

**Supplementary
Submission
No 69b**

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

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The Director
Standing Committee on State Development
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Att: The Hon Emily Suvaal MLC
Committee Chair

**Re: Inquiry into the feasibility of undergrounding the
transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects**

Dear The Hon. Suvaal

Firstly, I wish to pass on my thanks to Minister Penny Sharpe for agreeing to hold the above inquiry and for being given the opportunity to write a submission.

I am a member of HumeLink Alliance Inc. and the Yass Landscape Guardians Group and have had a long association with country farming and living, as have my forebears for six generations before me. Therefore it stands to reason I have a great love and understanding of the bush and how it "works".

While I am certainly **not** in favour of coal mines and coal fired electricity and do see the need of an alternate power source, I do question the capabilities and longevity of green renewables. However that is beside the point. What is a far more serious issue for me is the current proposal to transport this renewable energy, via huge 500kV Transmission Lines across the country **above ground** to where it is needed, as in the case of HumeLink.

It is a well known fact that many European countries, USA and Canada are now putting transmission lines underground with it being mandatory in some countries. In fact in some parts in England, such as Dorset, overhead transmission lines are actually being demolished and relocated underground. I also recently read where a internationally recognised expert on underground transmission lines, spoke of the bemusement of overseas countries learning Australia was still choosing to construct **above ground** powerlines.

I feel there is very little real knowledge and understanding how disruptive and destructive HumeLink will be on effected landholders out in the wider community, especially when it is proposed to construct two more 500kV transmission lines alongside at a later date. From comments made by some people, who through not having the opportunity to experience life on the land, seem to be under the impression it's all about lifestyle. And to a point it is a

good lifestyle but not without its tough times and heartbreak. **What it really is all about is making a living!** A farmer needs at least 1,000 to 2,000 ha. using every bit of that area to make any sort of income particularly from grazing sheep and cattle and/ or cropping with unpredictable weather cycles and markets all part of the picture. It only takes one bushfire, one hail storm, one flood or one drought to wipe out any income for a year or more; in the case of prolonged drought a rising debt being forced to buy fodder. To be a successful farmer these days means running a farm as a commercial business. And to do that means ongoing effort all year, often working seven days a week, on a strict budget with the need of much scientific and technical knowledge, planning and efficient use of time. This applies to all types of farming. To continue producing all this food and textiles, much of which is exported, Australian farmers, regarded as the most efficient in the world, need every bit of arable land with sufficient rainfall, particularly as our population grows. Enough land has already been lost to wind and solar farms – we simply cannot afford to lose anymore.

As well, more and more farmers, with the aid of Greening Australia, are involved with the planting of swathes of native trees and shrubs, not only as shelter for stock but to restore so much of the lost habitat for birds and wildlife. Farmers on the whole are greener than the Greenies. They care for their land and look after it to keep it healthy and productive. HumeLink above ground requires an easement of 70 m. but to be under ground (a double circuit cable) an easement of only 42 to 48m. is required thus saving many valuable trees and habitat for birds. Surely that is important, after all trees absorb carbon and produce oxygen!

Another industry which will suffer, if these monstrous above ground transmission lines are allowed to proceed, will be Country Tourism. So many city dwellers are now flocking to the country areas, especially after the restrictions of Covid. Examples are the Gundagai, Tumut, Jugiong, Coolamon, Milthorpe and Mudgee areas especially with the growing development of Air BnB's, Country Farm Stays and Resorts. City dwellers come to enjoy scenic countryside and peaceful rural lifestyle, not to be confronted by lines of dominating 70m. tall steel Transmission lines striding across the landscape. Local tourism employs many people and helps support many country towns.

Then there are the possible problems arising from HumeLink being above ground to be considered:

- Causing a bushfire through a fallen cable or connector. The 2020 bushfires cost Transgrid \$140 million dollars to repair powerlines
- The danger firefighters would be put in fighting the fire underneath live wires (Transgrid indicated that the transmission line would not be turned off in the event of a bushfire)
- The restriction of water bombing aircraft operating in the vicinity of the transmission line
- Damage and loss of power caused by a severe storm
- The restrictions and danger of farm machinery such as a harvester 4m. in height passing under the transmission line.
- The restriction placed on essential farm operations such as aerial crop dusting, weed spraying and fertiliser spreading.

- The loss of productive land through the easement and cleared areas for the pylons and crane pads.
- The disruption to farm activities and disturbances to stock
- The danger to flocks of migratory birds and Wedgetail Eagles
- The relatively unknown consequences of exposure to the high electro magnetic field
- The unsightly visual impact
- And last but by no means least, **the undeserved distress and feeling of having no control** being caused to those landholders who, regardless of compensation, are against having HumeLink constructed **above ground** on their farms, whether they want it or not.

All of the above could be eliminated if HumeLink was underground

Sure, effected landholders have been offered compensation but only a one off payment. A payment which will never compensate the loss of value of their land with the Transmission Line above ground. Land that otherwise would grow year by year in value.

Transgrid claim that the cost to put HumeLink underground would cost at least three times as much, a cost which would be passed onto consumers and tax payers and that is a no no. But then consider Snowy 2. Originally quoted to cost. \$2.1 billion now has blown out to \$9.1 billion and rising. However there doesn't seem to be much concern about that.

Finally, it is not as though objecting landholders are asking for HumeLink to be scrapped altogether. All they are asking for is a compromise that it be put underground with less compensation.

To me that would be a win win situation. Better for the safety and security of the Transmission Line, better for the environment and better for the landholders who can continue running their properties without loss of land, restrictions and visual impact.

Kind regards

Rosemary Miller