**DELWP** - REZDevelopment@delwp.vic.gov.au

**Subject**: Response to the Renewable Energy Zone Development Plan Directions Paper

I am contacting you to provide feedback on the State Government of Victoria REZ Development Plan Directions Paper 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.

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 and the Lerderderg State Park and the alignments impact on Darley, Coimadai, Merrimu, Bacchus Marsh and surrounding regions.

I write this letter as a local resident to voice concerns about the proposed WVTNP and its impacts on our local community. The project has been identified in the REZ Development Plan Directions Paper as having a ‘**High Risk**’ of delivery.

There is widespread community concern about the **Western: V3 Project** and I would like to identify the following key impacts:

1. **Bushfire Risk** – The region is in a known bushfire prone area. Transmission lines through this corridor heighten the risk, impeded firefighting efforts, and put lives and properties at risk.
2. **Visual Impact** – Visual pollution from overhead transmission lines severely impact visual amenity of residents by obstructing our scenic views of the Lerderderg State Park and surrounds.
3. **Property Values** – Impact on Visual Amenity will have an adverse impact on property values. This area has significance because of the views.
4. **Significant landscape** - The community is concerned of the amenity impacts the transmission lines will have on these natural landscapes and the negative impact that will have on the State and Regionally significant landscapes and views that were identified in the South West Landscape Assessment Study *(Planisphere, 2012).*
5. **Biodiversity and Habitat** – Based on an appraisal of records and potential and known habitats in the area, eight threatened fauna species are considered to have a moderate to high potential to occur within or directly surrounding the Area of Interest.
6. **Regional Tourism** – Overhead transmission lines through this corridor will cause extensive, unnecessary, irreversible, and entirely unacceptable damage to the Park amenity. The reasons for visiting this region will be impacted significantly as nature-based tourists turn away. The plan to create a recreation paradise at Bald Hill is one step closer as the State Government announced they will hand over $1.6 million for the development of the 1001 Steps at Darley’s Bald Hill for arts and nature-based tourism. The completed ‘Activation Project’ is worth close to $13 million. Once constructed, the visual amenity from this long awaited and economically beneficial tourism hub is going to be destroyed. Dominated by a long line of 85m, 500kV high voltage transmission towers.

The proposed northern corridor of the **Western: V3 Project** demonstrates a clear lack of planning, impact assessment, and understanding of the region’s significance. To regain its Social Licence to Operate, AusNet Services need to place decision-making in the hands of the community and implement what the community decides, not use old ‘above ground’ technology and offer alternative corridors that do not minimise impacts and simply do not work.

I am in full support of Renewable Energy Zones but not when they create **Visual Pollution**. All Renewable Energy transmissions to the grid, must be made underground using HVDC. This potential corridor passes right through the heart of residential, significance areas, wildlife habitat and public open spaces. The irreversible impact on property values, visual amenity, wildlife, environment, tourism and local community is simply unacceptable.

**I urge you to insist on a comprehensive review of the Western: V3 Project, the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP) North Ballarat to Bulgana. I request the permanent removal of the proposed northern alignment between Darley and the Lerderderg State Park from the Project’s Area of Interest.**

Kind regards