

Submission
No 159

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 14 July 2023

Partially
Confidential

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

14th 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 support for the undergrounding of powerlines as a crucial measure to enhance safety, preserve agricultural operations, safeguard the environment, and reduce the impact on biodiversity. The benefits of undergrounding powerlines will endure for generations, ensuring a secure and sustainable future for our communities.

I live with my fiancé on our family farm, which is due to be impacted by the transmission lines. Our property is a Soldier settlement block and proudly representing the third generation of farmers. We hold hopes for the future of our farm, that it will be passed down to our future children as the fourth-generation farmers, and are devastated to think that the landscape we now enjoy will be changed forever and we will burden families and communities just like ours with increased fire risk for the next 100+ years if Humelink goes overhead. Why aren't we opting for the technology to safeguard our assets and proudly keeping people and communities safer in the next fire event. Rather than adding hazardous infrastructure that inhibits safe fire fighting and control. Undergrounding is technology that has people, communities and future generations considered.

One of the most critical advantages of undergrounding powerlines is the elimination of the risk of bushfires. Unlike overhead powerlines, underground cables do not pose a threat of ignition, thereby significantly reducing the risk of deadly bushfires. This not only protects lives, property, and native animals. Additionally, underground powerlines eliminate restrictions or hazards on safe firefighting operations. With overhead powerlines, firefighters face numerous challenges, whereas undergrounding powerlines removes some of these obstacles. As a Volunteer Rural Fire Service member I am concerned for myself, my fiancé, and my family members, who are all also RFS

volunteers. The knowledge that we can respond safely and effectively to fire incidents alleviates the stress and worry we may experience during such emergencies. This sense of reassurance contributes to our overall mental well-being, knowing that our lives and community is better protected against the destructive impact of fires.

Our agricultural sector plays a crucial role in nourishing our community and sustaining our economy. However, traditional overhead powerlines can pose challenges to farmers, impacting their operations and productivity. Undergrounding powerlines eliminates these obstacles, providing farmers with the freedom to fully utilise their land and contribute to a thriving agricultural industry that benefits us all.

Additionally, the visual impact on our landscape and amenity is a genuine concern for many of us. We cherish the natural beauty of our surroundings and the unique character of our community. The undergrounding of powerlines allows us to preserve this beauty, as underground cables remain hidden from view. This not only enhances our quality of life but also ensures that future generations can enjoy the unspoiled charm of our environment.

Furthermore, undergrounding powerlines significantly reduces the impact on biodiversity. Since underground cables require a much smaller easement, they minimise the disturbance to natural habitats and ecosystems. This is particularly important as the preservation of biodiversity becomes increasingly crucial in the face of environmental challenges. By choosing underground powerlines, we prioritise the protection and conservation of our diverse flora and fauna.

In closing, I would like to stress that the cost associated with undergrounding powerlines is a worthwhile investment in the safety and well-being of our community. The devastating bushfires we have witnessed in recent years have left scars that go beyond monetary value. By proactively transitioning to underground powerlines, we can significantly reduce the risk of such catastrophic events, saving lives and protecting the invaluable assets that we hold dear.

In conclusion, the undergrounding of powerlines offers numerous advantages for safety, agriculture, environment, and biodiversity. The benefits of this investment will extend beyond our generation, securing a safer and more sustainable future for our communities.

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.