

# OFFICIAL COMPLAINT

## WESTERN VICTORIA TRANSMISSION NETWORK PROJECT

February 28th, 2022

**The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change**  
Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne, VIC 3002

Dear Minister,

I wish to lodge a formal complaint about AusNet's proposed Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP). I support the need to invest in transmission networks that are reliable, resilient, secure, robust and efficient to support the connection of renewable energy for all Australians, however, the WVTNP is not the industry leading, future thinking required to deliver this.

There are a number of issues listed below in regards to the WVTNP that lead conclusively to the fact that AusNet have not considered **ALL** alternatives and therefore are **NOT** delivering the best option for all Victorians. Evidence supports that there are far better options that will reduce congestion on the existing transmission network, provide actual net renewable energy, have far less impact on the environment, have far less visual pollution and importantly, have the support of communities, rather than the out-dated overhead transmission technology you are persisting with.

I am writing to ask you to:

- Stop progressing the so-called cheapest and route that is the highest risk,
- That you listen to the people affected by this project and consider what they have to say,
- Enforce AusNet to undertake a transparent process and a proper analysis of all alternatives,
- Stop AusNet steamrolling communities with outdated short-term thinking, and
- Step up and drive the future thinking required to provide a renewable energy solution that is not out-dated, inferior and destructive but one that all Australians and our natural environment deserve and is in Australia's best strategic national interest.

The proposed WVTNP overhead transmission network will have a destructive and irreversible effect along the whole route impacting tens of thousands of regional Victorians, hundreds of businesses and the natural environment. Parts of the proposed route run through Victoria's most high-risk bushfire areas as well as prime agricultural land. The following points include some of the numerous complaints that thousands of Victorians have voiced against the project that AusNet seem to be ignoring:

- **Environmental Impacts** – The WVTNP will have significant and detrimental generational impacts on the environment due to the extensive removal of native vegetation and more than 155,000 mature native trees. This will cause serious loss of biomass and wildlife.
- **Heightened Bushfire Risks** – Overhead transmission lines not only cause bushfires (as confirmed in the WVTNP Bushfire Preliminary EES Information Sheet but also impose restrictions to fire fighters when fighting fires, placing lives, homes and the natural environment at a huge risk.
- **Agricultural Impacts** – The WVTNP will have devastating impacts to Victorian farmers, their families, livelihoods and local businesses as a result of significant farming productivity loss.
- **Property Values** – Property values of thousands of Victorians along the 190km of proposed transmission will plummet by up to 40% and not just to those who are directly impacted and offered compensation.
- **Lack of Social Licence and Consultation** – AusNet has not actively listened to the tens of thousands of Victorians that will be adversely affected by these transmission lines. “Inferior community consultation” has only happening after the RIT-T process and AusNet dismiss communities concern along the 190km proposed route.
- **Mental and Physical Health Impacts** – We are already seeing a significant deterioration in mental health in our communities along the route as they deal with serious mental health challenges due to the high levels of stress and mental fatigue caused by the WVTNP. Not to mention the physical health impacts from the Electro Magnetic Fields (EMFs) the transmission lines will emit.

There is no question that we need to consider what the future of Victoria's and more broadly, Australia's energy supply will look like. The question is do we want to be considered world leaders in how we achieve this or are we happy to rush ahead and take a much less socially responsible path and continue with out-dated, inferior and destructive overhead electricity technology? AusNet have ignored the solution in the best interests of everyone. Our energy supply system can be designed to minimise the impact on the environment and landscape and take account of human needs, overhead transmission lines aren't the answer.

International best practice of undergrounding needs to be seriously considered to modernise Australia's electricity grid in alignment with global trends. Undergrounding energy transmission is considered best practice around the world due to its many benefits such as eliminating risks from extreme weather and bushfires, significantly reducing environmental and social impacts and is more reliable and requires less maintenance.

The Environment Effects Statement cannot provide the mechanism to assess the best outcome for the community, it will only assess whether an inferior solution's impacts can be mitigated to a level sufficiently low enough to be acceptable. The impacts these proposed overhead transmission lines will be permanent and cannot be mitigated later.

Minister D'Ambrosio – the energy future is in your hands, so is the lives of thousands of Victorians. I urge you to please step forward and help drive the future thinking required to provide the renewable energy transmission solution that Victorians, all Australians, and our natural environment deserve.

Regards,

Name

E-mail and/or Address

SUPPORTING  
**STOP  
AUSNET'S  
TOWERS**