

# STOP, RETHINK HUMELINK

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## **Response to supplementary question for the Inquiry into the feasibility of Undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects**

### **Question:**

Can you please describe how the landholders and surrounding communities impacted by these transmission lines, feel about having to deal with the impacts of these projects, to save consumers around \$8 per quarter on their electricity bills?

### **Response:**

The cost to regional people, communities, and the wider community of HumeLink as an overhead transmission line is immense and enduring for the 80+ year lifetime of the infrastructure.

The impacts and cost of an overground high voltage transmission line is significantly more than the small additional cost of Undergrounding the transmission.

As we understand it, the additional costs to consumers for the construction of HumeLink being placed undergrounded is still an unknown. This is despite Transgrid continually perpetuating a myth that the cost of undergrounding would be significant. When challenged on the question of how significant, we have not been able to get an answer. Even at the inquiry, Transgrid CEO Brett Redman advised he had “no idea” of the impact to household bills,

If undergrounding HumeLink will add an additional \$8 per quarter to the average electricity bill, we believe consumers would be more than happy to contribute to protecting our communities, our wildlife, our landscapes, and the livelihood of those that will be impacted. It's worth noting that many research reports shows that consumers are happy to pay extra for green energy, with research by *Central Queensland University* suggesting households were willing to pay \$28 extra per quarter on top of their bill to support clean energy. A two per cent increase in power costs would seem well within the capacity and willingness of consumers to pay.

Recent elections have shown significant support for low emissions policy. This reinforces our view that the community will be willing to pay for low emission and low impact transmission as well as low emission generation – particularly given the massive impact that aboveground transmission would have if HumeLink 1.0 is allowed to go ahead as planned.

It is also important to recognise that undergrounding HumeLink will present savings to the consumer over its lifetime, through reduced loss of electricity and less ongoing maintenance costs compared to overhead transmission. While we have asked Transgrid for the cost of easement practices for an overhead option over the lifespan of the project, and comparisons to undergrounding, we have been met with silence.

From the very first day that an overhead HumeLink was announced, our community has been fearful of the very real and concerning impacts that above ground transmission lines will have on them, with many in the community having severe mental health issues just

thinking about what the 80-metre high, high voltage towers will do to them and the community they have built their lives in. The concern is evidenced by the many thousands who have signed petitions, written to our elected officials, and put in many hundreds of hours to try to ensure these lines are put underground. It is also evidenced by the submissions sent to the inquiry and the community attendance at the Public Forum held by the committee.

If built overground, HumeLink will destroy a significant part of NSW. The impacts are many including:

- Increased risks of bushfires in a community that has already had to live through, and is still recovering, from the Black Summer bushfires along with other fires throughout the years, with the ever present fear of the next one;
- Firefighting efforts being hampered in the vicinity of HumeLink when a fire next breaks out, putting the lives of those living near the line, and the volunteers fighting the fires, at risk, While Transgrid repeatedly use “de-energising the line” as a mitigation strategy, it is by no means a safe measure. Transgrid’s own experts have advised the community that a de-energised line is still defined to have residual energy present and still poses a risk to human life;
- The destruction of 48,322 hectares of beautiful landscapes land in the region (equivalent to 67,678 football fields), with trees being replaced by 800-900 towers measuring 80 metres high;
- Large areas of native forests and bushland being clearfelled, with serious impacts on habitat for 82 threatened species of plants and animals including the Koala, Booroolong Frog, Superb Parrot, Gang-gang Cockatoo, and the Powerful Owl.
- have significant impacts on businesses and primary producers, including significant changes to farming practice, inability to remain competitive through adopting technological advances in agriculture and leaving them uninsurable.
- The community being exposed to greater mental health and other health concerns, from EMF exposure and exposure to chemicals used to maintain transmission line easements.

The sense of the urban majority imposing unacceptable costs on the rural minority is very widespread in our communities. Our community should not have to deal with the impacts that will be created by an above ground HumeLink.

They are huge and should not be ignored, in order to save energy users a few dollars.