

VNI West Submission 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023

This submission is written on behalf of The Wallaloo and Gre Gre District Alliance group against the 500kV transmission lines proposed for the area through the VNI West. The WaGGDA consists of 25 landowning and agricultural business operating families in the Wallaloo, Kanya, Tottington, Gre Gre and Callawadda areas of the Northern Grampians Shire.

AEMO overhead powerline transmission in Option 5 significantly impacts on this group's farms. The lines will have a detrimental impact on their businesses and people are deeply concerned about the impact on their family and community's wellbeing.

The land owners represented by WaGGDA hold prime farm land growing high quality protein for the Australian and International market. Predominately this consist of various grains, meat and fibre.

Agriculture as a whole is considered a driving sector in Northern Grampians in terms of regional exports, employment, value-added and local expenditure on goods and services (backward linkages) as a whole the sector contributed 16% of total economic benefit into the Northern Grampians economy. It was our number one sector in terms of the wealth it generated in 2019 (value-added). Sheep and grain delivered 66% of the wealth generated by Agriculture in 2019. Agriculture employed the greatest number of people across all industry sectors.

Northern Grampians Shire Economic & Dev Strategy 2021-31.

WaGGDA will advocate that the level of economic importance and value of agricultural land is hugely significant and the impacts of VNI West, as assessed in the report, do not adequately include this true value in its assessments of and preference for Option 5. The Northern Grampians Shire Economic & Development Strategy 2021-31 identified agricultural technology and advancements as the number one economic opportunity for the Shire, many of these future developments will be negatively impacted or impossible with overhead transmission lines of VNI West.

Every landowner in the group identified that they had little or no information in relation to the overhead powerline transmission and the acquisition of farm lands to undertake this project. Some had attended a meeting in St Arnaud with VFF, AEMO and Vicgrid and found that did not adequately answer questions of landowners. WaGGDA reiterates the words of Mayor Councillor Kevin Erwin "Council is extremely concerned that infrastructure of this scale will have a very substantial and direct impact on prime agricultural land, but the period allowed for public input is too short," Cr Erwin said.

CFA volunteers Captains and brigade members make up a large portion of the WaGGDA and have expressed extreme concern of increased fire risks of overhead transmission lines and the inability to combat fires on land with overhead powerlines. Brigade Captains and long-standing CFA volunteers will cease to be involved in their

local CFA in any area that imposed the risk of overhead powerlines to the countryside.

Areas near or beneath transmission lines should be avoided in the event of a fire, as dense smoke can increase the risk of an electrical arc or flashover which can endanger life and property.

Bushfire management and community safety

3 These are risk volunteers are not prepared to take.

WaGGDA would like to bring the attention to the work of Professor Simon Bartlett and Professor Bruce Mountain in address that Option 5 is not acceptable to WaGGDA and that other more viable and more economically feasible options exist for the successful of transferring renewable energies in Victoria. Including existing carriageways for energy transmission.

Expediating Option 5 will not be an option for the local landowners of WaGGDA. The advocacy group will be exploring its own cultural sensitivity data including flora and fauna, historical linkages and cultural relevancies of the region. Other impacts WaGGDA will explore and measure are the short-, medium- and long-term impacts of overhead transmission lines on intergenerational farming families, rural communities, farm businesses and land. Landowners in the area exist due to several generations of understanding the land, decades of toil, wisdom and solid economic management; this will not be compromised.

WaGGDA is exploring legal options to contest the recently issued Ministerial [NEVA Order](#) issued by the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, Victorian Minister for Minister for Energy and Resources under the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005. And its capacity to authorise AEMO to undertake early works leading up to spring surveys as part of the planning and environmental approval process for VNI West from the third quarter of 2023 and the ability of the State government to avoid standard planning procedure.

As further information on AEMO comes to light and their consultation continues to lack transparency questions arise here I reference Australian Energy Council about the authenticity of many assumptions in AEMO report on VNI West and the preferred option 5. WaGGDA will support a ground swell of people, organisations and business that are seeking an independent inquiry into the process.

Sincerely

On behalf of Wallaloo and Gre Gre District Alliance of landowners

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