

Submission  
No 206

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

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**Date Received:** 14 July 2023

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Richard & Pamela Martin

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

14<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear The Hon Emily Suvaal MLC,

**Re: Feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this important inquiry into the feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure for renewable infrastructure projects.

The State and Federal Governments promoting carbon intensive systems to implement their climate change policies and net zero targets is the height of hypocrisy. Building huge 80 metre transmission lines across highly productive agricultural land, sterilizing impacted land with thousands of tons of steel and cement. This is not saving the planet because it is so carbon intensive.

In 2020 The European Commission stated, 'Growth in materials use, coupled with the environmental consequences of material extraction, processing and waste, is likely to increase the pressure on the resource base of the planet's economies and jeopardize gains in well-being'.

Without addressing the resource implications of low-carbon technologies and transmission there is a risk that shifting the burden of curbing emissions to other parts of the economic chain may simply cause new environmental and social problems, such as heavy metal pollution, habitat destruction, or resource depletion.

John Blackburn, the chair of The Institute for Integrated Economics Research, says the agricultural sector is critical for the security of the region, in terms of being able to support our neighbours (Indonesia) in a food crisis: it is as important as defence and our security.

Agricultural land should be prioritized for food production and not viewed by politicians as a disposable commodity to be permanently sterilized with thousands of tons of steel, cement, glass, and toxic metals.

The current Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) ensures Transgrid delivers a process based on net direct electricity market benefits to consumers, business, and the profitability of energy production. The RIT-T does not include consideration of social and environmental impacts on landholders and local communities.

Transgrid's attitude and treatment of impacted landholders will not change until the RIT-T is changed by government to include agriculture, landholders, and local communities as **KEY Stakeholders**.

Landholders are expected to fully bear the financial, social, and visual costs of these towers. It is morally unjust to expect one section of the community i.e., agricultural families to subsidize the electricity costs of east coast city dwellers and business.

While ever these outdated RIT-T guidelines are pursued by government, conflict with landholders and local communities will continue to increase.

Privatization of Transgrid to a multi- national company by the NSW Government has been a failure. Profits to Transgrid shareholders and the NSW State Government's agenda for the 'cheapest transmission route' override the rights of agricultural communities and their environments.

The cost of transmission must reflect the true cost of electricity production. Electricity consumers must pay the true cost of electricity so that electricity is used efficiently. The true cost of electricity production must include the cost to the environment, and the cost to agricultural families.

Internationally, governments are choosing undergrounding based on analysis of all costs, including environmental and social costs and conclude that undergrounding transmission lines is the cheapest long-term solution.

HVDC underground transmission has less transmission loss than AC overhead lines, and so has offsetting energy efficiency benefits over the life of any project.

Undergrounding has other benefits as well:

- No risk of underground cables causing a fire
- No restriction or hazard on safe firefighting
- Protection of the infrastructure from severe weather and fire events
- Will not impede agricultural operations
- No impact on the landscape and amenity
- A significantly reduced impact on biodiversity and a much smaller easement is required.

Our governments are telling us that renewable energy, like wind and solar, will reduce the cost of electricity. Given this, it's critical that a better environmental option for transmitting electricity, like undergrounding, isn't rejected on the basis of cost.

Finally, the benefits to the environment and communities of undergrounding will last for generations.

Yours Sincerely,

Richard & Pamela Martin.