

Submission
No 45

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

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I am writing this submission about the proposed Hume link project, as I have great concern about its proposed overhead, powerline network. As a landholder in the Adelong district with an existing 350 powerline running through our property I know all too well the drawbacks of having such infrastructure across grazing country. During the recent Dunns Road fire, we were told not to go under the power line if it was in the vicinity of the bushfire. The current powerline dissects our property with houses on either side.

During the fire, the occupant of the second house on our property was completely isolated and I was unable to get near that house for well over an hour to see whether he was okay or even alive. The fire travelling under the powerlines prevented me from being able to get between the two houses. This delayed response could be the difference between life and death. It could also have cost us the house. I would also like to mention that there were no employees from Transgrid anywhere near our property during the Dunn's Road fire to help fight the fire on their easement. What is going to be Transgrid's firefighting policy during such events as the Dunn's Road fire when they propose to have such a huge network of powerlines strung across the countryside?

Cheapest options in life are often not the best they may look good in the short-term, but in the long-term, they more often than not they are a costly mistake. It is time the government realised that overhead powerlines in a country prone to bushfire are no longer appropriate. There is another option, and that is to put the powerline underground. Overhead powerline should no longer be an option in this country. All new suburbs built in Australia have underground power supplied so why should rural people bear the brunt of ugly, dangerous superseded infrastructure?

Country people are not against the infrastructure required for renewable energy, but they are against outdated practices and infrastructure that is ugly, will impact on the daily running of their properties and severely reduce the value of their assets. Many of these farmers have worked hard and borrowed a lot of money from banks to pay for their properties, therefore it is grossly unfair for the government to allow such an unnecessary devaluation. We have a lot of steep country in our district and the only way to control noxious weeds, and to apply fertiliser is from the air. The proposed power line will be extremely dangerous for aircraft and will make it impossible to control noxious weeds in certain areas. Once again it will be putting lives at risk.

Putting the powerline underground will be destructive to the landscape in the short-term. However, once it has been installed, it will have minimum impact on the environment unlike the overhead option. The people of Australia have a responsibility to maintain a healthy environment for the native flora and fauna that exists. We have fenced off native vegetation areas since the fire to allow for regeneration at our expense. The thought of government allowing a company to doze through these areas for a powerline is criminal.

Trans-grid has no idea of the level of mental stress that this project is causing. In an already stretched health system in Australia, how can the government allow projects to go ahead that cause such severe health issues? Lives are worth far more than the cheapest option. As a first world country, we need to show leadership when it comes to renewable energy and not just accept the cheapest option to tick the boxes. The government must realise this is a mistake and take action immediately before it is too late.