

Dear Cr Hood,

Thank you for your letter. Please share my response below with your fellow councillors.

The original sin of privatising the distribution network (a natural monopoly) and allowing a for-profit company to make super profits from the community is at the heart of the problem.

### **Transmission lines project in Western Vic**

The Greens are firmly committed to increasing Victoria's renewable energy supply, but believe this needs to be done in a way that minimises the impact on both people and our natural environment. Community consultation on the Western Renewables Link has been terrible, and the Greens have raised concerns with the project with ministers, calling for proper investigation of putting the lines underground, and genuine engagement with the community.

### **How it will impact potato farmers and cattle farmers and our thoughts on this**

The Greens are concerned about the possible impact of the Western Renewables Link on farming. So far AusNet has been unable to convince farmers that the project will have minimal impacts on farming and the Greens are hoping that the Environmental Effects Statement process will be able to provide more reliable information. Farmers in western Victoria provide not just a key part of our economy but also of the food on our plates.

### **How the Greens feel about the standard of community consultation**

Community consultation on the Western Renewables Link has been woeful, with communities not getting the information they need on time, and not having their voices heard. Victorian Greens Leader Samantha Ratnam wrote to the environment minister in May, calling on her to engage more with the people of western Victoria. She still hasn't heard back.

### **Whether it should be above ground or underground at various places**

The Greens believe it's essential that putting at least some of the route underground should be properly investigated. In fact, Greens MP Ellen Sandell wrote to the planning minister back in July 2020, before the Environment Effects Statement had been announced, demanding both that there be an EES and that it consider underground construction. How much of the route should be underground will depend not just on the cost, but also on the easements required and the impacts on agriculture and bush. The Greens hope that the EES process will help resolve some of the competing claims on this.

### **Bushfire risk**

The Greens are calling for the implementation of the 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations around power lines. This includes the use of underground cabling to prevent bushfires. Furthermore, consideration needs to be given to the effect on aerial firefighting capacity of aerial power lines where they are used.

Kind regards,

Earl.

**EARL JAMES** (he/him)

Candidate for Ripon – Australian Greens Victoria

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