

Submission
No 13

**INQUIRY INTO FEASIBILITY OF UNDERGROUNDING
THE TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR
RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS**

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 6 July 2023

Partially
Confidential

I live in Bannister, next to the Gullen Range Wind Farm, and the Gullen Range solar farm. It has been very interesting been a part of this community during these developments, and now during the proposed Hume Link development.

When the wind farm was proposed the community were very concerned - about devaluation of land, about noise, about bushfires and visual impacts. Once the wind farm was up, it seems that the community realised that the impacts of the wind farm were not as bad as they feared, and in fact they were very minimal.

When the solar farm was proposed, again the community were very concerned - about land devaluation and visual amenity. Once again these impacts proved to be negligible. Our farm values are all still going up at the ridiculous rate as the rest of the country, and there are many people who are very happy to live very close to wind and solar farms.

Then the Hume Link transmission line was proposed, and again the community is concerned - about land devaluation, about visual amenity, about bushfires and about electromagnetic radiation.

It is curious to me that we have not learnt from the last 2 experiences of the wind farm and the solar farm to realise that these impacts will also probably be minimal. What is consistent throughout these 3 experiences is a poor community communication and consultation. This is the underlying cause of these concerns.

If you were told that a Transmission line was going through the area, somewhere in a 1km pathway, and your house, or the land where you plan to build a house, lay in that pathway, it would make planning very difficult, and that would be very stressful. If you were also told that your only option if you didn't like what was being proposed was to have your land compulsorily acquired, you would feel very defensive and disempowered. Not many people would respond very positively to this kind of communication.

So, it is also surprising that the development companies have also not learnt from the previous experiences and learnt to communicate better - to consult in genuine, meaningful ways where the community will have the opportunity to have input into the plans.

A great example of this is the Goulburn Community Solar farm - this solar farm will be in very close proximity to many businesses and houses, as it will be in Goulburn. At very early stages in the development planning the proponents communicated directly with every single residence that would have line of sight to the solar farm. They asked if it would be ok. They asked if they had any concerns or if there was any way they could minimise the impacts. And as a result that solar farm, right in the middle of a rural city, has had next to zero community opposition.

Another way to ensure good ensure good social licence is to pay people, and pay them well. Not just hosts - but neighbours as well. This isn't just about a money grab, but is a way of meaningfully engaging and empowering people, and spreading the benefits throughout the community.. And, it really helps gets communities on side.

RE-Alliance have outlines these ideas and a lo more details in there Building Trust for Transmission Report - <https://www.re-alliance.org.au/reports>. It is well worth a read.

So, in summary, the concerns that the communities that will host transmission lines have are real, even if their concerns don't eventuate. The communities are offside, and it will be a long road to get them back. But, these communities matter. Social Licence is incredibly important,

and so much hard to gain once the distrust is already set in. But, it matters. Work with these communities. Empower these communities. Help them maximise the benefits of hosting renewable energy infrastructure. Going underground is NOT the only way to achieve that. Under-grounding is incredibly expensive. We need these transmission lines up quick smart so we can roll out the renewable energy transition.