**Subject: Victoria's Renewable Energy Zones - Community Concerns**

**Mr Andrew Dyer**

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner

nwfc@nwfc.gov.au

cc: **The Hon Angus Taylor MP**

angus.taylor.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Dyer

Congratulations on your new role as Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner. I understand in this role, you will oversee complaints and community concerns about major new transmission projects.

I am contacting you to provide feedback on the State Government of Victoria's proposed Renewable Energy Zones with specific reference to the Western: V3 Project, the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP) North Ballarat to Bulgana. This project involves constructing a 500kV overhead transmission line from North Ballarat to Sydenham.

The project has been identified in the REZ Development Plan Directions Paper as having a ‘High Risk’ of delivery for the following reasons:

* Project within greenfield area therefore vegetation clearing required.
* Infrastructure close to sensitive areas
* Conflicting land use
* Potential conflicting regarding future residential development.
* Potential community concerns regarding increased visual impacts and environmental impacts.

AusNet Services has identified an Area of Interest (AoI) and has further narrowed potential corridors, one of these corridors runs immediately north of Darley. My concerns relate specifically to this northern alignment proposed between the town of Darley (Bacchus marsh) and the Lerderderg State Park.

I am a resident of the Moorabool Shire and are devastated by the proposed alignment due to overwhelming impact of the proposed corridor on our local region. Given AusNet are not particularly interested in community concerns, I am please you have been appointed to this new role. It is about time community voices were heard.

The impacts on this region include:

* Bushfire Risk
* Firefighting Risks
* Impact on Water Bombing efforts
* Safety Concerns
* Significant Habitat loss
* Impact on Significance Areas
* Culture and Heritage
* Impact on our Visual Amenity (towers are Visual Pollution)
* Tourism & Recreation
* Economic Impact

You can learn more about the impact on our region on our community website where all impacts, including the shocking visual pollution has been highlighted [www.darleypowerfight.com.au](http://www.darleypowerfight.com.au)

I believe building and maintaining strong social licence is central to the delivery of Renewable Energy Zones and the future of this project. To date, no social license to operate exists. Community engagement is most successful when it establishes and delivers on clear expectations and gives everyone in the community the opportunity to influence decisions in each aspect of planning, development and decision making, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

I urge you to insist on a comprehensive review of the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project and the permanent removal of the proposed northern alignment between Darley and the Lerderderg State Park from the Project’s Area of Interest. The northern alignment demonstrates a clear lack of planning, social license and understanding of the overwhelming impact on this important area.

I am in full support of Renewable Energy Zones but not when a potential corridor passes right through the heart of residential, significance areas, wildlife habitat and public open spaces, creating Visual Pollution in the process. The irreversible impact on property values, visual amenity, wildlife, environment, and local community is simply not acceptable.

I look forward to your response.

Regards