

**Submission  
No 6**

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

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Cate Faehrmann  
Committee Chair

**Inquiry into the Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for  
Renewable Energy Projects**

Dear Cate

Firstly thank you for your support and chairing this very important second inquiry. I wish to register my **opposition** to this project being constructed **ABOVE GROUND**. My main reason being because of the tremendously negative affects on the environment, native bird and animal habitat, productive farmland and farming practices.

I have 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 energy and do see the need of an alternative lower carbon producing source of energy, I do question the capabilities, reliability and long term production of electricity by green renewables, i.e. wind and solar. Especially when considering the environmental damage, loss of native flora and fauna habitat and productive agricultural land both wind and solar farms bring about along with their short productive lifespan of 15 to 20 years. Also with no apparent assurances they will be renewed and no state government legislation in place that they be decommissioned, there then could well be another environmental issue with them being abandoned and left to disintegrate.

Then to add to the above problems, there is the current proposal to transport this renewable energy, via huge 500kV Transmission lines **above ground** across vast expanses of rural land to where it is needed in ever growing cities, as in the case of HumeLink for one.

It is well established fact many European countries, USA and Canada are now putting high voltage transmission lines underground, some for several hundred kilometres, and these countries are now questioning why Australia is still persisting to construct high voltage transmission lines **above ground**. This was highlighted by Co-Author, Ken Berry when presenting the report on the recent independent and intensive study for putting Humelink underground carried out by Amplitude Consultants. To quote Ken, “I am very embarrassed when my engineering colleagues overseas say to me, ‘ Ken, why do the Australian public allow the construction of overhead lines onto rural properties. This is outdated technology, and the construction of new overhead transmission lines are banned by most European

countries for health, safety and environment aspects. Surely Australia is not now a third world country?" End of quote.

Also I feel there is very little knowledge or understanding in the cities of the disruption and destruction these transmission lines such as HumeLink will have on affected farmers' land, particularly when it is proposed construct two more such lines along side in the future. That will mean a total easement of 210m. width – a substantial slice of land that the landholder will not be able to use. But with the transmission line underground, grazing and farming activities could continue as before.

From comments made by many people who, through not having the opportunity to experience life on the land, seem to be under the impression that it is all about lifestyle. And to a point it is a good lifestyle but not without its tough times, hard work and heartbreak. **What it is really 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 or cattle and/or cropping with unpredictable weather cycles and markets all part of the picture. Incidentally unpredictable weather cycles have been happening for hundreds of years! 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 with being forced to buy fodder at a premium price. To be a successful farmer these days means running a farm as a commercial business with particular attention being paid to the environmental care of the land to ensure it remains healthy and productive. This means eradication of noxious weeds and feral animals along with rotational grazing and cropping and maintenance of fences and waterways. And to do this means an ongoing effort all year, often working long hours, seven days a week in all sorts of weather on a strict budget along with the need to keep up to date with new scientific and technical knowledge, planning and efficient use of time. This applies to all types of farming. To continue growing all this agricultural produce and natural fibre, Australian farmers, regarded as the most efficient in the world, need every bit of arable land with sufficient rainfall to sustain our growing population and export markets. Enough land has already been lost to urban growth, wind and solar farms – we simply cannot afford to lose any more.

Also, more and more farmers, with the aid of Greening Australia, are involved in planting swathes of native trees and shrubs, not only as shade and shelter for stock but to restore so much of the lost habitat for birds, bees and wildlife. Farmers on the whole are greener than The Greenies. They love and care for their land.

HumeLink, **above ground**, requires an easement of 70m. plus a large crane pad area at every pylon but if **under ground**, an easement of only 40m. is required thus saving many valuable trees and productive land. Surely that is important, trees absorb carbon and produce oxygen!

Another rural industry which will suffer if these monstrous transmission lines are allowed to proceed **above ground** will be Country Tourism. So many city dwellers are now flocking to country areas especially after the restrictions of Covid and costly overseas travel. Examples are the Gundagai, Tumut, Jugiong, Coolamon, Milthorpe and Mudgee areas, with many Country Resorts, Farm Stays and Air B'Bs available. City dwellers come to enjoy the scenic countryside and peaceful rural lifestyle not to be confronted by the site of ugly 80m.

tall steel pylons and transmission lines striding across the landscape. Local tourism employs many people and helps to support many towns.

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

- A flashover from clashing powerlines during a high wind event or fallen cables causing the outbreak of a bushfire. The cost of repairing/ replacing powerlines after the 2020 bushfire cost \$140 million.
- In the event of a bushfire, even with a restricted area of 25m. either side of the line, Fire fighters would still be in grave danger especially as Transgrid have indicated the line would **not be turned off**.
- The restriction on water bombing aircraft operating in the vicinity due to smoke and live wires.
- In hot weather, high voltage transmission lines sag, increasing again the danger of a flash over to occur should a truck or farm machinery be driven underneath.
- Damage and loss of power caused by a severe storm. With the fact that China has admitted they have had to compromise the quality of their manufactured steel due to high world wide demand surely increases the likelihood of pylons and cables with less strength being brought down by high winds.
- The restriction placed on essential farming operations such as aerial crop dusting, weed spraying and fertiliser spreading.
- The restriction to other farm activities - ploughing, harvesting, hay making, fencing etc.
- The danger to flocks of local and migratory birds particularly Wedgetail Eagles.
- The relatively unknown affects of the high electro magnetic field on humans and stock.
- And last but by no means least, the undeserved severe distress landholders are suffering, including thoughts of suicide, caused by having no or little say or control over this situation. Regardless of compensation, the vast majority are **against** having HumeLink being constructed **above ground** across their farms resulting in environmental damage and loss, bushfire risk and disruption to farming operations.

**All of the above could be eliminated if HumeLink was underground**

Sure, effected landholders have been offered compensation spaced over 20 years. A payment however which will never fully compensate the loss of value of their property with HumeLink being **above ground**.

Transgrid claim that to put HumeLink **under ground** would cost **three times** as much as **above ground**, a cost that would be passed onto consumers and that is a No No. But then consider Snowy 2.0. Progressing at a snails pace with several stoppages, it was originally quoted to cost \$2.1 billion with 2024 completion date. Now the cost has blown out to \$12.2 billion, **six times** the original estimate and the finish date postponed to 2029. What the cost will be by then doesn't bear thinking about! However in this case **six times** the cost doesn't seem to matter! Anyhow as it stands now, as shown by the Amplitude Consultants study, the cost of putting HumeLink underground would only be **one and a half times** the cost.

Finally, it is not as though objecting landholders are asking that HumeLink be scrapped altogether. **All they are asking is for the compromise that HumeLink be put under ground with less compensation.** Surely that is not too much to ask?

To me, to put HumeLink **under ground** would be a **win win** situation all round.

Better for the safety and security of the transmission line, better for the environment and better for the landholders who can use all of their farm, including the land above the underground cable, along with not having the ongoing visual and mental impact, the worry of possible bushfire ignition and land use restrictions.

Yours Faithfully

Rosemary Miller