

Best outcome must be for all

By Helen Tatchell

“Green energy should be transported in a green way,” Moorabool Mayor David Edwards has said.

In a video on Council's social media page, Cr Edwards said the Western Victorian Transmission Network Program, that involves overhead high voltage powerline transmission towers, is causing a lot of angst in the community.

“This is a project that will deliver major infrastructure to Victoria, but it's looking like it will come at a great cost to Moorabool.

“Council has been advocating that this is not to be on the shortest route and cheapest cost, it needs to be done with the best outcome for all the communities across the shires affected.”

Cr Edwards said one of the major problems for Council is the project is above ground and it becomes a major fire hazard.

“It doesn't meet the requirements of the coronial inquest into bushfires. It doesn't consider the farmers that have been there for two, three or more, generations. It has a major impact on the visual landscapes across our shire. Everybody knows that is one of our major assets,” he said.

Council is asking the State government to take control of this project to ensure good community outcomes are achieved.

“Council will continue to advocate strongly, and this really is a once in a lifetime project but, should be done the proper way so it doesn't not only affect this current generation but generations to come.”

Council's submission

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Twelve months ago, Moorabool Shire Council sent to Western Victorian Renewable Integration RIT-T, Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), their submission to the Western Victorian Renewable Integration Project Assessment Draft Report, seven pages in fact.

It read that Council recognised the importance of renewable energy infrastructure projects and applauded AEMO for commencing a project that has the potential to provide significant community benefit and increased employment opportunities.

“The Shire is generally supportive of renewable energy, which is evidenced through the substantial number of wind farms within the municipality,” the submission read.

However, it also stated the Shire is mindful of achieving a balanced outcome where the amenity of the Shire is not unreasonably compromised by the visual intrusion and angst this causes within the community.

The Council submission acknowledged the project was in its infancy and was therefore difficult to provide a detailed submission without a clear understanding of the proposed alignment for the powerlines.

“...or the potential impacts on land use, along with community and social implications.”

Council wrote (26 June 2019) that while AEMO have not specifically identified a study corridor, “the likely corridor is to be located through the centre of the

community and the potential impacts the project may have on that community.”

Concerns were raised about the amenity impacts the powerlines may have on the natural landscapes and the negative impact on the State and Regionally significant landscapes including:

- Lerderderg and Werribee Gorge State Parks

(State significant landscape)

- Wombat State Forest

(Regionally significant landscape)

- Mt Blackwood & Lal Lal Falls

(State significant view)

- Mt Buninyong & Mt Warrenheip

(Regionally significant view)

Addressing the undergrounding of the high voltage transmission lines, and noting it comes at an increased expense, Council are of the view that undergrounding the lines would be a solution to many of the concerns the Shire has with the project.

“If the financial implications are too high to underground in their entirety, then at a minimum the transmission lines should be underground around the towns to minimise the visual intrusion in highly populated areas.”

In conclusion the Shire submission read, “the Shire demands the project is conducted in a manner that has the least impact on our residents, our existing landscape, the natural environment, farming activities, our towns and the growth projected for the Shire.”

municipality.”

It was also written that currently, there is much angst in the Bacchus Marsh community in regard to potential expansion of the waste facility and quarries.

“While the Shire understand the importance of projects with State benefits, it is important that consideration is also given to the local

“It is Council’s view the most appropriate way to address our concerns would be through the undergrounding of the powerlines, ideally for the extent of the project.”

**The submission was authored by Moorabool Shire Council CEO Derek Madden and Planning Officers Henry Bezuidenhout and Vanessa Osborn.*