

Submission
No 210

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 14 July 2023

Partially
Confidential

Thankyou for your consideration

I am a First nations man who has a Degree in Protected Area Management and a Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health (Public Health) and a grazier / land manger in the Batlow area - as such I am in a position to discuss cultural, environmental, agricultural, and public wellbeing matters.

In addition, I was on the front line of the 2020 bush fires and lost my house, business, livestock, vehicles, and way of life and have suffered the effects of poor planning, resource mismanagement and poor delivery of services from local, state, and federal government and other NGO industry sectors.

As such I have several concerns regarding the overhead powerline proposal by Transgrid and believe the only sensible, viable, culturally acceptable, financially responsible and most appropriate action in relation to minimizing pubic health risk is to place the powerlines underground wherever it is possible to do so.

My reasonings are as follow:

Human Wellbeing Risk:

There is a very real and likely increase of significant risk to human lives in the installation of the proposed towers for several reasons.

- 1) Direct risk is increased to public safety by isolating significant areas of land from airplane and helicopter fire support – this was a critical element in the 2020 fires.
If the towers are installed at 75 m as proposed, they will cause exclusion zones, so significant areas such as the Gilmore valley will be left exposed by eliminating the ability to use air support in fires or significantly increase the response time by aircraft if they have to find alternate routes into areas such as these.
- 2) These exclusion zones will also mean a significant number of dams and water sources will be excluded from being able to be accessed by fire air support again increasing critical response time and reducing resources
- 3) Sadly, Batlow and the surrounding area is prone to lightening strikes proof of this is the many blackouts that occur in our area, The installation of these overhead powerlines will increase lighting strike occurrence and potential fires.
- 4) Many people are still feeling the pressures of the fires from 2020, mental health has been a significant factor in local wellbeing the Aesthetic pollution of people's homes and spaces will continue to impact on them negatively and sadly may contribute to our already high suicide rate and mental health condition of the community.
- 5) It is well documented any threats – perceived or present cause significant stress to peoples mental wellbeing – the resistance to the overhead powerlines from the local community and indication from most that they would not like to stop progress but believe the lines need to be installed underground demonstrates that the lines are a significant perceived risk and as such a significant mental health stressor.
- 6) The installation of overhead powerlines also bring restrictions on several agricultural best practices including – spraying and fertilizing steep and less accessible areas, drone mapping,

drone stock checking, aerial pest management practices – These all mean that alternate practices will come with an increased risk to the contractor or land manager due to access hazards and add a significant financial burden, which in turn increases financial/ mental health pressures to an area still suffering the effects of the 2020 disaster

- 7) Devaluing of our farms, and natural resource areas by visual pollution also places mental health stressors on those effected.

Cultural inappropriateness

- 1) Several sections of the proposed line for example where it runs along the end of Mudjarn (Piney) will place the powerlines directly in the line of sight between Mudjarn and Mt Naughton both being significant places with markers that point to each other – It is inappropriate that the line of sight be broken as this is one of the last visual links left unmolested by colonization in the area.
- 2) Fire risk to Mudjarn (Piney) – Mudjarn is one of the most significant and on its Killamacat face largely undisturbed cultural sights. Its steepness and lack of access have helped to preserve the site. The new proposed powerlines if erected will be placed directly between Mudjarn and the Tumut airport if this is to occur it means that a water bomber leaving from Tumut airport would not have the capacity to clear the powerlines and they would have to fly an extended route to be able to fight fires on or in the direction of Brungle or Mudjarn. It is unclear in the supplied information if the Killamacat face of Mudjarn could be defended at all by aircraft in the case of a fire as exclusion zones for firefighting near these lines are currently very vague.
- 3) Hundreds if not thousands of significant size trees will be removed along the proposed route many of these trees while not scar trees or identified as culturally significant as individuals, are very culturally significant due to the age and location of many of these trees, being along travel paths, meeting places and hunting grounds – these trees are some of the only living representatives of a pre-colonization time and of all the stages in our countries development since as such our ancestors walked under, sat under and interacted with these trees so they ARE culturally significant, While I understand progress means change and it will be necessary to remove some trees the overhead proposal requires a much more significant clearing footprint than an underground model proposal.
- 4) Visual suppression is also a significant consideration as powerlines the size of the proposed ones will leave a continual scar and representation of colonization that visually pollutes the environment – it maybe listed as a cost of progress, but this could be avoided, and sensitivity demonstrated by implementing an underground powerline. (this also falls under Human wellbeing as that's what we all are – Human beings
- 5) Very little research has been done on the potential effects / risks of the powerlines on native Australian Fauna which is a significant concern given the amount of endangered, threatened or at risk species within in the Snowy Valley Area – impact studies of the potential vegetation clearing, land use tenure and physical threat of magnetic field disruption all need

to be researched or considered further to establish the true likely threat to our sensitive environment of the south west slopes and mountain regions.

Financial disaster risk

- 1) With the common belief that climate disasters will continue into the foreseeable future it is very likely that the Snowy Valley area will face significant bush fires again. To date I have been unable to establish if any consideration has been given to the engineering of the proposed above ground towers and lines to factor this in – During the 2020 fires we have evidence of temperatures on our farm reaching approximately 2000 degrees in the fire storm. I do not believe the current design has factored for this is and that exposure to repeated conditions would be likely to cause structural integrity issues on the lines and the towers leading to extensive and inhibiting financial outlay in testing and replacing these elements. In addition, there would be a significant cost in the power interruption should this occur. Underground instillation would also address these elements of concern.

Best practice

In addition to the above mentioned the current government has moved forward on many climate change and forward thinking issues – putting the powerlines underground promotes best practice, demonstrates care for both the current population and future generations to come, allows Australia to become a world leader in moving past above ground powerlines into a new phase of technology application that is both sensible, responsible and sustainable.

Setting precedent with this type of consideration for the community will allow the community to favor future proposals with more confidence and cooperation.

Respectfully