

MEDIA RELEASE

AusNet's Announcement of Final Preferred Transmission Path for the WVTNP has the community angrier than ever.

26th November 2021

AusNet's final preferred transmission path announcement today regarding the proposed Western Victoria Transmission Network Project, is a continued demonstration of their unwillingness to absorb and suitably respond to the many thousands of voices opposed to the project.

The proposed transmission line and terminal station will have a devastating and irreversible effect on the region, it's tens of thousands of community members, hundreds of businesses and on the natural environment.

This announcement has been made in the early stages of the Environmental Effects Statement (EES), reportedly the most rigorous environmental impact assessment process in Victoria. The EES process is administered by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) on behalf of Victoria's Minister for Planning under the Environment Effects Act 1978. The purpose of the EES is to ensure that major projects are designed, constructed, and operated to avoid, minimise (if avoidance is not possible) or manage adverse impacts on environment and community, in that specific order.

Stop AusNet's Towers Campaign Chair, Emma Muir said, "Today's announcement comes as a bitter message to the community who have opposed this project from day one. AusNet have not listened or acted upon the vast concerns brought to them by the community and businesses. AusNet have not undertaken comprehensive EES studies across all areas as they claim and this announcement is premature. This announced route mirrors the same hypothetical line that we drew on a map 14 months, it is essentially a straight line that delivers the cheapest option for AusNet but the most impactful and dangerous option for the community."

Parts of the proposed route run through Victoria's most high risk bushfire areas as well as prime agricultural land.

"In spite of significant community opposition supported by a wealth of evidence that demonstrates the severe economic and environmental damage combined with considerable heightened risks AusNet continues to steamroll ahead."

"No amount of money saves our lives and no amount of money saves the irreversible environmental damage. This community is not for sale and no amount of compensation can buy our safety and future."

"We deserve better in Victoria, our children deserve better. A legacy of more and more devastating overhead transmission lines isn't part of a cleaner future for the 21st century and beyond, anywhere across our beautiful state."

Our community has decided to take a stand. The proposed approach by AusNet cannot be allowed to proceed. There is too much at stake, not just for our large community of concerned citizens, but for all Victorians. The impact on our communities is irreversible and unacceptable when there are better ways to deliver this project that need to be explored."

Recent months have brought about a stepping up of AusNet's aggressive bullying and stand-over tactics on affected communities.

AusNet has a long and continued history of community disregard. In the Black Saturday Bushfire Civil Court case, AusNet argued that they should not be held legally responsible to pay damages to people who were injured in the fire, to families of people killed in the fire, or to people whose homes were destroyed in the fire.

In 2020, a storm north of Colac led to six transmission towers being knocked to the ground. This energy failure cost Victorians millions of dollars because AusNet were not held responsible for damages caused to their infrastructure.

Again, in June and October this year, the unnecessary risk of AusNet's overhead power distribution lines led to hundreds of thousands of homes throughout Victoria being without power for long periods.

A recent independent report from The Moorabool Shire Council confirms that underground HVDC cables are a viable, safer, more reliable and more efficient alternative to the outdated and high-risk overhead HVAC proposed for the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project.

Community Alliance Group *Stop AusNet's Towers* say enough is enough. *"We are taking legal action to fight AusNet and AEMO. This project must be reassessed and put underground. We urge all Victorians to get involved because the issue of overhead transmission lines will affect each and every one of us, as we head into this renewable energy transition,"* said Mrs Muir.

CONTACT: Emma Muir, MCHPA, 0412 685 404

MORE INFORMATION: stopausnetstowers.com.au or facebook.com/stopausnetstowers