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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

We are writing to express support for upgrading single phase power to three phase infrastructure in the Tyrendarra area of South West Victoria. To achieve our regions' goals of renewable energy and water sustainability leadership, as well as to maintain and enhance our position as a world class tourism destination and Victoria's largest food and fibre producer, we need infrastructure that supports innovation and business growth.

To introduce ourselves, we are Russell and Mary Hussey. Third generation dairy farmer at Woolsthorpe and over our 33 years of dairying we have witnessed many changes in not only the industry but our district. These include less but larger dairies, the exit of soldier settlers in the area transitioning farms from beef/sheep enterprises to larger holdings with improved infrastructure needing centre pivot irrigation and rotary dairies. We, over the years have expanded and altered our business when able and are always planning and budgeting forward for better and improved systems to assist us in being not only more profitable whilst increasing income, but also increasing staff and milk production. We are proud of our milk we produce and the communities we support and need.

Without a guarantee, continued and serviceable electricity supply we have no foundation for our business as even our stock water relies on electricity. We guarantee the quality and quantity of our milk to Saputo Australia as part of our supplier contracts and require your support to not only supply but improve and commit to our dairying future. We have a perishable product that without refrigeration must be transported to the factory ASAP otherwise it is deemed not fit to human consumption. In the south west region we have many dairy and factory operations that rely all day every day on a guaranteed supply of electricity. Three phase power for us would make business changing future and we write to express our support to this proposal and back it 100 percent.

[select 2-4 relevant paragraphs below; or create own]

This investment has been called for by members of our community over a period spanning six years, and we are pleased to see it recommended in Infrastructure Victoria's Draft 30-year Infrastructure Strategy. Upgrading less than 100kms of single phase line supplying 1,130 Tyrendarra, Strathdownie, Cape Bridgewater and Gorae West customers directly is essential to capitalise on the Great South Coast's competitive advantages for economic growth and to unlock downstream economic and social value.

Business beyond the 1000-plus directly benefiting from the upgrade will be more resilient to economic shocks such as the pandemic and climate change events. If delivered, the upgrade will allow businesses and individuals to unlock new industry growth opportunities and improve macro-economic outcomes by increasing access to jobs and upskilling, and provide infrastructure that enables investment to reduce the cost of energy long-term. In the same vein, the community, sporting and education users of this network will have an enhanced capacity to deliver positive social outcomes.

The Great South Coast is a leader in renewable energy. Our region includes renewable energy projects worth multiple billions and we are building on our early adoption of renewable energy (with some of Victoria's first wind farms located in the region) with a purposeful intent to embrace renewable technology adoption further. We recognise clean energy is a pathway for energy cost-savings and long-term environmental sustainability, whilst enhancing our ability to innovate and compete as a high-tech food and fibre sector with global reach. As a result, numerous high-value renewables projects are in various stages of planning and development across the region.

We recognise this infrastructure is vital to further improve our natural resource stewardship as food, forestry and aquaculture producers, as well as to drive whole-of-region prosperity through the benefits accrued to affiliated industries such as tourism, where food plays a key role, and the preservation of our natural environment.

We note that our goal to strengthen agricultural water security by modernising irrigation to better prepare the region for the impacts of climate change is intrinsically linked to modernised power infrastructure.

The 2019-2020 Victorian Food and Fibre Export Performance Report showed that Victoria delivered a record \$14.5 billion in exports and is well on target to reach its target of \$20 billion food and fibre exports by 2030. A positive milestone for farmers and Victoria that produces over a quarter of Australia's food and fibre exports, with most of this production generated within the Great South Coast. This result and growth projection demonstrates the strength of our region, however it is contingent on the infrastructure being in place to enable investment, diversification and innovation.

We consider it is important to re-evaluate the role of population density as a deciding factor in determining the value of investments in power infrastructure upgrades. This model appears to place regional Victoria at a considerable disadvantage, which is disappointing considering regional Victoria has been acknowledged as critical in maintaining Victoria's economic resilience and food supply chain integrity during the pandemic. We encourage you to work with local stakeholders to review this process to ensure fairness for all Victorians.

We urge you to empower Victoria's Great South Coast 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,

Russell and Mary Hussey