

**Submission  
No 52**

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

**Name:** Mr Greg McGrath  
**Date Received:** 10 November 2023

---

The Director,  
Select Committee on the Feasibility of Undergrounding  
Infrastructure for Renewable Energy Projects,  
Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street,  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

*10 November 2023*

Dear Director,

**Re: Feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this critical inquiry. I write this submission to reiterate our support for undergrounding transmission infrastructure and refer the committee to our initial submission to this inquiry.

We are affected landholders at Yass. The proposed lines will go through the middle of our property, greatly impact our farming operations, and significantly impact one of the two houses on the property to the extent that the occupying family will need to relocate to avoid the impact. The impact on our property would be decreased greatly if the lines were placed underground.

Attached are our responses to Transgrid's Humelink EIS. We ask that the points raised in these objections are considered in addition to our initial submission to this inquiry. Most importantly we would like to draw your attention to the noise impact that we are now aware of as we are listed as an impacted receiver. This is something that Transgrid cannot mitigate unless the lines are placed underground.

We would also like to refer you to the recent underground cost review completed by Amplitude Consultants when reconsidering the feasibility of undergrounding.

We urge the Select Committee to recommend undergrounding the HumeLink project.

Yours sincerely,

Greg and Elizabeth McGrath

10<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Director – Energy Assessments,  
Development Assessment,  
Department of Planning and Environment,  
4 Parramatta Square,  
12 Darcy Street,  
Parramatta NSW 2150

Dear Sir/Madam,

**SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT OF THE  
HUMELINK PROJECT – APPLICATION NO SSI-36656827**

I hereby submit this response to the HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement report.

I object to the HumeLink proposal on a number of grounds, as follows:

**1. Significant concerns regarding Noise from construction & operation of Transmission Lines**

I own the residence XXX which is labelled as:

- a. A potentially impacted receiver** on page 22 of 34 of SLR Consulting’s attachment I **Operational Noise Impact Mapping** in Transgrid’s Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment, EIS Technical Report 9.

In table 13-10 of the EIS, Key Potential Social Impacts during operation of the project, topic: Way of life - Noise Disturbance, Transgrid have reported this impact as:

- Before mitigation: “Likelihood: Possible; Magnitude: minor; Significance: medium (negative)”.
- After mitigation: “Likelihood: Unlikely; Magnitude: minor; Significance: low (negative)”.

I believe the initial impact has been severely underestimated and I am concerned that the impact after mitigation has been falsely estimated as the only mitigation strategy noted in the EIS is:

- “consultation will be undertaken with the landowner of the affected residence to identify solutions.” Table 15-19 Summary of noise and vibration mitigation measures, reference NV9.

Transgrid fail to suggest or identify any potential solutions if monitoring shows noise levels are affected. How can the impact after mitigation be measured if there is no suggested mitigation option?

I believe this is because there is no easy or effective solution to this problem, and it likely means we will have to live with the noise as Transgrid has failed to work with us on moving the lines further away from this house and failed to accurately consider the option of undergrounding.

- b. An impacted receiver - 11 – 20 dB (Moderately intrusive)** on page 24 of 36 of SLR Consulting's attachment G.3 Worst-case Daytime Transmission Line **Construction Noise Impacts** in Transgrid's Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment, EIS Technical Report 9.

In table 13-9 of the EIS, Key Potential Social Impacts during construction of the project, topic: Health and Wellbeing - Community Health, Transgrid have reported this impact as:

- Before mitigation: "Likelihood: Possible; Magnitude: minor; Significance: medium (negative)".
- After mitigation: "Likelihood: Unlikely; Magnitude: minor; Significance: low (negative)".

Transgrid state that "noise and vibration may impact nearby residents' enjoyment of their home or result in potential sleep disturbance from plant and machinery movements or other construction activities... can have an adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of residents". They aim to minimise impacts, however none of the mitigation measures will negate this issue.

My son's young family live in this house and I believe transgrid have severely underestimated the noise, vibration and dust impact on the residence and therefore, by labelling the significance of this impact as low demonstrates their inability to care, engage and consult with landowners.

My wife and I also live on the property and although this house is not listed as an impacted receiver, it is listed as XXX in the study area. I believe that the impact on this house has also been underestimated. I am concerned about the access tracks that we will be required to give up also and as a result be impacted by the noise and dust of vehicles traveling passed both houses.

## **2. Insufficient consideration of Bushfire Risk**

In table 13-10 of the EIS, Key Potential Social Impacts during operation of the project, topic: Health and Wellbeing - Perceived risk of EMF and Bushfire, Transgrid have reported this impact as:

- Before mitigation: "Likelihood: Unlikely; Magnitude: minimal; Significance: low (negative)".
- After mitigation: "Likelihood: Unlikely; Magnitude: minimal; Significance: low (negative)".

Transgrid note that "the perceived risk of bushfire along the project footprint may elicit anxieties from those located in or near the project footprint". However, they go on to rate this impact as unlikely, minimal and low. I think it is fair to say that there has been a great deal of anxiety in the community regarding potential bushfire risks. For Transgrid to list the significance of this concern as low, they are again demonstration their inability to care, engage and consult with landowners.

### **3. Disregard for change of visual amenity and landscape**

In table 13-10 of the EIS, Key Potential Social Impacts during operation of the project, topic: Surroundings – Ongoing visual impacts and changes to landscape character, Transgrid have reported this impact as:

- Before mitigation: “Likelihood: almost certain; Magnitude: moderate; Significance: high (negative)”.
- After mitigation: “Likelihood: almost certain; Magnitude: moderate; Significance: high (negative)”.

Access to tools, such as NERA, to visualise the transmission lines have been requested so that this impact can be better understood, however Transgrid has not made access to these tools public.

The result after mitigation is the same as before mitigation because the only mitigation strategy that will address this impact is undergrounding the lines and Transgrid fail to address this option accurately. By stating that “the potential impacts on landscape character would be localised and are unlikely to be high for the entire social locality” demonstrates again that Transgrid are not concerned about the impact this project is having on landowners.

Transgrid have failed to convince landholders that they value their concerns as they have continued to exaggerate the cost of undergrounding the transmission lines. The cost of undergrounding is higher than the cost of the landholders decreased visual amenity and landscape character because Transgrid have been allowed to completely disregard this entire social cost to landholders.

### **4. Overstating community engagement & underestimating mental health impacts**

I believe that Transgrid have exaggerated their attempts to engage and listen to the community. In Section 6. Engagement, Figure 6-3 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation illustrates that Transgrid are aiming to empower the public. They aim “to place the final decision making in the hands of the public” ... “we will implement what you decide”. This is not only completely laughable but represents one of the many mistruths Transgrid are preaching to the public.

The public have requested that the lines be built underground and accurate reporting on the feasibility of undergrounding Humelink transmission lines be completed. Transgrid has pushed back on this idea from the beginning and as a result I am concerned that they have gone on to deliver misleading information to the government in the public inquiry to sway the decision of the committee.

I believe Transgrid are doing everything they possibly can to ensure that they do not empower the public and do not have to implement what the public has decided.

One of our first consultations included a conversation with a Transgrid representative suggesting that if the house my Son lives in was his house and the lines were constructed in the planned area, he would choose not to live there. When asked what he would do in our situation, he suggested that he would, like us, just have to cop the loss.

The anxiety and stress this entire project has caused my family is immense. It has taken moments from us that we will never get back.

**5. Failing to carry out an accurate cost benefit analysis**

I believe that the following social costs have not accurately been included in Transgrid's cost benefit analysis.

- a. The cost of the health and wellbeing of noise impacted residents
- b. The cost of bushfire risks
- c. The cost of decreased visual amenity and changed landscapes
- d. The cost of community/landholder stress and anxiety (mental health impacts)

I attach a copy of my submission to the Inquiry - Feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects for further background and consideration (Attachment 1).

- I acknowledge and accept the Department of Planning and Environment's disclaimer and declaration.
- Declaration of political donations: No.

Yours sincerely,

Greg McGrath

## Attachment 1

Greg & Elizabeth McGrath

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

14 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 inquiry into the feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects. We are affected landholders in the Yass Valley Shire and appreciate this opportunity to voice our concerns.

Transgrid's proposed Humelink Transmission Lines will run through our property which primarily runs merino sheep for wool production. This project will clear an approximate 1.5km long strip, 70 meters wide, right through the middle of our 6th generation farmland. With our family having farmed and lived on this land for over 100 years, I'm sure it comes as no surprise to you that we are finding this proposal difficult to accept. Generations of work and effort will be negated if this proposal goes ahead.

For example, the family has spent decades growing the kilometers of tree lines that protect lambing paddocks and the elm trees which are used for fodder. The easement will cut through treelines, lambing and hay paddocks, removing many of these well-established shelters, pastures, and elms. Replacing these treelines will take time and rejuvenating the pastures after soil-compaction from temporary access roads for the large equipment will not be easy.

Years worth of weed management may also be negated. Management of weeds and parasites is something we spend a lot of time and money on. It is a priority for us as it can affect the quality of our flock and fleeces. We are concerned about biosecurity risks as there is an increased risk of weeds being transferred to the farm via contaminated vehicles, however we are more concerned that these lines will impede our ability to use aerial spray contractors to control seasonal and introduced weeds. Parts of our property are steep and require aerial spraying to ensure coverage and safety. Ground spraying is not always an option.

The farm's airstrip will also be affected, meaning that contractors will have to fly a different route to avoid the transmission lines. This will all come at a cost to the farm and other farmers in the area that utilise the airstrip.

A major concern for us is the increased bushfire risk these transmission lines will pose. As a member of the local RFS and having seen numerous bushfires in our region (farmland and national parks), the prospect of increasing the risk of a fire starting, along with the inability to fight it due to the transmission lines' no-go zones, terrifies me. We will not have access to aerial emergency services and there are few other options when fighting fires in steep country. The devastation caused by these fires isn't being acknowledged. Maybe it isn't until you see the houses left in ruins that you

really understand the impacts of these fires. Or until you have to shoot your own stock because their hooves are burnt, and they can no longer walk. Not to mention the human lives that are risk and extreme monetary costs that result. Please stop and take these concerns seriously.

Aside from the very real devastation of these fires, we will face new challenges in relation to insurances for fire damage. The increased costs for these insurances can't be easily accounted for at this early stage. Yet we are being asked to estimate these costs for compensation.

The above concerns are relatively straight forward and justifiable. The next concern however seems to be brushed off, misunderstood and labelled as NIMBY (not in my back yard). And that is the concern of visual pollution and decreased visual amenity. The transmission line is proposed to be constructed 300m from my son and his family's house, right outside their kitchen window. It will be viewed from our house also. Transgrid's attitude towards this wasn't far from – too bad. Moving the easement just far enough away from my son's house so that little needed to be done about it was how it was dealt with. Putting a value on this has been the most difficult. Valuing the beauty of our landscapes doesn't seem to be a concern for Transgrid.

Yet valuing the impact of these lines is what we've been asked to do. The value that I (and my family) place on this land is not inline with that of any valuer due to their strict guidelines and rule books that do not account for social or visual amenity. We've been asked to spend our time talking to valuers, solicitors, consultants to negotiate a value. Negotiate a value for the impact of these lines that we aren't even sure of the exact location, or the exact number of towers, or their position, or their height. None of this process is in our favour. None of it actually acknowledges the time lost, the angst, or the things we actually value.

I note also that we are being asked to sacrifice our landscapes and accept this monstrous, outdated infrastructure based on the assumption that these renewable energy projects are going to result in a positive outcome on our electricity bills and successfully transition the nation to Net Zero. I think it is fair to admit that there may be some doubt around this plan and therefore I would think we are within our right to question this proposal given its potentially devastating impacts.

It is due to the above concerns that I urge the Standing Committee to recommend undergrounding Humelink. Underground transmission will lower, or in some cases remove, the above impacts on our property and many surrounding properties in our region.

Kind regards,

Greg McGrath



Elizabeth McGrath  
Yass

10<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Director – Energy Assessments,  
Development Assessment,  
Department of Planning and Environment,  
4 Parramatta Square,  
12 Darcy Street,  
Parramatta NSW 2150

Dear Sir/Madam,

**SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT OF THE  
HUMELINK PROJECT – APPLICATION NO SSI-36656827**

I hereby submit this response to the HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement report.

I object to the HumeLink proposal on a number of grounds, as follows:

**1. Farming Operations**

I believe that this project will have short- and long-term negative impacts on the farming operations at Elmside. I am concerned that it will cause immense disruption to our operations and that we will not be compensated appropriately as we do not have the resources to fight this battle. We are farmers, not solicitors or accountants and the battle is skewed in Transgrids favour. The 4 volume EIS is a great example of this. Many landholders do not have the expertise or time to properly digest and respond to this massive document. We are at this alone. It is not a fair battle.

**2. Environment**

Our family has been improving this land for over 100 years. We have been maintaining soils, pastures, tree lines and waterways. The easement will remove all trees within the 70m easement. These trees include established tree lines and 60 year old established elm trees. These trees cannot be replaced quickly. They provide fodder and shelter for our animals. I am concerned that this will disrupt the native birdlife also and that this hasn't been given enough consideration. Superb parrots and wedge tail eagles are common in the areas this line will go through. The beautiful spaces these lines will destroy is heartbreaking.

**3. Noise & Vibration Impacts**

I am concerned that the noise & vibration impacts during both construction and operation of the transmission lines has been underestimated and that this will negatively affect both houses on our property. My sons young family will be highly impacted by the construction and operation of these lines. I am concerned that there will be no effective way of mitigating these impacts.

#### **4. Bushfire Risk**

I am concerned that the lines will significantly increase the potential for property damage in the case of a bushfire as there will be less resources available to fight the fire. Aircraft will be limited, and firefighters will be unable/unwilling to fight the fire close to powerlines. This increases the risk to our property in the event of a bushfire. I am concerned that this impact has been underestimated. The community believe the significance of this impact is high, not low. We have requested that the lines be placed underground so that our property and the people and animals on it have the best chance at remaining safe if there is a bushfire.

#### **5. Visual Amenity**

Currently, our land does not have powerlines. It is "green fields". After these lines go through, one residence will look at them 300m from their kitchen window and the other from the west side of the house and verandah. I am concerned that Transgrid are not listening to the importance and value we put on visual amenity and landscape. We have requested that these lines be placed underground to preserve our landscapes and visual amenity.

#### **6. Engagement Process**

I believe Transgrid have exaggerated their attempts to consult and engage with the community. I believe they have not answered ours or the community's questions and that they have lost our trust by presenting, what I believe, misleading cost information of the undergrounding option. We continue to be told we'll be compensated, however a lot of sleep is lost over our fears of being undercompensated. We expect the value that we place on this land and the negative impact of these lines to be very different to the value Transgrid will place on it.

#### **7. Positive Net Benefit**

I am concerned that Transgrid have not included appropriate social and environmental costs, as requested by the community, into their cost benefit analysis and are therefore presenting a positive net benefit which does not accurately represent the cost/benefit of the project.

- I acknowledge and accept the Department of Planning and Environment's disclaimer and declaration.
- Declaration of political donations: No.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth McGrath