



Australian Energy Market Operator (Victorian Planning)  
Email: [VNIWestRITT@aemo.com.au](mailto:VNIWestRITT@aemo.com.au)

6 April 2023

To whom it may concern,

### **City of Greater Bendigo submission to VNI West Additional Consultation Report**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the VNI West Additional Consultation Report Options Assessment. The City of Greater Bendigo is pleased to provide the following response.

**Overall, Council is supportive of the VNI West project and the new preferred route Option 5 via Bulgana, however we are keen to ensure Bendigo is not disadvantaged by the new preferred alignment.**

#### The City of Greater Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo is a growing regional city in Central Victoria, with a population of over 123,000, projected to reach 155,000 by 2036. New housing approvals in our municipality are approximately 900 dwellings each year and growing.

The City is also a strong employment centre with a growing industrial sector. The Bendigo Regional Employment Precinct proposes to create 300 hectares of industrial land near Marong which will increase the City's manufacturing capability and generate additional demand for renewable energy.

The Greater Bendigo City Council is committed to working with our community to transition our city to a zero emissions future, with all electricity sourced from renewable sources.

#### Support for the multi-criteria assessment and outcome

Council acknowledges the important role VNI West will play in providing additional capacity to transmit the substantial amounts of new renewable energy across the nation, providing the population with a secure electricity supply from renewable sources.

Council recognises the challenges in the rapid deployment of the interconnector, and the difficulties any proposed route will have in securing the necessary social licence for the project.

We acknowledge the commitment by AEMO to improve community engagement and to integrate community and stakeholder feedback into all further project planning, consultation, tendering, and delivery phases for the project.

Council welcomes the re-examination of the project with the inclusion of social and environmental factors in the multi-criteria analysis assessment of the design options.

We support the proposed option that seeks to minimise negative environmental and social impacts while meeting engineering requirements.

#### Community consultation

We are supportive of the consultation process being undertaken but wish to highlight that further community consultation will be required during the project's detailed design phase once a preferred route is selected.

#### Community and economic benefit

We expect the construction and maintenance of VNI West and the associated development of generation assets in the Renewable Energy Zone will generate a substantial economic benefit for regional Victoria. As Bendigo is a major regional city with an education and industrial sector, we ask that the City be consulted during the project's design and initiation phases, to ensure that economic opportunities within City and broader region are maximised.

With the preferred Option 5 route now avoiding the Bendigo region, we see a reduction in the future economic benefits to our municipality and our sub-region including a diminishment of the opportunity to develop renewable generation assets. As a result, we urge AEMO to work with Powercor to proactively monitor Bendigo's current and projected electricity demand to ensure the transmission and distribution networks are upgraded in advance of the City's projected population increase and commercial expansion. This will ensure our City and sub-region is able to realise its solar generation capacity while meeting the needs of future residents and businesses.

If you have any queries, or wish to discuss anything in the above submission, please do not hesitate to contact me at [m.wyatt@bendigo.vic.gov.au](mailto:m.wyatt@bendigo.vic.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,



**Michelle Wyatt**  
**Manager Climate Change and Environment**