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Victorian Farmers Rally Against Harsh Land Access Laws

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Victorian farmers protest new laws allowing Transmission Company Victoria to access private land for renewable energy projects, facing hefty fines for resistance.

In a bold stand against what many call oppressive legislation, hundreds of Victorian farmers rallied outside Parliament House in Melbourne on July 30, 2025, to oppose the National Electricity (Victoria) Amendment (VicGrid Stage 2 Reform) Bill. The bill grants Transmission Company Victoria (TCV) and VicGrid, the state’s transmission planning agency, authority to enter private farmland without consent to construct high-voltage transmission lines for renewable energy projects like the Victoria-New South Wales Interconnector (VNI) West and Western Renewables Link. Farmers face fines up to \$12,210 for obstructing access, with authorities potentially using force, including police

assistance, to enforce entry, according to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News.

The legislation, debated in state parliament, has sparked outrage among regional communities, particularly in western Victoria, where the VNI West project's 240-kilometer route threatens prime agricultural land. Farmers like Mark Reading from Wallaloo vowed to lock their gates, stating, "They'll face fierce opposition if they try to enter." The bill's provisions, which include on-the-spot fines and court-ordered access, are seen as a direct assault on property rights. Andrew Weidemann, a rally organizer from Rupanyup, described the laws as "draconian," arguing they undermine farmers' livelihoods and food security, as reported by Stock & Land.

Nationals Member of Parliament (MP) Anne Webster, representing Mallee, criticized the Labor government's approach, highlighting the lack of respect for farmers who "feed and power the nation." She noted the projects' impact on grocery prices and energy costs, exacerbating cost-of-living pressures. Webster emphasized that the laws allow bolt cutters on farm gates, stripping landowners of recourse through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Energy Minister Lily D'Ambrosio defended the bill, claiming it ensures reliable energy as coal plants close, but farmers remain unconvinced. Claire Grant, a farmer affected by VNI West, cited concerns over land devaluation and restricted farming practices, per ABC News. The opposition, led by Brad Battin, pledged to repeal the bill if elected, arguing it prioritizes renewable agendas over rural communities. With protests intensifying, the fight for property rights continues to challenge Victoria's energy transition.