

Submission  
No 28

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
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Partially  
Confidential

I urge the NSW Parliament when investigating the cost associated with underground transmission lines versus overhead powerlines to consider the fire safety risk, insurance costs and farm viability due to overhead lines.

Firefighting & Community Safety First and foremost, this is a public safety issue. Farmers shouldn't be expected to accept the extra fire safety risk associated with overhead transmission. Firefighting can't be performed safely near transmission lines, regardless of whether firefighters are on the ground or fighting the fire in planes and helicopters. Safety regulations impose No Go zones that mean areas under and near the transmission lines are undefendable. In addition to flame height and smoke presenting significant arc hazard near transmission lines, water applied during firefighting poses an electrical safety risk. The presence of overhead lines increases the risk that fires can escape control lines while power companies decide whether to de-energise the power.

Limitations on our ability to fight fires around transmission lines directly impact community safety.

Fire safety risk can be reduced by undergrounding. Yes, it costs more but we're talking about the safety of communities that are in harm's way.

Compensation or 'community benefit' programs don't offer any solution to a safety problem of this severity. How many more Royal Commissions will it take before the fire safety message gets through?

Farm Insurance – Unavailable or Unaffordable

Second, there is a related problem with farm insurance.

Farmers along the proposed transmission routes are being told by insurance brokers that farm insurance will be unaffordable or unavailable due to the increased fire risk associated with overhead transmission. Fire risk is becoming too hot to handle for insurance companies.

Building overhead lines is cheaper for power companies but this creates a substantial risk for farmers.

AEMO says farmers can claim compensation but how do you compensate farmers who can't get insurance? The NSW Parliament should be asking why

AEMO fobs off farmers when insurance questions are asked at community meetings.

If farm insurance is unavailable or unaffordable, farmers have no safety net. Banks don't want to lend money to farms where insurance is unavailable or unaffordable. A farm that can't borrow for normal farm operations will quickly become unviable. This creates a real cost to the community that the NSW Parliament needs to consider because the scale of this insurance problem is significant.

Thirdly, maintenance issues and therefore costs associated with underground power lines are far less over the lifetime of the project and this shouldn't be ignored. We can't just think about the cost today, but the cost we are imposing on the generations to come. Thank you for considering my concerns.