

Attention: Department of Planning & Environment

Submission from Big Springs Rural Fire Service Brigade regarding HumeLink- SSI-36656827

3.3.1.1. Wagga 330 kV substation to proposed Gugaa 500 kV substation

3.3.1.2. Proposed Gugaa 500 kV substation to Wondalga

3.4.1 Proposed Gugaa 500 kV substation

Members of Big Springs Rural Fire Service Brigade (“Big Springs RFS”) voted at the AGM to make submissions raising concerns, seeking further information and objecting to issues raised in the HumeLink EIS and other impacts foreseen for the brigade as the new Gugaa 500kV substation (“substation site”) and increased capacity high voltage lines to and from the substation site are located within our area of responsibility.

Members of Big Springs RFS identified the following concerns:-

- 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
- Increased fire hazard due to oil (fuel) loading at substation site
- Potential for environmentally detrimental oil and other chemical spills from site across highly productive farmland noting the substation site is in a valley with multiple creeks nearby, all of which are tributaries of the Murrumbidgee River
- Single access to substation site off Livingstone Gully Road - not 360 degree access and no alternate road access
- Big Springs RFS only has fire assets in a shed on Compton Road meaning fire assets can only get to a fire on the northern and eastern sides of the brigade’s boundary, including Transgrid owned assets, by traveling under the high voltage wires which cross both Big Springs Road and Livingstone Gully Road
- Delay from time of call up to time of attendance for Big Springs RFS to get to fire shed, mobilise assets and travel to substation site via Livingstone Gully Road (dirt road access) or long way round via Big Springs Road, Gregadoo Road, Livingstone Gully Road
- Given only one access route to substation site Big Springs RFS will not be able to fire fight to best advantage in prevailing conditions (eg. to counter wind direction) due to restricted access and difficulty traversing surrounding rural property
- In the case of smoke being present from a fast moving grass fire both Livingstone Gully Road and Big Springs Road may be affected at the same time limiting access and increasing possible losses on the northern and eastern sides of the Big Springs RFS brigade area
- Concern about limited membership and assets of Big Springs RFS and consequent stretching of our capacity to respond to any other incident in our area if members are called to incident/s at Transgrid owned infrastructure in our area
- Fatigue of Big Springs RFS members if called regularly to incidents at Transgrid owned infrastructure in our area both in terms of physical fatigue and willingness to attend callouts
- Increased risk for aerial fire fighting (65m verses existing 30m aerial wires) -
 - currently fires on Mt Flakney are fought on a roughly 18.6 year cycle using fixed wing aircraft
 - aircraft take off from Forest Hill and fly heavy to the fire location – discharging in a climb

- with higher wires, aircraft will have to climb higher for clearance over the wires, then descend to discharge at best level, then climb again increasing aviation hazard
- mitigation may be to add more aircraft loaded with less retardant, or fight from a higher altitude – both requiring a higher frequency of flights – therefore based upon Risk = Frequency x Outcome – risk is increased.

In respect of Proposed Gugaa 500 kV substation the members of Big Springs RFS seek the following information:-

- Will the substation site will be manned and/or monitored 24/7 to initiate immediate emergency response?
- What is the line of command and communication access to isolate the line and/or substation site during any emergency?
- Will the contact names/numbers of that line of command be made available to Big Springs RFS and by what means?
- What is the role to be played by volunteer Big Springs RFS members in any emergency response as opposed to any Transgrid dedicated response team or employed professional fire fighters from Wagga Wagga, and what will be the order of call up?
- What firefighting assets will be available at the substation site and who is to operate them?
- Is there to be any incident or firefighting training on substation site?
- Is Big Springs RFS expected to attend all incidents relating to Transgrid owned infrastructure in our area noting limited membership and assets?
- The 22.5ha substation appears designed to take 7 transformers, various switching gantries, and two small buildings. This would not take up 22.5ha. What is the balance of land set aside for?
- Why is there no mention of Synchronous Condensers in the substation site design?
- Why is the site to be illuminated 24/7 but only day shift occupancy is mentioned? Could infrared lighting be used at night for security to reduce lux level and consequent light pollution in an otherwise rural setting?
- Why is the line no longer being considered to the north of Wagga Wagga airport?

Objection to increased capacity of overhead line:-

- Members of Big Springs RFS submit that the high voltage line itself should be constructed underground to limit risk of fire from overhead lines and allow the brigade 360 degree terrestrial access to effectively fire fight in all our brigade area.

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