

Dear AER,

My name is Kristy Hourigan, and I am the owner of the Euroa Caravan Park, one of the largest accommodation and tourism providers in the Strathbogie Shire. I am writing to make a formal submission regarding AusNet's Revised Regulatory Proposal for 2026–31, specifically concerning the reliability upgrades for our region.

I am strongly requesting that the AER approve the Euroa–Benalla express feeder reliability project, which AusNet has included in its revised proposal under its targeted reliability program for worst-served customers.

This inclusion appears on page 15 of the Revised Proposal, where AusNet identifies:

"...economically justified investments on six worst-served feeders and an additional project (the Benalla to Euroa express feeder)."

(Referenced from AusNet Electricity Distribution Price Review 2026–31 Revised Regulatory Proposal, p.15)

Euroa is that additional project, and this upgrade is essential to our community's wellbeing, safety, and economic future.

Euroa is a worst-served community with a documented history of severe outages

In late 2023 and early 2024, Euroa experienced 14 power outages in just two months, with several lasting more than 24 hours and many not related to storms or weather. During these outages:

- Mobile towers failed as their batteries depleted, cutting off all communication.
- Vulnerable residents were left without any means of calling emergency services.
- Many of my guests, elderly couples, families, and travellers with medical equipment, were placed in unsafe situations.
- Local businesses suffered significant financial loss.

As a caravan park that accommodates thousands of visitors each year, power reliability is not optional. It is fundamental to guest safety, refrigeration of food and medicine, heating/cooling, lighting, medical devices, and communication.

Euroa's repeated reliability failures demonstrate that the existing infrastructure is not fit for purpose without this upgrade.

The revised proposal is a major step forward, but only if the AER approves the Euroa project

I acknowledge and support AusNet's revised proposal, which:

- Rebuilds the technical and economic modelling,
- Addresses the AER's earlier concerns,
- Incorporates updated demand and cost data, and

- Correctly recognises Euroa as a worst-served community requiring targeted investment.

The reliability program has been significantly scaled back, but Euroa's feeder, the Benalla–Euroa express feeder, has been retained as a prioritised project due to the seriousness of our reliability challenges.

This is the clearest evidence that AusNet recognises Euroa's situation as genuinely critical.

However, inclusion in the revised proposal does not guarantee approval.

If the AER does not fund this project, Euroa may face another five years without the upgrade we desperately need.

From my perspective as a business owner and consumer:

The cost of NOT upgrading Euroa will be far greater than the cost of the upgrade.

Tourism cancellations, safety risks, business losses, communication failures, reputational harm, and community vulnerability already impose a high economic and social cost on our region.

It is far more economically responsible to make this investment now.

4. Why the AER's approval matters so urgently

Without this upgrade:

- Our town will remain exposed to repeated outages
- Mobile towers will continue to fail during long outages
- Businesses like mine will continue to incur major financial losses
- Visitors will lose confidence in Euroa as a safe and reliable destination
- Residents will continue to experience fear, uncertainty, and risk during outages

This is not hypothetical, we've already lived it.

I respectfully ask that the AER:

1. Approve the Euroa–Benalla express feeder reliability upgrade in full as part of the 2026–31 final determination.
2. Recognise Euroa as a worst-served community whose safety and economic stability depend on this project.
3. Give full weight to AusNet's revised technical evidence and the extensive community impacts documented across Euroa.
4. Ensure that the reliability upgrade is prioritised for early delivery within the regulatory period.

Euroa has already endured the consequences of under-investment in this feeder. As the owner of Euroa Caravan Park, a business that contributes significantly to local tourism and

employment, I am urging the AER to approve this project for the sake of our community's safety, resilience, and economic wellbeing.

Thank you for considering my submission. I am available to provide further detail regarding outage impacts, bookings lost, communication failures, and the lived experiences of guests affected by these events.

Kind regards,
Kristy Hourigan
Owner Euroa Caravan Park