

Submission
No 32

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

Name: Hon Wendy Tuckerman MP

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**NSW PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO FEASIBILITY OF
UNDERGROUNDING TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE**

As the local Member for Goulburn, I herewith lodge a submission to the inquiry into the feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure.

I write to you to bring to your immediate attention the frustrations of not only myself, but many landowners and constituents in my electorate that will be severely impacted by the Humelink/TransGrid project.

I have, and will continue, to strongly support my constituents in their pursuit to have the Humelink/TransGrid project undergrounded. Overhead transmission lines have significant consequences for our landscapes, land use and environment. There is also research to suggest that there are health risks to humans living within close proximity to high voltage overhead powerlines.

Overhead powerline faults have also been reported to be the cause of almost 5% of all rural fires in Australia, as per the Black Summer fires of 2019-20, which caused so much devastation in my electorate.

In recent correspondence to the Humelink Undergrounding Steering Committee, TransGrid advise *"TransGrid, like all other Transmission Network Service Providers must propose the most efficient route for transmission that is the long-term interests of consumers of electricity with respect to price, quality, safety, reliability and security of supply of electricity"*.

I put to you that in 2023, the **archaic** infrastructure of overhead powerlines is not moving in the right direction for the future security of electricity supply in NSW.

TransGrid advise in further correspondence dated 21 December 2022 to my office, *"We are also working on methods such as screening, reducing visual impact by placing towers below ridge lines and certain matt paints that reduce the glare of the towers and tower designs"*. Have TransGrid considered moving the financial burdens of these works to a more feasible and future focussed result such as undergrounding?

I note from minutes of a Humelink Community Consultative meeting held 14 September 2022, a representative from TransGrid advised *"The other factor TransGrid deems making undergrounding unfeasible is the time it will take to underground the cables along HumeLink, hence not complying with AEMO's determination to accelerate the project"*.

Project acceleration or "fast tracking" transmission infrastructure will, and has, come at a critical cost to landowners and the environment. Why are we not **planning** for better long term future outcomes?

I firmly believe that TransGrid have failed to consult with my communities in an *altruistic* manner. Many of the affected landowners have, at their own expense, taken time to invest in undergrounding reporting and provided options which they have presented to TransGrid only to feel that their questions or concerns are ignored or responded to with a lack of integrity, proper investigation, and a "standardised" approach.

The below information has been provided to me a member of the Upper Lachlan, Yass Valley Community Consultative Committee. The correspondence intelligently articulates the concerns the group have raised with regard to the undergrounding report commissioned by TransGrid through GHD.

From the report.

"The undergrounding route options presented are outcomes of a limited desk top study that utilises a geospatial constraint analysis tool. Refining this assessment through more detailed site and field investigations including community, environmental and engineering perspectives would determine the extent of constraints including constructability. Whether a detailed route options study could result in a shorter or longer route outcome is purely speculative. If a shorter route with easier terrain and less clearing can be identified through further analysis, the cost of undergrounding is expected to be lower than presented in this report. The study has explored viable technical options however as a concept study the costing and delivery timing will have a high level of variability. Market testing is required to provide more certainty around these variables."

Do we not owe it to our communities and to our environment to make further investigations?

I implore the NSW Government to consider undergrounding the transmission infrastructure, including the Humelink project as a matter of urgency. We are in a unique position with an extremely powerful responsibility to make sure we are doing what is ethically right for communities, the environment, and the State of NSW.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Tuckerman, MP.
Member for Goulburn