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Powercor proposes faster, simpler renewable energy connections

More renewable energy projects would be connected faster, helping provide cleaner power to Victorians and supporting the state to meet emissions reductions, under a new plan by electricity distributor Powercor.

Home to four of Victoria's six Renewable Energy Zones, Powercor has proposed using its distribution network to enable the connection of large-scale renewable projects in response to the Victoria Government's Renewable Energy Zone discussion paper.

The proposal seeks to unlock 1.3GW of capacity on the existing network and improve reliability for customers through a series of network upgrades over two stages, including:

- Synchronous condensers spread out across the network to deliver system strength that supports new large-scale renewable connections to both the transmission and distribution networks; and
- Upgrading key parts of the 66kV network to enable a greater number of large solar and wind projects to connect to the existing network within the Geelong, Shepparton, Terang, Ballarat and Bendigo regions.
- Grid-scale batteries installed across up to 20 existing network sites in central, western and northern Victoria, delivering as much as 1.1GW of storage capacity to release transmission constraints while also providing local community benefits.

The proposal complements the Victorian Government's recent announcement of a 45-50% emissions reduction target by 2050, with a faster transition to renewable electricity generation a key driver.

Powercor General Manager, Electricity Networks, Mark Clarke, said distribution networks should be considered as part of a whole-of-network solution to unlocking the targeted 10GW of new renewable energy capacity in the shortest time possible.

"Connecting renewable energy at the distribution network level is fast, simple and generates greater benefits more broadly spread out at the local level," Mr Clarke said.

"The real opportunities come from creating jobs and network capacity that will benefit a large number of diverse communities."

The Powercor proposal requires no new easements and uses existing land and assets held by Powercor to ensure no additional impacts on the visual amenity of communities or local agricultural or natural environments.

"We can support new renewable generation while also improving power reliability and network capacity for more solar, EV charging infrastructure and battery programs in local communities," Mr Clarke said.

Already, 2GW of renewable energy generation is connected to the Powercor network, with another 2.3GW of active connections enquiries or applications ranging in size from 1MW to 150MW in the assessment process.

Mr Clarke said having comparatively smaller projects connected via the distribution network meant more projects could be built at the same time, leading to more jobs for regional Victoria.

For more information call Powercor's media line on (03) 9683 4342



“There were more than 300 people, mostly locals, employed during the construction of the 112MW Karadoc Solar Farm in north-western Victoria which is connected to the Powercor network,” Mr Clarke said.

“Many of these employees and apprentices have now gone on to use that experience and those skills to build careers on other renewable generation projects around Australia.”

For more information on Powercor’s proposal see the Executive Summary at [this link](#).

For more information on Victoria’s Renewable Energy Zones, visit <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/renewable-energy-zones>

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Background – Powercor

Powercor distributes electricity to 850,000 customers across the western suburbs of Melbourne and through central and western Victoria to the South Australian and New South Wales borders. Electricity is distributed in the region via a network comprising over 88,400 kilometres of wires, supported by more than 577,420 poles and associated infrastructure.

Residential households account for 86 per cent of connections. Our customers are dispersed over a wide geographic area in a density of just 12 people per square kilometre.

Our network also supports 11,200 medium, commercial and industrial businesses and 106,500 small businesses dominated by health care and social assistance, agriculture, forestry and fishing. These businesses generate 25 per cent of Victoria’s Gross Domestic Product.

Our teams operate from 13 depots, our Bendigo-based customer contact centre and our CBD headquarters, to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity by operating, managing and maintaining all network assets and metering services. This means managing a network that is reliable and safe, particularly in relation to bushfire risks.

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