

Submission
No 137

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

The benefits of underground transmission infrastructure:

* Underground lines produce lower magnetic fields. We are aware of at least one example in our community where a farmer with a pace maker is currently being coerced into hosting three converging overhead transmission lines on his moderate sized property. This farmer is faced with being unable to live in his own house and work on his own farm. If the transmission infrastructure was underground lower magnetic fields would be produced and individuals would be able to remain living and working in the area with greatly reduced impact to their health.

* Underground lines allow for the continuation of aerial fire fighting. Fire trucks during a bush fire are not encouraged to leave the main roads, fire suppression is totally reliant on aerial support (fixed wing and rotary wing). A quick view of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau Aviation investigations will show that wire strikes produce fatalities. The NSW Governments plan to produce the States energy from hundreds of sites - how many thousands kilometres of overhead transmission lines? The benefit of underground transmission lines is that pilots of firefighting aircraft will be able to do their work with out risking an exponential rise in fatalities due to wire strikes. The likely result is that should the government push on with overhead transmissions lines no aerial fire fighting will take place. Renewable energy developments are being built in bush fire zones, the result of overhead transmission lines will be the States power infrastructure will be left to burn.

* Underground transmission lines allow for the continuation of aerial agriculture. In the last 3 years NSW farmers have used aerial agriculture for baiting mice, culling feral pigs, controlling weeds in crops that were too wet to access by land and apply fertiliser that cannot be spread by land. With underground transmission lines this continues. With overhead transmission lines these aerial treatments cannot take place. The cost of not being able to continue aerial agricultural applications is increased biosecurity problems and reduced crop yields.

* Underground transmission lines allow for the continued use of large agricultural equipment. Harvesters, haulout bins and seeding equipment get bigger not smaller, as farmers seek to increase efficiency. Overhead transmission lines have easement restrictions of 4.6 metres maximum. Modern farming equipment commonly has a height over 5 metres. Does the NSW State Government wish to reduce the amount of crops that can be produced in this State?

* Underground transmission lines will result in less land clearing than the construction of overhead transmission lines. The transmission line planned for the Central West Orana Renewable Energy zone will clear over 3000 ha of Box Gum Woodland, a critically endangered ecological community. The NSW State Government won't get this back by buying some biodiversity credits. Underground transmission lines would not require this quantity of land clearing.

* Underground transmissions lines will not have the visual impact of overhead transmission lines. When did you last see a real estate agent advertising the vast expanse of transmission lines that you can view from the property? The loss of visual amenity of thousands of regional homes will render properties unsaleable. The economic cost could result in many being unable to repay their bank loans.

When costing the underground versus overhead transmission infrastructure what value does the NSW State Government put on land clearing for overhead infrastructure? What value does the NSW State Government put on destruction of critically endangered ecological communities due to overhead transmission lines? Does the cost calculation account for the displacement of people from their own homes due to overhead transmission lines? Does the cost calculation account for the cost of the compulsory acquisition process? Does the cost calculation account for the devaluing of properties and the potential for properties to be unsaleable and loans unable to be repaid? Does the cost calculation account for loss of crop production due to overhead transmission lines? Does the cost calculation account for increased bush fire devastation due to loss of aerial fire fighting in regions covered in overhead transmission lines? The State's energy projects are all built in bush fire zones.