

**Submission
No 165**

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

Name: Mr Andrew Hallard

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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 important inquiry into the feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure for renewable infrastructure projects.

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the environmental consequences associated with the proposed Hume Link transmission project and to strongly advocate for the undergrounding of transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects.

As a resident of _____, I am deeply committed to the preservation of our natural environment and believe that undergrounding transmission infrastructure presents a viable and sustainable solution.

As the demand for clean and renewable energy continues to grow, and we move towards our target of net zero emissions by 2050, it is imperative that we prioritise sustainable, modern, advanced and environmentally conscious methods of transmitting and distributing electricity. While overhead transmission lines have traditionally been the preferred method, they come with a range of environmental and social challenges. These challenges include the visual impacts on landscapes, harm to wildlife and the increased risk of fire. Our region was completely devastated by the 2020 Bushfires. I was witness to the wanton destruction of wildlife and the ecosystem at large. Anything that increases the risk of a repeat of these events should be closely considered.

Undergrounding transmission infrastructure offers a range of benefits that address these concerns. Firstly, underground cables have minimal visual impact on surrounding landscapes, thus preserving the natural beauty of the region, and promoting tourism which will generate economic activity locally. This is particularly important in areas such as Batlow, where the scenic charm and environmental integrity are significant attractions.

Underground cables have a reduced risk of causing harm to wildlife compared to overhead lines. Birds are susceptible to electrocution or collisions with overhead infrastructure. By adopting underground transmission methods, we can mitigate these risks and protect our diverse ecosystems and wildlife populations.

Undergrounding transmission infrastructure helps decrease the likelihood of power outages resulting from severe weather events. Underground cables are less susceptible to weather-related damage, reducing the frequency and the duration of service interruptions. This resilience enhances energy security, which is crucial for both residential consumers and industries reliant on a stable and uninterrupted power supply.

While it is acknowledged that undergrounding transmission infrastructure presents initial cost challenges, it is essential to consider the long-term benefits and positive environmental externalities.

Investing in undergrounding will contribute to a more sustainable energy infrastructure and reduce the need for costly maintenance and repairs associated with overhead lines. Additionally, advances in technology and installation methods have significantly reduced the costs of undergrounding in recent years, making it a more economically viable option.

I kindly request that you consider the feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects in NSW, including the proposed Hume Link project. Conducting a comprehensive study to assess the potential benefits, costs, and impacts of undergrounding, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas like Batlow, would demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development and the well-being of local communities.

We all want to get to Net Zero as quickly as possible. NSW has a remarkable opportunity to be the first state in Australia to underground state and national significant transmission infrastructure. We should adopt the approach of Germany and other Scandinavian countries who have already begun undergrounding their transmission cables. *Let us become a clean economy whilst also looking like one.*

I urge the Standing Committee to recommend that undergrounding is the best way forward for renewable energy transmission in NSW. As we transition to net zero emissions, we need environmentally responsible transmission as well as generation.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Hallard