

Submission Regarding Western Power Headworks Costs
Attn Mr Lyndon Rowe ERA

I write as a resident of Wellington Mill, a community of approx sixty families centered in the Ferguson Valley, 20kms east of Dardanup.

Over the last four years the Wellington Mill Community Association in combination with the Dardanup Shire Council has formulated the Wellington Mill Structure Plan, designed to guide future development in the area, which has considerable historical significance and is one of the South West's most scenic areas.

The gist of the Structure Plan allows for limited subdivision of some of the larger properties, controlled by current road access and suitable slope. Most of the properties in question had a background of dairying, no longer economically viable but now much in demand as "lifestyle" blocks. Subdivision was to be limited to result in titles no smaller than 4Ha, with the aim to preserve the rural lifestyle and beauty of the area.

The Structure Plan was submitted to the WAPC for approval, but was rejected with the advice that Western Power advised that the single phase grid serving the area was at capacity and required upgrading to three phase. No subdivision could proceed without this upgrade, with the costs of the upgrade to be borne by the first sub-divider.

The rejection of the Structure Plan for the reasons given highlights key points which common sense dictates should be addressed.....

1. The 'user pays' policy which lies behind Western Power's rejection is in such instances unworkable. The situation is not one of a major commercial land development involving scores of blocks where upgrading costs may be economically viable. Currently there are three residents who have submitted 'Application for Amendments' involving eight lots. The applicant closest to the present three phase line, to bring the line to his block alone, would be faced with a \$500,000 cost, which of course makes the exercise unfeasible. The scenario means that the policy enunciated would stifle any likelihood of future developments in Wellington Mill.
2. The current policy seems to give Western Power sole monopolistic rights to supply power. There are currently other power suppliers in the state and likely to be more in the future, together with privately supplied alternative energy sources. Any policy needs to be able to cover much wider possibilities.
3. There is a basic question of the right of land title independent of power. Western Power also rejected a modified submission of the structure plan which allowed for title applicants to opt for alternative energy sources. This results in a government agency vetoing development involving alternative energy sources which the same government actively encourages and promotes as ideal.

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4. There needs to be a far more equitable share of power supply costs than the current policy promotes. The higher costs of supply to rural communities should be spread over the wider State population if there is to be any further rural development.
5. The 'first user pays' ad hoc policy illustrated by the Wellington Mill situation is unworkable and will automatically curtail rural residential development, particularly in areas such as this where the development entails a relatively small number of 'lifestyle' blocks. The 'Contributory' scheme which functioned under the SEC some years ago did much to equitably spread costs and amortize capital expenditure over a period of years.

Addendum.....I feel that the time given for submissions on the subject of headworks costs has been unreasonably short and lacking in public dissemination. It would be salutary for any investigative body to attend any public meeting in rural areas where the subject of Western Power policy is raised. They would find strongly worded consensus that rural W.A. is treated badly in almost every aspect of Western Power's activities.

Signed

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