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8.1.21

Ms Kami Kaur
General Manager, A/g
Australian Energy Regulator
GPO Box 520
Melbourne VIC 3001

via email: VIC2021-26@aer.gov.au

Response to Powercor Revised Proposal 2021-2026:

Request to upgrade Tyrendarra, Strathdownie Cape Bridgewater and Gorae West to three-phase power

The purpose of this letter is to express my support for upgrading single phase power to three phase infrastructure in South West Victoria.

I am fortunate to sit as Deputy Chair of Great South Coast Regional Partnership, alongside my board roles with Great South Coast Food & Fibre and Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority.

A consistent and recurring theme is that of enabling infrastructure or lack thereof in regional areas of Victoria. I have discussed this at length with Ministers, Bureaucrats, Councillors, and we find ourselves in this perpetual Chicken and Egg moment with infrastructure upgrades. Generally, it comes down to three things that get in the way.

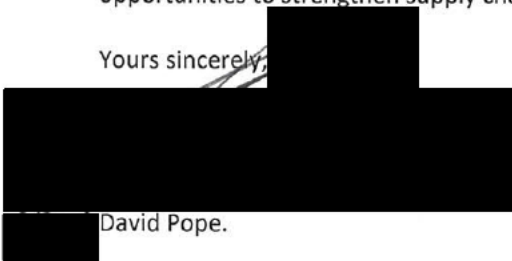
- Not enough population density to warrant to capital expense.
- A lack of long-term vision for regional prosperity.
- Lack of courage by the regulator.

This proposal has previously been declined due to the numbers not stacking up due to our low population density. Low population density in your process seems to disadvantage our region twice – firstly in the evaluation process where fewer people is falsely equated to reduced investment value, and secondly, where the user-pays model means we pay a disproportionate fee for the privilege of having infrastructure upgraded **when it is well and truly past it's use-by date**.

I understand that there are calls to re-examine this approach in terms of its unintended negative impact on regional communities and I cannot support this strongly enough. I consider it the role of government and power companies to fund the upgrade, with users charged for the electricity they use.

Thank you for your consideration. In closing, I urge you to proceed with this upgrade to enable South West Victoria's businesses, residents and wider community to invest, build resilience and sustainability, and take advantage of opportunities to strengthen supply chains and local manufacturing.

Yours sincerely,

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David Pope.