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Incorporating community sentiment analysis

The Australian Energy Market Operator, or AEMO, says it's just too difficult to factor in community sentiment when reviewing early-stage electricity network plans. In its Draft 2025 Electricity Network Options Report, AEMO states: _"Community sentiment and social licence are critical factors to the delivery of transmission, or any large infrastructure, projects. However, at the stage of reviewing conceptual options, there is not a practical way to directly reflect sentiment."_

But is that really the case?

In today's digital age, tools powered by artificial intelligence are making sentiment analysis more accessible than ever. These technologies can gauge public opinion across social media, online forums, and submissions — quickly and at scale. Every AEMO webinar attracts hundreds of participants — and likely behind each one of them I'm guessing were a lot more people. So why not give public sentiment the same level of attention as technical modelling? If trust and transparency are key, AEMO must step up.

That means developing a robust, ongoing program to capture and incorporate community views — not just as a footnote, but as a core input in our energy future.