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## SP AusNet aerial inspections near Traralgon and Warragul

Electricity distribution company SP AusNet's helicopter will be flying around Traralgon and Warragul over the next few weeks, inspecting more than 5000 power poles and assets as part of the company's bushfire mitigation program.

To meet its safety regulations and ensure a reliable supply of electricity to customers, this year SP AusNet will spend approximately \$95 million on inspecting, repairing and replacing electrical assets along with approximately \$40 million on pruning or clearing hazardous trees.

SP AusNet Eastern Region Manager Jim Haylock said that SP AusNet's helicopter has cutting-edge photographic technology to inspect electrical assets quickly in hard to reach landscapes.

"Since 2010, we've been using a helicopter to help manage our growing asset inspection program throughout our network spanning 48,000 kilometres," Mr Haylock said.

"With the helicopter, we can quickly take photos of our power poles, crossarms and other assets for our technical specialist to assess and then direct our field workers to undertake the appropriate action required.

"These helicopter inspections are a part of our extensive program of work to ensure that we are as prepared for the coming bushfire season," he said.

SP AusNet operates the helicopter between 8am and 4pm, flying at approximately 350 feet with custom blades that minimise noise. So far this year, the company has inspected more than 10,000 power poles and assets around Traralgon, Churchill, Leongatha and Bairnsdale.

Mr Haylock said the company's inspection program complements its comprehensive asset maintenance and vegetation management programs in place to ensure a safe and reliable supply of electricity to customers and help reduce bushfire risk.

"Through our programs, this year SP AusNet will inspect approximately 120,000 power poles and assets in addition to the 135,000 hazardous trees our vegetation team will prune or cut around throughout our network," Mr Haylock said.

Moving forward, SP AusNet will focus on working with the Victorian State Government and other stakeholders to implement its \$750m, 10-year work plan to mitigate bushfires caused by electrical assets. This includes upgrading network protection devices and undergrounding powerlines in high bushfire risk areas.

SP AusNet is scheduled to complete its bushfire mitigation and vegetation work before the commencement of the declared bushfire season, meeting all regulatory requirements and ensuring a high level of preparedness for its network.

**Ends...**