

**Submission
No 66**

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

Name: Mr Peter Lawson
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Peter Lawson

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

9th 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 my support for undergrounding transmission infrastructure and I refer the committee to my initial submission to this inquiry, which is attached to this submission.

I am a Landholder in the Book Book area, a few kilometres East of the proposed Gugga substation. The proposed lines will traverse 3km's of our property and be within 400m of our house and living area, but be in full view.

I have been involved in the CCG and was on the steering committee for the Undergrounding report which was conducted by GHD on behalf of TransGrid. This was supposed to be an open and honest review of putting the cables underground. As it turned out, the review was tainted by deception and, reluctance and what strongly came across as a directive put forward to thwart any progression in putting a reasonable case forward for undergrounding to be considered. Since then we have had a review in to the undergrounding study done and fully costed. The review has been submitted to this inquiry.

The process taken by TransGrid has been frustrating right from the start to say the least. TransGrid actively said they were wanting to build trust with landholders and the community as a whole, but then continued to tell mistruths, tried to bully their way taking a 'big corporate' approach to small and seemingly insignificant landholders because they knew they had the law on their side.

After reviewing Transgrid's Humelink EIS, I ask that the below points are considered in addition to my initial submission:

- The visual impact to our residence and the rest of the farm where we spend our time working.
 - As shown in '*Visual -Attachment H- Visibility structures within 2km*' it shows our house is in a 'moderate' visual impact area. The lines are about 330m away and the Humelink lines are up to 85m tall, on top of a ridge looking straight down to the house. It is ludicrous to think that it does not have a HIGH impact.
 - The fact that the EIS only acknowledges the visual impact from the residence rather than the whole property where we spend our time working is also an indication of the neglect that this process has shown. As the lines (both current 330Kva and proposed 500Kva HumeLink line) go through the middle of the property along a central ridgeline for 3km, they are, and will be even more so with 65-85m towers, very visible from just about any point on the property. Extremely visible, from lots of view points, which is something the EIS does not take into account! It uses very limited view points to assess the data.
 - The planting of trees as a screen is a bit of a 'thought bubble' and a completely inadequate solution. Most trees are 15-20m tall, the towers, which sit on top of a ridge, are 65-85m tall, so unless the trees are planted just outside the windows of the house, there is very little they will achieve to reduce the visual pollution.
- Further to this, there are numerous houses that are not noted within the 2km corridor showing that the EIS for this project has not been done to a satisfactory and relevant level.
- The Noise impact of the Transmission lines as indicated by the Noise policy for Industry (EPA) will likely be exceeded with the Humelink lines, especially where it parallels the existing 330Kva line (which it does through our area and property). The defined transmission line noise impact zone is 470m. The Attachment 1, Operational noise impact Mapping within the EIS shows the noise impact zone at about 300m. Our residence is 330m from the proposed transmission lines, but outside the marked impact corridor. To add to the either, 'slight of hand', or poorly and inappropriate standard of the EIS, the marked impact zone is not even on either side of the project footprint. This would indicate that noise travels further one way than the other! We haven't ever been made aware of the potential noise issues by TransGrid, even though we had thought there would potentially be some. This is another area where we strongly object to the Humelink project.
- The Biodiversity loss within our farm will be significant due to the HumeLink transmission lines. Listed in the EIS in our immediate area are 10 threatened fauna species being the Grey Crowned Babbler, Brown Tree Creeper, the Little Eagle, Diamond Firetail, Dusky Woodswallow, Varied Sitella, Squirrel Glider, Eastern False Pipstrelle, Greater Broad-Nosed Bat, Large Bent-winged Bat and the Southern Myotis. As well as this there is mention of the sensitive species, the Superb parrot.
 - All of the birds listed here are regularly seen on our property, but only 1 was listed in the EIS.
 - There is a Little Eagle nesting within 300m of the Proposed lines which was not noted.
 - Superb Parrot have nested on our property and still do locally, very close to the proposed lines. So it is habitat to their liking, but about to be removed, or at the very least, reduced, possibly enough to move them on but certainly ensure there is less habitat for them to survive.

- There are families of Grey Crowned Babblers that nest directly under the proposed lines, which their habitat (nesting and feeding trees) will be destroyed.
- There are both Little Eagles and Wedge Tails Eagles nesting within 2-300m of the lines.
- There are also regular annual visits from the endangered Swift parrots on their migrations.
- Hooded robins, another vulnerable species and one with a CAP plan are also regularly sited in these areas.
- The destruction of habitat for all fauna is exacerbated by the paralleling of the 330Kva line, which is not taken into consideration within this EIS. So instead of having a 70m easement which reduces the safety of many species to cross such an area, they will now have a 130m area with no tree cover. This greatly reduces the chance of lots of fauna risking the move across the vacant area, or increases their chances of being preyed upon.
- The EIS has insufficiently listed vulnerable species and therefore the impact that will occur.
- With all the evidence indicating that our seasons will get more and more erratic and extreme and more and more pressure is put on farmers/landowners to do more and more to mitigate this, it would be assumed that a bit more effort should be put on regulators to reduce the area impacted by destruction of all things good in the environment when there are other options, for not a lot more \$ value.
- In the EIS there are Fifty-five threatened flora species and 19 threatened fauna species that have been assumed present due to the presence of suitable habitat. If this is the case, what measures are being taken to minimise the destruction this suitable habitat? It is one thing to note it, but no action is listed to account for it and the destruction it will cause, further reducing the chance of vulnerable and endangered species to remain in existence.
 - Australia has the highest rate of extinction of its flora and fauna of any 1st world country, possibly any country!
- A solution to all of these issues is available if they put the lines underground!
 - A much smaller easement and footprint.
 - Much less destruction of biodiversity and habitat
 - A feasible option financially.
- The tree loss, apart from a biodiversity and fauna habitat loss perspective, is a major issue from a shade and shelter point of view for livestock. We will potentially lose over 280 trees which are currently large enough to provide shade for our livestock.
 - In 3-5 paddocks, we will lose 90% or above shade. This is an enormous cost purely from a production loss let alone the increased risk of mortality due to exposure.
 - None of this has been taken into account in the EIS, nor by TransGrid.
- Some affected locals have been advised by TransGrid's Land Access Officers that they will NOT be replacing the trees they clear on farm which is a clear contradiction of TransGrid's statements in the EIS (pp.11).
 - Surely making good on this destruction is a no brainer.
 - Allowing 'Offsets' to be purchased out of the area does nothing for the people who have had their biodiversity destroyed but no compensation for what they could have sold it for, or keeping the money local.
 - All biodiversity offsets should be purchased locally. Ideally within the same farm that has been affected. A far greater effort by TGrid should be made in this area.
- We are concerned about increased fire hazard due to higher voltage capacity on overhead lines and consequent increased likelihood and increased impact of fire ignition and failure during high winds and lightning strikes.

- Also, the risk associated with fighting fires under, and around overhead lines is significant and very dangerous due to arcing, which was seen on a number of occasions during the Dunns road fires in 2019/20. FRIGHTENING!
- This also hinders the ability to control fires with aircraft, potentially not being able to utilise the best area to defend an approaching fire if the transmission lines are nearby.
- There are many negative impacts of new 500kV Transmission lines to agricultural production.
 - No aerial applications of sprays/fertilizers (within the corridor but also impacting the whole property)
 - Impacts the effectiveness of electric fencing.
 - Impacts the ability to use virtual fencing as it is affected by the frequency of the lines and made redundant. That could be a very valuable tool for us in the future, which will now be taken away, with no compensation of any form.
 - Precision agriculture is curtailed and restricted within the corridor under the lines and we are unsure what other new technology will emerge in the future (ie increasing drone use and wireless connectivity for tank/trough monitoring).
 - No machinery over 4.3m, which will have potentially a massive affect to many farmers.
 - No spray irrigation is allowed.
- The reduction in farmland values. TransGrid states that *“The operational impacts on livelihoods within the social locality could arise in land use, loss of agricultural land and impacts on property values for land within the project footprint”*. It is very true that there will be an impact on property values, but what it tries to sneak through is that it is only in the project footprint. It should be noted that the whole farm value is affected by the project. This should be accounted for in both the EIS and the compensation package to all affected landholders. It is severely under acknowledged and under valued.

In order to minimise the above impacts, I urge the Select Committee to recommend undergrounding the HumLink project.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Lawson