

**Submission
No 14**

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

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To the Hon Cate Faehrmann, Committee Chair
Inquiry – Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for
Renewable Energy Projects
6 Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity of providing a submission to this inquiry. I have previously made a submission on this subject to the inquiry held earlier this year and this is attached.

In this new submission, I would like to stress many people in my electorate continue to hold serious concerns about the proposal to overground the wires for Transgrid's HumeLink project.

I draw your attention to the report by Amplitude Consultants in August this year, which found the capital cost of undergrounding the cables on this project to be as little as 1.5 times the cost of the overhead option.

While the undergrounding option is obviously more costly, it offers huge offsets in terms of reduced fire risk, improved environmental outcomes, improved efficiency in energy transfer and importantly, greater acceptance by communities along the proposed route.

My main concerns with HumeLink include the heightened risk of significant bushfire damage both because overhead powerlines can ignite fires and because they hinder fire-fighting efforts. Other concerns centre on negative impact on the use of agricultural land, scarring of the landscape, increased mental illness among landowners and the ruin of community environments and tourism in the region.

I also note the HumeLink EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) Summary August 2023 highlighted a number of significant environmental risks, including:

- Damage to biodiversity, with impacts on threatened and endangered plants and animals
- Erosion caused by land clearing
- Transportation of weeds and pathogens across valuable agricultural land, and
- Potential contamination of waterways and changes in flood behaviour

The alternative proposal to underground the transmission lines would significantly reduce the risks, protect the visual amenity of the region, and allay the concerns of many community members who will suffer negative social, environmental and financial impacts from the development of overhead cables suspended from giant towers more than 65 metres high.

While coming as an extra cost to the private investors funding the project, the undergrounding option would deliver a long-term investment in the future, providing safer and more efficient power transmission, reducing the incalculable costs of potential bushfires and protecting the community from social and financial imposts that will impact this region for many generations.

I urge your committee to consider the Amplitude report in detail and seek expert views that will illustrate the many long-term advantages of undergrounding the cables at a cost much lower than originally expected and delivering a modern energy transmission system that will be welcomed by the community now and for many years to come.

Yours sincerely

Dr Joe McGirr, MP
Member for Wagga Wagga