

Media Release



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Government must take control of electricity planning infrastructure

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has called on the Victorian Government to step in and take over planning of the state's transmission network following the consultation on the proposed VNI West project.

VFF President Emma Germano said the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) had failed to take the impact on agricultural production into account in planning for transmission on behalf of the Victorian Government, and that the government needs to take back control.

"Farmers have had a gutful over the disrespectful way in which these projects are being planned. AEMO is not up to the task of taking into account the impact of these projects on Victoria's food and fibre production. It is an unelected agency which seems to answer to no-one."

"Ultimately, the Victorian Government is responsible for delivering this public infrastructure. The government should take full control of planning the shift to renewable energy across the state to ensure the impacts on agriculture and regional communities is understood and mitigated."

As part of the VFF submission to AEMO's consultation on the VNI West project, Ms Germano said planning for the VNI West and Western Renewables Link (WRL) projects should be paused, with government needing to undertake a state-wide plan.

"The VFF believes that an immediate halt to all planning for the VNI West and WRL projects must be undertaken. The powers for all transmission network planning must be vested in and executed directly by the Victorian Government. In addition, there must be a state-wide plan for renewable energy and transmission, that accounts for issues of agricultural production."

Ms Germano said farmers were being forced to bear the cost of transmission infrastructure because AEMO is only considering the cost of powerlines in terms of the cost to consumers' electricity bills.

"It is clear that AEMO's view on transmission planning is completely blinkered by the requirements it has to place energy consumers at the centre of investment decisions. This view has no regard for the interests of communities, landholders, businesses and families that are directly impacted by the construction and operation of transmission towers, and who bear costs that are not accounted for under the existing cost benefit arrangements."

"Most concerning to the VFF, our members and all Victorians who value food and fibre production, AEMO's actions to date take no account of agricultural production and its importance to Victoria's economy."

Ms Germano said the government needed to look at the [submission put forward by Professors Bruce Mountain and Simon Bartlett](#) and seriously consider its conclusions.

"Their submission highlights the reasons why AEMO is not suitable to be planning Victoria's transmission network and that it seems to be motivated by wanting to build a transmission link along the eastern coast of Australia. These are grave concerns that the Minister for Energy has a duty to investigate immediately."

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