

September 2023

We attended last Wednesday's Landholder/Community Roundtable - Community Engagement Review initiated by Dr Helen Haines and chaired by Prof. Andrew Dyer, and we were most appreciative of this opportunity.

The meeting drew a large contingent of deeply dissatisfied landholders, who feel aggrieved by proposed large scale wind and solar farms. Most of them call themselves "green" but seem to think that the shift to renewables should be undertaken anywhere but in their back yard. This resistance to change is creating enormous difficulties and delays in the race to bring clean, green solutions. It is often driven by misinformation and/or ignorance. These failings must be acknowledged and addressed, and communities must be made aware of the enormous opportunities and leverage that accompany new energy generation projects. The proposed Ruffy Windfarm is one such example (see attachments).

The urgency to engage with Local and State Govts, to guide and regulate investors, and ensure Australian citizens are informed and included has never been more urgent. The Federal Govt must lead and not allow the development of renewables to be determined by private enterprise. We know that, to date, the shift to renewables has been most successful when driven by community engagement is strong. Now we must apply that commitment at a national level.

A) The barriers to date appear to be:-

- **An initial and lasting denial of the science and now a failure to act with urgency on Climate Change.** We must move rapidly if we hope to meet our 2030 emissions targets and limit global warming. This poses huge pressures as citizens demand change and solutions that require new cost outlays, but no-one seems to be prepared to bear any financial impost. The increasing costs of fire and flood reparation for example, are assumed to be a government or insurance company responsibility. Citizens are mostly ignorant or disconnected from our wasteful consumer lifestyle, and most citizens just expect insurance companies to be there for them when it happens to them. At a time when governments should be incentivising responsible resource use, it is generally left to individuals or community groups to initiate change. Government messaging needs to address this.
- **The power of the fossil fuel industry.** The failure to understand the enormous benefits offered by renewables, not least their capacity to lower energy costs is still a problem in many Australian households. Our significant and long-term addiction to fossil fuels has clouded the enormously positive stories around rooftop solar uptake, community energy projects and the real possibilities put forward by visionaries and innovators, including Saul Griffith, etc
- **The lack of understanding around the opportunities.** While our local government authority (Strathbogie Shire Council) has declared a Climate Emergency, this is not reflected in day-to-day decisions, or an understanding by officers of how to shift from BAU to a more responsive approach. Our meetings with them around the Ruffy Windfarm opportunity, have not initiated further discussions, possibly because they don't fully understand or have the capacity to be pro-active.

B) Community Engagement: -

- **Education and promotion are key.** Promote, promote and promote the many innovations underway. The experience of EEG has been positive, but we are all volunteers, with limited time capacity. We have mostly been left alone to promote projects, and while community drivers are incredibly committed and effective, the uptake could be so much faster if we were solidly backed by departmental staff. The good-news stories around renewables are enormous, yet rarely do we see promotions by the Government in mainstream media.

- **Small towns are taking big steps.** In 2018 the Euroa Environment Group Inc (EEG) successfully won State Govt funding for a Business Demonstration Microgrid. Though cynicism (once rife when discussing subsidised renewables) initially hindered business trust, the project has been an enormous success, not least because credible local environmentalists drove the public engagement. Now, 6 years on, several local businesses, are benefitting from solar and battery installations, and boasting of their involvement. All this has occurred in a country town with woeful energy security, where discussions around bigger installations (neighbourhood batteries, etc) are now seen as both achievable and desirable.
- **Support innovators.** The way forward offers incredible benefits for communities, but these benefits are currently poorly understood or ignored. The EEG has tried to communicate to our local Council (Strathbogie Shire) the opportunities presented by the proposed Ruffy Windfarm development, with no success. Every level of Government must be quickly schooled in local power generation benefits and how they can cooperate and support innovators.

C) The Future: -

- The future is electric and its underway. [A good example is the shift to EV's](#). But these facts are not widely known. **Publicising good news stories/ energy updates and facts (not FUD) is critical.**
- Unfortunately, the promotion of renewables and their side-benefits has generally been left to energy zealots. Community energy groups, including EEG and Farmers for Climate Action regularly hold events promoting clean energy options, with good responses, however **grassroots efforts must be supported at a Government level**. Poor understanding of the solutions must be addressed. We still hear complaints about solar farms taking up valuable farmland – ie. reducing productivity. This is a total furphy. [AgriVoltaics](#) offers multiple benefits and is already happening in our region. *“One of the biggest advantages to agrivoltaic systems is their ability to make agricultural land more resilient to climate change, especially farms that are located in dryland ecosystems where increasing temperatures and water scarcity are already issues. Agrivoltaics is a way to keep food production high to feed our growing population, while climate change makes conditions less suitable for farming.”* Agricultural landholders are largely in the dark around the multiple and immediate benefits on offer. A solid campaign supporting community investment in new clean technologies would make the work of community leaders a lot more effective.
- **Schooling departmental energy “champions”** to work with planning departments at both a State and Local Government level could build greater understanding and escalate uptake of renewables throughout the regions.
- **Incentivise positive change.** Currently, developers offer enticements to immediate property owners, as a way of winning support. This conveys the message that there are winners and losers, when in fact we are all winning from the investment in clean energy. We must reward the drivers of change.
- **Education, promotion and communication are essential.** We already have good resources. Many websites tell of the shift. [Open NEM](#) is one brilliant example that is easy to comprehend.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to contribute, and we welcome ongoing involvement.

shirley saywell
euroa environment group
p o box 77 euroa
ph: 0427-246900

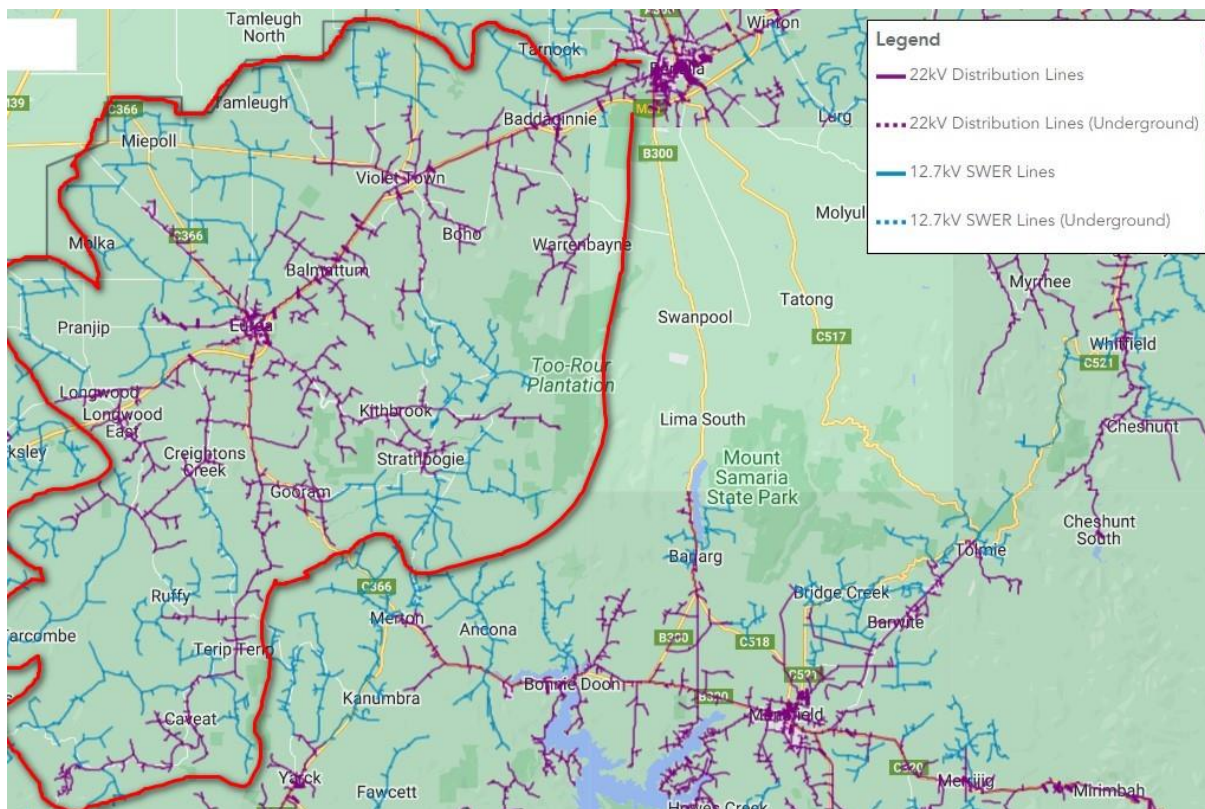


BACKGROUND INFORMATION – POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO EUROA AND SURROUNDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED WINDFARM ASSUMED TO BE LOCATED CLOSE TO RUFFY

The Background: -

The Shire of Strathbogie and its Councils have sought for over 30 years to enhance the electricity supply to Euroa and surrounds. Petitioning of the local Electricity Distributor AusNet Services, SP AusNet, TXU, Eastern Energy and the SECV for a second supply into the area has been constant and ongoing.

The current electricity supply emanates from the Benalla Zone Substation. Although sophisticated protection minimizes the impact of storms and animal activity, the power quality for Euroa residents is greatly compromised.



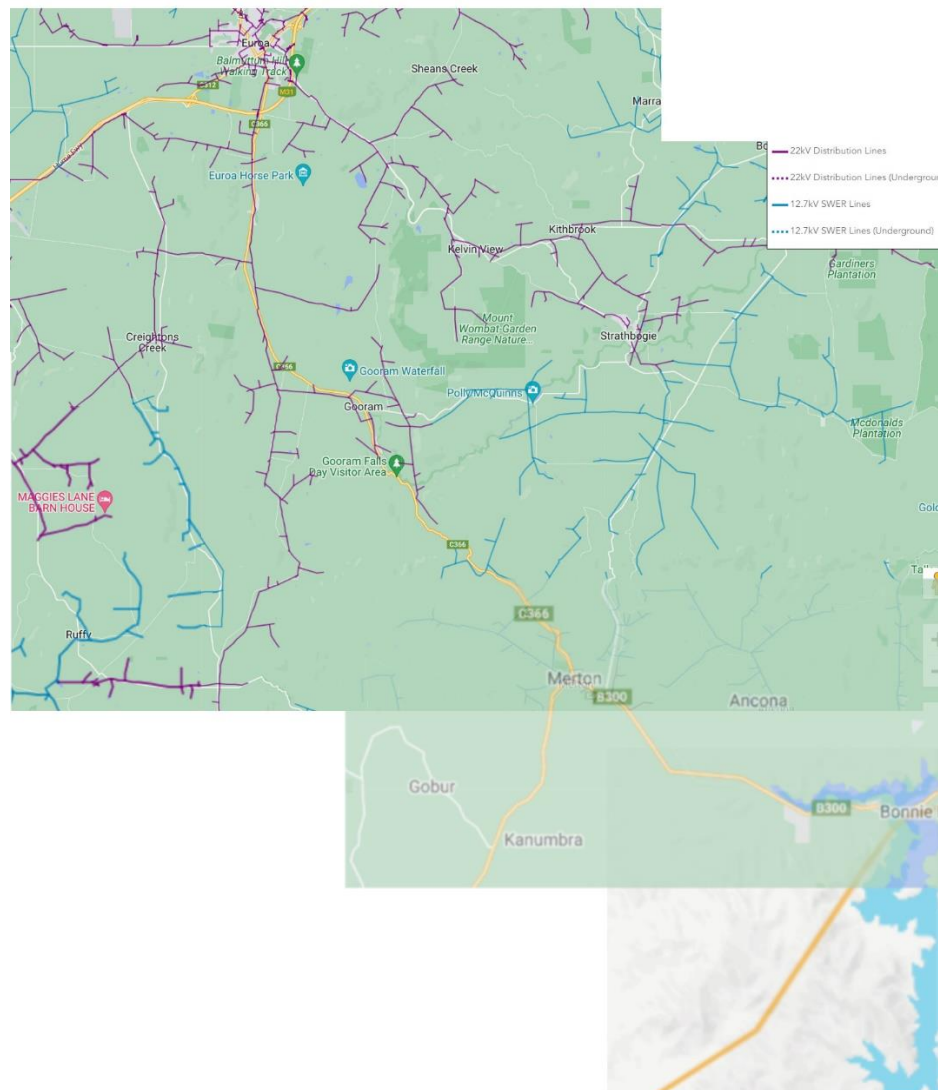
Source: <https://dapr.ausnetservices.com.au/>

The Wind Farm proposal: -

Plans to build a wind farm in the southern part of the Shire provide a rare opportunity for Euroa and surrounds to pursue an alternate connection to the transmission network (via the windfarm).

The size of the proposed wind farm has been rumored to be . . . “600-megawatt wind farm might be constructed within the area between Seymour, Ruffy and Euroa,” . . . (Stock & Land May 19, 2022)

The proposed wind farm must create a connection to the electricity market. The closest suitable Transmission line being the 330 kV Line South Morang Terminal to Dederang Terminal. See compiled map below - the 330 kV line being shown in yellow in the south eastern corner.



The opportunity: -

This connection would necessitate a significant (and expensive) upgrade to the existing electricity distribution assets, to enable a greater loading to be supported.

Max Rankin, former AusNet manager and long-time advocate for an improved power supply for Euroa, suggests this project provides Euroa with a once-in-a lifetime opportunity: -

- The wind farm proponents will be seeking substantial local support. Could the proponents be encouraged to incorporate a new power line into Euroa – from the proposed windfarm site – as a trade-off for timely and affordable delivery of the wind farm? How much of these works would they fund to win this support and ensure their proposal gets the green light? They will be looking to avoid a potentially drawn out appeal.
- Monetising the community benefits is a sure way for the Strathboggy Shire Council to build a favourable case. Developers are familiar with the community benefits. They also expect opposition to their proposal. Windfarms in Victoria have had a long history of being stalled

or totally rejected and so failing to proceed. The most common cause of conflict has been failure to engage with the community. The NIMBY effect also looms large as farms with a tower gain an off-farm income stream, whereas those next door, who are impacted similarly, receive no income from the development. As a result, the proponents must engage with the community and demonstrate a benefit to all – to address the pragmatic question of “What’s in it for me?” Sustained campaigns can be costly and often lead to developers going elsewhere. To keep the developers interested will take advocacy and diplomacy. Our community and the Strathbogie Shire Council will need to be pro-active to ensure the developer stays interested and we don’t miss out.

- Euroa’s future depends on sustainable power generation and supply. Wind power has the opportunity to deliver an outcome greater than anything we have ever considered before. With large batteries in place, fed by wind power, we could transform our local economy. We have been looking for solutions for years. We now have a grand opportunity in front of us.

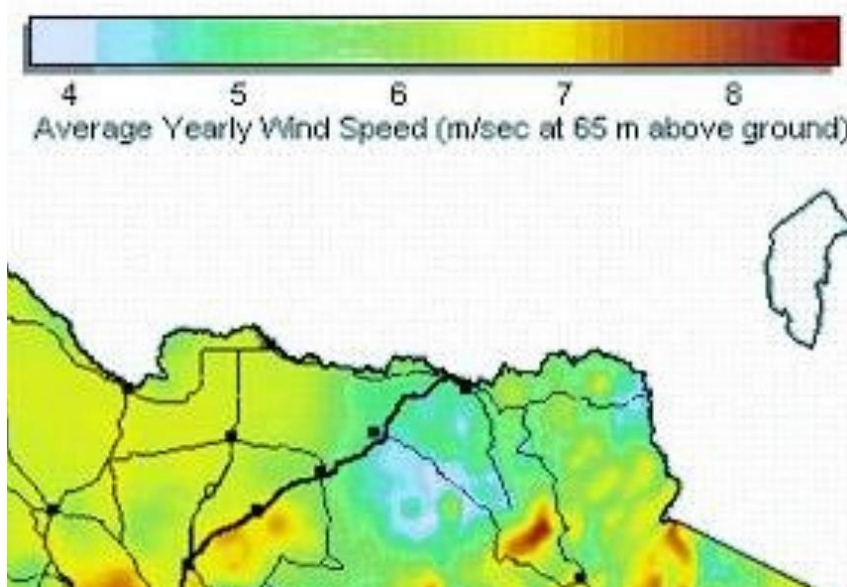
We are proposing to put a value on this community support via Business Development opportunities which come from a more secure electricity supply. The existing non-network solution has limitations on supporting ongoing development.

Mobile generation: 2.4 MW of temporary generation was installed to manage residential summer peak demand in Euroa. Outside of the summer months, generators were deployed to reduce the impact of planned outages to customers during asset replacement and augmentation works.

(Source AusNet Services Distribution Annual Planning Report 2022 – 2026)

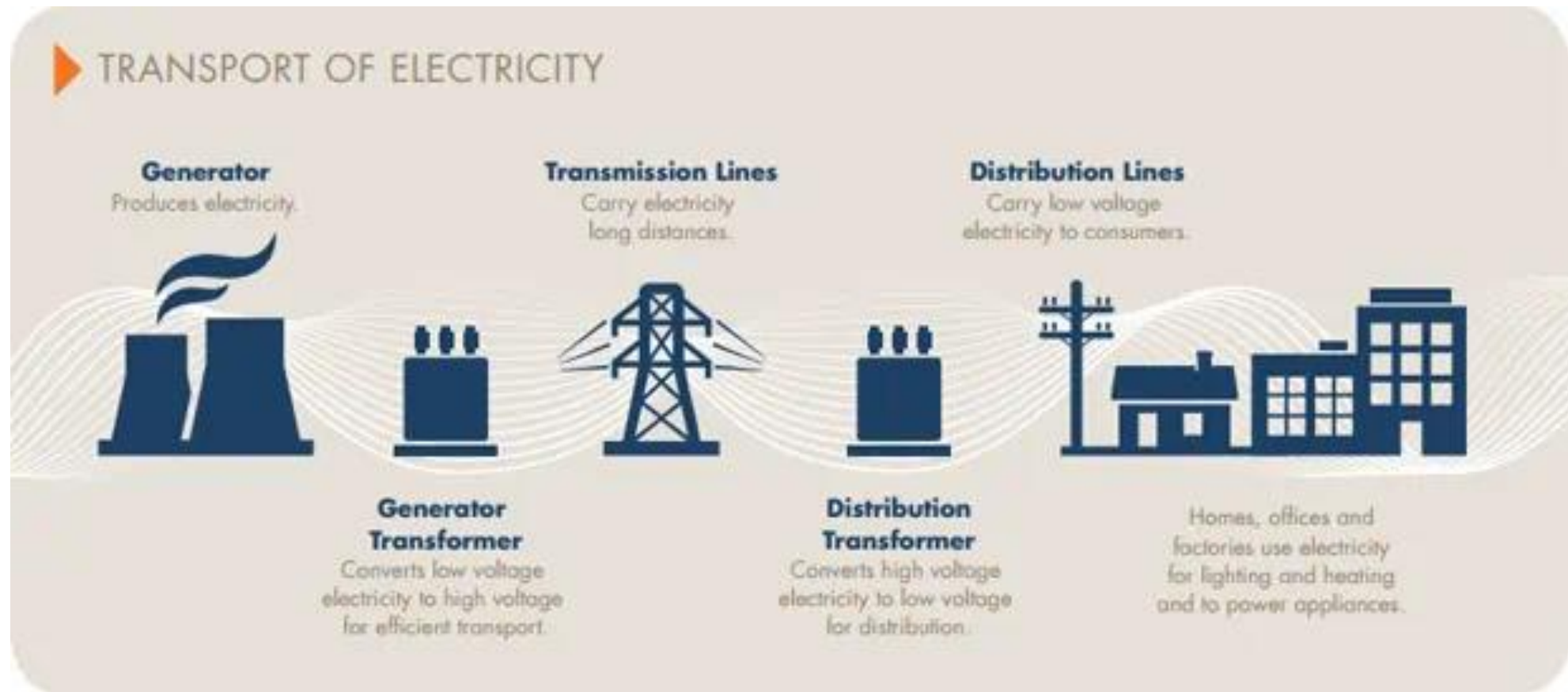
Other Issues: -

- There are limited good inland sites in Victoria and once identified usually continue to attract investors if not developed. (Source: The Victorian Wind Atlas)



- Road infrastructure in the area would need to be improved to accommodate the movement of long vehicles transporting the blades.
- The proposal is a non-traditional, needs-based and innovative solution to an existing power quality issue which has existed for many years and one which the traditional market rules have not been able to meet.

TRADITIONAL MODEL - VALUE ADDED DELIVERY CHAIN



<https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/about-the-national-electricity-market-nem>

SOME HISTORY BACK TO PRE 2000

- Upgrades of the electricity supply to Euroa and surrounds has been a constant topic of discussion with SECV, TXU SP AusNet and AusNet Services over more than 25 years.
- Responses from the network provider have always been optimistic dependent upon load growth.
- We have had significant load growth but still no meaningful development of the electricity network to support economic development for our at risk rural electricity supply
- A reliable electricity supply is essential to growth and economic development for Strathbogie Shire

Transmission: 220,000 Volt Tower line



Terminal Stations: Used to deliver large amounts of power from the transmission network to meet localized load requirements

Glenrowan Terminal Station

Benalla Zone Substation

Sub Transmission:
Nil Retail Customers
66,000 Volt Pole line

Wangaratta Zone Substation



Since 2011/12 temporary 2 MW of temporary generation has been installed at the Euroa Showgrounds to manage summer peak demand on the feeder, in excess of the feeder capacity. Note, the generation cannot support island mode operation.

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Distribution: Euroa Line 22,000 volt Distribution (area includes Violet Town, Strathbogie, Longwood and Highlands)

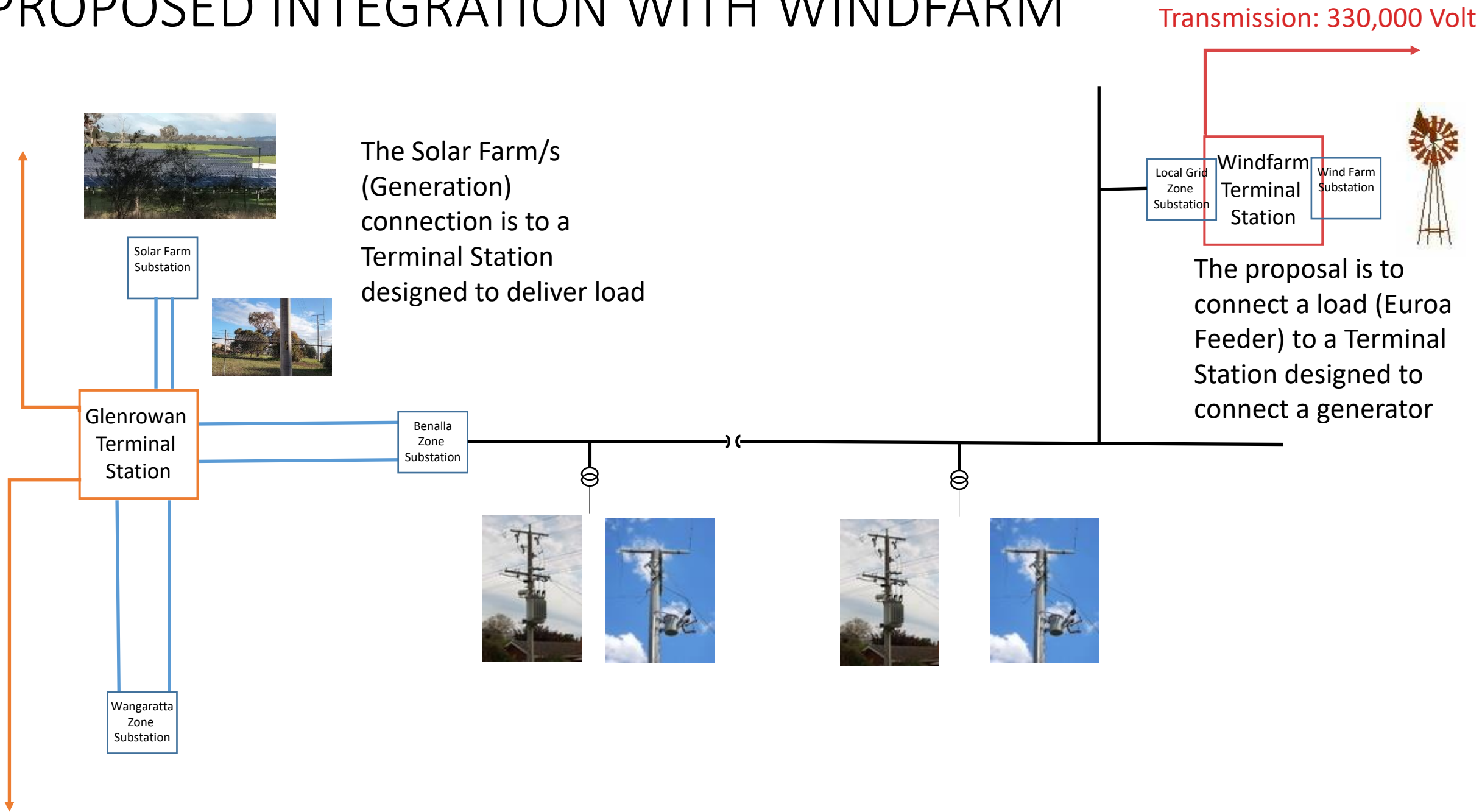
- 4,727 Retail low voltage Retail Customers
 - 1,200 km 22,000 Line
- Longest feeder on AusNet Services Network by approx. 25%

Higher risk of outages

Higher risk of Power Quality Issues

22,000 volts to 230/400 Volts
Many Distribution substations located adjacent to all customers.

PROPOSED INTEGRATION WITH WINDFARM



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- Provides an alternate electricity supply from the grid and removes the single order contingency for the majority of the customers
- Reduction on line losses reduces carbon emissions
- Euroa is a gas town current State government to reduce gas consumption will increase electricity consumption and likely increase demand in winter and at evening peak in summer
- Line loss reductions will reduce marginally cost of electricity
- Some issues
 - Cannot parallel the two supplies
 - Existing overhead line needs to be upgraded to accommodate more load
 - The Windfarm Zone substation is also an additional cost