Submission No 67

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

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Ian Robson

The Hon Emily Suvaal, MLC, Committee Chair
STANDING COMMITTEE ON STATE DEVELOPMENT
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Suvaal

INQUIRY – Feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects

I am the manager of a farm that is in line to be affected by the Humelink overhead transmission lines.

I am also a volunteer in the Rural Fire Service having held positions in the service to the level of Group Captain

My major concerns with the overhead transmission lines include:

1. Increased fire risk due to fires starting from the overhead powerlines.
2. Increased fire risk from the inability to control fires under overhead transmission lines.
3. Effects on agriculture through biosecurity risks and introduction of off farm pests, diseases and weeds.
4. Diminishing farm values.
5. Interruption of visual amenities.

Increased fire risk due to fires starting from the overhead powerlines.

Having overhead transmission lines poses a direct possibility of failure which may start bushfires. We have seen over many years the number of fires started by transmission lines.

Undergrounding would eliminate this risk of failure with only required sub stations above ground.

Increased fire risk from the inability to control fires under overhead transmission lines.

NSW Rural Fire Service states in their Advanced Firefighter training manual that firefighters are not to be within 25 metres of high voltage overhead transmission lines. Forestry Corporation has Standard Operating Procedures which also restrict access of firefighters to areas under high voltage transmission lines.

By not allowing fire-fighters access to the areas under transmission lines, this will lead to fires escaping and becoming exponentially larger.

Undergrounding will once again eliminate this risk and allow firefighters to do their job without risk of injury or the threat of fires growing in size uncontrolled.

Effects on agriculture through biosecurity risks and introduction of off farm pests, diseases and weeds.

Having overhead transmission lines provides an ongoing biosecurity risk to all lands affected by these structures. Not only is there risk during construction, the structures also create an ongoing threat for birds to continually introduce weeds and bird born diseases onto areas under the transmission lines. Many of these may affect not only birds, but may also affect other livestock.

Diminishing farm values.

By hosting overhead transmission lines, farm values are set to reduce and also restrict the possibility of sales of farms. These two problems have been highlighted in other regions showing the negative impact that overhead transmission lines have on farm values. Not only do they reduce the values, they also reduce the equity in farms for financing of other projects. This reduces farmers ability to grow and develop their business. The other problem is farms will also become les desirable to purchase with overhead powerlines being present.

By undergrounding, these property values will not change to the extent they will with overhead transmission lines. The properties will also be more desirable than those hosting overhead transmission lines.

Interruption of visual amenities

Overhead powerlines change the visual appearance of the rural landscape. Having 75 metre high towers interrupting the magnificent natural views that many rural properties have. These transmission lines change an idealic natural landscape into an industrial view that many find harsh and undesirable.

Once again, undergrounding is the answer. It does not create an eyesore. There will be a short term scar which will heal. It will not be a 70 metre wide easement devoid of all native trees and an industrial structure to replace what mother nature provided us with.

I recognise the importance of renewable, clean energy and the need for infrastructure to support its transmission. But we need your help to negotiate better short- and long-term options for local businesses, communities, the environment, and future generations.

Underground electricity transmission is best practice around the world. We urge you to support undergrounding HumeLink so that all Australians are not casualties as we transition to a low carbon energy future.

Regards

Ian Robson