

Peter & Christine Rose
361 Hanworth Road
BANNABY NSW 2580

Correspondence to: p_rose@bigpond.net.au
osrose@yahoo.com

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**

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

We object to the HumeLink proposal on a number of grounds, which are set out in detail below. In summary:

- Transgrid has not followed its own guiding principles in its route selection process which has caused the proposed corridor to deviate from the straightest route onto our prime grazing land, visually impacting our home and within a short distance, impeding our sheds and main working area.
- Transgrid made the decision to deviate from its guiding principles solely for political reasons because it did not want to negotiate with the National Parks & Wildlife Service for the corridor to cross the Tarlo National Park (parallel to existing transmission lines) as it may have had to underground 1.6 km of the transmission line, impacting its profit drivers.
- Because Transgrid had already decided not to engage with the National Parks & Wildlife Service it had already made up its mind about the route selection **before** it engaged in **any** community consultation, including consideration of the (significant) environmental, cultural & heritage and social impact of the route on the community.
- Transgrid then refused to engage in any meaningful community consultation before issuing its easement notices.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. We are landowners of a property (approx. 1,100 acres) at Bannaby in the Southern Highlands of NSW in the Upper Lachlan Shire. We first purchased the property in December 2005 (Low Round Hill), expanding to the adjoining property (Cross Station) in early 2008. At that time, in 2005, NSW was coming off a significant drought and the land was arid, prone to erosion, nearly totally denuded of trees, overrun with a range of invasive weeds, but spectacularly beautiful. Our property is very hilly, with deep gorges traversing the property and stunning views of the mountains and the Mares Forest National Park. We fell in love with its remote beauty immediately.

- 1.2. Over the past 18 years we have dedicated ourselves to improving our land, with a mission to leave it better than we found it. We have practiced a range of regenerative farming techniques in consultation with Landcare to improve erosion, create native wildlife corridors, pasture improve and secure water to rehabilitate and enhance our farming ecosystem. We have hand planted thousands of trees, including rare native trees, to increase the flora biodiversity, as a mechanism for sustainable erosion control, wind breaks, provide shade and shelter for animals and create corridors for the native wildlife to cross the property and access Bannaby Creek.
- 1.3. We successfully run a herd of grass fed Angus and Welsh Black cattle and Merino sheep. At great expense, we have fenced off our deep dams and gullies, with most paddocks being trough fed to protect the waterways from erosion and reduce contamination. We have significantly reduced the use of poisons and chemicals on the property by hand removing and slashing weeds. We felt this was an important step, to reduce the toxic chemicals that can leach into the waterways considering our property is part of the Warragamba Dam catchment area that feeds the water drunk by greater Sydney.
- 1.4. We built a beautiful family home on the hill overlooking the Bannaby creek and the mountains, where our children and grandchildren have grown up and enjoyed the quite, rural life that Bannaby has to offer.
- 1.5. We were Bannaby residents long before the Bannaby High Voltage Electrical substation (**Bannaby substation**) was built. At the time that the planning approvals and EIS for the Bannaby substation were lodged and the road was tarred, repeated representations were made to us that the building of the Bannaby substation would have no negative impact on local residents but would be a benefit because of road maintenance and priority bush fire and other services. Clearly those representations were false or had no reasonable basis. The Bannaby substation is located about 3.5 km southeast further up Hanworth Road from our property and on the other side of the road.
- 1.6. We will be directly affected by the HumeLink project to install 360km of 500kV overhead transmission lines connecting Wagga Wagga, Bannaby and Maragle (**HumeLink Project**).¹ Transgrid propose to erect three 80m towers bisecting our entire property (approx. 1,096m) requiring a 70 metre “clearing” easement. Transgrid has said that the surrounding land must be “sterilised” of vegetation. The towers will be less than 400m from the Cross station house site and sheds.²
- 1.7. The towers will be visible from the house and all aspects of the property. Critically, our property is very hilly with deep gullies and gorges at multiple points (which are mostly fenced off to livestock). As such, we only have several flattish paddocks for grazing our cattle and which we crop for hay for times of drought. The flattish paddocks visible from the house and sheds are particularly critical during calving and lambing so that we can monitor the animals. It is these very flattish paddocks that Transgrid propose to fall within the transmission corridor (as it will be easier to build the towers on flattish land than steep rock gullies). The damage to our property and cattle business by losing the most arable and usable land cannot be recompensed, and our whole livelihood is at risk of being destroyed.

2. Transgrid’s community consultation obligations

- 2.1. Transgrid says that it is committed to *“listening and working respectfully, effectively and transparently with communities”* however, in our experience, Transgrid has been dismissive in its dealings with us, BRAG and the Bannaby landowners.
- 2.2. On 19 December 2020, Transgrid announced that it had engaged Rod Stowe to help Transgrid implement the best possible landowner and community engagement practices on its major transmission projects (including HumeLink) to ensure they met the highest standards.³ Mr Stowe

¹ <https://tatimes.com.au/landholders-left-in-limbo-by-humelink-proposal/>

² “Certificate of Compensation Assessment” dated 31 January 2023 (based on a desktop assessment in April 2022) of Transgrid’s valuer, Knight Frank.

³ <https://www.transgrid.com.au/media-publications/news-articles/independent-advocate-to-ensure-better-outcomes-for-landowners-and-communities-affected-by-major-transmission-projects>

said “Transgrid has clearly recognised that it can do a lot better with landowner and community engagement ... I’ll be advising on best practice, specifically with regard to landowners, to ensure processes are transparent and their voices are heard.” Any landowner dissatisfied with engagement with Transgrid would be directed to the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON).

- 2.3. In July 2021, Mr Stowe published a report “*Review of Humelink engagement process: Findings of the Review*”.⁴ That report found that:
 - (a) from a landowner’s perspective, Transgrid’s processes were not open and transparent including (amongst other things) that all options were not being adequately assessed.
 - (b) landowners definitely do not feel that they have been heard because (amongst other things) alternative options proposed by landowners are not seriously explored, or if seriously explored an understandable reason for their rejection has not been provided.
 - (c) Transgrid’s engagement process on the HumeLink Project did not meet best practice standards.
- 2.4. The report set out 20 recommendations, including (amongst other things) “examine all proposed transmission route options (including those proposed by landowners) with detailed advice as to feasibility and reasons for exclusion”.
- 2.5. In September 2021, Transgrid published an announcement entitled “Landowner consultation overview”⁵ which stated that it was committed to robust transparent and effective community engagement on the HumeLink project and had committed to implementing all 20 of Mr Stowe’s recommendations. Transgrid described the initial consultation process to involve the following steps:
 - (a) Initial contact with landowners within the study corridor to provide project information and a request to meet;
 - (b) Landowner consultation to start with landowners to provide comments and information on issues relevant to their property and the project.
 - (c) Meetings with landowners to gather property-specific feedback; and
 - (d) Start easement negotiations.
- 2.6. On 22 September 2022, Transgrid announced changes to the HumeLink Project corridor to release some landowners from the study corridor, and include others in the new areas being studied. Executive Manager of Delivery, Craig Stallan said the changes were to “*support the preference for a double-circuit configuration for the entire route and reduce the project’s footprint, minimising the expected environmental impacts, however engagement with impacted landowners is ongoing. In coming months, we will continue to speak with landowners and communities to examine ways to reduce the overall impact on them. These changes to the HumeLink corridor have been made to deliver the best overall network reliability, capacity and value-for-money*”.⁶
- 2.7. As set out further below, once we were informed by Transgrid in around February 2021 that our property fell within the study corridor and we were likely to be impacted by the HumeLink Project, we expected Transgrid to comply with its community consultation obligations. We have been sorely disappointed. Transgrid had already made a final decision about the Bannaby corridor, well before any community consultation commenced (including any site visits or analysis of the geology, topography or ecological issues).

⁴ <https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/ttufg3xy/stowe-landowner-advocate-report-findings-of-the-humelink-review.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/tusb2bsg/210922-landowner-consultation-humelink.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.transgrid.com.au/media-publications/news-articles/humelink-corridor-refined-as-community-consultation-continues-for-project>

3. Transgrid's route selection process guiding principles

- 3.1. In an undated Transgrid media article entitled "Your questions answered", Transgrid provided the following information to the public as to how it plans the project corridor.⁷

How does Transgrid narrow the study area?

This is a complex process with a range of factors considered as we continue to assess and refine the study corridor. These factors include environmental and cultural heritage considerations, minimising proximity to residences, feedback from landowners and stakeholders, constructability and construction costs. Importantly, this information is considered holistically as a change in one area can result in consequences elsewhere.

Corridor refinement is an ongoing process as we progress to a preferred route, with refinements made as more information is collected. Across the project's footprint we have investigated broad areas up to 5km wide and then slowly narrowed the study corridor based on constraints mapping, ongoing technical assessments and feedback gathered during consultation.

Transgrid applies the following guiding principles to a route selection process:

- ***keep the transmission line as straight as possible;***
- ***select the shortest possible route between two substations where possible;***
- ***parallel existing transmission easements or use public land where possible.***

In conjunction with these principles, HumeLink has identified constraints and opportunities including:

- (a) *social considerations such as avoiding townships and built up areas, airports, community services and cultural heritage*
- (b) *environmental factors, including minimising impacts on flora and fauna and considering soils, hydrology and air quality; and*
- (c) *land use considerations, including existing or planned use for agriculture, tourism and industry.*

Throughout the project planning process, Transgrid continues to map constraints and opportunities as more detailed information is gathered by consulting with landowners, community members and Traditional Owner groups. Field investigations, feasibility studies and technical assessments further contribute to assessment and gradual narrowing of the study corridor. Transgrid is progressively working towards narrowing the preferred corridor to 200 metres.

Why does the corridor for HumeLink avoid national parks and other public land?

We consider a range of factors in the process to identify the preferred alignment for HumeLink, including environmental and agricultural impacts, technical considerations, constructability, proximity to residences, social impact, landowner and community feedback and cost – this includes looking at public land. We complete a range of assessments and consider landowner and community feedback to ensure the final alignment best considers all of these factors.

Transgrid considers the advantages and disadvantages to utilising public land. Advantages overall include reducing impact on landowners.

Disadvantages of installing transmission lines in national parks include:

- *impacts on biodiversity, heritage sites, areas with Aboriginal significance and recreational space*
- *more outages due to bushfires and damage caused by fallen trees, and increased associated maintenance costs*
- *greater impacts on aerial firefighting operations*
- *challenging terrain from a construction and operational perspective*
- *environmental impacts with increased clearing required across the easement and for access paths*
- *higher biodiversity costs.*

⁷ <https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/hzchmlbc/humelink-fags.pdf>

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) also requires projects to avoid, minimise or offset environmental impacts and Transgrid is required to demonstrate that no other feasible options were available as part of the environmental planning approvals that best meet this criteria.

Building a transmission line through Forestry Corporation land has the benefit of utilising existing access tracks and reducing impact on privately owned property. However, there are other potential impacts on State Forests that need to be considered. State Forests play an important role in the local economy including jobs, and the loss of productive plantation land from the required clearing of land for an easement and access purposes would impact forestry operations, as well as downstream businesses and suppliers.

While the use of public land is not been considered as a preferred option for the above reasons, we have heard from the community that there is still a strong preference to still prioritise public land over the use of private land. We have and continue to explore a number of alternative routes suggested by landowners, and will provide information back to the community on the feasibility of these options.

- 3.2. As set out further below, we expected Transgrid to comply with its guiding principles on route selection process, including, keeping the transmission lines as straight as possible, selecting the shortest possible route between two substations and parallel existing transmission easements or use public land where possible. Unfortunately, in our case, at Bannaby, Transgrid has not followed its own principles in its selection process.

4. Bannaby route selection process issues

- 4.1. From around October 2017, the connection of the Bannaby substation to Snowy Hydro 2.0 via the HumLink was being considered (initially as a 500kV single circuit line).
- 4.2. At all times from 2017 until 2021, the study corridor was the straightest possible route, running parallel to the existing transmission lines connected to the Bannaby substation, the most direct route between the substations and affecting the least number of residences (**Southern Route**).
- 4.3. In around February 2021, we had our first “community consultation” with Transgrid at which time we were told the study corridor had changed, with the proposed route to cross the road to the north of the Bannaby substation, traverse directly through around (18) properties in the approximately 10 kilometres from the substation until it hooks back to the more direct route on the other side of Bannaby (**Northern Route**). This route does not keep the transmission lines as straight as possible, is not the shortest route between substations and does not parallel existing transmission easements.
- 4.4. There was no community consultation before the Northern Route was devised. It appears to have been done on a “desktop” basis with Transgrid later admitting it did not know the number of houses affected and that no one had driven (or even flown a drone) along the proposed route to visually assess the impact of the proposal on the local community. Considering the significant and devastating impact of the transmission lines on affected properties, community consultation should have started before the corridor was determined, not after. This is unacceptable in a modern democracy, particularly where Transgrid is a private company motivated by profit drivers.
- 4.5. The following map shows the Southern Route (in green) and the Northern Route (in yellow):⁸

⁸ https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/fh1nnpns/03-transgrid_a4_factsheet_humelink_-route-selection_bannaby_01-04-2022.pdf



Map 1: Routes considered in the Bannaby area

- 4.6. Discussions with Transgrid were then delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions and lock downs. However, during this “initial consultation period”, Transgrid told various Bannaby residents impacted by the Northern Route that:
- due to various constraints to get the project back on track the Northern Route was largely a fait accompli and there was nothing that could be done to change it;
 - if they wanted to oppose the Northern Route, they needed to form an action group of all of the affected residents and put an alternative feasible proposal for Transgrid to consider.
- 4.7. From mid-2021, Transgrid has been sending letters to numerous Bannaby landowners stating “Congratulations! Your land will not be affected by the new transmission lines”. Having sent those letters, it would seem very difficult for Transgrid to change the route to affect land of people who received those letters.
- 4.8. In September 2021, the HumeLink Project was widely criticised in a report by the Victoria Energy Policy Centre (VEPC)⁹ which says the project requires a “complete rethink”. One researcher stated “When you look at the technical, financial and environmental aspects of Snowy 2.0, they didn’t stack up [when the project was announced in 2017] and they still don’t stack up,” and “If anything, the economics have gotten worse and we are now aware of the enormous environmental damage to Kosciuszko National Park and impacts on the landowners affected by HumeLink.” VEPC favours underground transmission lines, particularly through the Kosciuszko National Park.¹⁰¹¹ Criticism is made of the entire project design with the report calling for an independent review process to look at what’s being proposed and to come up with the best solution from the technical, financial, environmental and community perspectives and to ensure that Snowy Hydro shoulders its share of the costs and not leave the burden on NSW electricity consumers. Transgrid has not addressed the criticism of the project design.
- 4.9. By September 2021, Transgrid’s cost estimate of the HumeLink Project had blown out to \$3.317 billion (a 250% increase to its January 2020 estimate of \$1.35 billion) making it “by far the most

⁹ https://243b2ed8-6648-49fe-80f0-f281c11c3917.filesusr.com/ugd/92a2aa_a94f4be48d5294751bdc2300e9e0f1faa.pdf#xd_co_f=MWU5NjBjYWVhMOMi00NmY3LTgwMjctODg2ZjNhMGRIQGQ1~:https://www.vepc.org.au

¹⁰ <https://reneweconomy.com.au/eleven-lessons-from-the-blow-out-in-costs-for-humelink-transmission-line/>

¹¹ <https://tatimes.com.au/new-report-says-humelink-on-wrong-economic-footing/>

expensive transmission project” in Australia.¹² Transgrid’s revised project cost estimate in its September 2021 project assessment conclusions report has “a high degree of uncertainty, of -30%/+50%. That is, HumeLink’s cost is expected to end up somewhere between \$2.3bn and \$5.0bn – a \$2.7bn range!”¹³.

- 4.10. On 30 September 2021, four representatives from Niche Environment & Heritage Company (**Niche**), came to our property to conduct onsite field work for Transgrid’s ecological study. It was pouring with rain and their car got bogged and we had to tow them out. They conducted their field work on Low Round Hill, rather than on Cross Station, that is, on the wrong property, at a site nowhere near where the proposed towers or easement would be placed. Niche concluded (in a report provided months later) that the (wrong) property had Yellow Box, Blakely’s Red Gum grassy woodland, 4 threatened flora transects, 2 hollow bearing trees and 3 aquatic assessments.
- 4.11. During 2021, all of the landowners of the properties impacted by the Northern Route formed the Bannaby Resident’s Action Group (**BRAG**) to advocate with Transgrid for it to consider an alternative proposal to Transgrid that the transmission lines should follow the Southern Route (parallel to the existing lines) as this would significantly reduce the number of homes affected, consistent with Transgrid’s stated aims as set out on their website. The owner of the majority of the affected land along the Southern Route as well as the historic “Hillasmont”, Mr Keith Kerridge, is a member of BRAG and supports and agrees that the Southern Route least impacts landowners (including himself).
- 4.12. In around October 2021, we (together with the rest of the BRAG) formally requested that Transgrid assess the Southern Route as an alternative option to the Northern Route.
- 4.13. On 16 October 2021, members of BRAG (Mal Brierly and Keith Kerridge) met with the Honourable Rodney Roberts, MLC to discuss the problem with Transgrid with the proposed Northern Route and the impact on landowners. BRAG raised a potential 30% reduction in land values if the Northern Route proceeded. Mr Kerridge informed Mr Roberts that although he was the substantial owner of the land on the Southern Route, that route would have the least impact on landowners.
- 4.14. In October 2021, Transgrid prepared maps of the narrowed the study corridor following the Northern Route. These maps were provided to us in March 2022 (after we were informed that Transgrid was proceeding with the Northern Route) as Transgrid’s “most recent maps”. The fact these maps were prepared in October 2021 (and not amended before March 2022), suggests that subsequent community consultation about the proposed route was not in good faith and that Transgrid had little to no intention to change the route irrespective of any factors raised through the community consultation process.
- 4.15. On 8 November 2021, we made a complaint to the EWON, Mr Andrew Dyer and asked for his cooperation mediating with Transgrid.
- 4.16. On 9 November 2021, we (together with other BRAG members) met with Transgrid representatives to discuss the concerns with the Northern Route.
- 4.17. In December 2021, a meeting was held between Mr Dyer, members of BRAG and representatives of Transgrid with site visits to our property and various other properties on the Northern route. At that meeting, Mr Dyer stated that he failed to see why the route had been changed. Mr Dyer asked Transgrid to provide us with a cost benefit analysis of the comparison to the two alternative routes (Northern and Southern) and the ecological and cultural survey reports undertaken by Transgrid for the two routes. Transgrid agreed to provide that information and stated that it had not made up their minds as to the relative merits of the two routes and were open to discussion. At this meeting, Keith Kerridge (the owner of a majority of land along the Southern Route) told Mr

¹² <https://reneweconomy.com.au/eleven-lessons-from-the-blow-out-in-costs-for-humelink-transmission-line/>

¹³ <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/households-could-be-up-for-2b-electricity-transmission-cost-blowout-20210911-p58qsb.html>
<https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/news-events/news/humelink-to-increase-nsw-power-bills-cost-the-economy>

Dyer and Transgrid that he (and 3 other Southern Route landowners who already have 300kW easements affecting their land) were happy to discuss negotiations regarding reinstating the Southern Route. Transgrid did not accept that offer (as it had already made up its mind about the Northern Route).

- 4.18. On around 15 December 2021, we wrote to Wendy Tuckerman MP, the then Minister for Local Government of NSW, to inform her of our issues dealing with Transgrid. Ms Tuckerman subsequently came and visited Cross Station and some other affected sites and met with landowners. She also failed to see why the route had been altered and said that she would meet with Transgrid.
- 4.19. From around mid-December 2021, Transgrid began to contact BRAG members to inform them that Transgrid had decided to proceed with its preferred Northern Route.
- 4.20. On 18 January 2022, Ms Tuckerman MP wrote a letter to The Honourable Mr Matthew Keen, the then Treasurer of NSW & Minister for Energy to raise the issues that BRAG was having with Transgrid concerning the Northern Route and its lack of meaningful consultation with her constituents. We understand that Ms Tuckerman has also contacted various politicians on behalf of BRAG.
- 4.21. On 26 to 28 January 2022, Niche attended a further onsite field work at our property on microbats, concluding that there were 4 threatened bat species detected.
- 4.22. On 27 January 2022, we informed Chris Bowen, Minister for Climate Change & Energy, of the devastating effect of the Northern Route on landowners to which he responded *"the consultation system is effectively a sham"*.
- 4.23. In early February 2022, we had telephone calls with Transgrid in which we were told that Transgrid was unwilling or unable to provide us with either the cost benefit analysis or EIS requested by Mr Dyer on the basis that the information was confidential, privileged and commercially sensitive.
- 4.24. On 22 February 2022, out of sheer frustration with Transgrid's duplicity, lack of meaningful consultation and provision of information, we notified them that we were not going to allow them further access on our property. However, (as set out below) we have attempted to continue our dialogue with Transgrid since that time, including attending conferences and hosting various Transgrid representatives on supervised visits.
- 4.25. On 10 March 2022, we contacted Ms Tuckerman again to update her on our dealings with Transgrid.
- 4.26. At no time between the meeting on 14 December 2021 and 28 March 2022, did Transgrid engage in any discussion (let alone an open discussion) with us or any of our impacted neighbours about the relative merits of the two possible routes.
- 4.27. On 28 March 2022, we received a phone call from Transgrid that it was proceeding with its preferred Northern Route.
- 4.28. In March 2022, Transgrid published the *"HumeLink Fact Sheet Bannaby Route Refinement Decision March 2022"*.¹⁴ In this publication, Transgrid set out its (factually inaccurate) reasons for preferring the Northern Route to the Southern Route (see further below).
- 4.29. On 11 April 2022, we commissioned a preliminary site assessment by Ecology Consulting (**Our Ecology Report**). Two ecologists, Finbar Shields and Lesley Peden, came to Cross Station to conduct a site overview for threatened flora. Mature trees mix of Yellow Box and Blakey's Red Gum which are components of the threatened Box Gum Woodland CEEC. It was noted that our property retained a high proportion of intact native vegetation. Remnant woodland and forests are abundant and the area fulfils an important function in landscape connectivity. The condition of

¹⁴ https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/fh1npnsp/03-transgrid_a4_factsheet_humelink_-route-selection_bannaby_01-04-2022.pdf

native ecosystems and availability of abundant habitat for a range of species suggest a high likelihood of presence of threatened species to occur in the locality.

- See **Attachment 1**: Our Ecology Report by Ecology Consulting dated 11 April 2022.

- 4.30. Shortly after we received Our Ecology Report, we published a copy of the BRAG website and emailed a copy to our Transgrid representatives.
- 4.31. In April 2022, Transgrid finalised the 200m corridor and stated that in coming weeks it would be further refined to identify a 70m easement, following which the easement acquisition process would commence.
- 4.32. On 11 May 2022, BRAG wrote to Mr Keen to reiterate our concerns about Transgrid's dealings with us concerning the proposed Northern Route and our alternative option of the Southern Route, which we did not think had been adequately addressed.
- 4.33. On 24 May 2022, BRAG wrote to Jerry Maycock, Transgrid Chairman to elevate our complaints about our dealings with Transgrid.
- 4.34. On 3 June 2022, Gordon Taylor, Transgrid's Executive General Manager, Major Projects stated in a letter to us and other landowners:

"Our overarching objective is to achieve agreement on compensation with landowners but given the importance of the HumeLink Project, will proceed to compulsorily acquire an easement if agreement cannot be reached with the landowner within the statutory timeframes".

- 4.35. This comment makes any negotiation with Transgrid asymmetrical.
- 4.36. On 23 June 2022, BRAG wrote to Gordon Taylor, copied to Brett Redman, Transgrid CEO, Jerry Maycock and Mr Dyer in which we raised the issue of lack of consultation, transparency and lack of provision of data by Transgrid to substantiate the case for their preferred Northern Route and stated that *"I do not believe by the nature of your response that Transgrid is taking this matter seriously."* An allegation of bullying by Transgrid representatives of BRAG landowners was raised.
- 4.37. In September 2022, we commissioned Steven Noon as a consultant engineer to prepare an engineering study comparing the Southern Route and the Northern Route from an engineering perspective (**Our Engineering Report**). Mr Noon previously worked with Transgrid and was familiar with Bannaby substation. A copy of Mr Noon's report is attached.

- See **Attachment 2**: Our Engineering Report by Steven Noon dated September 2022.

- 4.38. Shortly after we received Our Engineering Report, we published a copy of the BRAG website and emailed a copy to our Transgrid representatives.
- 4.39. On 31 January 2023, we received a letter from Transgrid to commence negotiations for the acquisition of an easement on Cross Station. This was despite the HumeLink Project still going through review and the EIS not yet been lodged. Transgrid said it valuer would be attending affected properties.
- 4.40. On 23 February 2023, we reached out to Mr Anthony Ko, Energy Assessments Department of Planning & Environment and we provided him with copies of the Environmental Report and Engineering Report.
- 4.41. In around April 2023, Transgrid's valuer attended Cross Station to assess the impact of the project. Transgrid's valuer stated to us that if Transgrid persisted with this proposal, it would have significant visual impact on both Cross Station and surrounding properties. In addition, he acknowledged that the construction of the towers would significantly impede farm management, particularly given the steepness of the terrain. Aerial management of weed control, firefighting and crop sowing would be dangerous and impossible.

5. Transgrid's stated reasons for preferring the Northern Route

- 5.1. Transgrid says that its route development "holistically" has regard to social constraints (such as townships, built up areas and cultural heritage), environmental constraints and land use constraints. However, unlike the Southern Route, the Northern Route has significant environmental, cultural and heritage impacts.
- 5.2. In its March publication, Transgrid states that it determined that the Northern Route (referred to by Transgrid as "Bannaby 3") was preferred for the following reasons:
 - (a) it has a lower environmental impact with a smaller area of Plant Community Types impacted.
 - (b) it's lower environmental impact was also illustrated by its materially lower biodiversity offset cost.
 - (c) It traverses a shorter distance through high to very high bushfire risk areas, and therefore is the better option from a network resilience perspective.
 - (d) Whilst it traverses a longer distance on private land than the national park option (the Southern Route, referred to by Transgrid as "Bannaby 1"), there is no benefit gained by moving to either of the other two alternatives as they have a similar number of private landowners impacted and a greater number of residences within 500m of the line.
- 5.3. Despite repeated requests, Transgrid has not provided us with any evidence of an ecological study or engineering report conducted on the Southern Route which would enable Transgrid to make the comparisons it did in its March publication.
- 5.4. In our discussions with Transgrid representatives, admissions have been made that:
 - (a) their engineers would prefer out of simplicity and efficiency that Transgrid had proceeded with the Southern Route where access roads existed and they could run parallel with the existing 330kW power lines.
 - (b) the impediment was political and their inability to deal with National Parks & Wildlife Service on extending the corridor into 1.6km of the Tarlo National Park and that this was the main driver for the route change.

6. Tarlo National Park

- 6.1. As stated above, Transgrid's only real reason for changing to the Northern Route is because the Southern Route traverses the Tarlo National Park (for only 1.6 km) and Transgrid would have to deal with the National Parks & Wildlife Service to negotiate an easement which would incur additional "environmental offset" costs. Transgrid says its easement cannot go through the National Park unless there is no other feasible option. In our view (and the view of our neighbours), the Northern Route is not a feasible option!
- 6.2. Critically, there are existing transmission lines (and a corresponding easement) crossing through the Tarlo National Park. The Southern Route would simply parallel these existing lines.
- 6.3. There seems to be little credence to Transgrid's position that the transmission lines cannot run through the Tarlo National Park unless there is no other feasible option considering that Snowy Hydro 2.0 is situated in the Kosciuszko National Park and other sections of the transmission line cross that National Park including from Lobs Hole to the proposed substation at Maragle.
- 6.4. In Our Engineering Report, Steven Noon:
 - (a) Refers to Transgrid's guiding principles to the route selection process being to:
 - (i) Keep the transmission line as straight as possible;
 - (ii) Select the shortest possible route between two substations where possible;
 - (iii) Parallel existing transmission easements or use public land where possible.

- (b) Opines that the Southern Route has a very small impact on the Tarlo National Park. This is also the case for the existing 330kV line that is subject of the maintenance agreement between Transgrid and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This has ensured that clearing under the lines is minimised to permit wildlife movement.
 - (c) That existing maintenance agreement could be expanded to accommodate HumeLink Option 1 (Southern Route), both during construction and in operation.
 - (d) Accordingly, with such management issues in place, it is considered that the HumeLink work would be consistent with the Tarlo National Park Plan of Management.
 - (e) In view of the minimal impact on the Tarlo National Park and the adoption of appropriate management measures, and because the HumeLink transmission project has been declared by the NSW Government a Critical State Infrastructure (CSSI), it is considered in balance that this aspect of the project could gain ministerial approval when considered as part of the detailed EIS process.
 - (f) For the Southern Route, access is largely obtained through tracks already constructed for the operation of the existing 330kV line. Accordingly, the need for new tracks is limited. In contrast for the Northern Route, the provision of new construction and operational tracks will be required.
- 6.5. It follows that the resolution of the critical issue is well within the purview of the current minister and the Department of Planning. Transgrid just hasn't bothered to action it because it prefers to bully landowners like us.
- 6.6. The issue with the Tarlo National Park could also be easily solved by Transgrid undergrounding the transmission lines.

7. Environmental impact

- 7.1. The proposed Northern Route will destroy the habitat of endangered koalas which live within the proposed corridor. Whereas there have been numerous sightings of Koalas along the Northern Route, to the best of our knowledge (and we used to own 2,000 acres of land on the Southern Route) no koalas have ever been spotted on the Southern Route as it is mostly grasslands with few trees or nature corridors.
- 7.2. Similarly, there have also been many sightings of platypus along the proposed Northern Route whereas there are no waterways along the Southern Route (including the relevant section of the Tarlo National Park).
- 7.3. The Northern Route impacts land which adjoins Mares Forest National Park and the Blue National Park and is also the habitat of endangered quolls, black cockatoos, white-tailed wallabies, wedge tail eagles, lyrebirds, emus, echidnas, platypus, kangaroos and wombats.
- 7.4. As stated by Steven Noon, whereas there are already cleared tracks on the Southern Route, the Northern Route will require the construction of new tracks which will involve the significantly clearing of trees (including old growth, mature trees) and crossing of creeks and the corresponding destruction of habitat and risk of contamination and erosion.
- 7.5. Transgrid says that it has conducted seasonal environmental surveys to consider the environmental impact of the transmission lines on the Northern Route. As stated above, the environmental surveys conducted on our property were done in less than ideal conditions and on the wrong property. It should have been very difficult for Transgrid to draw any meaningful conclusions from those environmental surveys, and yet they have.
- 7.6. The area of our property which falls within the now 70m narrowed corridor is positioned such that it will destroy extensive wildlife corridors consisting of native trees and bushes which provide sanctuary and habitat for the native animals, birds and insects in a flourishing ecosystem and protected corridor down to Bannaby Creek. The planting and fencing off of these treed areas reduce soil erosion and shelter livestock. They have been purposefully planted by us over the

course of nearly 20 years under the guidance of Landcare, at considerable cost and with careful thought and planning.

- 7.7. Transgrid made no attempt to share with us, the landowners, the results of these two cursory studies. We were only provided with the environmental report in respect of our property in mid-2023, after repeated requests.
- 7.8. The pylons for the proposed Northern Route traverse through some of the most productive land in the area – hundreds of thousands of dollars have been invested in this land, pasture improving and controlling weeds to make it productive for livestock and cropping. By blindly promoting the Northern Route Transgrid myopically focuses on the importance of industrialisation and electrical utilities without any consideration of the important agricultural contribution of our land and the Bannaby area (which helps sustainably feed Australians).
- 7.9. Erosion control is an ongoing problem. The Bannaby area is in the catchment for the Warragamba Dam and its fragile ecology has required both landowners and Landcare to invest significant amounts of money restoring the land, vegetation, fencing out riparian ways and encouraging biodiversity of plants and animals. The construction of the towers on the Northern Route is an anathema to that ethos.
- 7.10. Transgrid's proposed Northern Route for the transmission lines does not seem to have taken any of these above mentioned factors into account. Like many local farmers, we endeavour to use as little dangerous substances on our property and consume the beef that we breed here because it is not contaminated with the poisons and additives used on large, commercial properties. Transgrid proposed to "sterilise the corridor" with no regard for the impact on the surrounding land, including the leaching of chemicals into land grazed and waterways used for human consumption. Transgrid does not take such "externalities" into consideration when determining the corridor.
- 7.11. The environmental impact could be negated by Transgrid either:
 - (a) Changing the route to the Southern Route; or
 - (b) Undergrounding the transmission lines on the Northern Route.
- 7.12. Transgrid has not even considered this latter option because it prioritises profit drivers over any other consideration.

8. Culture and heritage

- 8.1. The HumeLink *"EIS Technical Report 8- Visual and Landscape Character Assessment"* states:

"Upper Lachlan Local Environmental Plan 2010 – aims to co-ordinate the orderly use and development of land used for Primary Production and Rural Landscape Zones. Aim to minimise the visual impact of development on the existing agricultural landscape character and conserve heritage items including their "settings and views".

- 8.2. Transgrid's overhead wires and towers will impact almost every cultural heritage site in the Bannaby area, in respect of which Transgrid has done no research before changing the corridor from the Southern Route to the Northern Route, despite the information being publicly available. It was all done on a "desktop" analysis with not one person from Transgrid coming to the area to drive the road and look at the topography or count the houses before the change was a fait accompli.
- 8.3. The cultural heritage sites affected within the Northern Route include:
 - (a) Hillas Farm Homestead which was built in c. 1876 (the site was first established in 1826) and is listed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register and is the subject of a permanent conservation order. The house and gardens have a number of open days per year and attract up to two hundred visitors at some openings. One of the proposed towers would be 200m from the house and has a dramatic visual impact. This will amount to dramatic cultural vandalism, a loss not only for the Bannaby area but Australia as a whole.

(b) “Cross Station” (our property) which was settled by the Whipp family in the mid-1800s and houses the gravesites of two Whipp grandchildren and their grandfather, all of whom died in the 1880s. The Northern Route bisects “Cross Station” destroying the value of that property.

(c) Historic Adavale homestead and numerous other historic sites dating back to the 1800s.

8.4. The Southern Route has no heritage implications.

8.5. The cultural & heritage impact could be negated by Transgrid either:

(a) Changing the route to the Southern Route; or

(b) Undergrounding the transmission lines on the Northern Route.

8.6. Transgrid has not even considered this latter option because it prioritises profit drivers over any other consideration.

9. Social impact (emotional, mental and psychological factors)

9.1. Transgrid’s proposed Northern Route impacts many households, most of whom are permanent residents. Like us, our Bannaby neighbours and business owners have expressed extreme distress and anxiety because the proposed HumeLink project has serious financial implications and will destroy their quality of life. Because Transgrid had already made up its mind about the Northern Route, it had little regard for our concerns or distress.

9.2. Most landowners, like us, moved to the area because of its remote and quiet beauty and are now facing enormous 80m electricity towers being built on top of their homes, with little opportunity to challenge the decision as the corridor has already been decided.

9.3. We have been severely distressed in our dealings with Transgrid over the last 2 years. The initial shock and distress in finding out that Transgrid wanted to desecrate our haven with 80m transmission lines is indescribable. Exacerbated by the (false) promises that had been made to us when the Bannaby substation was first constructed and the fact that we had dedicated almost 20 years to trying to regenerate our land.

9.4. Once we saw the dogleg that is the Northern Route and compared it to the straight line of the Southern Route which parallels existing lines (rather than crossing pristine land) the decision seemed irrational and we have spent years and so much stress trying to get a proper explanation from Transgrid.

9.5. Particularly hurtful and distressing for us has been the disregard that Transgrid has shown us. Yes, we are private landowners and they are a huge, privately owned foreign company with the backing of the government. However, we worked hard to afford our land, we have paid enormous mortgages trying to build our dream piece of rural Australia and to us that is worth something, it is worth fighting for and protecting unless there is no other foreseeable option. But there is another foreseeable option – the Southern Route, but Transgrid doesn’t want to accept that and they have lied to us about conducting surveys, testings and costings of that option (which it hasn’t) because it doesn’t want to really consider it or have the headache of having to deal with the National Parks & Wildlife Service and potentially the additional associated costs.

9.6. Transgrid wants to make a profit for its (foreign) investors – that is its driver. It wants to construct and operate the transmission lines at the lowest possible cost so it makes the most money. It doesn’t care whose dreams or what it destroys in the process.

9.7. The whole process has been totally undemocratic. We were told from the outset that we had no hopes of contesting the decision made in early 2021 to impact our land. We have been told repeatedly that if we don’t negotiate then they will forcibly resume our land. If that isn’t bullying then we don’t know what is.

9.8. We understand that transmission lines have to go somewhere – this is not a “not in my backyard” situation. Our criticism is that there are better alternatives to what Transgrid has proposed – i.e.

undergrounding the lines or following the Southern Route - and Transgrid has not seriously considered those options (because of the cost and effort).

- 9.9. Transgrid has shown scant regard for the mental health impact on the community. When questioned, Transgrid representatives said they had no idea how many homes were impacted by the Northern Route and had not done any research, interviews or surveillance to determine that matter until after the Northern Route was determined and a change to the route was no longer possible. This failure to consult and consider the impact on landowners is indicative of the attitude Transgrid has taken throughout the process, showing no regard for the interests or mental health of those affected.
- 9.10. The social impact could be negated by Transgrid either:
- (a) Changing the route to the Southern Route; or
 - (b) Undergrounding the transmission lines on the Northern Route.
- 9.11. Transgrid has not even considered this latter option because it prioritises profit drivers over any other consideration.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1. The route should be changed from the Northern Route to the Southern Route or the transmission lines should be undergrounded. In particular:
- (a) the Southern Route is consistent with Transgrid's guiding principles to the route selection process – keeping the transmission lines as straight as possible; selecting the shortest possible route between two substations where possible; parallel existing transmission easements or use public land where possible. The Northern Route is not consistent with any of those principles.
 - (b) All of the landowners on the Northern Route, including us, have opposed the Northern Route. Whereas a number of landowners who own land affected by the Southern Route, including the owner of Bannaby Station and 3 others who already have 300kW easements affecting their land, invited Transgrid to discuss negotiations regarding reinstating the Southern Route. Transgrid did not accept that offer, as it had already made up its mind about the Northern Route.
 - (c) Transgrid, in spite of all of the representations, documents and reports that we have submitted to them, remained intransigent and committed to their proposed Northern Route.
- 10.2. As landowners, we believe that for the HumeLink to proceed with the requisite social licence and to part of the 21st century renewable revolution, that undergrounding is the logical way to go. As demonstrated in this submission, Transgrid's proposed Northern Route, with its dogleg across to our property, does not stand up to scrutiny. The Southern Route is far more practical.
- 10.3. Precedent exists for moving the line, as evidenced by the landowners at Batlow who presumed on Transgrid to see good sense.¹⁵

Attachments:

1. **Attachment 1:** Our Ecology Report by Ecology Consulting dated 11 April 2022.
2. **Attachment 2:** Our Engineering Report by Steven Noon dated September 2022

¹⁵ <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/transmission-towers-to-move-in-new-line-for-humelink-route/news-story/1fc3d5b39b885194e844725279be7812>

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Rose". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'P' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine Rose". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter & Christine Rose

Cross Station, 361 Hanworth Road, Bannaby NSW

Date: 5 October 2023