

25 November 2025

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The Hon Catherine King MP
Minister for Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development
and Local Government
Catherine.King.MP@aph.gov.au

Cc: Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure,
Transport and Regional Development
Senator.McKenzie@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister King,

Subject: Advocacy for Inclusion of Critical Infrastructure in AusNet's 2026–31 Regulatory Proposal

I write on behalf of Strathbogie Shire Council to express our deep concern regarding the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) Draft Determination on AusNet's 2026–31 Regulatory Proposal, specifically the exclusion of two critical infrastructure projects:

- The proposed express feeder BN11 from Benalla to Euroa
- Upgrade works on SM11 from Seymour to Nagambie

These projects are vital to addressing the sustained and unacceptable power reliability issues experienced by our communities and to support the region's future residential and industrial growth.

The rationale provided by the AER—that demand-driven augmentation does not meet the required threshold and that the Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR) based on the Value of Customer Reliability (VCR) does not stack up against other projects—is inconsistent with the lived experience of our community and the strategic importance of these upgrades.

BN11 is the longest single-line feeder in Victoria within AusNet's network. Its vulnerability has led to frequent and prolonged outages, severely impacting residents and businesses. The introduction of Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiters (REFCLs) following the Black Saturday Royal Commission further constrained the network's flexibility and resilience.

Nagambie and Euroa are poised for significant growth, supported by land availability, proximity to Melbourne, and strong transport links via road and rail. However, poor power reliability continues to deter industrial investment, constraining our economic development and undermining community confidence.

We urge the AER to reconsider its draft determination and include BN11 and SM11 in the final regulatory proposal. These upgrades are not only technically necessary but strategically aligned with regional development priorities and community safety.

Strathbogie Shire Council is concerned that the AER's decision-making formula only considers cost-benefit metrics rather than the social impacts and inequities of the decisions they are making, with no further consideration given to the needs of rural and geographically dispersed communities—not just urban density—when assessing distribution network upgrades.

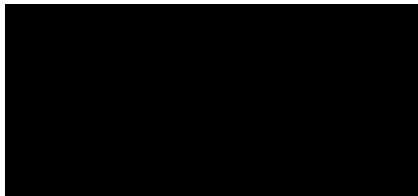
It is in this way that we urgently seek your support acknowledging the critical importance of energy security for our region.

We are grateful for the support already expressed by the Federal Member for Indi Dr Helen Haines MP and the State Member for Euroa Ms Annabelle Cleeland MP, and we hope the AER will take into account the unique challenges and opportunities facing our region.

We would welcome the opportunity to brief you further and provide community testimonials and data to support our position and welcome your response via reply email to info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au or you can call me on [REDACTED] to discuss this matter further.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Mayor Scott Jeffery
Strathbogie Shire Council