacting soil, removing plant cover, and altering existing drainages or creating new ones. Altered hydrology can affect aquatic, wetland, and riparian habitats and species, and can affect soil moisture and surface water availability in other kinds of ecosystems.

#### 2.6 Soil Erosion

Transmission line construction can lead to soil erosion by removing vegetation cover, compacting soils, and cutting into banks. Erosion can reduce soil fertility and lead to siltation, which affects water quality and productivity in aquatic and wetland ecosystems.

#### 2.7 Biodiversity Impacts

The construction and operation of transmission lines can affect biodiversity in many ways, including habitat conversion and fragmentation, changes in hydrology, soil compaction and erosion, pesticide use, introduced species, and hunting and harvesting enabled by rights-of-way and construction roads. Species in small, rare, sensitive, and otherwise critical habitats may be especially affected.

#### 2.8 Wildlife Impacts

The wildlife impacts of transmission line construction and operation include bird electrocutions and collisions, changes in predator-prey relations in and along the edges of rights-of-way, destruction or alteration of wetland and aquatic environments, and increases in hunting and fishing enabled by rights-of-way and construction/maintenance roads.

#### 2.9 Toxic and Water Pollution

Toxic pollution from transmission lines can result from pesticide use in rights-of-way, and from the leakage of PCBs from equipment that contains them. Water pollution can result from inadequate wastewater treatment for construction camps, workshops, and staff quarters.

#### 2.10 Safety and Public Health including Fire Firefighting and Safety

Transmission lines present a risk of electrocution to the public, by direct contact with high voltage equipment and lines, and also by induced voltages, especially in the case of vehicles and farm machinery that transit beneath transmission lines. Humans and farm animals can also risk electrocution or nuisance shock when inadequate grounding at substations energizes metal objects, such as stock tanks, fences either under transmission lines or outside substation grounds. Other safety threats include the collapse of transmission towers during storms and the financial impacts of the loss of power into major cities, regional centres and industry.

Firefighting agencies (CFA, FRV and DEWLP) have procedures where direct firefighting cannot be undertaken, under, adjacent or above transmission lines. This puts adjoining properties at risk as active firefighting cannot be undertaken and will result in more losses, injuries and deaths. As a rate payer in Victoria, you must pay a fire service levy, how can your property not have response and be protected by the firefighting agencies if they are not allowed to enter these areas due to the extreme risk of firefighting due to potential short circuiting of the power due to smoke, dust or water vapour in the air

#### 2.11 Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)

The effects of power-line frequency electromagnetic fields (EMF) on humans are scientifically uncertain at this point, but some studies indicate that chronic exposure to relatively high-level EMFs from overhead high-voltage AC transmission lines (and other AC equipment) can lead to an increased incidence of adverse health effects, including childhood leukemia and miscarriage.

With this now a consideration, a farming enterprise that is based on livestock production is now not viable to sell its breeding stock to remain viable.

#### 2.12 Electromagnetic Interference (EMI)

Corona and induced electromagnetic fields from the operation of high voltage transmission lines can produce electromagnetic interference (EMI), or electrical noise, that affects the functioning of electronic and telecommunications equipment. "Jitter" in television screens and computer monitors can result from EMI.

#### 2.13 Audible Noise

Corona from the operation of high voltage transmission lines can make audible noises, often described as "hissing," in the vicinity of the right-of-way. Transformers also produce noises often described as "humming," which are frequently audible outside substation borders. People often consider such noises to be a nuisance.

#### 2.14 Resettlement

The need to clear land for transmission rights-of-way and associated facilities can result in the removal of people living in these locations, and their resettlement in new locations. Depending on conditions, resettlement can be socially and economically disruptive to the people affected, and ecologically damaging to the area in which they are resettled.



## 2.15 Indigenous Peoples

Transmission lines and associated facilities, and roads built for construction and access, can affect indigenous communities in a variety of ways, including removal and resettlement from ancestral homes, destruction or damage of important cultural sites, and the opening of previously remote areas to commerce and interactions with outsiders.

## 2.16 Economic Disruption

The construction and operation of transmission lines and associated facilities can affect local economies by disrupting agriculture, by producing or eliminating local jobs in construction or maintenance, and by affecting property values for reasons such as aesthetic changes, perceptions of hazard, and road access.

## 2.17 Cultural Sites

Transmission line construction can affect cultural sites such as areas of archaeological, historical, or religious significance. Burial sites and buried artifacts may be disturbed, especially when excavation is required. Undergrounding can use existing easements i.e. road rail, energy corridors

## 2.18 Aesthetic Impacts

Transmission lines and towers are unattractive to many people, especially when located near their homes or near scenic sites such as parks and river crossings.

# 3. Best Practices for Assessing and Reducing Environmental Impacts in

## Transmission Projects

### 3.1 Best Practices in Environmental Assessment

Internationally-recognized best practices for reducing the environmental impacts of transmission line construction and operation inevitably begin with the Environmental Effects Assessment process and the preparation of written environmental impact studies. Although the names and specific details associated with environmental assessment may differ in different countries and jurisdictions, there are common features that are widely considered to reflect current international best practices. These common features include those summarized in the

subsections below (3.1.1 – 3.1.9).

#### 3.1.1 Alternative Routings

- Alternative routings must be proposed for transmission rights-of-way, as well as alternative locations for substations and other transmission facilities. Detailed maps with topographic and land use information must be included in draft and final environmental studies.

#### 3.1.2 Specific Design Features

- Proposed line designs used for environmental assessment purposes must include, for each section of each alternative route, the specific information essential to determining potential environmental impacts, including right-of-way width, pole type and height, and span lengths. Similar information is required for substations, converter stations, and switchyards.

#### 3.1.3 Technical Alternatives

- Relevant technical alternatives under consideration – such as the possible use of DC transmission, and the possible use of underground cables to substitute for overhead lines – should be included where applicable in descriptions of alternative routings and designs.

#### 3.1.4 Comparative Assessment

- Environmental assessment stresses the comparative assessment of the proposed alternative routings, line designs, and technical alternatives for a number of categories of environmental impact, such as those described in Section 2 above. The null option – namely, of not building the transmission line or related facilities at all – should also be included in the comparison as a standard against which the project can be judged.

#### 3.1.5 Social Impacts

- Social, cultural, and economic impacts on affected populations should be included within the meaning and basic intent of the environmental assessment process. This should form the basis of selecting a new easement or using an existing easement

#### 3.1.6 Expert Assessment in the Field

- Environmental assessment of transmission projects must not be paper studies only.

Empirical investigations of conditions and potential impacts in the field must be undertaken by appropriate experts, including as appropriate such professionals as engineers, ecologists, biologists, economists, and anthropologists.

Input from private property owners should also be measured in the preliminary assessment. This group of people need to be acknowledged as stakeholders to ensure local input is not lost or not assessed against the project deliverables.

#### 3.1.7 Public Input

- The environmental assessment process must actively solicit public input, including that of affected communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Public input is often linked to a multi-stage process in the preparation of environmental impact studies, in which draft studies containing descriptions of the proposed alternative routings and line designs are made available for public inspection, and meetings or other venues for soliciting input on these draft studies are provided.

### 3.1.8 Mitigation Plans

- After routings and design alternatives have been duly considered and decided upon, specific mitigation measures to reduce specific impacts identified in the environmental assessment must be concretely described in a mitigation plan. These measures should be based on international best practices as determined through due diligence by appropriate experts. The administrative and institutional arrangements for implementation of the mitigation plan should be clearly spelled out in the final environmental assessment report.

### 3.1.9 Monitoring

- Monitoring of environmental impacts, as measured against baselines established in the environmental assessment process, and of the ongoing implementation of mitigation plans, must be an integral part of the construction and ongoing operation of the transmission facilities.

## 3.2 Best Practices in Project Implementation

In addition to the general principles of Environmental Assessment described in the previous

section (Section 3.1), there are also specific best-practice techniques employed in actual project implementation. Some of the most widely-recognized environmental best practices employed during the siting, design, construction, and operation phases of transmission projects are briefly described in the sections below. This list is general in nature; it goes without saying that the selection of the most appropriate specific methods for an actual project is always dependent on the specific conditions unique to that project.

### 3.2.1 Avoidance of Sensitive and High Value Areas

The siting of transmission facilities must seek to avoid to the maximum extent possible areas of high ecological, cultural, economic, and aesthetic value and sensitivity. When siting in such areas cannot be avoided altogether, the area of disruption should be minimized, and the impacts mitigated.

### 3.2.2 Use of Existing Corridors

The use of existing utility and transportation corridors for transmission facilities is generally preferred over the construction of new corridors, as long as such use does not adversely affect the environment or the pre-existing infrastructure. New technology such as refitting existing lines, monopole technology and undergrounding in existing easements is preferred to establishing a new easement.

### 3.2.3 Detailed Environmental Mapping

Proposed transmission routings should be accompanied by detailed mapping of environmental and cultural resources along the entire route, based on data collected by appropriate experts conducting field investigations, remote sensing, and other reliable data sources. Some examples of the types of data required include terrain and vegetation features, hydrologic features, the presence of sensitive or endangered species, migratory bird flyways, archaeological sites, indigenous villages, agricultural and industrial facilities, and seasonally sensitive data such as fire incidence, wildlife breeding, and fish spawning periods. This data as inputted by the communities has not been displayed or assessed as critical to the development of transmission lines, but this data is critical to the social licensing and the affect it has on the communities being impacted.

### 3.2.4 Integration of Environmental Data and Project Design

After environmental resources are mapped, they are often entered into GIS databases, in order to be more readily available for incorporation into decisions about transmission facility design,

Studies has identified five top issues requiring ongoing research as these are monitored over a number of years:

- The Degree to Which ROWs can Function as Ecological Corridors is Unknown
- The Degree to Which ROWs are a Fragmenting Force at the Regional, Landscape, and Watershed Scale is Unknown
- Specific Knowledge is Lacking on How to Control or Limit the Spread of Invasive species and the Chemicals Used on ROWs to Other Areas
- The Ramifications of Compliance with the Migratory Birds and the deaths of raptors is captured but not used in the decision making, which makes them Unknown
- How can ROWs Function as Habitat for Threatened and endangered Species Both on the ROW and as Part of a Larger Landscape construction, and operation.

### 3.2.5 Land Restoration and Set-Asides

When sensitive habitats are affected by the construction of transmission facilities, two kinds of mitigation measures are often employed. (1) Wetlands, forests, and other sensitive habitats disturbed by construction are re-landscaped and replanted with native vegetation, and otherwise restored as nearly as possible to their original condition. (2) Lands in other locations with habitats similar to those affected by the transmission project are purchased by the utility, placed in public trust, and protected from future development.

Most times an environmental offset is developed away from the communities where the impact is most affected. Local bio-links, wildlife sanctuaries provided by private property owners is destroyed in the name of renewable

energy. This has enormous social impacts on communities that pride their low environmental footprint is minimised and the future of protecting the landscape is paramount to be sustainable into the future.

### 3.2.6 Resettlement Plans

When construction of transmission facilities entails resettlement of individuals who live under, adjacent or in close proximity to the proposed transmission lines, energy farms or associated energy infrastructure, a formal assessment must be undertaken and all resettlement expenses and losses paid by the proponent or state federal government. Again, the social licensing of affected persons must be main objective, not the development of a transmission line or energy facility

### 3.2.7 Compensation Plans

Other economic losses to individuals due to transmission facilities—for example, lost agricultural production in the right-of-way during construction—must also be formally assessed and compensated. When environmental, community, and cultural impacts affect a community as a whole—for example, in the case of damage to waterways or fisheries—these impacts should also be formally assessed and payments made to appropriate public agencies or NGOs to compensate the community, restore lost amenities, and support research into long-term effects and management practices.

### 3.2.8 Construction Practices in Sensitive Habitats

When the construction of transmission facilities in sensitive habitats cannot be avoided altogether, impacts can be minimized in several ways:

- Pre-construction surveys and post-construction monitoring.
- Use of underground cables instead of overhead lines (except where cable construction is more destructive than the impacts it would avoid)
- Widening span lengths to reduce the number of towers in sensitive habitats or avoiding placing towers in sensitive locations such as rivers.
- Also using different technologies such as undergrounding or using existing easements or energy corridors
- Limiting construction to dry seasons or periods when the ground is completely wet in order to minimize the effects of construction equipment on wet soils.
- Avoiding construction during periods in which essential natural processes such as wildlife breeding and fish spawning might be disturbed.
- Providing stringent control of erosion and sedimentation when vegetation is removed.

- Using helicopters for tower installation and other means of minimizing road-building in remote areas.
- Minimizing construction duration, noise, and use of explosives.
- Ensuring that construction equipment is properly cleaned to avoid accidental spreading of invasive species.
- Employing cultural experts in the project team to identify and protect valuable archaeological and cultural artifacts and sites encountered during construction.

### 3.2.9 BIO Security including Pest and Vegetation Management

Local BIO security plans must be adhered too especially in the planning and development of this type of infrastructure.

Control of biological diseases insects and vegetation in transmission rights-of-way should be conducted so as to minimize impacts on surrounding ecosystems. The techniques employed are generally referred to as Integrated Pest Management and Integrated Vegetation Management, and are adopted as appropriate to specific site conditions—for example, the terrain, vegetation type, and species present—along the entire right-of-way, as indicated by environmental mapping. IPM and IVM to minimize the use of herbicides and pesticides in favor of practices such as replanting with native species, manual mowing and trimming, and maintaining populations of natural predators. Where herbicides and pesticides are used, they are precisely targeted and applied to minimize their spread into surrounding ecosystems.

### 3.2.10 Wildlife Protection

Techniques for protecting wildlife in transmission rights-of-way and substations must adapted for specific local conditions. Some widespread methods include the following:

- Bird collisions can be avoided by siting of towers and lines away from avian flyways, based on environmental surveys.
- Controlling wildlife to protect transmission facilities— birds and small mammals to prevent them from shorting out equipment such as transformers and breakers are a common problem. The elimination of convenient nesting places on transmission towers would not be a problem if existing corridors or undergrounding technology used.
- Illegal hunting and fishing in transmission rights-of-way, by utility employees as well as by members of the public, must be strictly monitored and prevented.

### 3.2.11 EMF Reduction

Although the health effects of chronic exposure to EMFs from AC transmission lines remain scientifically uncertain, many utilities and regulatory authorities employ EMF reduction practices as a precautionary measure, usually within the limit of a few percent of overall project cost. Guidelines differ from country to country; in many

places, utilities seek to keep annual average magnetic field intensities at the edge of the right-of-way below about 10 mG (milliGauss). This is usually accomplished by one or more of the following methods:

- Use of DC transmission instead of AC transmission. DC transmission produces primarily static electric fields, and is therefore assumed to pose a minimal EMF-related human health concern.
- Use of underground cable, especially in areas where residential dwellings and worksites dictate.
- Raising conductor height above the ground, typically by increasing tower height.
- Reducing conductor spacing.
- Arranging phases so that fields tend to cancel.
- Increasing transmission voltage (since magnetic field intensities are a function of current, and increased voltage, all things being equal, will result in reduced current).
- Reducing loads (and therefore, currents).
- Increasing right-of-way widths or buffer zone widths, to move people further from transmission lines. The Australian Energy and Infrastructure Commissioner recommends a 300 metre setback to residential dwellings.

### 3.2.12 Aesthetic Improvement

Underground cables can be used to remove the risk of destroying the aesthetics especially when measuring damage to the environment, private property values and tourism.

## 4. World Bank Environmental Guidelines for Transmission Projects

The World Bank endorsed an official Environment Strategy that named environmental protection, social cohesion, and economic growth as the three legs of the sustainable development tripod that support the Bank's core mission of alleviating poverty. This method must be used to identify and measure the transmission lines construction against the destruction of community.