

**Submission
No 39**

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

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The Hon Emily Suvaal, Committee Chair,
Inquiry – Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for Renewable Energy Projects
Standing Committee on State Development
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear The Hon Emily Suvaal MLC

Re: Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for Renewal Energy Projects

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this vitally important inquiry. We, as a family, hope that the outcome of this inquiry will ensure better outcome for regional communities in NSW.

We are a family of fourth generation primary producers and along with our community are experiencing significant anxiety about the Humelink proposal of erecting high voltage transmission lines with towers as tall as the Sydney Harbour Bridge pylons, across our property. We feel powerless at the hands of Transgrid, a foreign owned company who has doggedly pursued one option with scare campaigns and threats of compulsory acquisition. These scare campaigns have caused significant angst in the community when landowners are faced with the destruction of their homes, their livelihoods and the precious landscapes with some experiencing thoughts of suicide.

Humelink is impacting third and fourth generation farmers who, due to their love of the land and the many ups and downs weathered by Australian farmers, are being defeated by a foreign owned body forcing these industrial monstrosities across productive land, and these foreign owned bodies seem to be assisted by government agencies and their unfair processes.

Of major concern to all in the community is the increased risk of bushfires. We do not want to see another Black Summer like that of 2019/2020. These transmission lines do fall over and in the type of extreme summer conditions we experience in Australia, another disaster is looming. The cost of bushfires is significant eg: Victoria's Black Saturday bush fires cost \$7.6 billion and the cost of Black Summer fires was \$230 billion. High Voltage power lines stop the management of bush fires due to the over and under spaces are "no go" for firefighters. Many farmers lost significant parts of their properties during Black Summer as a result of being unable to fight the fires.

Regional Australia has Tourism as a major growth industry and Transgrid has not treated this as a serious consideration in their proposal. Instead, they have pushed forward with little regard to build this massive eyesore, an ugly 360km long, 70 metre wide scar through state forests and working farms and old growth forests from Wagga Wagga to the beautiful Southern Highlands.

Transgrid has shown little regard to the impact this transmission line will have on productive farm land, these farm lands being significant contributors to the local economy and employment and to the country's food production.

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Currently the Humelink proposal is set to devastate habitats for more than 80 threatened or endangered species of Flora and Fauna and impact an area of 5173 hectares of land. Native forests will undergo clear-felling and bushland will be destroyed impacting habitat, greenhouse gases and global warming.

The Transgrid preferred route conflicts with decades of scientific research that demonstrates vegetation clearance contributes to a warming and changing climate, add the manufacture of carbon intensive construction materials of concrete and steel and the environmental impact is enormous.

It is inconceivable to think that in this century, the transmission of green power requires environmental destruction. There is no doubt in our minds that we need renewable energy but the proposed transmission is definitely not the answer.

Undergrounding is the answer for many reasons:

- An estimated 15m easement in comparison to 70m
- Much reduced removal of trees and plant flora
- Reduction in endangered species being killed
- Land above underground cable infrastructure can be rejuvenated after construction
- No towers/wires interfering with bird flight or the movement of climbing animals
- Eliminates the risk of overhead lines causing bush fires
- Eliminates air and ground fire control hazards
- Eliminates the risk of interruption of power transmission in severe weather events
- Minimal impact on private or public land after construction
- No overhead power lines impeding agricultural operations such as irrigation, drones, aircraft operations or machinery use
- No visual impact from the transmission lines and no loss of rural landscape character of regions
- Less risk of serious health impacts due to little or no electromagnetic fields
- No interruption of new technologies in precision agriculture that improve the productive efficiency of agriculture.

And finally COST. The cost of undergrounding is more than offset by enduring environmental benefits. Humelink's costings do not properly consider the ongoing maintenance of towers to keep them safe over the 80 plus year life of the project, just the upfront build cost. Maintenance costs would be significantly reduced by undergrounding. Transgrid's estimates are inflated and have been proven to be wildly inaccurate.

Underground energy transmission is best practice around the world and this has been proven by Australian studies. It is also more reliable, safer and efficient.

NSW needs to take the lead and support a renewable energy solution that all Australians and our iconic natural environment deserve while also supporting the health of regional and rural communities.

We urge the Committee to strongly recommend the case for undergrounding.

Yours Sincerely,

Eris W Heffernan

Lynette F Heffernan