

Submission
No 68

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

Organisation: NSW Farmers Dunedoo Branch

Date Received: 10 November 2023



Dunedoo Branch

10TH November 2023

The Director,

Select Committee on the Feasibility of Undergrounding
Infrastructure for Renewable Energy Projects
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Sent via Email: undergrounding.infrastructure@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Director,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the very critical inquiry. I am writing this submission to support of NSW Farmers for undergrounding transmission infrastructure and make an individual submission of behalf of the Dunedoo Branch.

There will be an huge loss of productive agricultural land – approx . 4000ha, that is, loss of prime land which currently grows crops, raises sheep and cattle, which contributes to feeding people both in Australia and overseas. That is within a 50km radius of the village of Birriwa.

Visual impact of power lines to both landowners who are directly impacted by the lines and to those neighbours who are indirectly impacted.

Water supply for construction of eight projects – where will that come from? There is also the question of water, general waste and sewerage waste for the proposed camp sites.

Transmission towers will take away animal watering points, restrict aerial firefighting and hundreds of shade trees will have to be removed to build these towers. That is NOT 'green', that is destroying the countryside by removing trees that are over 200 years old.

All the movement of heavy and light vehicles on these little back roads will stop the movement of livestock from one paddock to another.

Emergency services are already at full stretch – how are our little communities meant to cater an extra 2000 people – Police, Ambulance, Doctors, Hospitals, Rural Fire Service?

Impact on the Merotherie Road: 1.7km of Merotherie Road is a flood plain – it is marked on the maps however not recognised by local councils, therefore most probably won't be recognised by Planning NSW.

Floodwater currently comes up, crosses the flood plain and subsides without serious and long-lasting disruption to agricultural activity and flows through to the Macquarie River.

Upgrades with culverts and other engineering solutions will cause flooding upstream and intensify and concentrate flows downstream which will result in significant erosion and reduction in available agricultural land and create new drainage lines and artificial water courses. There is absolutely no doubt that any engineering solutions will always impact the natural environment. Secondary roads being upgraded to create access for Transmission lines, wind and solar developments will also impact the whole catchment's water courses. The Talbragar River flows into the Macquarie River near Dubbo which impacts the Macquarie Marshes and other significant environmental areas. The health of the river system is paramount!

NSW Farmers' Association – Dunedoo Branch

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Biosecurity – Energy Co has not addressed biosecurity – there needs to be a stringent biosecurity plan. There will be many vehicles travelling through multiple properties causing high risk - eg: speading of noxious weeds, leaving gates open and allowing stock to get out of their paddocks and onto public roads.

Farmers are being asked to assess the impact of this project on their operations and negotiate appropriate compensation with Transgrid by providing independent valuations and preparing Property Management Plans. They are expected to do this, even though Transgrid cannot confirm exactly how their properties will be impacted. Transgrid cannot confirm exactly where the line will go, how many towers will be necessary, if the easement will be fenced during construction and/or during operation, or how they will access the easements. This has proved extremely difficult for landholders as they have been left to guess what the impact will be.

Farmers in the Dunedoo, Birriwa area are familiar with bushfires and understand the devastation that can result. In 2017 the Sir Ivan Bushfire, burnt 55,000ha in the Warrumbungle Shire, the Birriwa Bushfire 1979, in the Warrumbungle and Mid Western Regional Council burnt many thousands of hectares and a life was lost. We are concerned that the overhead lines not only increase the risk of a bushfire starting but increase the risk of a bushfire remaining out of control as the lines will impede firefighting abilities. Transgrid has recently increased their correspondence with government in an attempt to reassure people that they have a management plan to control vegetation, however farmers have seen these plans fail before and need to be given more confidence. We would like to see a comparison of the budget for vegetation management over the life of the line vs the budget allocated for 330kv and 500kva lines.

If theses solar and wind developments do proceed the transmission lines should be all underground to lessen the impact I have pointed out above. I strongly urge the Select Committee to recommend undergrounding of the CWO REZ Transgrid lines to minimise the impacts of Primary Production in the Dunedoo/Birriwa area.

Amanda Bowman
Member
NSW Farmers Dunedoo Branch