

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P088

Name: Andrew Reid

Location: Waubra, VIC, Australia

Submission

- I am concerned about how this project may cause property values to fall; many people rely on their businesses and properties to supplement their retirement income. My retirement is in this property, either from selling or leasing, therefore if the property is devalued, I will have significantly less retirement funds.
- Because of the easement, this transmission line project will limit farming activities; it will also severely limit the ability of CFA and fire fighters to operate through the properties when fires occur.
- Because of these constraints, the fire in Lexton, for example, was difficult to control as the firefighters could not use aerial bombing.
- The project will have an impact on my and my wife's health because if VNI West is as close to residences as WRL is, it will be 400 metres our house. Which will have an impact on our health.
- The constant change of routes and size of powerlines has mentally exhausted us and our health is being impacted.
- We have 20-30 (within 3km) wind turbines near our property which create awful noise, I am concerned that with the powerlines this will only become worse.
- VNI West will promote the development of new wind farms in the Waubra area; wind farms produce noise and have an impact on my wife's health.
- I feel that the project team has done a poor effort of assessing significant Aboriginal heritage. They have not acknowledged the artifacts from the tribe that used to live in the area and was wiped out in the 1800s. There are important cultural landmarks such as the canoe tree and tree circles in the area.
- The visual amenity of VNI West and renewable energy projects in the area will have an impact on landscape aesthetics, lowering property values.

- I am appalled by Ausnet's behaviour in our area, which included avoiding meetings with the community and engaging in bullying tactics. I had a meeting set up with someone from Ausnet, after waiting for nearly 2 hours I was told that he had forgotten about the meeting and never came.
- I believe that people from the countryside have been left behind and thus made to suffer for the sake of city residents.
- The State Government's compensation of \$8000 to landowners is insufficient.
- Wind commission was a joke and ruined my faith in human nature.
- I am very disheartened by the whole wind farm fight, the community is still scarred by the experience.

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P089

Name: Andrew & Tracey Arbuckle

Location: Moolerr, VIC, Australia

Submission

Good Afternoon

I'm writing to express my concerns over the proposed Option 5 powerline. I farm at Moolerr and have not received any information/ consultation from anyone regarding this proposal. I grow wheat, oats, barley, and livestock (sheep) and I'm very concerned what impact any powerlines running through my property will have to me and my families 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

Yours

Andrew & Tracey Arbuckle

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P091

Name: Dawn Miller

Location: Gunbower, VIC, Australia

Submission

I wish to protest against this proposal. This is good farming land which will be not fit for purpose. They will be running over or near the Patho plains grasslands. They would also impact the lifestyle of those living along the river and creek. Local wetlands and cultural heritage would also impacted.

Dawn Miller

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P092

Name: [WITHHELD]

Location: Myrniong, VIC, Australia

Submission

Submission in relation to the VNI West Consultation Report - Options Assessment

1. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission on the VNI-West Consultation Report - Options Assessment.

2. My submission concerns two key issues

a. The first relates to a lack of transparency and the low credibility that can be attributed to

AEMO claims in the report that issues and feedback raised by the 26 respondents to the VNIWest PADR have been adequately considered, and that corresponding corrections, additions or changes have been made to arrive at the options and analysis presented in the Consultation Report.

b. The second issue relates to the use of the Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA) Framework to analyse and support conclusions for VN|-West route options, connections points to the Western Renewables Link (WRL) and uprating of the WRL link from Ballarat to Bulgana, however, the report fails to apply these same considerations to the WRL options from Bulgana to Ballarat and Sydenham.

Issue X. Transparency of AEMO's analysis and Credibility of AEMO's assurances.

3. While the Consultation Report includes a graphic to show the 10 broad themes most commented on in the 26 PADR submissions, no detailed assessment of the issues raised and what impact they have had on the PADR conclusions is available to the public. The Consultation Report only refers to a high-level feedback summary which refers to the latest Consultation

Report.

4. The linkages between the issues raised by the 26 respondents in relation to the initial route options and their relative costs and assessments and AEMO's expansion to the current round of seven route and configuration options has not been adequately explained.

5. Rather, the report is just asking the public to trust AEMO'. This is not reasonable, or possible, given AEMO's behaviour to date with the WRL planning and consultation process. AEMO's lack of credibility in adherence to the NERs and the WRL RIT-T process engenders anything but trust.

5. AEMO's credibility and trustworthiness are the subject of Victorian Supreme Court Action by the Moorabooland Central Highlands Power Alliance (MCHPA).

7. Given the significant impact of the WRL and VNI-West to communities and also how important the success of both projects is to Victoria's transition to renewable energy, rather than just taking AEMO at its word, I believe that the Victorian public deserve independent assurance that NER processes have been followed correctly and that legitimate feedback has been appropriately assessed and actioned.

8. Before finalising the VNI-West RIT-T process, I request that an independent assurance activity be commissioned to provide the public and the Victorian Government confidence that legitimate feedback on the VNI-West PADR and proposed changes to the WRL has been assessed and been taken into account in designs and route plans in a logical and defensible manner, and not just collected, summarised and filed.

Issue 2. Use of the MCA to assess WRL route options.

9. If it serves AEMO's purpose, and supposedly also serves the community, to use the MCA methodology to further/ assess the VNI-West options consistent with the functions conferred by the NEVA Order, then this should also be applied to the WRL.

10. The VNI-West project is inextricably linked to the WRL and to apply a more sophisticated methodology to take account of social, environment, land use and other factors in the VNI-West

route selection but ignore these factors completely in the WRL route is hypocritical, and, unethical.

11. This approach is indefensible when you consider:

a. the apparent flaws in the current WRL route decision process and outcome which have been tabled by the MCHPA in its Supreme Court affidavit dated 23 December 2022; and

b. the widespread and united community opposition to the current WRL route due to the severe social, environmental and land use impacts through the growth corridor of the Melton and Moorabool shires and Victoria's agricultural food bowl.

12. If the independent assurance activity argued for at Issue 1 were to conclude that the VN|-West options outlined in the Consultation Report actually did represent the net positive benefit that AEMO claim, and confirmed that the MCA analysis allowed a better option for all to be identified which takes account of unique social, land use and environmental factors, then this same approach should be applied equally to the credible options initially presented in the WRL PADR.

13. In addition, other options should also be assessed, as has been done in the case of the VNI-It/est, including:

a. Underground transmission in an alternate alignment, existing easement, or right-of-way, including the use of sub-stations to offset capacitive losses.

b. Realignment of the WRL via the Moorabool terminal station, Haunted Gully, then north to Bulgana to connect to VNI West via a number of easements already owned by AusNet.

c. Upgrading existing 220kV lines to 500 kV, and single lines to double.

14. Given the high community opposition to the WRL and AEMO and AusNet's total loss of social licence along the length of this project, when applying the MCA to the WRL options the percentage weightings of the six MCA factors should be revised to show much higher weightings against social, land use and environment e.g., much greater than LA -5a/o.

Conclusion

15. In conclusion, communities affected by the WRL unanimously want a safer, more reliable transmission network which adds value to their communities, livelihoods and properties and reduces risk. The VNI-West Consultation Report appears to be trying to achieve this, in part, using the MCA.

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L6. AEMO's analysis of the VNI-West options should be subject to independent validation to provide assurance of its merit, and the MCA methodology should also be applied to identify a better design option for the WRL.

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P093

Name: Trevor Davis

Location: Ballan, VIC, Australia

Submission

Dear AEMO,

We operate a small farming property at the abovementioned address that will be affected by the proposed Western Renewables Link powerline between Ballarat and Sydenham. Ours is a beef cattle operation that includes the production of hay for winter feeding. The property is worked by my wife and me.

The proposed power lines would traverse the south end of our property and be directly above a large dam that we have. This is a refuge area for water fowl and inhabited by a range of duck, water hen and black swans. We fear the existence of overhead powerlines will negatively affect this water feature that has been a safe breeding area for wildlife for some decades.

The proposed power lines would also bring about the destruction of a number of mature native trees that provide refuges for wildlife.

We are concerned that the powerline concept adopted by AEMO is an overhead solution. The preferred solution for other high-capacity interconnector lines has been to install them underground. Why is that concept being ignored in the case of the Western Renewables Link powerline?

Finally, the RIT-T process is problematic in that decisions are made in relation to need and placement of infrastructure with absolutely no engagement with potentially affected property owners at the time. Instead, the contract for the construction and operation of the powerline at a particular price was awarded BEFORE any property owner engagement commenced. We would be interested to learn reason for the lack of such engagement during the RIT-T process when the likely powerline corridor first became known.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Yours faithfully



Trevor Davis

'Springfields'

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P094

Name: Bill & Marilyn Knights

Location: Gre Gre, VIC, Australia

Submission

We have farmed in the Gre Gre area near St.Arnaud for nearly 60 odd years and together our family we continue to operate a cropping and wool production farming business. We are strongly opposed to the use of our property and the carve up of our community for use as a pathway for power lines which for obvious political and corporate profiteering reasons, have been shifted to our region. Our region is very good at what it does and it's value is in what it produces not what it may possibly host.

We more importantly voice our objection to any plan to convert our area into a sea of wind towers which we expect this power line will enable. Wind towers will destroy our community and significantly impact negatively our family's future at Gre Gre.

We are VFF members and will support their process in objecting to the option 5 proposal.

Bill & Marilyn Knights

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P095

Name: Vicky Marett

Location: Bacchus Marsh, VIC, Australia

Submission

Dear Sir/Madam

My Husband and I have lived at Darley since June 2000. The land has been held in my family firstly by and uncle who sold to my parents who then sold to us. The family association beginning approximately 1973 or, 50 years ago. In recent years, our two sons have purchased land on the road and reside at [WITHHELD].

We all now find ourselves located in the area between the state park and the proposed power lines with no exit in an emergency. Time spent living in the location makes us acutely aware of the dangers and extremely high wind we would face during a bush fire. The fierce northerly winds filter through to us down the gorge. In the event the power towers failed, lines were blown down, etc, we are left with no way to escape.

The consultation by Ausnet on this has been appalling to say the least. We have been offered the deceitful \$500 VISA card for access rights, they told us they were going to look at other areas (but, letters were never even sent out to those landholders), subjected to Ausnet people on our properties despite being told not to enter. The list goes on, they sneak about, lie and are not welcome or wanted anywhere near our properties.

This project needs to be rethought and undergrounded. Surely we can do better in 2023 than to use ugly, 80+m high, power towers to deliver electricity? We had to connect our property using underground because it was deemed to unsafe for poles and wires. This same theory needs to apply for major works. There is a much better way and that is to put these lines underground.

We strongly believe, in the interests of building true community engagement the project should be halted. An in depth, fair and complete Cost Benefits Analysis for above and underground has been carried out.

We could go on for pages on our reasons, beliefs, values and feelings. In short, we believe it is a poorly thought-out plan with a focus purely on budget which is going to be a blight on our environment and future generations.

Do it once, do it well. In this case, this means undergrounding.

Regards

Allan & Vicky Marett

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P098

Name: Shaun Cleary

Location: Blampied, VIC, Australia

Submission

My family has been farming this land at Smeaton consistently for 147 years. Over time children have been raised, my wife and I got married here in 2016 and the family has gone about their business growing potatoes and running livestock. Today my wife Danika and I continue to farm here with my parents and two young children.

Twelve months ago, to the day we moved into our dream house on the property for what was supposed to be one of the happiest times of our life has been tarnished by the continual stress of losing everything due to WRL transmission lines.

In March last year I met with the Minister for Energy The Hon. Lily D’Ambrosio along with some other members of the community over a Microsoft Teams Link. I described our current situation and predicament, and her exact words were “You can not put a price on that”. You see with the current alignment of the WRL we are due to lose our new family home along with our whole entire property, taking away the family’s place of existence for close on 150 years.

AusNet last year told us we are one of the most effected families along the whole route. How lucky are we, we risk losing absolutely everything that the family has literally put blood sweat and tears into for so long. For over two years we have had to live with the constant mental stress of not knowing where we are headed and what our future will hold. I can safely say that having no control over your own destiny is one of the most unnerving and frightening situations and I would not wish what we are currently having to endure on my worst enemy.

You bang on about Cultural Heritage having an impact on the lines well I think you would struggle to find a more Culturally Significant area than the district in which we live in which is going to be completely ruined by this project. Properties have been passed down through the generations since the days of settlement.

This project in its current form is one of the biggest Ponzi schemes we have seen in modern times. I have not met one person or politician in the last two years that has said the destruction of this prime agricultural land is a good idea and or in any way green!

We were not consulted at all in the beginning. In fact, the lines route was decided in conjunction with a handful of neighbours looking to keep the line away from their own properties and houses, in order to ruin ours they even took payments from AusNet to work with them (Did someone say corruption?). We were told at the eleventh hour and now are forced to wear it.

How can anyone in their right mind in the year of 2023 agree to and think that putting a now 500kva Transmission line 50m away from a family's house is a good idea?

It simply does not pass the pub test. Thinking that raising children under and around these monstrous towers is a responsible way to bring up kids is beyond me.

This project needs to be placed underground. Think back if you can to 1980 when this was top notch technology. Mobile phones were starting to appear.

How do you think the people of Victoria would feel if you said to them, everyone needs to put their current mobile phone in the bin. We are going to force everyone to use the old car phones from the 80's and you have to suck it up because that will make our overseas shareholders more money and the people in Melbourne will save a few dollars.

There would be riots in the streets. This is the same with the WRL and VNI West project. We need to use the latest technology available, this dated technology currently proposed will put people's lives at risk. But hey, I guess what's more important a few deaths or Daniel Westerman's bonus....? You tell me.....

This could be a good news story for AEMO not the current absolute sh*t show you have created for yourselves.

How dare anyone think they will put a Transmission line so close to my house is beyond me.

Regards

Shaun Cleary

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P099

Name: Andrew & Sharyn & Matthew Lockhart **Location:** Wychitella, VIC, Australia

Submission

5th April 2023

Submission on the VNI West – Consultation Report

To Whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) Consultation Report.

We are farmers located within the Loddon Shire with approx. 3,500Ha of farming land. Our farming business ranges from sowing and harvesting barley, wheat, oats, beans and canola for human and animal consumption to running 3,200 head of sheep for wool and fat lambs.

We have just recently 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.

2,500Ha of our productive farming land is located within the corridor of this proposed transmission line. We are concerned by the potential negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on our farming operations and business.

If the transmission infrastructure was to be built on our farmland, we are concerned that we have no information on what land access arrangements could be demanded by the transmission company before, during and after construction; what costs this would have on our business; and what our rights would be.

We are also concerned that there is no information available to us about the compensation that would be provided because of the impacts on our farming operations including reduced production and decreased land values. It is therefore impossible to provide an assessment on the costs to our business if the project was constructed on our land.

Whilst we have not been provided with information that details the impact of transmission infrastructure on our farmland, we believe the following issues will impact our ability to maintain a commercial farming operation now and into the future:

- decreased land value and loss of productive capacity;
- Inability to use tractors and machinery under powerlines;
- inability to irrigate under powerlines;
- inability to utilize emerging technologies such as drones and autonomous vehicles;
- refusal to give notice or inform landholders what chemicals have been used on site causing issues with vendor declarations;
- spread of weeds;
- failure to close gates;
- damage to crops;
- materials left on site causing damage to machinery.

These impacts must be considered when evaluating the true costs and benefits of the proposed project across all agricultural business in the region.

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

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

Andrew, Sharyn & Matthew Lockhart

Wychitella

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P100

Name: Tyler Nelson (Nelson Farms)

Location: Leaghur, VIC, Australia

Submission

Our farm and residence are located at Leaghur, Victoria. We operate a hay, grain and livestock production business.

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.

Due to the lack of information provided by AEMO around the possible location of the VNI West Project (Option 5), I am unable to form a completely informed opinion on this matter, however I am concerned by the potential negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will potentially have on my farming operations and business if the line goes near our property.

If the transmission infrastructure was to be built on my farmland, I am concerned that I have no information on what land access arrangements could be demanded by the transmission company before, during and after construction; what costs this would have on my business; and what my rights would be.

I am also concerned that there is no information available to me about the compensation that would be provided because of the impacts on my farming operations including reduced production and decreased land values. It is therefore impossible to provide an assessment on the costs to my business if the project was constructed on my land.

Whilst I have not been provided with information that details the impact of transmission infrastructure on my farmland, I believe the following issues will impact my ability to maintain a commercial farming operation now and into the future:

- decreased land value and loss of productive capacity;
- Inability to use tractors and machinery under powerlines;
- inability to irrigate under powerlines;
- inability to utilize emerging technologies such as drones and autonomous vehicles;

- refusal to give notice or inform landholders what chemicals have been used on site causing issues with vendor declarations;
- spread of weeds;
- failure to close gates;
- damage to crops;
- materials left on site causing damage to machinery.

To add to the above list, the area of Leaghur does not have the resources in terms of good road access and access to firefighting equipment to address any potential issues and risks associated with high-voltage powerlines and their maintenance.

These impacts must be considered when evaluating the true costs and benefits of the proposed project across all agricultural business in the region.

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

We live across the road from the environmentally and culturally significant Leaghur State Park and associated lake system. It would be difficult to determine what sorts of impacts that these high-voltage transmission lines will have on movement of bird life, fire risk to native vegetation and the spread of weeds into those environmentally significant areas.

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 farm business. I believe the community needs more time to respond to this project so a more accurate assessment of its costs and benefits can be made.

Tyler Nelson

Nelson Farms

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P101

Name: Andries Kolpa

Location: Mount Franklin, VIC, Australia

Submission

I would hereby voice my opposition to the AUSNET and AEMO transmission towers. I understand that the undergrounding of power lines has not been considered. The unwillingness to consider this option for the more sensitive sections of the route demonstrates an indifference to genuine community concerns in Hepburn Shire.

This largely unchanged power line route with the significantly larger towers recommended in the report are of major concern for Hepburn Shire Council, for residents, for business operators, as this would have an even greater adverse impact on a large part of the Hepburn Shire economy. I'm wholeheartedly against this!

I join the call of seeking to cancel the existing AEMO contract with Ausnet or have it substantially changed in order to minimize the impact of the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project / VNI West on property owners by influencing a direction to the WVTNP / VNI West team to investigate alternative options such as undergrounding.

The most suitable solution to the proposed transmission lines is an undergrounded solution entirely in the Hepburn Shire and Moorabool Shire geographical area from West of Ballarat to Sydenham.

These shires strongly oppose the transmission lines being above ground for good reason, but are you listening!??

The fundamental reason that projects are able to efficiently and economically achieve long distances underground, is because they use Direct Current (DC), rather than alternating current (AC).

In addition the easement under them proposed to be increased from 40 – 60 metres wide to 70 – 100 metres wide is unacceptable as it would result in a large swathe of Victoria's top agricultural land (that is of world-heritage quality!) that would be rendered unusable.

Furthermore Hepburn Shire, Daylesford and the goldfields are part of a strong tourism industry, which has been promoted by the Victorian Government for decades and the area is under a UNESCO bid. The region is known as the spa centre of Australia and every weekend hundreds of people visit from Melbourne and beyond. There is no other shire like Hepburn Shire - a beautiful shire at the top of the ranges.

Do the right thing, STOP this project in its current form!

Andries Kolpa

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P102

Name: Ryan Stewart

Location: Buckrabanyule, VIC, Australia

Submission

I have recently started an apprenticeship on my family farm in Buckrabanyule with a view to taking over the operation of the farm in the near future. I have only recently been alerted to 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 I live and work on. I am concerned by the potential negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on my family's farming operations and business and on my future as a Primary Producer.

As well as learning about practical traditional and existing farm methods in my apprenticeship, my theoretical apprenticeship component has a significant focus on innovation and technology. A lot of this technology helps reduce the use of chemicals and make better decisions to mitigate the effects of climate change and to reduce our carbon footprint. Towers would prohibit the use of many technologies and reduce my ability to ensure that our family farm remains both economically and environmentally sustainable into the future.

I am opposed to the proposed route 5 option as I deeply concerned that the impact of transmission infrastructure on my family farmland, will impact my family's ability to maintain a commercial farming operation due to the following issues:

- decreased land value and loss of productive capacity;
- Inability to use tractors and machinery under powerlines;
- inability to utilize emerging technologies such as drones and autonomous vehicles;
- refusal to give notice or inform landholders what chemicals have been used on site causing issues with vendor declarations;
- spread of weeds;
- failure to close gates;
- damage to crops;
- materials left on site causing damage to machinery.

These impacts must be considered when evaluating the true costs and benefits of the proposed project across all agricultural business in the region.

It's hard enough nowadays to be profitable through a small primary production business without reducing the land available to farm. We are constantly looking for ways to implement technology and alternate farm practices to maximise the productive of our land as best we can but to ensure that the productivity of farms meets the future food production needs and allows them to remain profitable, it is often necessary to expand and acquire additional land. Productive land availability is already being reduced through competition for housing and other non-farm dependant industries, it is irresponsible to further reduce the productive land available through the installation of these towers. With two sisters who also want to farm, we need to ensure that they are also given the opportunity to follow their chosen careers by growing our farm enterprise to cater for them.

The devaluation of our existing land will make it hard to leverage for equity in order to progress and acquire suitable, fertile acreage not inhibited by transmission infrastructure. It is hard enough for young farmers to borrow the required funds without losing our capital value through no fault of our own. This drop in lending ability will make it harder for young farmers to enter and sustain and grow their businesses putting the future of this generation of farmers at risk.

I am a 6th gen farmer and I don't want to be the last.

Ryan Stewart

Buckrabanyule.

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P103

Name: Rachael McIntyre

Location: Gre Gre, VIC, Australia

Submission

Dear Australian Energy Market Operator,

In light of recent information regarding the VNI West Project, which myself and many of my fellow community members have only just discovered as little as 2 weeks ago, thanks to your lack of communication, I am writing to put forward the voice of many disappointed and infuriated farm owners and community members.

I'm distraught at the fact that this project has been developed without the adequate acknowledgment of affected landowners. How is it possible to have such an in-depth view of what you consider to be best fit for the project route, without consulting farmers and landowners for their opinion, considering you are planning to disrupt what they consider to be their office, their place of work, their livelihood, their home.

For a matter of perspective, I do agree and acknowledge that there needs to be renewable energy links in place for Australia, however, directing those resources through valuable and prime farming land is not the answer and not the best route in the opinion of those who could be affected.

There are already corridors throughout Victoria that could be utilised to provide a better passage to these enormous power lines. Understandably you think that because there's no infrastructure, building or other permanent structures on the farm land, what harm could it

do? Unfortunately, what you fail to see in your assessments is that these properties you wish to undermine with this infrastructure are highly utilised year after year by dedicated farmers and business owners to provide food and fibre for this country. Railroading through the properties which provide for Australia will cause major disruption to their business.

These power lines would affect farming communities in so many ways. Being disappointed with the little information provided on Tuesday 21st March, at the Public Meeting in St Arnaud hosted by the VFF and Northern Grampians Shire, we did however take away some key aspects of the project including the fact we cannot fight fires around this infrastructure. Australians learned the hard truth from Black Saturday, just how devastating fire from fallen power lines can be. As part of most farmers' preparations for the cropping season, we participate in planned burns of our paddocks. If for some reason, it became necessary for emergency intervention, how much would be lost before it was possible to be extinguished? How long would it take before it was safe for emergency crews to do their job? These powerlines may very well become a hazardous burden on emergency authorities in instances such as these.

In addition, it will disrupt our everyday activities needed to prosper as a farming enterprise. We were told that we would require a permit for use of any machinery above 4.3 metres from ground level within the exclusion zone. We would also need a permit for access within 30m of the radius of the powerline and 17m either side of the transmission line itself. That is equivalent to 2872.4 square metres of unusable space just on the powerline structure, not taking into account the 17m either side of the transmission lines themselves. Not only is this a burden and time wasting endeavour on busy farming life but it also comes at an additional cost to business owners. Vital parts of farming life would be unable to continue such as irrigation structures in multiple areas of the proposed route, disrupting years and years of progress and initiative that farming enterprises have put in place to grow and prosper in their

businesses.

I would also like to point out the pitiful excuse for consultation with stakeholders, which includes land owners. In a passage taken directly from the Transgrid website, it states that:

“In order to assess all network and non-network options from a technical and economic perspective, we are using the Australian Energy Regulator’s Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T). The RIT-T is a formal consultation process designed to:

- Inform stakeholders of the investment need and proposed options to address it
- Test the market for alternative and more efficient solutions
- Explain to stakeholders the basis on which the preferred option has been selected.”

In respect to the above statement, I would like to argue that there has not been adequate information given to stakeholders about the project, and when questioned about the project we have received no clear answer or follow up. You also have not taken into consideration alternative routes, you have chosen the cheapest route possible in an area that is less densely populated therefore limiting our voices and opinions based on our suburban density in comparison to other bigger towns and areas, giving us little hope of a successful dispute.

You also have not given us an explanation on exactly why the preferred route was chosen other than the fact it is less costly. Not one of the above mentioned consultation processes have been deemed satisfactory.

So, in a frustrating conclusion, take the above points into consideration and listen to the people who have given you feedback and take it on board. Listen to those desperately voicing their concerns and hesitations against the project. Find another way to make this possible that will benefit everyone. Not just those in your offices. Look out the window and consider those you will be disrupting, those you will be hurting, those who will need to spend their lives and for generations afterwards, being surrounded by your project. It’s more than just a project... to us in the firing line this is an uprooting of our lives and our businesses.

The work we’ve spent so much of our lives to accomplish, may all go up in smoke.

Rachael McIntyre

Gre Gre, Victoria

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P104

Name: Roslyn & Isaac Lanyon

Location: Boort, VIC, Australia

Submission

Submission on the VNI West – Consultation Report

Our farming operation is on the outskirts of Boort. We farm fat lambs as well as cereal crops including wheat, barley and canola. We value our farming life and our community. We also have an Engineering business on farm which relies on the community for its longevity. This proposal will have a direct impact on our farm and local community.

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 I operate a business on. I am concerned by the potential negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on my farming operations and business.

If the transmission infrastructure was to be built on my farmland, I am concerned that I have no information on what land access arrangements could be demanded by the transmission company before, during and after construction; what costs this would have on my business; and what my rights would be.

I am also concerned that there is no information available to me about the compensation that would be provided because of the impacts on my farming operations including reduced production and decreased land values. It is therefore impossible to provide an assessment on the costs to my business if the project was constructed on my land.

Whilst I have not been provided with information that details the impact of transmission infrastructure on my farmland, I believe the following issues will impact my ability to maintain a commercial farming operation now and into the future:

- decreased land value and loss of productive capacity;
- Inability to use tractors and machinery under powerlines;

- inability to irrigate under powerlines;
- inability to utilize emerging technologies such as drones and autonomous vehicles;
- refusal to give notice or inform landholders what chemicals have been used on site causing issues with vendor declarations;
- spread of weeds;
- failure to close gates;
- damage to crops;
- materials left on site causing damage to machinery.

These impacts must be considered when evaluating the true costs and benefits of the proposed project across all agricultural business in the region.

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

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 farm business. I believe the community needs more time to respond to this project so a more accurate assessment of its costs and benefits can be made.

Roslyn & Isaac Lanyon

Boort

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P106

Name: Nathan Lancashire

Location: St Arnaud, VIC, Australia

Submission

To whom it may concern

As a third generation farmer who farms within the proposed corridor for this poorly conceived project, it has impacted the mental health of my whole family due to the uncertainty and potential impact on our ability to produce an income to support our families. This project will also be a blight on the landscape and forever a reminder of the narrow sighted, \$ driven leaders who have “developed” this project.

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

The North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected - 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 - huge impacts on agriculture and mental health!

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, who have never left their offices to visit and understand the regions.

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. Not to mention the loss of the ability to produce food with low food km's.

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.

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 and to mitigate bushfire risk.

Think this process through, not just for the now but for the future!

I look forward to a genuine, non form generated response to my concerns!

Regards, Nathan Lancashire

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P107

Name: Monique Watts

Location: St Arnaud, VIC, Australia

Submission

To Whom It may concern

Re: Submission against VNI Transmission Line

To the masses in the city, in their offices and board rooms, a stretch of rural land may be considered little more than a scarcely populated area between “city A” and “city B.” Having had the good fortune of being raised on this land, I’m proud to have a different perspective. Within these stretches of rural lands exist precious communities. Not purely in a sentimental sense, but in a productivity sense. These Farming communities are our nation’s best shot at food security. These are our country cousins without whom many of our industries are compromised. They deserve respect, candour and support.

Right now, the communities of Charlton, Yeungroon, Coonooer Bridge and St.Arnaud are fearful. They know that there is a plan for a transmission line to run somewhere in the vicinity of their townships, their farming land, or perhaps right through their back yards. Through the land that they’ve loved, lived off and cared for, for many generations. Yet they are struggling to get facts. There is a sense of being deceived as weak attempts are made at consulting the community through public meetings, where answers are not provided and surveys offering cash incentives taken up by individuals who don’t own or live on the land and are unlikely to be directly affected.

A trail of 80-meter-tall steel monstrosities being erected on a farmer’s much-loved land, literally their pride, joy and livelihood, the land they nurture through drought, flood and fire, lambing, cropping and harvest for

generations on end, is, at an individual level heartbreaking. The social impact of such a project surely has not been appreciated – this will be insurmountable to the individuals involved and devastating to the community. This has not been acknowledged. The suggested compensation sum is insulting. Has anyone stopped to consider the affect the mental health of the individuals being impacted by this. How is this being managed? Suicide rates in our rural regions are already unacceptably high, with recent Australian data showing that one farmer dies every ten days from suicide. The communities are rightfully alarmed. There is no place to get hard facts about exactly what is going to happen, where it is going to happen and when. There is an overwhelming sense of deceit and there's nowhere to go for answers or support. To those in the boardrooms in the big smoke, the finer details may be minutia, but to those on the land, they are defining details. Essential knowledge.

These farmers are reasonable people. They are intelligent people. They work hard, and without them our country would stop. The consultancy period has been too short. The outcome too vulgar. There must be a smarter option than the VNI West Transmission Line Option 5. Surely we're better than this.

Sincerely

A/Prof Monique Watts

Cardiologist

Visiting Medical Officer to East Wimmera Health

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P109

Name: Michael Darzins

Location: Marnoo, VIC, Australia

Submission

Dear AEMO,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the consultation on the VNI west transmission project.

The pink area on the map for this proposed transmission line includes farmland that my family operate a business on and I care deeply about. I am concerned by the detrimental negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on farming operations and business.

I am aware that there has been very little consultation regarding this project and the community and those impacted have many unanswered questions. Three people stood out the front of the local town hall, but they could not answer questions such as how tall the towers are.

My concerns are:

- We will be unable to work under the lines safely.
- We will be unable to use machinery under the lines.
- Stock may not be able to graze under lines.
- Difficulty in fighting fires under the lines.
- What happens to the towers when they condemn them? Who is responsible for decommissioning, recycling and land restoration.

These are only a few of the basic destructive complications that the powerlines will have on the people who have to work and live around them

We need to be aware of the evolving new age agricultural technology.

From a CFA point of view, if fires can't be fought near or under the transmission lines, it could burn hundreds of acres before it is brought under control. This could claim the lives and homes of many vulnerable people and animals.

I believe that option 5 isn't the answer for renewable energy transmission lines. The Victorian Government and AEMO should put the lines underground, not on highly productive farm land.

Our preference would be that underground transmission lines follow existing transport corridors wherever possible. Where it isn't possible, it should be laid underground and the landowners be properly compensated for:

- Loss of productive land
- Inconvenience
- Lease on the use of their land (lower than if overhead)

The costs of burying cables is significantly higher than running overhead lines however, the lower costs of maintenance, leasing land and bushfire pay the extra investment back over time.

If you have any further questions about the submission, please get in touch with me.

Name: Michael Darzins

Location in concern: Marnoo East

Regards

Michael Darzins

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P110

Name: Marissa & George Portelli

Location: Myrniong, VIC, Australia

Submission

We write as impacted property owners/residents.

Our affected property of 51 acre in Myrniong that joins onto another 78 acres of ours, where we are fortunate enough to enjoy peace privacy and views and we once thought our dreams are coming true and turning this into our forever home to raise our 4 young children has now turned into our worst nightmare since the announcement. Our lives have not only been put on hold from building our forever home for our young growing family but has also turned our lives upside down. The significant impact this has had on our property will have the powerline running over the roof of our home if we are to continue on with building our home, the easement takes up half of our property so it does not leave us with much room to move if we had to move the house and we would only be left with the dreadful site of the powerlines every way we look.

When the route was changed late last year we were not notified of the change, this not only impacted more of our 51 acres but was also pushed onto our other joining property also. This was not communicated to us at all no notification no phone call nothing, we had to find this out online once the announcement was made, this is just unacceptable, we have notified Ausnet on several occasions of our situation and we feel that no consideration has been made.

We believe that the Victorian government and AEMO need to consider undergrounding the proposed project alongside existing transport corridors or on public land to ensure minimal disruption to farm businesses in the region.

George & Marissa Portelli from Myrniong

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P111

Name: Margaret Shaughnessy

Location: Marnoo, VIC, Australia

Submission

3 April 2023

I have only recently become aware of the Victorian Government and AEMO's proposal to construct power transmission lines from Bulgana to NSW.

The area on the map for this proposed transmission line includes farmland that I live on and operate a business on. I am concerned by the detrimental negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on my farming operations, business and quality of life. I am a small landholder and this could impact adversely on my cattle production reducing it to an unsustainable level. If the transmission infrastructure was to be built on my farmland, I am concerned that I have no information on what land access arrangements would be required before during and after building and what my rights are. Also the compensation costs and what happens in 25 years when they are decommissioned? Are we liable to the costs involved?

We have not had any questions answered and basically no consultation. A few people at the local town hall who can't answer basic questions like the height of the towers is inadequate and frankly an insult to the intelligence of locals landholders.

Whilst I have not been provided with information about impact on my farmland, I have other issues that I believe will impact my ability to maintain a commercial farming operation now and into the future. These are:

- We can't work under the lines safely, eg. machinery, run stock
- Decreased land values and loss of productivity
- Can't fight fires under power lines
- failure to close gates
- damage to pasture
- spread of weeds
- chemical use with vendor declarations.

From a CFA point of view, if fires can't be fought under power lines it puts more land and infrastructure at risk of being in jeopardy of another tragic black Saturday type event.

These impacts must be considered when evaluating the true costs and benefits of the proposed project across all agricultural businesses in the region. Who wants to look at the beautiful hills and the horizon with ugly pylons and powerlines marring the view?

I believe the Victorian Government and AEMO must put the lines underground along existing transport corridors, and not on highly productive farm land, that will rip communities and families apart. Consider the long term best options and not short term least cost scenarios that will ultimately cost more in the long run.

Please reconsider by putting the powerlines underground. At least give the community more time to respond to this project so more accurate assessments of costs and benefits can be made.

Name: Marg Shaughnessy

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P112

Name: Marg Bruechert

Location: Newlyn, VIC, Australia

Submission

I am a resident in Newlyn Victoria and extremely concerned about the whole process of the proposed Western Renewable link and other links across Victoria.

The consultation process has not been long enough, transparent enough, or informative enough to allow anyone 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 clearly 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 farm businesses in the region.

Now is the opportunity for the Victorian Government to make a real difference for our future by changing antiquated systems and implementing systems that are safer, less destructive, environmentally acceptable and progressive.

This/these projects need to be underground.

Marg Bruechert.

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P113

Name: Mackenzie Barham

Location: Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Submission

VNI West Powerline Transmission Submission

To whom it may concern,

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

Whilst I am writing this from a metropolitan city in Victoria, I have family and friends in Marnoo and Gre Gre (option 5) and have many concerns for this proposed project going through this area. My main concern is the impact this will have on many livelihoods who rely on this land for farming and livestock.

I believe this project will have an everlasting impact on families who have resided there for generations, not only in a financial sense but also cause immense stress on a small country community. Aside from the vast impact this will have on the individuals whose land is used and those who surround it, I am deeply worried about the toll this large-scale project will have on the environment. Due to limited information given to the exact whereabouts these will be built, this project could tear down untamed blocks filled with native flora and fauna.

These impacts must be considered when evaluating the true costs and benefits of the proposed project across all agricultural businesses in the region.

I believe the Victorian Government and AEMO should consider undergrounding the proposed project alongside existing transport corridors or on public land to at least reduce the impact and disruption to farm businesses in the region.

I believe the community needs more time to respond to this project so a more accurate assessment of its costs and benefits can be made.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.

Kind regards,

Mackenzie Barham

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P115

Name: Loretta Toohey

Location: Springbank, VIC, Australia

Submission

To Whom It May Concern,

And I really hope someone does care.

In the above photo are 5th generation farmers, (my 4 children and daughter in law) the future of my farming enterprise that I started with my husband 32 years ago (who sadly passed away nearly 3 years ago). I will most likely not be here in 30 years, but my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren hopefully will be, Farming as we have done for the past 150 years.

The blight of the 85 meter transmission lines as part of the proposed western renewables link project you want to leave for the future generations will ruin prime agriculture land where we run Angus Beef Cattle, lambs and grow potatoes – in other words we are part of the farming sector that helps feed our nation.

We back onto the Wombat State Forest where every year we have to have a bush fire plan. I pay my rates, my taxes, my insurance. Am I guaranteed that the fire trucks and fire helicopters will come to help save my stock, my land, my kids and myself; or will the transmission lines prohibit that sort of thing happening due to the associated increased risk to Occupational Health & Safety?

We already know that the cause of the Kinglake & Marysville Bushfires were overhead power lines, causing the loss of countless lives.

‘The cause of the Kilmore East – Kinglake bushfire was found by the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission to be an ageing SP AusNet powerline. In December 2014 Victoria’s supreme court

approved a \$494 million settlement of a legal class action against SP Ausnet and Utility Service Groups.”

Total area burnt 1,100,000 acres, due to a fallen powerline starting a blaze in farmland at 11.47am on Black Saturday.

Can you the people, who are supposed to be doing the right thing for everyone (not just so people living in Melbourne who want cheaper power) look to the bigger picture? Look further than 3 years ahead, be like our forefathers and mothers, look 50 years into the future - put it underground where it will be safe for generations to come.

Thanking you for taking the time to read my submission and hopefully looking to the bigger picture. The cheapest transmission line project is not always the best, sometimes it's better to Err on the side of caution and not go in all guns blazing. It is very easy to sit in an office and draw a red line on a map and say this is what we will do. The straightest route is not always the easiest and not always the best!

As John Dryden 1631 -1700 English poet said

Nor is the people's judgment always true: The most may err as grossly as the few!

Loretta Toohey

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P116

Name: Linda Carpenter

Location: Newlyn, VIC, Australia

Submission

Hello

I wanted to add my voice to the huge dissatisfaction factor felt by residents living along the proposed route for this project.

While I am not a 'directly impacted' landowner, I am nevertheless, a landowner in Newlyn North and the impact of these huge towers will have an adverse impact on my health, wellbeing, and up to now, satisfaction with living in this area. If I had wanted to live anywhere near massive electricity transmission towers, then I would have bought property cheaply down in the outer south eastern suburbs and put the remaining \$\$\$ into my superannuation in order to have a carefree retirement full of overseas travel and restaurant dinners whenever I wanted.

Instead I invested in this delightfully bucolic agricultural area, where cows and sheep graze contentedly against the backdrop of ancient volcanos, and where I live very simply growing most of my food and have a healthy quality of life in my retirement. I am part of the small scale artisan farming movement in the Hepburn Shire and we have been working hard on joint future plans these last 3 years to make this area a 'healthy food destination', complementing the existing 'Spa capital of Victoria' reputation of Daylesford. Tourists come to this area for its natural beauty and its health giving restorative properties, and have been doing so since the early 1900's. And I am very sure that the Hepburn Shire Council have already stressed this fact to you, with a notational annual tourist dollar income into the shire because of its natural beauty. A very high proportion of this will evaporate if these planned overhead transmission lines are constructed.

Also, there is the danger created by the longstanding high winds that blow across our agricultural plains, and the potential impact of wild fires caused by any electrical malfunction. And you know this has happened elsewhere, and we do not want to endanger our small rural communities. You have only to look at the gigantic conifers planted by the first farming communities around here to note that excessive wind has been a constant factor of life in this area.

But I think the real 'Elephant in the Room' is the fact that this infrastructure project was prematurely awarded to Ausnet, an infrastructure specialist only in overhead transmission lines. The community is, quite rightly, demanding underground powerlines. This is the safest, greenest, and 'best practice' option for us and for future generations. The contract should never have been awarded prior to the environmental impact study, which is still

currently underway. Shame on everyone involved in this massive 'stuff up'. And no amount of compensation, apologies, or any other poor excuses will change this fact that the project is completely flawed because of incorrect planning and roll out.

So, given Ausnet are probably not capable of delivering on the wise community wish for safe undergrounding, can I respectfully suggest that the Ausnet contract be cancelled, with whatever penalty must be born by government, be born, and that a new tender process, based on an environmental sensitive framework from this still to be completed report, be used as the basis for a new undergrounding specialist to get the job done to everyone's satisfaction.

The current project is so wrong in so many ways you are currently being told, that it cannot now succeed.

So AEMO, do the right thing, stop procrastinating, bite the bullet and let's get a 'best practice' project commenced.

Sincerely

Linda Carpenter

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P117

Name: Nathan & Ian & Cameron Lancashire **Location:** Springbank, VIC, Australia

Submission

To whom it may concern

As third and fourth generation farmers who farm within the proposed corridor for this poorly conceived project, it has impacted the mental health of my whole family due to the uncertainty and potential impact on our ability to produce an income to support our families. This project will also be a blight on the landscape and forever a reminder of the narrow sighted, \$ driven leaders who have “developed” this project.

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

The North Ballarat terminal station was not moved because communities objected - 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 - huge impacts on agriculture and mental health!

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, who have never left their offices to visit and understand the regions.

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. Not to mention the loss of the ability to produce food with low food km’s.

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.

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 and to mitigate bushfire risk.

Think this process through, not just for the now but for the future!

I look forward to a genuine, non form generated response to my concerns!

Regards,

I Lancashire & Sons Pty Ltd

Springbank, Victoria Australia

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P118

Name: Kylee Jessen

Location: Greendale, VIC, Australia

Submission

Hi,

We are a family of 4 living in Greendale. We live on a hill overlooking the Greendale valley. This beautiful view is the reason why we packed up and moved from Melbourne over 5 years ago to this stunning countryside. If the WRL proceeds above ground as planned our view will be impacted by the ugly 80m towers.

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

We 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 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.

We will not stop!

Thank you,

Kylee Jessen

Adrian O'Connor

Ivy O'Connor

Oscar O'Connor

Greendale 3341

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P119

Name: Ken & Una Round

Location: Gre Gre, VIC, Australia

Submission

5/4/2023

Submission on the VNI West – Consultation Report

We 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.

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.

We have cereal and livestock farming enterprise at 90 Hilliards Lane Yeungroon, 20 klms south of Charlton in Victoria. This property has been in the family since selection in 1887 and we have become the owners 9 years ago, having purchased the property from other family members at great cost.

Whilst this original family held block is smaller in size compared to surrounding properties, the significance of the property to our family heritage is immense. There is a granite headstone placed on a rise overlooking the farm infrastructure, installed by previous family owners acknowledging the contributions their deceased parents made to the property and community of Yeungroon in their life time.

If our farm was to become impacted by the proposed transmission lines and infrastructure in any form, the entire property would become unviable for any form of agriculture and 135 years of continuous ownership would have to be terminated. As we have no other property to farm the loss of our farm would be devastating to our lives and the lives of our children who look forward to continuing our heritage with this land and their forefathers before them. There is a section of the farm set aside from cropping operations that is home to a number of native grasses and plants that are home to numerous native flora and fauna including eagles, wrens, parrots and many different lizards etc. Being a native grass area, it also attracts kangaroos and other related animals and the preservation of this habitat is important to our family and those who established it in the past

The corridor for this proposed transmission line includes farmland that I operate a business on. I am concerned by the potential negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on my farming operations and business.

If the transmission infrastructure was to be built on my farmland, I am concerned that I have no information on what land access arrangements could be demanded by the transmission company before, during and after construction; what costs this would have on my business; and what my rights would be.

I am also concerned that there is no information available to me about the compensation that would be provided because of the impacts on my farming operations including loss of production and decreased land values. It is therefore impossible to provide an assessment on the costs to my business if the project was constructed on my land. But we believe the whole farm would become unviable given its size and we have no other property to farm.

Whilst I have not been provided with information that details the impact of transmission infrastructure on my farmland, I believe the following issues will impact my ability to maintain a commercial farming operation now and into the future:

- decreased land value and loss of productive capacity;
- Inability to use tractors and machinery under powerlines;
- inability to irrigate under powerlines;
- inability to utilize emerging technologies such as drones and autonomous vehicles;
- refusal to give notice or inform landholders what chemicals have been used on site causing issues with vendor declarations;
- spread of weeds;
- failure to close gates;
- damage to crops;
- materials left on site causing damage to machinery.

These impacts must be considered when evaluating the true costs and benefits of the proposed project across all agricultural business in the region.

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

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 farm business. I believe the community needs more time to respond to this project so a more accurate assessment of its costs and benefits can be made.

Yours sincerely

Ken & Una Round

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P120

Name: Kate Mackay

Location: Hepburn, VIC, Australia

Submission

I wish to express my concern about the proposed 80+ metre powerlines which will carve up some of Victoria prime farming land and will affect the community now and in generations to come

As a business owner in Hepburn Shire I am shocked and dismayed that these powerlines are being considered for this beautiful part of the world.

The powerlines are a blight on the landscape and will impact the health and well being of many communities.

Whilst I am supportive of increasing the use of renewable energy it seems extraordinarily short sighted to wreck the environment to implement these policies. Where is the innovation in coming up with a more palatable solution. We are living in the 21st Century where we need to protect our environment and not destroy it.

Consideration should be given to putting these powerlines underground or along existing highways.

Overhead powerlines increase safety issues related to fire and storms which are now more prevalent due to climate change.

I urge you to consider putting these underground to protect our beautiful countryside and the livelihoods of those communities affected and for all Victorians who cherish these rural communities.

Thank you.

regards

Kate Mackay

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P122

Name: Wayne Hodge

Location: Ballan, VIC, Australia

Submission

My name is Wayne Vivian Hodge.

I have lived and worked all my life in Ballan. My forebears have farmed here for over 160 years.

I am impacted by the WRL as I live in the direct path of the misconceived abomination. Should the Ausnet Towers go along the proposed route, the access roads will be on two fronts within 30 meters of my home.

Not only will the Ausnet Towers go through Pykes Creek reservoir but will then head north east along the Korjamnunnip Creek.

This will decimate the value of my land but also my ability to graze my stock and to harvest crops. Not to mention the real and present threat of fire and the refusal of the CFA to attend such fires.

The damage to the environment I fear, will cause ecological destruction of the forests and is of great concern to me. I have over many years established a sanctuary for our native birds and wildlife. I have planted hundreds of trees and have built wildlife crossing corridors, which provides food, water and shelter for when they migrate. Ausnet plans to bulldoze most of my plantations and over 150 000 trees in total.

I believe that I have been treated with contempt by the Victorian State Government and in particular by Ausnet. There has been no real dialogue, only constant threats of land acquisition and the use of intimidating tactics.

Lily Ambrosio - The member for Energy and Resources, has the power to force this project through and has effectively stripped me of the rights to take legal action.

The mental and financial stress has been enormous, to the point where I have been forced to put my property on the market. This is now causing health issues and at my advanced years, I will be unable continue to stand up for My Rights - as a hardworking and honest Australian Citizen.

Please reconsider allowing Ausnet to vandalize our precious countryside.

Yours Sincerely, Wayne Vivian Hodge

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P123

Name: Kate Nelson

Location: Leaghur, VIC, Australia

Submission

Our farm and residence are located at Leaghur, Victoria. We operate a hay, grain and livestock production business. On November 24th, 2022 our company (Nelfarm Pty Ltd) entered into a contract with the Commonwealth of Australia (represented by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water), in order to protect and enhance the areas of remnant vegetation on our property, of which there are a number.

As part of the Enhancing Remnant Vegetation Pilot Program, on the aforementioned date, we commenced a ten-year program of management activities to this end.

Clause 6.2 of the Contract states:

Management of the Land

The Grantee must manage the Land in accordance with the requirements of the Management Plan and ERV Management Protocol.

Unless the Grantee has obtained the Commonwealth's prior written consent, the Grantee must not:

- a. destroy, kill, clear, or otherwise damage the Remnant Vegetation; or
- b. knowingly do, or allow anything to be done, that is likely to adversely affect the conservation values of the Land.

If the proposed VNI West project connection to WRL (Option 5) was to encroach onto our property, it is highly likely that our remnant vegetation would be impacted, breaching both clauses 6.2a and 6.2b of our contract with the Commonwealth Government.

Our property is adjacent to the Leaghur State Park, which protects some of the most significant Black Box wetland and woodland communities in Victoria. Our property is also located less than 5 km from the environmentally and

culturally significant local lakes, Lake Meran and Lake Leaghur. According to the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, these wetlands and surrounding land are rich in cultural heritage, with sites and artefacts of cultural practices present throughout the landscape. The rivers and floodplains are valued as food and fibre sources and contain many sites of significance (such as camp sites and meeting places).

Additionally, we have a number of ecologically significant species growing on our property. As part of a plant survey which we undertook in October 2021 (in conjunction with Paul Foreman from Blue Devil Consulting, Castlemaine), we identified locations on our property where rare (*Chenopodium desertorum* subsp. *Desertorum*) and vulnerable species (*Acacia oswaldii*) were found to be growing in areas of remnant vegetation. We are committed to protecting and preserving these species.

Therefore, our property is part of an environmentally and culturally significant larger ecosystem, and we would object to the idea of putting transmission lines anywhere near the Leaghur State Park, Lake Meran or Lake Leaghur.

Due to our high regard for ecological and environmental outcomes, we also have no interest in having the aforementioned infrastructure constructed on our own property, either now or in the future. We don't want to have our land devalued by having transmission lines near it or on it, and we don't want to live right next to transmission lines.

Lastly, we feel that it is unreasonable to expect small businesses such as our own (2-3 staff) to:

- have the time to consult with neighbours, community groups in order to prepare submissions at such short notice and was so poorly advertised, and
- have the financial resources at their immediate disposal to be able to seek legal advice to inform said submissions

Kate Nelson (Nelson Farms)

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P124

Name: Karli & Denny Verghese

Location: Daylesford, VIC, Australia

Submission

(Submission extracted below)

5 April 2023

To AEMO / AVP / Transgrid / AusNet

VNIWestRITT@aemo.com.au

Victoria, and Australia as a whole, have a once in a generation opportunity to ensure that the design, planning, construction and operation of our electricity grid is world class, using latest technologies to harness renewable energy (wind, solar, hydro). In this planning for the ‘rewiring of the nation’, regulators, and Federal and State governments should be actively engaging with impacted communities and consumers, listening to their concerns and their ideas and solutions, to ensure that the grid delivers the least environmental and social costs while also delivering economically the most efficient grid that does not impose future costs for impacted landholders or higher electricity prices for consumers.

We are in support of renewable energy as coal and gas generation are retired. But the planning and design of **above ground transmission towers and lines for the Western Renewables Link (WRL) and VNI-West must not be at the detriment** of rural or urban communities, to agriculture profitability, to agricultural yields and food security, to property values, bushfire control due to limitations of aerial firefighting, tourism and the visual amenity on stunning landscapes and geologically unique formations of our region. We as a society should be embracing technologies such as undergrounding electricity lines, like what happens with water and gas pipes, along existing easements such as roads, highways, train lines etc. There are so many things wrong with the idea and plans for the proposed above ground WRL and VNI-West to run through prime agricultural lands, through stunning and unique landscapes, passing close by State forests, through rural properties and close to urban communities.

We have for the past five years begun our journey developing our property into an organic farm using biodynamic and permaculture principles. Our farm will include farm gate sales of organic produce including heritage fruits and nuts, and vegetables. We also have areas under silviculture and plan to have poultry and livestock.

We have also commenced construction of our house on our property. Our house will be a passive solar, off grid, straw bale house with a worm farm septic system. Yes, completely off grid to showcase current sustainable technologies using materials and processes that have low embodied energy and being self-sufficient. We also see great opportunity for tourism to include farm tours and farm stays showing people first hand our journey, experience and knowledge.

We are absolutely devastated that the proposed WRL route passes to the north of our property (200 metres from our house site) and also cuts through the north east section of our property. While the changing of the location of the proposed terminal station ‘north of Ballarat’ (Mount Prospect) is very welcome news, it is at the detriment of the WRL above ground towers being uprated from 220 kV (40 metre high towers) to 500 kV (85 metre high towers).

We are strongly concerned about the environmental, social, economic, and visual impacts on our property, and extremely concerned about the electromagnetic radiation and noise from high voltage powerlines and the impacts on humans and animals. There is also a large array of bird life on our property including wedge tail eagles, kites and other raptors who frequently fly over; pardalotes, willy wail tails, superb fairy-wren, who live among the trees and a large array of insects, reptiles and frogs in the waterways which cross through the property.

Below we list and detail our concerns and questions regarding consultation report for VNI-West / WRL. In some cases, terminology, modelling detail or assumptions are poorly explained or non-existent. The limited focus of the modelling and options to utilising only above ground transmission towers and lines, and not undergrounding, will be detrimental to impacted communities and consumers in general. Instead of just generating more and more energy and needing that to be crisscrossed above ground around the country resembling spaghetti soup, we as a nation should be carefully considering how we make our lives more energy efficient, through our housing design and construction, through efficient appliances, and generating energy where its consumed (e.g., roof top solar).

Undergrounding and alternative technologies

- In the executive summary, it says “*the seven credible options assessed*” (page 7). What is the definition of ‘credible’ and how do you assess ‘credible’?
- The seven options that are presented in the report steam rolls through above ground transmission towers and lines (in most cases 500 kV lines with 85 m high towers). Undergrounding has been dismissed, being relegated to only a very top level sensitivity analysis with no real modelling presented. Why are there not options considered and modelled investigating undergrounding?
- There is reference to a NSW Humelink undergrounding report (Table 16) trying to justify why undergrounding was not considered for VNI West / WRL. You cannot just refer to another study which has been undertaken in a different area, with different geology and topography, different conditions etc. You need to conduct the underground modelling and calculations for the proposed routes just like you are doing for the above ground towers.
- There is only one option that considers other technologies like batteries. Why is there only one such option modelled? Why are there no other options modelled with other technologies? You cannot just rule something out without doing the analysis and presenting the data.
- Without proper modelling of undergrounding and other technologies you are not actually considering all possible scenarios and options that should take note of not only construction costs but ongoing maintenance costs, increased bushfire risks, severe weather events, property devaluations, reduced agriculture and tourism profitability, reduced agricultural yields due to soil compaction and reduction in visual amenity.
- It is unclear through the entire document, how much energy needs to be supplied to Melbourne through these proposed new lines.
- The cost breakdowns of the different options, in particular the construction costs etc., need to be further detailed. As presented it is very difficult to understand the exact numbers and the data that sits behind these calculations. It needs to be more transparent.
- What are the maintenance costs associated with above ground towers vs undergrounding? Have maintenance costs been included in the modelling? And if not, why not?
- What are the risks associated with severe weather events for above ground towers vs undergrounding? Have these risks been included in the modelling? And if not, why not?

Terminal station location

- It is very good news that the preferred location of the proposed terminal station is no longer ‘north of Ballarat’ (i.e., Mount Prospect). This was always a ridiculous idea, that lacked understanding local conditions (e.g., on a natural waterway¹), a unique and stunning landscape (e.g., Mount Prospect which is an example of a lava dome vent²) while proposing to building an industrial 60 acre steel and wire eye sore in a prime agricultural location. As has been highlighted by community groups and energy experts³ with regard to previous WRL and VNI-West reports, the costings and modelling undertaken for the WRL were misleading and the whole project should be scrapped, go back to the drawing board and be re-routed.
- Given that the preferred site for a terminal station has been changed to be further west in Bulgana, this is now a major deviation and is **not** just “a material change in circumstance”. The entire concept of the WRL route needs to go back to the drawing board because initially the preferred route for WRL (and proposed terminal station at Mount Prospect) was selected based upon the proposed VNI-West running along the Ballarat-Bendigo easement. Now that this Ballarat-Bendigo option is not preferred, along with the location of the terminal station ‘north of Ballart’, the whole concept of WRL needs a complete re-design and rerouting.

¹ The Mount Prospect site and surrounding countryside can experience extensive flooding as witnessed in 2022, with close to 1000 mm of rainfall (http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/ncc/cdio/weatherData/av?p_nccObsCode=136&p_display_type=dailyDataFile&p_startYear=2022&p_c=-1552792686&p_stn_num=088113).

² “There are 100-odd volcanic vents (scoria domes) rising 200 to 500 feet above the surrounding countryside in the Daylesford District. The lava flows belong to the Newer Volcanic series of Pliocene to sub-Recent age” [i.e., 5.4 – 2.4 million years ago] (Coulson, A., 1954, The Volcanic Rocks of the Daylesford District, Proceedings of The Royal Society of Victoria, Vol 65, Issue 2, pages 113-124).

³ www.stopausnetstowers.com.au

Uprating of lines from 220 kV to 500 kV

- The uprating of the WRL from 220 kV to 500 kV for the entire length of the 190 km line is **not** just “a material change in circumstance”. It is now proposed to be 85 m high towers, with a 100 m easement, with 500 kV flowing through. This will result in greater impact on communities, existing and future households, greater agricultural land consumed by the towers and the easement, long term impacts upon soil compaction due to construction of tower footings and set up of towers (and reduced crop yields), further devaluation of properties, and reduced agricultural business profitability due to reduced land use.
- Additionally, 85 m towers will have a significantly larger footprint and severe visual amenity impact on superb rural landscapes, while impacting tourism. For instance, WRL is proposed to run along and over the Daylesford-Clunes Tourist Road, and either north or south of Hepburn Lagoon⁴, and cross in front of Kangaroo Hills⁵ (see Figure 1).
- What are the health impacts associated with electromagnetic fields from powerlines especially with lines being uprated to 500 kV and how have these been taken into consideration in the modelling especially near dwellings?
- What setback distances have been used in the modelling between towers and dwellings along the WRL / VNI-West corridors?
- Page 79, Figure 30 – the 500 kV line between Bulgana and Ballart needs to be yellow (to present 500 kV) not red (which depicts 220 kV). This also needs to be applied to Figure 32, Figure 34 and Figure 36, otherwise it is misleading.

Figure 1 View looking south over Hepburn Lagoon on the Daylesford-Clunes Tourist Road



Figure 2 Looking north from Newlyn towards Kangaroo Hills and Smeaton Hills



⁴ “Hepburn Lagoon may be the site of an explosion caldera or maar [low-relief, broad volcanic crater formed by shallow explosive eruptions], with the Kangaroo Hills marking the northern perimeter, a lower arcuate ridge on the west and south, and beds of tuff exposed on the northern edge of the lake” (Coulson, A., 1954, p 118-119).

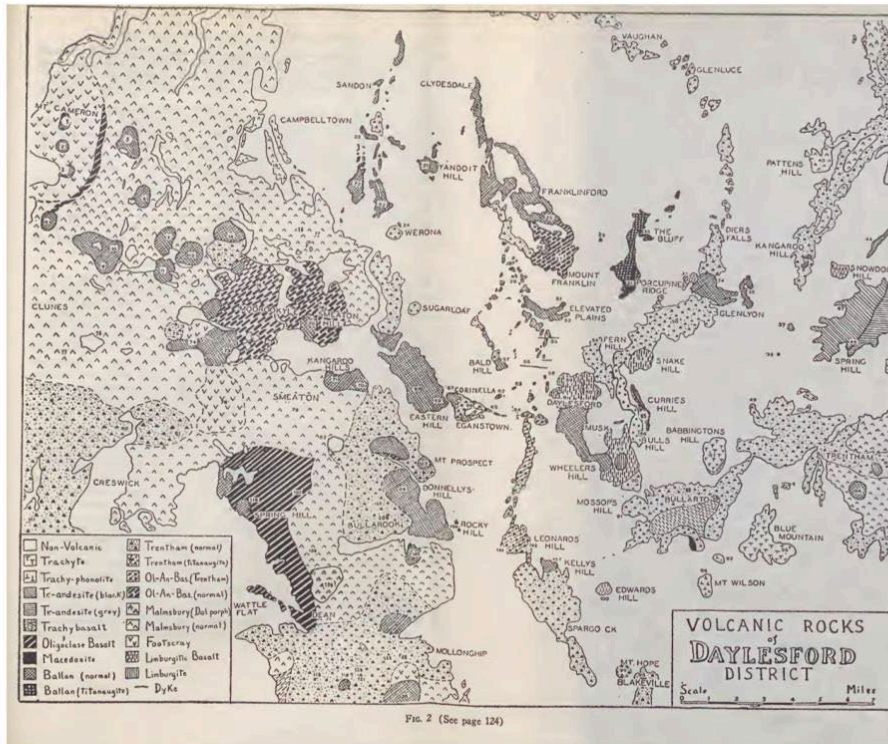
⁵ “At Kangaroo Hills (Newlyn) [scoria domes] there are paired hills due probably to simultaneous eruptions, as the rocks in each pair are identical” (Coulson, A., 1954, p 118).

Multi-criteria analysis (MCA)

- The multi criteria analysis (MCA) – why was it only an external consultant who was engaged to define the criteria, ratings and weightings and to conduct the MCA? Where is the engagement with impacted communities, local governments, Traditional Owners? A broad representation should be involved and included in designing and undertaking such an assessment.
- Page 12, Table 2 – why is ‘net economic benefits’ weighted 70%?
- How was it determined to nominate the other category weightings? What was the rationale for the selected “objective weighting” percentages?
- Under the environment criteria - Why are # of trees to be removed not included?
- Under the social (Land Use) criteria - Why is amount of area taken away from productive farming not included? And why is only ‘residential zone land’ included? This excludes rural household dwellings for instance.
- Why have you not considered “visual amenity and impacts on landscapes”?
- How did you consider the reduction in land use values due to above ground transmission towers, along with reduction in property values?
- There is currently a UNESCO World Heritage bid being developed for the Central Victorian Goldfields area⁶ where WRL is proposed to go through!!! This needs to be included in the modelling.
- If you are modifying prime agricultural land to host towers, then you also need to model the yields and food security of those crops and future impacts when those crops become more expensive to source from alternative locations, or reduced yields due to soil compaction from tower construction and maintenance activities.
- Where is the consideration of bushfire risk? The MCA has just looked at bushfire overlays. What about potential property and habitat loss from potential fires that may breakout and not be able to be fought aerially or in fact on the ground (under the powerline) hence the likelihood of more severe fire events. And future compensation for those communities impacted? Have the CFA/FRV (fire authority) been included in consultation on firefighting conditions near powerlines?
- Economic values should model reduction in property values, reduction in agricultural yields and productivity, reduction in tourism opportunities for those landholders who would be hosting infrastructure or overlooking it.
- Page 64, Table 11 – under social MCA objective – “community sentiment” is listed. How was this actually taken into consideration? And if so, did you consult with community? What did they say?
- So with the MCA it all comes down to ‘potential delivery risks to the project’ (p 64). Is it only about the cheapest option in the quickest time? What about the long term impacts on affected communities and the environment from inadequate design and planning?
- Page 33, Table 5 - How do you calculate “biodiversity offset costs”? What does it actually mean?
- Page 69, does the MCA also take into consideration the WRL route (220 kV vs 500 kV) and location of the terminal station or is it just what is presented in Table 26?
- Page 69, where has the MCA been scrutinised through sensitivity and scenario testing?
- Page 121, Table 17, what was the data source for National Parks / State Parks for protected areas?
- Table 17 – how were the ‘rating guidance’ values actually determined? E.g., why is >7.5 Ha very high impact for protected areas?
- Significant landscape overlays – landscapes like the volcanic cones through the ‘Daylesford district’ need to be modelled (see Figure 3). Once you scar this landscape (see Figure 2 and Figure 3) with above ground towers and powerlines, you permanently and irreversibly damage its visual and unique value, that sense of place, its natural beauty.

⁶ <https://goldfieldsworldheritage.com.au/>

Figure 3 Volcanic rocks of Daylesford District



Source: Coulson, A., 1954.

Other issues

- Page 11 “directions the market currently appears to be heading”. What are these directions and how have they been factored into the modelling?
- Why have you not conducted sensitivities to social license for future wind / solar generation at scale? What level have you assumed? Do you envisage these future generation would link into the WRL / VNI West? If yes, what new additional infrastructure would be required?
- The compensation for Victorian landholders hosting transmission lines is terribly underquoted and is a smack in the face!! What figures have you actually modelled and has it been included in the cost for each option?
- Page 101, easement compensation (Vic) – what distance of easement width was used and what compensation rates applied? Is compensation only for those landholders hosting towers? What about compensation for easements and those landholders who overlook towers?
- Throughout the report there is reference to “net zero emissions” – what does this actually mean? When you design and select materials like steel and concrete for above ground towers, they are two of the highest embodied energy materials. How is this taken into consideration in the modelling? How does this compare to undergrounding where these materials are not utilised?
- The prices and availability of steel and concrete, both high embodied energy materials, are increasing, along with supply chain demands and timing for sourcing. How have these been factored into the costing modelling? How do they compare against undergrounding where these materials are not required.
- What really drives electricity prices? Is it generation, transmission, whole sale prices, maintenance and upkeep or corporate profits? How is WRL/VNI-West expected to put downward pressure on energy costs?

- Page 99, Costings – What year is ‘historical data’ from? How have steel prices overtime, including possible supply chain constraints and delays been considered?
- Don’t dismiss visual amenity. It is really difficult to put a cost on it. It comprises many things – sense of place, wellbeing, beauty, appreciation for nature. The ‘Daylesford district’ has unique landscapes that are very different from any other part of the country. Similar landscapes elsewhere in the developed world are cherished and it would be unimaginable that such a project would be allowed to get off the ground today.

The whole concept of the WRL and VNI-West with the proposed above ground overhead towers and powerlines is going to have profound, irreversible, damage to communities along the proposed route, to their livelihoods and financially, to the environment, to wildlife, to visual amenity and to the tourism industry. We are unfortunately property owners who will be significantly impacted if this was to proceed. We do hope that AEMO, the Victorian Government and Ausnet will actively acknowledge our concerns and the proposed route is rerouted including put underground.

Landholders and community in general should not have to accept above ground towers and powerlines, because they already exist across the nation. Above ground towers are an out of date technology. We as a nation can do much better. What legacy do we as a nation want to leave for our communities, for our children and future generations in regard to the transmission of electricity? Is an 85 metre tall, 400 kilometre long scar on regional Victoria an acceptable sacrifice to benefit the excesses of metropolitan Victoria?

Regards

K and D Verghese

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P125

Name: Joan Addison

Location: Bacchus Marsh, VIC, Australia

Submission

To Whom it may concern

As I live in a semi-rural area close by to those whose farms, views, and persons will be affected by the suggested location of the Towers I wish to make a submission for you to re-consider the location of the Towers from where they are currently stated as going.

I also have health issues with multiple allergies , including allergies to electrical emissions . I live in an area which hosts many wild birds, ducks, endangered species, kangaroos and echidnas and the like.

I would prefer that the towers do not kill our eagles, our people, our crops and our food animals

So my main contention is that the cables need to be underground

First and foremost I am totally puzzled as to why you do not appear to have looked at and considered the Bushfire Royal Commission report.

It stated that power lines were the source of some of the dreadful fires that we have had, and recommended that they be put underground .

Why not heed that recommendation?

I note in conjunction with the Bushfire Report was the CFA's comments that they would not put themselves in danger by trying to put out a fire commenced by power lines.

Why not use the money you would have put aside for compensation payments for damaged property, towards putting you lines underground

Secondly , for 7 years I lived in Darwin, known for its cyclones and thus high winds. I and my family went through a cyclone and can attest to the scary time this was

Interestingly ALL cables were put underground . Not only that, due to the high number of lightning strikes the real cables were sunk inot the ground with a dummy cable over the top. the dummy cable saved the real cables from damage

If Darwin can do this why can't you?

Thirdly the Moorabool had a cost analysis done for building the towers or putting them underground. The answer was that it was not outrageously different

Fourthly - your impact on people. Surely you can't be immune to the protest, the anger, the huge mental health issues you are causing, the damage to cropping and grazing livestock that will be caused by having towers all over the landscape.

Why not reconsider and use the underground method and gain yourself some "Mr Nice Guy" kudos, instead of your current hated status

Fifthly - consider the landscape . We try to promote rural vistas, we try to promote tranquility . we try to keep our farms going so we don't have to import inferior and chemical laden foods from overseas .

Why don't you help to protect this environment by putting the cables underground

Sixth. Consider the health issues. Many people can be affected not only by the hum of wind farms, but also of the hum of the high tension cables .

Why not protect people's health by putting the cables underground

I am sure there are others who have submitted to you many other concerns

I hope you read all the submissions , and deeply consider them

AND

put the cables underground

Mrs Joan Addison

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P126

Name: Jennifer Cossar

Location: Charlton, VIC, Australia

Submission

Saturday, 1 April 2023

Submission to the VNI West- Consultation Report

Our farm now supports the sixth generation; farming land that we have tended and cared for and a lifestyle to pass onto succeeding generations. We have implemented modern and changing practices to ensure this land remains viable and sustainable; we have reversed erosion, maintained natural stands of Buloke and other vegetation and allowed the natural flow of creeks through our property. We are all called to look after our land, some just a backyard but out here these wide open spaces demand a resilience of character to nurture and to make a living from without destroying its integrity; these spaces demand no less value in terms of economy, land use, social fabric, environment and culture than the "higher densely populated areas", to propose high voltage transmission lines running through this landscape will be detrimental to its integrity and to farming families, it is dismissive, reductive and environmentally destructive, it provides no less than "a spider web of metal junk over our rural landscape."

These proposed power lines present a huge footprint over our land and are equivalent to the destruction of other culturally preserved land, the proposed economic payoff is both insulting and hypocritical to generations of caretakers of this land.

Prior to the announcement on 20th 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 the land we farm, I object to this proposal and believe it is a short sighted approach to meet perceived deadlines and timeframes within a business deal and request less environmentally destructive measures need to be considered.

JENNIFER COSSAR

CHARLTON VIC 3525

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P127

Name: Jason Canfield

Location: Waubra, VIC, Australia

Submission

To AEMO,

I live in the district of Waubra and I'm a land owner who is directly impacted by this project.

My partner and I just brought a small amount of land a couple of years before this project was announced, we've started building our dream, and with that project being announced has for a better of a word has destroyed our dreams and the way we wanted to use the land we brought!

We will never be able to sell the property in the future! Expect probably massive losses that's to the devaluation of the of having massive transmission lines run through it. As it stands now our property has been devalued significantly because of this.

Given how close the transmission lines are to my house I wonder how is AMEO going to protect my place and pure breed animals from bushfires? I also wonder how is AEMO protected my pure bred animals with the wiping out of a significant amount of trees on the property?

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 of my work commitments.

I really feel that AEMO is not listening and failing to explore feasible alternatives, Has HVDC been considered undergrounding it. 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 or does my life not matter?? I'm pretty sure you have no idea what impact you are causing.

Regards

Jason Canfield

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P128

Name: Jasmin Dearing

Location: Darley, VIC, Australia

Submission

Hello,

My name is Jasmin Dearing, I am a mother of 3 young children and in 2019 we purchased the land of our dreams in Darley.

This is a block that looks out directly over the Lerderderg state Forrest, the only thing separating us and the Forrest is a 500meter patch of crown land.

We purchased this block with the understanding that nothing could be built behind us and that our picturesque million dollar views would remain this way, and our children could be raised in the peaceful countryside.

We poured our life savings into this block of land and built a beautiful house at a huge financial cost, this was something we were confident in doing because at that stage we knew whatever happened weather we sold sooner or held onto our property for a life time and sold later we could recoup our money and come out financially stable and better able to support our children now or in the future.

That was until a very poor decision was made regarding the location of the WRL.

This decision was made based purely upon getting the WRL up and running as quickly and cheaply upfront as possible(there was no inclusion in the ongoing maintenance cost or compensation costs), you made the decision about where it should go based on those two factors with complete disregard to the communities and the environment that it was to impact. And once you made that decision you then conducted a flawed study that only led to one answer which was the answer the government wanted and that was to create this power line on the most direct route from one point to another.

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.

My mental health is currently at breaking point. We are fretting that we have over capitalized on this property which will now sit within 300m from your powerlines, this will severely effect our financial future, our retirement plans and most importantly our ability to pass on financial stability to our children.

We are uneasy about the suspected correlation between living with a certain perimeter of over head powerlines and childhood leukemia, kidney disease and fertility problems later in life.

I am mostly concerned about what sort of a state we are living in where the well-being of people, safety of established homes and communities, extreme bushfire risk, wildlife and their habitats are completely disregarded for the purpose of getting this project done in the cheapest nastiest way (not benefiting anyone other than the Labor governments PR team... it might look like your doing the right thing but you're doing it in the worst possible way therefore it's doing more harm than good) And these listed concerns do not even begin to cover the broader concerns of bushfire risk, endangered animal species, critical habitats, the protection of the State Forrest, essential farming land being destroyed, the damage it will do to small business and generational farmers in its path of destruction, the emissions that will be created in the production of the powerlines, the negative effect on the overall visual appearance in this beautiful part of the world - impacting tourism.

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

This project should be considered for under grounding using HVDC alongside existing transport corridors in order to minimize disruption to farming and business regions. It appears that you have refused to assess any other feasible options and I personally cannot trust in your findings or this government because the your conclusions are based on an extremely bias study.

I feel it would benefit everyone involved if this project was done properly from the start, at this rate you are going to obliterate the entire regional landscape of Victoria with infrastructure that will be costly to maintain and become obsolete sooner than in should be in order to do it cheap upfront and get it done quickly. Send it back to

the drawing board and catch up with the rest of the modern western world and forget these overhead powerlines that are destroying lives and obliterating the environment.

You must send this project back to the drawing board and get this project done properly from the start for the sake of current and future generations.

Regards

Jasmin Dearing from Darley

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P129

Name: Janine Batters

Location: St Arnaud, VIC, Australia

Submission

Submission on the VNI West – Consultation Report: Wednesday 5th April 2023

My family and I farm north of St Arnaud at Sutherland, Swanwater, Gooroc, Coonooer West, Slaty Creek as well as Gre Gre to the west. We produce canola, wheat, barley, oats, lentils, vetch and oaten hay as well as wool and prime lambs.

I have only very recently become aware of the Victorian Government and AEMO's proposal to construct a 500 kilovolt (kV) double-circuit overhead transmission line from Bulgana to New South Wales.

As a farming family living and working at 35 Dunstan Road, Coonooer West with my husband Ben and our two children Xavier (nine) and Alice (six), the proposed 500 kV double-circuit overhead transmission line threatens our livelihood, our health and our way of life.

I'm writing, imploring you not to choose Option 5 for the VNI West project and instead utilise the offshore wind farm option. Failing that, I believe undergrounding the proposed project alongside existing transport corridors or on public land needs to be chosen.

As a mother of two young children living in the proposed area where these towers will run, the VNI West Option 5 is a terrifying thought and certainly not an appropriate option.

I am extremely concerned about the potential Electromagnetic Field (EMF) that these 500 kV double-circuit overhead transmission lines will emit. Population studies have shown that EMF can

cause Leukemia in children. While we were told at the webinar that there was no link found and that AEMO were taking a cautious approach, this is not acceptable. There are numerous studies that show the increased risk of childhood leukemia from high EMF exposure levels.

To say that there is no evidence, in a consultation webinar is a blatant lie. According to the study EMFs and Childhood Leukemia by Michael Kundi in the American National Library of Medicine, the association [between EMF and Leukemia] is not small, but is comparable or larger than that for all other factors considered by Belson et al. (2007). Second, the evidence is consistent across different continents, study types, measurement methods, and other factors.

These towers should not be placed anywhere near homes or workplaces. They should not be erected anywhere! They need to be kilometres away from anywhere where people will inhabit for any given period. This is why the Victorian Government's offshore wind policy needs to be the direction for renewable energy moving forward, not these transmission lines. As admitted by AEMO, they do not even result in more renewable generation being supported than some other options, but less!

Option 5 doesn't have a connection around Bendigo to the existing network and because of that, Option 5 does not increase the transfer capacity between Kerang, Bendigo and Ballarat areas like the other options do. Therefore, promises that these lines will help reduce blackouts in our area are untrue, meaning we will have to bear the negative economic, health and lifestyle implications of this flawed Option 5, with no power benefits in return!

EMF has also been linked to behavioural disturbances. We have consequently taken several steps to see that we avoid EMF wherever possible, particularly in our home where we had thought we could control the environment. If these transfer towers are placed anywhere near our home, we will lose this control which has the potential to unduly affect our family's health and consequently the wellbeing of our family. Please don't place these towers anywhere near our home.

The corridor for this proposed transmission line includes farmland that I operate a business on. I am concerned by the potential negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on my

farming operations and business as well as the health and wellbeing of my young family and the loss of property value this will inevitably have. If these towers are built on my farm land, not only will they reduce the amount of land I can farm without equivalent compensation (\$8000 a kilometre for 20 years is an insult). They will directly affect my borrowing capacity, consequently putting the handbrake on any expansion plans to support our family into the future.

If the transmission infrastructure was to be built on my farmland, I am concerned that I have no information on what land access arrangements could be demanded by the transmission company before, during and after construction; what costs this would have on my business; and what my rights would be. The information provided in the webinar and consequent documents did not scratch the surface of what information is required for farmers to work with these grotesque and hazardous towering structures.

I am also concerned that there is no information available to me about the compensation that would be provided because of the impacts on my farming operations including reduced production and decreased land values. It is therefore impossible to provide an assessment on the costs to my business if the project was constructed on my land.

The fact that \$8000 a kilometre is being offered for 20 years, not the life of the towers, which will continue to affect farm operations, income, and value well after this time as confirmed by the below statement, shows the lack of respect being shown to farmers regarding this project. It is offensive and unjust. The losses incurred by this project far exceed the compensation and measured cost by AEMO.

Most overhead transmission lines have a long lifespan, so decommissioning of existing transmission lines is not common but may occur if the transmission line is being replaced with a higher voltage line (source Electricity Transmission Lines, Bushfire Management and Community Safety).

How can those involved in the project sleep at night using the fallback line of This amount is a new Victorian government payment that is in addition to the compensation process that is applied in

Victoria. AVP would encourage any interested or concerned community members to contact rezdevelopment@delwp.vic.gov.au? It appears they are taking a 'not my problem approach' even though they are tasked with the consultation process. It is your problem AEMO and if these towers were built anywhere near you, you would change your attitude in a heartbeat.

Whilst I have not been provided with information that details the impact of transmission infrastructure on my farmland, I believe the following issues will impact my ability to maintain a commercial farming operation now and into the future:

- decreased land value and loss of productive capacity,
- fire risks and inability to fight fires when they start as dense smoke can increase the risk of an electrical arc or flashover which can endanger life and property (source Electricity Transmission Lines, Bushfire Management and Community Safety). As farmers we already deal with drought and floods, we don't need the added stress and pressure that these overhead transfer lines bring via fire risk. In 2018 the Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) power network started a wildfire in California and burned down more than 10,000 homes and 153,000 acres. Eighty-four people lost their lives. Overhead transfer powerlines are not something we want in the area and certainly not near our home. Please find a safer, healthier option than Option 5.
- endangering health and lives because of the fire risk,
- Inability to use tractors and machinery under powerlines,
- inability to utilize emerging technologies such as drones and autonomous vehicles,
- refusal to give notice or inform landholders what chemicals have been used on site causing issues with vendor declarations,
- spread of weeds,
- failure to close gates,
- damage to crops,
- materials left on site causing damage to machinery.

These impacts must be considered when evaluating the true costs and benefits of the proposed project across all agricultural business in the region. I believe the Victorian Government and AEMO should stop this project in favour of the three offshore wind proposals: Star of the South, Macquarie Group and Flotation Energy. Together these three projects could generate 4.7GW of new capacity, power around 3.6 million homes and bring more than \$18 billion in new investments to Victoria. As quoted by AEMO, these offshore investments dramatically reduce the net benefits of the VNI West proposal from 1.842 billion to \$1 billion.

The Star of the South consortium says its offshore project not only “delivers 18 percent of the state’s electricity, but taps into the existing 500 kV LaTrobe Valley grid. Our modelling shows the Star of the South has the capacity to almost wholly, and reliably, cover the generation shortfall of a Yallourn exit and it would do so bereft of any short-term transmission upgrade to VNI West,” it said.

So not only will VNI West’s Option 5 threaten the livelihoods and health of thousands of farmers, their families, workers and communities, but they actually aren’t even needed!

In addition, the cited costs in a webinar hosted by AEMO and in documentation of the project have already been exposed by former chair of the University of Queensland’s Simon Bartlett. He has ridiculed AEMO’s report which he says miscalculates line distances and costs. As printed in The Weekly Times, page 4, Wednesday 22nd March The actual distance measured using AEMO’s mind-line analysis, by the professor and The Weekly Times are 231 km for the Bulgana route and 189 km for the Ballarat route. AEMO’s option report also puts the costs of its miscalculated 205 km Bulgana line at \$597m which equates to 2.9m/km for the Victoria section of VNI West, whereas it puts the cost of the 184 km NSW share of the line at \$751m, equal to \$4m/km. Professor Bartlett said “it costs virtually the same to build a 500 kV line in southern NSW and Victoria, the same materials, the same labour costs. It’s (the report) totally flawed.

These points are in addition to his statement that unrealistic operation of Snowy 2.0 may have exaggerated the benefits of VNI.

Furthermore, the submission states: By changing the VNI West/WRL connection point to Bulgama, around 100 kms of VNI West 500kV transmission line has been removed from VNI West as well as the new 500kV/220kV Bulgama substation. Based on the \$8.2m/km average cost of VNI West, this would reduce VNI West's cost by \$810m (\$414m NPV). Transferring the \$810m to WRL and advancing the required investment by five years from 2031 to 2026, would increase the cost of WRL by \$541m NPV less any savings from adjusting the 220kV scope of WRL. However, as the WRL PACR did not include these additional costs, and AEMO is reluctant to re-apply the RIT-T to WRL, the VNI West \$800m savings from changing the connection point appear to be removed from VNI West and hidden under the WRL PACR "pillow".

Professor Bartlett, an expert with forty years' experience in the power industry in electricity transmission, power systems and generation in Australia, Europe and Canada, has assessed the project and concluded that "it's totally flawed". This is evidence that this project is being rushed through without the necessary research and assessments nor regard for the true costs of the project. It is an insult to farmers that AEMO would think that it would be so easy to pull the wool over farmers' eyes with this political stunt.

If there is still any need for debate, these overhead transfer lines also threaten natural capital and wildlife. In addition to the increased fire risk they pose, native vegetation and plantations—vital to the ecosystem, in supporting the numerous species of birds, frogs, insects on our farm—could be destroyed—vegetation that has been on our farm and in the area for centuries. Species such as Buloke (*Allocasuarina luehmannii*) trees which are native to the area are slow growing and take hundreds of years to establish. Buloke trees are an important food resource for the endangered southeastern subspecies of the red-tailed black cockatoo which we have been seen in the area. We have been working with Landcare to protect these historic and important trees, particularly around our home which alone is home to hundreds of these special trees.

The destruction of wedge tail eagle habitat is also a clear concern and a red light for these transfer

lines to be erected anywhere near our home and on our farm. Wedge-tail eagles are shy breeders, which means they may desert their nests if disturbed. As landholders we are encouraged to retain at least 10 hectares of bush around nest sites and to avoid disturbing them. Wedge tail eagles, which are a protected species Australia wide are regulars on our farm. We are very careful not to disturb nests on our property, especially those in the bush near our home, to ensure that these birds continue to breed and their environment is protected. In addition to the damage overhead transfer power lines would cause to the vegetation that wedge tail eagles nest in, too much activity in the area due to construction, as well as the ongoing risk of electrocution from contact with power lines and installations (according to the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water) (Bell & Mooney 1998; Mooney 1997) could decimated the population in our region.

Farmers in the area are particularly invested in protecting natural capital and wildlife, Landcare Australia started in our area! At Winjallok! These powerlines threaten what we are so passionate about and have worked so hard to convince Australians to protect! We know renewable energy is important. We also know there is a better way!

The area for the proposed towers has also seen extensive flooding. With the recent floods in 2010, 2011 and 2022, roads were cut for months, with land inaccessible. It makes no sense to put electric towers in areas highly prone to flooding. This is further evidence that this project has not had adequate research or consultation and should not be the preferred option.

My parents farmers at Gre Gre and are passionate about conservation and sustainability. They have large areas of bushland and numerous tree plantations which are home to thousands of flora and fauna. They have spent a lifetime working hard to protect these areas.

The area where these towers are proposed to run is such a pretty part of our country, a pretty part of the world, with its wide-open spaces, diverse landscapes and vibrant communities. It should be valued as an asset, a national treasure. These towers will trash all three, punishing those who

choose to live in the country for these reasons and who have worked and continue you work hard to protect them. These towers are just another example of city centric policies with no regard for those in the country who are actually looking after the environment that these policies are supposedly protecting.

By trashing these areas, our local tourism industry will be affected. People won't travel to the region to visit powerlines, especially when they know the related adverse health effects. This will affect businesses. It will also affect employment in the region, increasing the difficulty of attracting and retaining staff.

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 its potential impacts.

The lack of consultation and not knowing what is happening is a reflection of AEMO's poor consultation. It is well documented that the unknown breeds fear and anxiety which consequently affects mental health. As a result, it is likely many people affected by this project are already experiencing mental health issues, and it is only the beginning if Option 5 is chosen. Yet another reason to choose offshore windfarms rather than Option 5.

Please show the strength to choose the offshore wind farm option which will not affect mum and dad farmers, food production, the health and wellbeing of these farming families and their communities or the important contribution these farmers make to the economy. Please choose to protect endangered species and other common species to the area from becoming endangered and the natural habitat which we have been protecting and restoring. If these were on your farm, or beside your home, forever, wouldn't you want someone to choose the common-sense option that is offshore wind farms rather than the fundamentally flawed Option 5?

If offshore windfarms are not chosen, I believe undergrounding the proposed project alongside existing transport corridors or on public land needs to be chosen to ensure minimal disruption to farm businesses in the region as well as avoiding the health, wellbeing, environmental and economic

repercussions of Option 5.

We are not numbers here in the country. We are people, just like you, just like those in government, like everyone across Australia. How would you feel if this was your health, family, business, livelihood, home that these towers would affect? It would be very clear, Option 5 is not the right choice.

We always have a choice. We always have options. Please choose again: offshore wind farms just make sense. Please don't put these transfer powerlines anywhere near my home.

Sincerely,

Janine Batters

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P131

Name: Joy Bryce

Location: St Arnaud, VIC, Australia

Submission

Joy Bryce -
4th April - 2023.

Re - VNI West Transmission project -
To the C.E.O. Alistair Parker -
Dear Alistair,

It is with much alarm,
that I read in our local - North
Central News Paper - the proposed
VNI West Transmission Project.

I am alarmed by the lack of
transparency and honesty.

From previous experience of
firstly - Lake Bonyateyo - WMO
stated that the lake would receive
water - but no - they are still
reluctant to honour their word -
Secondly - When a Piggery was
proposed in our farm area - we
were treated to a trip - to the Wood's
Piggery - near Donald - we were shown
playful piglets, housed in fresh clean
straw, (about mid-day), little did we
know - or did they tell us - that

2.

the pig odour, wafts around on the evening air — making outdoor mornings — but more especially evenings — impossible because of the sickening stench —

So you can see why I am questioning your honesty, about your proposed project —

One thing is for certain — I can guarantee — that if your proposed project was to go over your property — you would be just as disturbed and questioning as I am!

I feel the project is a bit "hull at a gate" — and I feel completely defenceless and hulled —

I gave my life to buy and pay for our property, so it is not just money, involved in this objection

Yours Sincerely,
Joy Bryce

[REDACTED]
St. Annandale 3478



Weather

WEDNESDAY
min 12°
max 22°



THURSDAY
min 6°
max 21°



FRIDAY
min 10°
max 22°



NORTH CENTRAL NEWS

St. Arnaud, Charlton, Wedderburn & Surrounding Districts

Est. 1864

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Above: A full St. Arnaud Town Hall with many of those leaving more frustrated and confused than when they arrived.

Massive attendance at VFF session on VNI West Transmission project

THE Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has thanked all those who attended their meeting in St. Arnaud last week on the proposed VNI West transmission project although many left the Town Hall more frustrated than when they entered.

It was a massive turnout with additional seating being brought in to cope with the large number of farmers who turned up.



Above: VicGrid CEO Alistair Parker.

Background

The Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) and the Western Renewables Link (WRL) are large, complex electricity transmission projects, involving a number of organizations.

This will however require a new high-capacity 500 kilovolt double-circuit overhead transmission line, connecting it in Victoria to EnergyConnect in New South Wales.

This proposed preferred option, which connects VNI West from near Kerang directly to WRL at a new terminal station near Bulgana, outperforms all other options considered according

to AEMO.

The project will provide a vital new transmission line to link renewable generators and ensure reliable, affordable power as Australia transitions to clean, low-cost renewable.

Presentations at the St. Arnaud Information Night were made by VicGrid CEO Alistair Parker, VFF Horticulture Vice-President Katherine Myers, and VFF General Manager Policy and Advocacy, Charles Everest.

Farmers 'shocked'

Farmers are shocked by the Victorian Government and AEMO's plan to carve up farmland in

Northern Grampians, Buloke, Loddon and Campaspe Shires.

Colin Coates, President of the St. Arnaud branch of the VFF said on ABC's CountryWide program that the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) was present in Ballarat but failed to manage to attend in St. Arnaud.

"At the information table last week AEMO were referencing the project about renewable with no reference to the powerlines.

"It was only if you more deeply pressed the question that they would talk about the powerlines.

It is planned that each pylon will have an easement of 100m and this Colin Coates said would be highly detri-

mental to farms.

"But we do not even know what the easement means.

"We know that accidents that occur under a pylon will not be insured" Colin said.

AEMO are recommending Option 5 which is Kerang to Bulgana, which will mean going west of St. Arnaud, but where exactly is a mystery.

"How can we put in a submission without the facts" Colin said.

"The actual route is very ill defined"

VFF's stand for farming communities

The VFF have stated that these projects will cut through farmland and will significantly impact the state's food and fibre production and in some cases, the projects may completely

ruin the livelihoods of farming families.

The VFF has long argued there must be a state-wide strategic plan for renewable energy and transmission developments that looks at the next century of the state's energy needs.

Instead, the VFF says that the Victorian Government is accelerating development with the threat of steamrolling over the top of communities.

Inadequate information

Colin Coates did concede that most people realized that the

powerlines will need to be built.

"But it is the fear of the unknown that is upsetting us

"There has been inadequate consultation" Colin said.

One known detail is the dollar amount of compensation with farmers to be offered \$8,000 per km per year for 25 years, a sum Colin Coates believes that sum is inadequate.

"These people seem to believe that country people are not major players in this project.

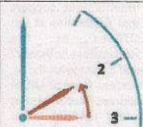
"They need to treat country people as they deserve to be treated" Colin said.

North Central News Easter arrangement

PLEASE NOTE:

North Central News will not be publishing a paper after Easter on Wednesday 12th April.

If you have important notices for that week they will need to be placed in next weeks paper 5th April.



Daylight saving ends

Sunday, 2 April 2023

3.00am clocks are turned backward 1 hour to 2.00am

INSIDE TODAY

- * Letters to the Editor - Pg. 2 & 3.
- * St. Arnaud Police report - Pg. 3.
- * Another Friends Gala Day under the trees - Pg. 4.
- * St. Arnaud Schools Walk for Autism - Pg. 5.



Above: (left to right) VFFs Charles Everest, Alistair Parker, Mayor Kevin Erwin and Colin Coates.

Editorial

Country people are not given the respect they deserve

TWO of the issues currently impacting the residents of this district are plagued by insufficient information available to those that are impacted the greatest. It highlights the lack of understanding by some of our largest organizations in Australia to understand what true 'community consultation' means. Community consultation has been described as a reciprocal process and a genuine partnership between the community and a service provider that embodies human rights principles in a tangible way.

Wow! How far from that are the stakeholders, the community, in the decision to decommission Upper Teddington Reservoir by Parks Victoria? How far from that definition are the farmers who left last week's meeting with the Australian Energy Market Operator as frustrated and confused as they were when they entered the meeting.

Colin Coates the St. Arnaud Branch President of the Victorian Farmers Federation, stated the frustration that we all feel when he said that "these people [AEMO] seem to believe that country people are not major players in this project. "They need to treat country people as they deserve to be treated".

Questions still remain for these farmer stakeholders who want to know details such as what can be done beneath a powerline, how high can equipment be to go beneath one, questions that as they are not answered treat country people with disdain. These a multi-million dollar businesses that are being treated badly and AEMO seems to have an odd idea of what a modern farming enterprise does undertake.

Parks Victoria is the other organization that have treated country people with disdain in relation to the Upper Teddington Reservoir. The Ripon MP Martha Haylett has been told that the 2022/23 budget contains a figure of \$3.2 million "to decommission the dam". That State budget was released in May 2022 and an online meeting to "consider the options" for the reservoir was held in September 2022, which means clearly that a decision had already been made and we were told that Parks Victoria merely had a preferred option to decommission. This treatment is a breach of not only government policy but an insult to country people.

Is it that those outside the city are considered less than their city counterparts, perhaps authorities such as AEMO and Parks Victoria, think that they can railroad those in rural areas as the numbers are not as great and perhaps even that we are more conservative and less likely to become raging activists. One thing is for certain however, no matter what these organizations see us as, they have been given a framework, Public Engagement Framework 2021-2025 to ensure that the communities are fully involved in the decision making process and neither have fulfilled the conditions of that framework. By not providing any detail of the work to be undertaken by Parks Victoria and AEMO the community is hard pressed to argue against it.

We, country people, need to start making a fuss. We are not given the respect we deserve and that is not good enough.

WEEKLY RAINFALL

ST. ARNAUD	.....	N/A
RAINFALL FOR MARCH	.....	11.8
YEARLY RAINFALL TO DATE	.....	37.0
CHARLTON	.....	N/A
RAINFALL FOR MARCH	.....	10.2
YEARLY RAINFALL TO DATE	.....	18.6

To the Editor

Online Planning Permits

Dear Editor,
I write in regard to your article titled "Council to finally adopt online planning permits" in your 16th of March edition.

As the community member who asked that question of Council, I would like to clarify one point, that of the current arrangements for viewing planning documents.

Your article states that people wishing to view the documents don't need to come into the office, they can be emailed through. This flies in the face of what the Northern Grampians Shire Council is telling the public.

At the Council Meeting on the 6th of March, where I raised this issue, the CEO Brent McAlister in his response to me said that at present if the planning permit was on public notice then the application documentation could be forwarded via email or posted to the individual.

He also said that he would be fascinated to know where I was told that I had to go into the Council Offices to view the documentation. Mr. McAlister's fascination could be quickly quenched by looking at his Shire's website or one the Shire's own planning application notices.

On the Northern Grampians Shire's own website under the title of "Where can I view the advertised plans" it states that "Advertised planning applications can be viewed at the council's offices in Stawell and St. Arnaud".

On the notice of application for a planning permit that is physical displayed on site of a proposed development it states the "You may look at the Application and any documents that support that Application at the Offices of the Responsible Authority" and it then gives the St. Arnaud Council Office address. There is also an added note on which nobly states, "This can be done during Office Hours and is free of charge".

There is no mention that the documentation can be posted or emailed on any of these means of communication.

It is good to see that the Shire is coming of age and adopting this

new online planning process, however, as a stop gap, perhaps updating the current website and planning notices could be a wise move!

Regards,
David Reynolds
St. Arnaud

Congratulations.

Dear Editor,
Congratulations to Joe Thompson and Andrea O'Gorman of the Charlton Harness Racing Club, and all of the hard working committee and volunteers on yet another successful community day on Sunday for the Charlton Harness Racing Cup.

What great teamwork

you have all shown.

This day continues to go from strength to strength in a fabulous community precinct.

We don't know one end of a horse from another yet have been many times and each year gets better.

That only happens when the planning and preparation are spot on, and there are many people hands on before during and after.

Well done to you all Just like the later proceedings for Australia Day, Charlton knows how to put together a community event.

Robin and Lynne McRae
Charlton

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NORTH CENTRAL NEWS
St. Arnaud, Charlton & surrounding districts

N.C.N. INFORMATION

The North Central News is 100% locally owned, independent newspaper, established in 1964. With an ABC audited circulation of 1,650 copies, and an estimated readership of over 4,250 throughout the Northern Grampians and Buloke Shires.

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ADVERTISING & COPY DETAILS
Artwork, and all advertisements or alterations are to be submitted before 5.00pm Friday prior to publication.
Announcements of births, deaths, marriages and engagements must be properly authenticated.
N.C.N. prefers advertisement and editorial copy to be typed or neatly hand-written to avoid being published incorrectly. We accept no responsibility for error or misspellings in illegible advertisement and editorial copy.

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No. 10082

NORTH CENTRAL NEWS CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Cross out
- Neckwear
- Month
- Edible rootstock
- Makes into a decree
- Stand for
- Briny
- Discourage from doing
- Gem weight
- Force back
- Book of the Bible
- Scoop up with tongue
- Get up
- Farm bird
- Explosion
- Staff of life
- Success
- Became sluggish
- Nearer
- Minute particle
- Build
- Smelling waste
- Spatter with water

DOWN

- Conscious of
- Season's yield
- Of the side
- Wrongdoer
- Makes rattling sound
- Withdraws
- Water grass
- Nuclear device
- Hidden obstacle
- Term expressing an attribute
- Fixes a tax
- Label
- Fasting period
- Shoemaker
- Heavenly bodies
- Consumers
- Venture
- Worshipped images
- Lofty

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See this week's solution on page 12.

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P132

Name: Clinton and Sarah Welsh

Location: Toolern Vale, VIC, Australia

Submission

To whom it may concern,

Our property address is [WITHHELD]. This part of Toolern Vale is the part that is closest to Melton.

Our property is family owned and in addition to being our place of business it has been our home for almost 29 years. Our property is where we run sheep, grow cereal crops and train horses. Harness Racing is our primary use for our home, our families have been respected members of the trotting community for five generations, so not only has it been our main source of income it is also our lifestyle. We are directly impacted by the Western Renewables Link (WRL), although the severity continues to vary with the continuing changing of routes and plans.

The consultation process can be described as mere lip service and has demonstrated the inept research into the locations where the towers are to be placed. Our property alone has towers going through the middle of our property, not along boundaries as previously advised by Ausnet representatives. The proposed route will be on top of a mains water pipe (running between Melton and Merrimu), our horse track which is necessary for our livelihood and most importantly next to our home.

Our preference for the project would be to revisit/reassess the proposed routes with the intention of going underground. If additional proposals for the route involved our property, our preference would be to be underground and next to the boundary. Unlike Ausnet, we understand the need for renewable energy sources but not at the cost of the environment.

Consultations and any interactions with Ausnet have been upsetting to say the least. They have shown no research into the industries which our property is used, namely Harness Racing. Our horses have been given even less consideration than domestic pets. Horses require training, care and are subject to drug testing as they are professional athletes. At a consultation with Ausnet, it was suggested our horses be housed somewhere else, this laughable suggestion is just one of many examples of the lack of study undertaken by Ausnet.

Recently, contractors employed through the project attended a neighbouring property which housed a retired, Group 1 Winning standardbred. The contractors and an Ausnet Land Liaison Officer who was also present at the time were ignorant to equine behaviour, resulting in the horse becoming frightened to the point he fled and was entangled in a wire fence. In this instance, the horse was significantly harmed and his elderly owner greatly distressed.

The vagueness of the information provided by Ausnet, continues to add further anguish. We continue to receive conflicting statements and no clarification when pressed for further details.

We Have been given glossy brochures and yet we still cannot be sure of the time needed for construction. Sometimes we are told 1-4 weeks (three occasions) to 2 years, by being vague like this how can a person, family or business plan to continue?

We have neighbours who only became aware of the project through us, they were never consulted by Ausnet. As a result, delayed attempts by the organisation to consult these people continues to cause mental anguish to them, let alone the financial consequences they will be facing as they have no course for compensation.

The North Ballarat terminal station, is not a benefit to Regional Victoria. If anything, it has highlighted the disregard for regional people's homes and livelihoods. This project is not only disastrous for us, but it also affects other members of our family who live in the region who will now be at greater risk (along with us) to environmental disasters such as bush fires.

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 super critical 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 which would severely impact system security.

Why won't you listen, the failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition.

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 and equine businesses in the region.

Regards, Clinton and Sarah Welsh, Toolern Vale VIC 3337

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P134

Name: Martin Duke

Location: Wycheproof, VIC, Australia

Submission

Dear Sir,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Your request for comments is a bit confusing. I have looked at your website, and from my cursory review, I cannot get a clear picture of what you are asking and what people are to comment on. You need to clarify what you want comments on and what will not be under consultation, else we do not know what we are allowed to comment on.

I observe that the reports for the Kerang to Bulgana corridor are not user friendly for the lay people. All seemingly high level with lots of terms and phrases that might be good for those in-the-know, but for the rest of us it is all complex and gobbledegook.

Thus not a good engagement plan or presentation. Too academic and technical, and above the common people.

Thus for comments on the proposed route, and what not to do, I provide the following in a similar vein - -

1. Do not interfere with existing farming, transport, industrial and logistics operations.
2. Do not interfere with airports and the flight paths for planes to and from them.
3. Do not interfere with community important or culturally significant locations.
4. Do not ruin the environment.
5. Do not create a blight on the aesthetics.
6. Do not cut trees or affect native vegetation.
7. Do not cause problems to native flora and fauna.
8. Do not affect waterways and catchments.
9. Do not interfere with existing infrastructure services.

10. Do not create radiation, light or noise pollution.

11. Have as short a construction time as practicable.

12. Engage with communities in a respectful, sensible and meaningful way.

13. Explain how such high voltage lines are able to travel under seas and not underground when on land.

14. Do not pretend that the community consultation you are undertaking today is anywhere appropriate, indicative or decisive for future decision making.

Please place me in the future community engagement mailing lists.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Duke

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P135

Name: Greg Baldwin

Location: Gre Gre, VIC, Australia

Submission

VNI west powerline transmission Submission 5.4.23

I write as a landowner who has been running an intergenerational farm for over 100 years that uses approximately 8000 acres of land in the Northern Grampians Shire: Predominately growing cereals, canola, beans, wheat, barley and oats along with meat and wool.

I have recently 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 I own and operate a business on. I am concerned by the potential negative impacts that transmission infrastructure will have on my farming operations, my community, my family and my business.

The recently escalating of land values of my farm land reflects the scarcity of land in Victoria that can grow food. The value of food producing land is of critical importance now and more so into the future and cannot be imposed upon. Other options for renewable transition do exist. I am concerned of the impacts on my farming operations including reduced production and decreased land values. There is research that identifies how transmission towers negatively affect plant growth of cereals but the short timeframe on the submission limits my capacity to research this – I wish for an extension of submission time. It is therefore impossible to provide an assessment on the costs to my business if the project was constructed on my farm land.

If the transmission infrastructure was to be built on farmland that my business is dependent upon, I am concerned that I have no information on what land access arrangements could be demanded by the transmission company before, during and after construction; what costs this would have on my business; and what my rights would be. A component of my farm enterprise, crucial to its viability, is a thoroughbred horse agistment component that has operated for 35 years. Infrastructure of this nature is totally incompatible with horses and places the animal and people involved at risk.

The net economic value of Option 5, in AEMO report, is much less than other options and I questions the reason behinds pursuing this more difficulty and costly route for achieving less renewable transition.

No one from AEMO, Ausnet or Vicgrid has contacted me or made information accessible in any transparent way.

As a land owner of many generations with solid plans in place for more generations to come, that have and will derived their income and life styles from this land I am totally opposed to any new developments that have a negative impact on my business and family.

Name:Greg Baldwin

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P136

Name: Jacqui & Shane Verley

Location: Boort, VIC, Australia

Submissions-

We support all concerns raised by the VFF regarding these proposed power lines.

We have land at Mysia and Boort. Still it is unclear exactly where these power towers are to be? Why have we not been given a clear plan?

We are concerned with the possible radiation exposure to our livestock and family. Have these studies looked at possible effects years later? No!

We run 3000 merino ewes in the area shaded where power towers may be installed. When maintaining these towers how can we be sure gates will be closed? What happens if they disturb lambing ewes? We could suffer a lot of mismothering and left with orphaned lambs!

We don't feel enough thought and communication has gone into this plan. We are extremely concerned.

Shane and Jacqui Verley

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P138

Name: Holly Masterson

Location: Darley, VIC, Australia

Submission

This project is a disaster. You can't damage the environment to fix the environment, that's stupidity (or greed) at its worst.

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

Tell them: You 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.

Tell them: 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.

Tell them: 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.

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

Tell them: 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.

Tell them: 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.

Tell them: They are not listening and their failure to explore feasible alternatives is going to result in increased and continued opposition.

Tell them: You 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.

Holly Masterson

Darley, Vic 3340

Individual submission



VNI West – Additional Consultation Report

SUBMISSION NUMBER: P139

Name: Hamish Toll

Location: Gunbower, VIC, Australia

Submission

Hi Team,

There has been quite a bit of non-specific or difficult to find information regarding the plans for the VNI West transmission plans and how it potentially relates to the area between Gunbower and Echuca.

Understand this type of infrastructure is potentially needed and provides for a sustainable future but want to ensure the appropriate community engagement and dissemination of information has occurred.

It may be in your planning to provide this engagement and that at the moment the works such as the options assessment are preliminary.

There are areas of natural and agricultural significance that have been pointed out through other submissions in the community and the VFF submission so am not writing to provide that level of detail but do agree with the content of the submissions.

I am writing as an objection as wish to ensure the community engagement and communications are to a high standard to ensure your messages and planning is clearly communicated and appropriate studies of impact have been done.

I am available to be involved in conversations/feedback as needed.

Regards

Hamish