

**Submission
No 207**

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

Name: Mr Robert Ironside

Date Received: 14 July 2023

Robert and Cara Ironside

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

14th July, 2023

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.

We strongly support undergrounding transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects, as it is a far less damaging option than Transgrid's currently proposed Humelink towers, which will severely impact the health of our local communities, the environment and the economy.

We own a 355 acre mountain top grazing property that boasts 360 degree views of some of the most picturesque landscapes including the Gilmore Valley, Green Hills, Batlow and the Snowy Mountain Ranges. Therefore, we were devastated when we were informed that Transgrid's proposed Humelink project was to be built right through the centre of our property, from its south eastern corner through to it's north western corner.

The 70 metre wide transmission easement corridor covers the area where we intended to build a home within the next 2-3 years. Additionally, we had hoped to build a couple of cabins to be used as short stay eco-retreats for tourists and visitors to the region.

If Transgrid's Humelink towers are built, it will mean that we are unable to practically build a home on our property, and that we would not go ahead with building tourist cabins, as no one would want to come to an eco-retreat where the previously magnificent views have been dominated and destroyed by such ugly, monstrous electricity transmission towers!

If Transgrid's proposed Humelink towers are built as currently proposed, our property's value will be vastly decreased. However, we would be left with no other choice than to sell our property (at a vastly decreased value) as it would be no longer fit for the purpose that we intended.

Our community and its region is such a beautiful and picturesque part of the world and people come from all over to visit the Snowy Valleys region and to enjoy the beauty and special activities on offer.

While the Snowy Valleys Council LGA and the Snowy Mountains have been selected as iconic locations to promote regional Australia, their tourism status was not treated as a serious consideration in Transgrid's Humelink proposal. Instead, Transgrid pushed ahead with its plan for monstrous towers as tall as the Harbour Bridge, cutting an ugly 360km long, 70-metre-wide scar

through native bushland, state forests and working farms, from Wagga Wagga to the edge of the Southern Highlands.

Underground energy transmission is best practice around the world and Australian scientific studies support this. It is less susceptible to outages and blackouts because it cannot be impacted by extreme weather or bushfires, and it lessens the risk of catastrophic bushfires.

Undergrounding of electricity transmission has been adopted in numerous different countries around the world, and even Transgrid's promotional video claims undergrounding is safer, more reliable and more efficient!

Whilst the direct costs may initially be greater, undergrounding would be a cheaper long-term option when you consider the ongoing maintenance costs, potentially higher transmission losses and outages associated with old above ground tower technology, even before you factor in the cost of bushfires, and the environmental and community devastation associated with these huge towers and the clear-felling of forests and habitat.

Our district and valley is still recovering from the devastating 2019-2020 bushfires that swept through and destroyed so much in its path. As a resident who witnessed and fought those fires, I know first hand that there is no doubt that Transgrid's current Humelink proposal for high voltage overhead transmission towers will make fire-prone southern NSW even more susceptible to devastating bushfires in the future.

High voltage powerlines effectively hinder the management of bushfires in their vicinity because the space over and under them are no-go zones for firefighters, and many of the dams used to refill aerial firefighting fleet in southern NSW will become no longer accessible to these key emergency services. Aerial response to bushfire management a commonly used fire control method, if Humelink's current proposal is actioned, it will not be an option for many fire-prone areas.

Therefore, we urge the Committee to strongly recommend the case for the undergrounding of Transgrid's Humelink project, and any future electricity transmission projects, and to strive for a better renewable energy solution that not only Southern NSW, but all Australians can be proud of, and that our natural environment deserves.

Thank you,

Robert and Cara Ironside