

**Submission
No 187**

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

Name: Mr Greg McGrath

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Greg & Elizabeth McGrath

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 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 inquiry into the feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects. We are affected landholders in the Yass Valley Shire and appreciate this opportunity to voice our concerns.

Transgrid's proposed Humelink Transmission Lines will run through our property which primarily runs merino sheep for wool production. This project will clear an approximate 1.5km long strip, 70 meters wide, right through the middle of our 6th generation farmland. With our family having farmed and lived on this land for over 100 years, I'm sure it comes as no surprise to you that we are finding this proposal difficult to accept. Generations of work and effort will be negated if this proposal goes ahead.

For example, the family has spent decades growing the kilometers of tree lines that protect lambing paddocks and the elm trees which are used for fodder. The easement will cut through treelines, lambing and hay paddocks, removing many of these well-established shelters, pastures, and elms. Replacing these treelines will take time and rejuvenating the pastures after soil-compaction from temporary access roads for the large equipment will not be easy.

Years worth of weed management may also be negated. Management of weeds and parasites is something we spend a lot of time and money on. It is a priority for us as it can affect the quality of our flock and fleeces. We are concerned about biosecurity risks as there is an increased risk of weeds being transferred to the farm via contaminated vehicles, however we are more concerned that these lines will impede our ability to use aerial spray contractors to control seasonal and introduced weeds. Parts of our property are steep and require aerial spraying to ensure coverage and safety. Ground spraying is not always an option.

The farm's airstrip will also be affected, meaning that contractors will have to fly a different route to avoid the transmission lines. This will all come at a cost to the farm and other farmers in the area that utilise the airstrip.

A major concern for us is the increased bushfire risk these transmission lines will pose. As a member of the local RFS and having seen numerous bushfires in our region (farmland and national parks), the prospect of increasing the risk of a fire starting, along with the inability to fight it due to the transmission lines' no-go zones, terrifies me. We will not have access to aerial emergency services

and there are few other options when fighting fires in steep country. The devastation caused by these fires isn't being acknowledged. Maybe it isn't until you see the houses left in ruins that you really understand the impacts of these fires. Or until you have to shoot your own stock because their hooves are burnt, and they can no longer walk. Not to mention the human lives that are risk and extreme monetary costs that result. Please stop and take these concerns seriously.

Aside from the very real devastation of these fires, we will face new challenges in relation to insurances for fire damage. The increased costs for these insurances can't be easily accounted for at this early stage. Yet we are being asked to estimate these costs for compensation.

The above concerns are relatively straight forward and justifiable. The next concern however seems to be brushed off, misunderstood and labelled as NIMBY (not in my back yard). And that is the concern of visual pollution and decreased visual amenity. The transmission line is proposed to be constructed 300m from my son and his family's house, right outside their kitchen window. It will be viewed from our house also. Transgrid's attitude towards this wasn't far from – too bad. Moving the easement just far enough away from my son's house so that little needed to be done about it was how it was dealt with. Putting a value on this has been the most difficult. Valuing the beauty of our landscapes doesn't seem to be a concern for Transgrid.

Yet valuing the impact of these lines is what we've been asked to do. The value that I (and my family) place on this land is not inline with that of any valuer due to their strict guidelines and rule books that do not account for social or visual amenity. We've been asked to spend our time talking to valuers, solicitors, consultants to negotiate a value. Negotiate a value for the impact of these lines that we aren't even sure of the exact location, or the exact number of towers, or their position, or their height. None of this process is in our favour. None of it actually acknowledges the time lost, the angst, or the things we actually value.

I note also that we are being asked to sacrifice our landscapes and accept this monstrous, outdated infrastructure based on the assumption that these renewable energy projects are going to result in a positive outcome on our electricity bills and successfully transition the nation to Net Zero. I think it is fair to admit that there may be some doubt around this plan and therefore I would think we are within our right to question this proposal given its potentially devastating impacts.

It is due to the above concerns that I urge the Standing Committee to recommend undergrounding Humelink. Underground transmission will lower, or in some cases remove, the above impacts on our property and many surrounding properties in our region.

Kind regards,

Greg McGrath