

**Submission
No 67**

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

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

By email: undergrounding.infrastructure@parliament.nsw.gov.au

10 November 2023

Dear Select Committee,

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, particularly undergrounding the HumeLink project. This submission is my personal response and mirrors the situation so many similarly affected citizens face.

I am nearly 70 years old. I write therefore as one thinking of the future which my children will inherit. I write of my small farm -158 hectares/390 acres – in the Bannister district, which will be irrevocably and severely damaged by the proposed HumeLink project.

And, I write knowing that there is a less invasive, safer, and more sustainable way of achieving energy supply, which does not mean scarring the countryside nor the lives of those living there.

Costly initially, yes, but taken over the lifetime that HumeLink is meant to last then it becomes very reasonable, as well as having the advantages of minimising the increasing danger of fire risk, reducing the fragmentation of floral and faunal communities, which already face real challenges, and the inevitable degradation of landscapes into which this short-sighted project will intrude. We are no longer in the 1950s nor is the scheme proposed a “dinky” one. It will be huge, dwarfing the existing infrastructure, and if agreed, it will be the forerunner of more.

On a personal note, since acquiring this property in 1983 I have worked to transform it from a relatively treeless one into one which has been recognised as being something of a model of sensible and sensitive farm planning. In particular the HumeLink plan will cut a devastating swathe – 70 to 130 m wide- through a Seed Orchard, which was developed in conjunction with Greening Australia, with the aim of providing seed, locally acclimatised, for use in Greening Australia’s seeding programs. But that’s not all! The HumeLink plan will also cut into and destroy the integrity of 4

shelterbelts/wildlife corridors. Not much you might think, but they form part of a co-ordinated plan to make this farm more resilient to the effects of an increasingly challenging climate. One site in particular was planted with a view to protecting a dam from the damaging effects of wind-created evaporation.

Not much but it has been the earnest work of one individual to accept the science and to do what can be done – often following guidelines propounded by government agencies, and so to leave this property in a better, more supple condition than what it had been. To find that a government through its agency can be so blasé and insensitive when there is a solution, being adopted elsewhere in the world, is intolerable.

“All Felled, Felled...”

(On the Destruction of a Sycamore Tree, Hadrian’s Wall, and TransGrid’s Plans for this Property)

Obviously, an affront or a challenge to them
That solitary it grew and withstood three hundred years,
Spring-leafed, winter spare, a quiet reminder
Of the slighthness of their mortality. And so, cleanly
Their saw ate their irritation and the years of its sure growing.
I say this from a continent uneasy with the gifts
We have taken and laid waste to, while singing
Our fake bonhomie, “She’ll be right, mate.”
I say this looking out my window to where, soon,
The work of this lifetime will at some hour hear
The arrival of men and then, a chainsaw tearing methodically
Into the life growing there. And afterwards,
The crushed silence. The scent of eucalypts
Persisting for days, useless like grief.

Thank you for accepting this submission. I urge the Select Committee to recommend undergrounding the HumeLink project.

Yours sincerely,

Russ Erwin