



**MEDIA RELEASE – February 20, 2024**

## **Regional Victoria Power Alliance: FIGHTING BACK WITH AN APPEAL AGAINST SUPREME COURT DECISION**

The Regional Victoria Power Alliance (RVPA) refuses to back down! We are taking decisive action in response to the recent Supreme Court judgment dismissing our case against the Victorian Government's "VNI West and WRL" Ministerial Orders. The imposition of the Western Renewables Link (WRL) and VNI West projects and their high voltage transmission towers and lines by these "Henry VIII" Orders cannot be democratically justified. We are appealing this judgment vigorously to defend our homes, farms, businesses, and the environment.

### **Brief background**

VNI West and WRL are two proposed projects forming one spine of 500kV high-capacity double circuit overhead transmission towers and lines (plus terminal stations) to connect Melbourne in Victoria to Dinawan in the NSW Riverina via a big dogleg that runs from Melbourne west to Bulgana 200km (which is WRL) and then curves north east 200km to the Murray River north of Kerang, via a proposed new terminal station at Tragowel, then a final 200km leg from the Murray to Dinawan (totalling 400km that is VNI West).

WRL is proposed to run through Green Wedge zones, past suburbs and State Forests, through Class 1 prime agricultural land which forms an important food bowl, and through landscapes that contain areas of environmentally important biodiversity and/or recognised historical value.

VNI West is also proposed to run through highly productive agricultural land and environmentally important and diverse landscapes including many critical waterways and lake systems supporting extensive wildlife.

### **Who are we?**

Regional Victoria Power Alliance (RVPA) is the trading name of the Moorabool and Central Highlands Power Alliance Inc. (MCHPA) which is a legal entity acting on behalf of all landholders, businesses, and communities along the entire lengths of both proposed project corridors.

### **What's Happening?**

In September 2023, the MCHPA challenged the February and May 2023 "VNI West and WRL" Ministerial Orders in the Supreme Court. Using "Henry VIII" powers, these Orders, spearheaded by the Minister for Energy and Resources, Lily D'Ambrosio with considerable direction from the Australian Energy Market

Operator (AEMO), aimed to fast-track the construction of transmission towers and lines for these two projects.

Despite our relentless efforts and exceptional work by our legal team, the single Judge rejected our claims in December 2023. However, our legal counsel has identified compelling grounds for appeal, and we submitted our application to the Court of Appeal on February 16, 2024. This appeal is a crucial stand against the Government's self-appointed decree for these detrimental projects to proceed.

### **Why is This Important?**

The proposed route for these transmission projects runs through Victoria's most high-risk bushfire areas as well as prime agricultural land placing an unacceptable increased risk on these communities. These projects will have significant and detrimental generational impacts on the environment due to the extensive removal of native vegetation and the destruction of more than 475,000 mature native trees, this will cause serious loss of biomass and wildlife. There will be devastating impacts on Victorian farmers, their families, livelihoods, and local businesses because of significant farming productivity loss.

By appealing the judgment, we are fighting to protect invaluable agricultural land, homes, and livelihoods from irreversible damage. It's not just a battle for today but for the future of Regional Victoria and the generations to come.

### **Community Stands Together:**

The RVPA represents a united front of community members, including determined landholders and resilient business owners along both project corridors. Our Alliance stands firm against the combined threats posed by the VNI West and WRL projects, forming an imposing 500kV transmission spine stretching across Victoria and into New South Wales.

Despite the formidable obstacles thrown by the Victorian Government and AEMO, our resolve remains unshakable in safeguarding our communities and environment.

The community is rallied together, unwavering in its commitment to fight for its rights. Together, we have the power to effect change and ensure a sustainable future for Regional Victoria.

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