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29<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**Wimmera Development Association response to the  
Western Victoria Renewable Integration Project Assessment Draft Report**

Wimmera Development Association (WDA) is the Wimmera Southern Mallee region's peak sustainable development body, covering the municipalities of Horsham Rural City Council, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Northern Grampians and Yarriambiack Shires. The Association's role is to work with the community and government(s) to attract new investment, further develop existing business and promote the Wimmera Southern Mallee region's sustainable development opportunities, both within and outside the region.

The Grampians region in Western Victoria (consisting of the Wimmera Southern Mallee to the West and Central Highlands to the East) has been highlighted as an integral part of this Victorian Renewable Energy Target mainly due to relatively low impact of wind and solar farms on residential and rural aesthetics. North West Victoria is experiencing a high level of interest for renewable generation connection, which exceeds current network capability and the region is being hampered in efforts to actively seek larger industries and renewable projects to locate here due to inadequacy of power transmission infrastructure. WDA acknowledges that upgrades to infrastructure and the inclusion of renewable energy will secure a more reliable and cost effective energy network for the region and further afield.

From an economic benefit point of view, many landholders on the peripherals of the region have supported these projects by leasing sites for wind turbines for the life of the windfarm. Producers across the remainder of the region would see this as an advantageous business opportunity to minimise risk from the mainly cropping enterprises. Through a number of previous site tests, the Wimmera plains have been shown to be ideal for windfarm development as wind farms on plains tend to have less stress on turbines from up and down drafts as with the valley and ridge design. Having large expanses of land available with small populations makes the region perfect for these renewable power projects to be located. Unfortunately a large portion of the Wimmera Southern Mallee does not have the power infrastructure to take advantage of these significant projects.

While WDA supports the recommendations of the report and in particular the augmentation of transmission lines from Ballarat to Horsham. However, due to the nature of the infrastructure across the Wimmera Southern Mallee,

it would like to see upgrades fast tracked for the region to take advantage of the increasing interest in Western Victoria by many proponents of Renewable energy, and the many opportunities that the Wimmera plains presents for these developments.

A number of alternative energy proposals are currently awaiting transmission capability improvements before they can become viable and delays in upgrading and augmenting transmission lines is a major inhibitor for these developments.

WDA would still encourage the market operator to consider the creation east west transmission capability along the Western Highway corridor and perhaps the creation of a third South Australian interconnector between Horsham and Keith (South Australia) and through to Adelaide via Nhill to capture some of the potential for wind and solar installations within this region. The creation of the third interconnector will assist to open up the areas either side of the South Australian/Victorian border to greater large scale renewable energy investment and create extra redundancy and energy security for SA through the creation of an extra 220 to 400MW.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ralph Kenyon'.

**Ralph Kenyon**

Executive Director