Dear (MP name),

**Re: Overhead Transmission Lines to Scar Regional Landscape and Economy**

It’s critical, as NSW and Australia move to renewable energy, that we build our future based on sustainable, efficient infrastructure and proper planning, not flawed economic modelling and short-term thinking.

Unfortunately, flawed economic modelling and short-term thinking appears to be the foundations for the State’s most expensive transmission projects ever - Transgrid’s proposed 360 kilometre high-voltage overhead transmission lines, HumeLink.

As it currently stands, HumeLink is a $4 billion economic disaster, benefiting only Transgrid’s foreign corporate owners who will see a 40% jump in revenue, according to Victoria Energy Policy Centre, Victoria University.

I am asking for you to review this issue and help us ensure the best outcome for our state.

The current Transgrid HumeLink plan is a big failure, driven solely by minimising upfront costs to fast track the overhead proposal, with no consideration of environmental, community or indirect economic impacts.

It fails to assess:

* the impact on tourism, a major growth industry for regional NSW, with revenue from tourism being $14.3 billion in 2019 alone, and visitors increasing 41% from 2014 to 2019. The Snowy Mountains and Tablelands have been selected as iconic locations to promote regional Australia, yet soon will be home to a massive eye-sore with huge 80 m towers, as tall as the Harbour Bridge pylons, cutting an ugly 360km long, 70-metre-wide scar through old growth forests, state forests and working farms, from Wagga Wagga and Kosciusko National Park to the edge of the beautiful Southern Highlands.
* the impact on local productive farmlands, which are significant contributors to local employment and the State’s economy. Numerous farms will see operations significantly impacted with lines cutting through and neighbouring their land.
* Increased bushfire risk from the lines sparking fires and impeding firefighting efforts.
* Diminished regional development as transmission lines make areas undesirable places to live and work.
* Higher transmission outages associated with old towers technology and increasingly severe weather events

The primary considerations should be to minimise the 80 plus year impacts on the environment, endangered species, prime agricultural land and local communities, whilst reducing – not increasing – bushfire risks.

Yet in pushing through the overhead proposal, it appears Transgrid’s only consideration has been upfront delivery costs.

This is inconsistent with the NSW Government’s general project evaluation principle ‘that all first-round impacts should be valued as changes relative to the base case regardless of whether the impacts are direct or indirect’ (NSW Government Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis, Policy and Guidelines Paper, NSW Treasury, March 2017). The current costing doesn’t incorporate all the environmental, social, or economic costs, of which there are many.

This social, economic, and environmental disaster can however be overcome, by taking the transmission underground, as they have in Europe and California and Transgrid has done recently in Sydney to deliver, in Transgrid’s own words, “more reliable, safer and more efficient” energy.

While requiring a greater upfront investment, though according to independent underground experts not as much as Transgrid claims, undergrounding is a cheaper long-term option when you factor in the cost of bushfires, and the environmental and community devastation associated with these huge towers.

We understand it may not be possible to put all the transmission lines underground, that will be necessary as we transition to a net zero carbon future. However, HumeLink is a 500kV line that will stand for more than 80 years. There is a strong economic and environmental case for putting this line underground.

500 kV lines are the tallest, bulkiest, and most imposing of all transmission lines in Australia, completely dominating the landscape for many kilometres either side. As stated above, this 500kV line will stretch an enormous 360km, with associated widespread visual and environmental impacts. As such there are extensive and enduring regional economic benefits from putting HumeLink, a 500kV line, underground

I urge you to support undergrounding HumeLink so that we have environmentally responsible electricity transmission, as we transition to a low carbon energy future. Our future regional economic development depends on preserving our regional environments.

Regards,