

Submission
No 216

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

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Inquiry into Feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects.

I wish to make the following submission to the Inquiry in particular relation to (a) benefits of undergrounding:

With the government's declaration of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs), there is substantial negative impact to farming properties along and near to proposed corridors. This is particularly evident in the Central West Orana (CWO) REZ, where Energy Co has been attempting to negotiate transmission corridors but is facing considerable opposition by multiple landowners.

"Overhead lines in transmission easements will be supported by steel lattice towers which are between 45 and 70 metres high. The towers will generally be spaced around 400 to 600 metres apart depending on the local geography and other factors" -Energy Co. Transmission Easement Acquisition

While impacts vary per location, by nature overhead lines permanently alter the look of agricultural farmland from scenic pastoral views to industrial zones.

"Amenity values means those natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes". -Law Insider

"An amenity is a feature of a property that makes it more valuable to potential buyers or tenants".
-Investopedia

500kv and 330kv transmission towers are ruinous to amenity values and have a detrimental effect on property values (due to negative amenity value and restrictions imposed by the transmission towers, see below). The compensation for hosting the transmission towers does not come near to offsetting these very real human and monetary costs.

Transmission towers also have numerous restrictions on what can be done around and under them.

"While there are some restrictions to the use of land within an easement for electrical transmission lines, livestock grazing can generally continue as normal. For other activities, such as operating farming equipment, fencing and irrigation, you may need to adhere to exclusion zones within a certain distance of transmission lines for safety reasons. You may also need to consult us about new proposals or developments within or near the easement." Energy Co. Transmission Easement Acquisition

Transmission tower corridors in the CWO REZ cover mostly agricultural land that has previously been improved with farming equipment and will need to be continually improved with farming equipment in future years. This land is not solely used for grazing purposes (the only activity allowed) and indeed if left untouched by farming equipment will be subject to weed infestation, tree regrowth and loss of pasture. The transmission corridors also cross thousands of fences that need to be safely maintained.

Undergrounding of transmission lines will negate much of the loss of amenity value and will not prevent most general farming improvement practices with farming equipment.

There are several landowners in the CWO REZ who have proposed transmission lines dividing their properties. The transmission towers will prevent access to the other half of their properties by farming equipment (as per Energy Co. advice), as well as taking valuable land out of production for crop, grain, hay etc. This brings additional hardship to the landowner and negatively impacts their ability to earn an income from their property.

Undergrounding of transmission lines will allow farmers to traverse their properties without impediment (after construction) and enable them to more fully utilize their productive farmland.

Annette Piper