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By Email

Submission to **STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY** (Parliament of Australia)

Inquiry into the Australian Local Power Agency Bill 2021 and Australian Local Power Agency (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity of providing input into the Australian Local Power Agency Bill 2021 and Australian Power Agency (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2021.

The ability to have a reliable, efficient and effective energy system is critical for the health and well being of residents, industry and the wider community. It can be argued that our current electrical system is no longer fit for purpose.

While I am currently living in Beechworth, I was previously on a 78 acre property where energy was provided through a major retailer. I also had a 2 kilowatt solar system and a solar hot water service system. A significant risk in that location was that the electricity provider informed me that in a high bush fire scenario they were prepared to cut off power to the property. An even bigger impact was that the 2009 bushfire was started by that same company up-hill from my property with a power line issue. There was considerable bushfire impact on my property and massive losses for the wider community in North East Victoria.

In North East Victoria we are heavily dependent on power coming from Gippsland, with major risks of being cut off every time that there is bush fire threatening the towers and power lines. We have also just witnessed the impact of storm damage in areas abutting Melbourne, where properties again dependent on the current electrical system have been severely impacted, losing power for weeks at a time.

The Local Power Agency Bill does not fix all of the problems of the current electrical system but provides opportunities and practical solutions to increase the resilience of the system and of communities. The technological changes that have been occurring over the last ten years has made renewable energy increasingly attractive and cheaper. Local communities, such as Yackandandah, Benalla and Bendigo have been actively trialling different technologies and building more robust, efficient models of electricity generation, distribution and storage. Communities heavily impacted by the recent 2020 bushfires are looking at using renewable energy and the examples of other communities to build a more resilient energy system that can continue to operate as an islanded power system when the main grid was not available.

The framework provided in the legislation allows a more consistent approach to building more resilient energy systems. Much of the work that has been done to date has been by passionate

volunteers. The proposed \$467 million Agency would support regional communities to develop and invest in their own renewable energy projects. This is an opportunity for the Federal Government to recognise and leverage the existing work in the communities. Supporting the legislation also demonstrates that the Federal Government understands the current energy challenges faced by regional and rural communities and is prepared to initiate positive change.

I look forward with interest to the response of the Committee and a positive response from Parliament.

Yours sincerely

Narelle Martin.