

Loddon Plains Landcare Network Inc.
28 Station St
Inglewood VIC 3517

19 April 2023

To who it may concern,

Submission re the VNI West Option 5

The Loddon Plains Landcare Network (LPLN Inc) is a not-for-profit organisation that formed in 2009. Situated on the Loddon Plains in North Central Victoria, it comprises 18 member Landcare and Natural Resource Management community groups and more than 300 farmers, many of whom will be directly impacted by the project's proposed route. The network area covers approximately 400,000 ha of land, mostly private agricultural land.

The network is overseen by a Committee of Management drawn from member groups. Its mission is securing healthy landscapes across the Loddon Plains. LPLN currently employs four staff who are all Loddon Shire residents and whose work would be impacted heavily by this decision to implement Option 5.

1 Biodiversity - GOANNA Project

The GOANNA Project (Group Organised Action Nurturing Natural Assets) is LPLN's landscape-scale restoration project delivering community projects, monitoring and education programs across the network area. The aim of this program is to enhance and protect High priority biodiversity assets along with cultural assets across the Loddon Plains.

2 Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture

LPLN Inc. is a leader in Sustainable and Regenerative Agriculture in Central Victoria. The LPLN Sustainable Agriculture Strategy aims to proactively facilitate the transition to healthier soils across the Network's agricultural land as the foundation for achieving long-term sustainable landscape change, new economic opportunities and securing the future of the region and halting the exit of its farming families.

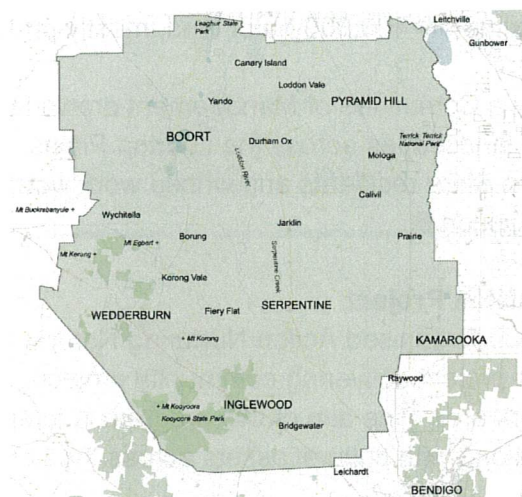
3 Impact of the VNI West Option 5

- Lily D'Ambrosio's fast-tracking ministerial order at the end of February, gives groups such as LPLN minimal time to assess the environmental impacts of this Project.
- The short timeline also makes it difficult to consult with our stakeholders and 18 Landcare Groups. Groups directly impacted by the decision include Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park, Terricks Ridge Landcare Group, Loddon Vale Landcare Group, Wychitella Districts Landcare Group, Mologa Landcare Group, East



Loddon Landcare Network, and the Northern Plains Conservation Management Network.

- There are multiple EPBC-listed species in the Option 5 area. Parks Victoria has had to comply with tight restrictions for getting water pipeline onto, and across some of their reserves including underground boring (no trenches), due to there being EPBC-listed species and ecosystems. It is completely inappropriate that an electricity supplier should not have to comply with similar restrictions for a major project.
- Many of our residents and landcare community have lived through Emergency events including Black Saturday and other Bushfires that were started by powerlines or severely exacerbated by above-ground infrastructure and there is great anxiety within our community about the risks associated with the proposal for above-ground transmission lines due to the safety and fire risk of the proposed Option 5 which runs through key agriculture areas and important natural grasslands.



Loddon Plains Landcare Network Region

LPLN Inc. urges AEMO to read the extensive environmental work we have completed and are planning for. These projects focus on critically endangered grasslands, riverine plains and high value wetlands.

Please access the Loddon Plains Landcare Network website

- <https://lpln.org/>
- <http://lpln.org/blueprint-for-action/>
- <https://lpln.org/other-projects/>

Key species impacted by the Option 5 proposal are:

- *Leipoa ocellata*- Mallee Fowl (vulnerable)
- *Pedionomus torquatus*- Plains Wanderer (Critically Endangered)
- *Sminthopsis Crassicaudata* - Fat-Tailed Dunnart



- Burhinus grallaris - Bush Stone Curlew (Endangered, Victoria)
- Varanus varius - Lace Monitor - Goanna (Endangered, Victoria)
- Litoria raniformis - Growling Grass Frog (Vulnerable, Victoria)
- Multiple Pea and orchid species
- Buloke
- Streaked Wattle and numerous grass species.

4 Recommendations

- Stop the fast-tracking of the VNI West transmission lines and undertake a thoughtful and consultative study into the long-term electricity plan for Victoria.
- Prioritise underground transmission lines for the benefit of not just our local farmers but for the urbanized regions which receive our agricultural commodities to provide food security.
- VNI West Option 5, will impact the fragile and endangered local environment and should be reconsidered. There needs to be more extensive flora and fauna surveys conducted on a longer-term basis to understand the impacts of this project on our fragile natural environment and a key agricultural community.

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

Will Sanson can be contacted on 0490 412 430 should you require more information.

Yours Sincerely,



Mal Brown
Secretary/Treasurer



Will Sanson
Landcare Facilitator

