

Submission to NSW Planning Portal – Objection to Hunter Transmission Project

Application Number: SSI-70610456

Applicant: Louise and Daniel Klerk

Address: Mount View Road, Millfield 2325

Date: 24th September 2025

To Whom it May Concern,

Submission Title: Objection to the Hunter Transmission Project – Mount View Road, Millfield Owners.

We are writing as a long-term residents and homeowners on Mount View Road, Millfield, to formally object to the approval of the Hunter Transmission Project as outlined in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We are deeply concerned about the potential environmental, social, and economic risks of this project. While we support the transition to renewable energy, this project, particularly its proposed route and execution, poses unacceptable risks and impacts our community, local environment, our properties and way of life.

The stated purpose of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Hunter Transmission Project is to identify, predict, and assess the environmental, social, and economic effects of the proposed infrastructure, ensuring transparency and enabling meaningful community input. The EIA's commitment to avoiding, minimising, or offsetting harm underscores the need to reconsider the proposed route, which threatens to disrupt the rural character of Mount View Road, diminish property values, compromise the safety and amenity of residents, and impact on the local biodiversity and culturally significant sites. Our objection is not only valid within this framework, it is essential to ensuring that the project reflects the voices and interests of those most directly affected.

Despite the NSW Department of Planning's stated commitment to delivering sustainable growth, creating liveable communities, supporting economic development, and promoting equity and resilience, the current HTP proposal fails to uphold these principles. It prioritises short-term infrastructure at the expense of Millfield's long-term future, disregards the wellbeing of its residents, and overlooks Millfield's vital role in sustaining more remote communities.

Executive Summary

This submission outlines a formal objection to the Hunter Transport Plan (HTP) as currently proposed, highlighting its failure to align with the NSW Department of Planning's stated commitments to sustainable growth, liveable communities, economic development, and equity and resilience. The plan sacrifices Millfield's long-term future for short-term infrastructure priorities, disregards the wellbeing of its residents, and neglects the town's strategic role in supporting more remote communities. The objection presents evidence that the HTP undermines regional planning principles, threatens environmental and cultural heritage, and risks irreversible damage to the character and viability of Millfield. We call for a reassessment of the proposal to ensure that infrastructure development genuinely supports the broader goals of regional sustainability and community resilience.

Key Grounds for Objection:

1. Irreversible Impact on Residential Amenity

The proposed 500kV transmission lines will run alarmingly close to residential properties including our own property and will introduce considerable visual intrusion and noise pollution, which will directly affect the serenity and visual amenity of Millfield, Mount View and surrounding communities. The EIS acknowledges visual and noise impacts yet fails to adequately mitigate them for affected homeowners. The EIS admits that these impacts will be felt most acutely by residents living nearby the completed project, including our family.

The towering infrastructure will dominate the landscape, destroy scenic views, and introduce persistent electromagnetic fields diminishing property values. The EIS acknowledges that the proposed 500kV transmission infrastructure will result in impacted visual sensitivity in rural residential areas such as Millfield. Based on the findings in the EIS, the project could potentially lead to a decrease in property values in the surrounding area due to the landscape alterations, noise, and visual impacts. This risks adversely impacting the wellbeing of residents and erodes the liveability of our community.

Section 10 of the EIS states “the landscape character study area includes all areas within 5 kilometres of the HTP corridor, that is a 10-kilometre-wide corridor including the 140-metre wide transmission line corridor”¹ Our property, if the project is approved and completed, will be within 5km of the HTP corridor noting no formal communications were received from EnergyCo in relation to the project. After attending a community consultation EnergyCo have now formally confirmed they will complete a visual impact assessment on our property, other properties in Millfield and Mount View have not been afforded this opportunity. EnergyCo’s lack of understanding about the impact on residential properties is apparent and full and detailed assessment must take place.

We are currently building our new dream home just 15 metres from Mount View Road, a home designed specifically to embrace the sweeping rural views and natural beauty that first drew us to Millfield. In 2019, we consulted with Cessnock City Council regarding future developments in the area and were advised that none were planned that would compromise our outlook or amenity. Based on this assurance, we committed to our build, and our slab was laid in August 2025. The proposed project now threatens to irreversibly alter the landscape we built for, with towering 500kV transmission lines and construction activity set to dominate the skyline and intrude directly into our line of sight. The visual impact from our new home will be immense, transforming what was intended to be a peaceful, scenic retreat into a corridor of industrial infrastructure. We love to sit on our verandah and watch lightning roll across the valley and sunsets fade behind the ridgeline. This project will destroy that experience, replacing it with steel towers and maintenance crews. The emotional and financial investment we’ve made in our new home deserves protection, not disregard.

It is also worth noting that the construction required on Mount View Road will be extensive, and our concerns related specifically to construction are detailed further below in this submission. We would like to note like most properties along Mount View Road have a tarred section of road directly from the driveway out of the property. The start of this tarred section is directly inline with our new front door so we can expect a considerable noise impact from heavy vehicles hitting the tar over the lengthy construction period. We also risk having our drinking water contaminated for up to two and half years as a result of the extra dust from construction vehicles entering our tank water supply (from the roof of our new house), which is located within 15 meters of Mount View Road. No consultation or mitigation options have been communicated

¹ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 436

from energy Co, obvious upgrades to the road or tarring of Mount View Road have not been explored by EnergyCo as part of the EIS. Soundproof fencing during construction should also be explored.

The EIS also states that “the visual study area is all areas within 1.625 kilometres of the HTP corridor (based on a maximum structure height of 85 metres).”² We dispute this methodology and can advise EnergyCo has confirmed³ that our property may potentially be visually impacted by the project but being outside 2km from the HTP and to date we have not been afforded the opportunity to assess the visual impact of the project on our property. This should serve as direct evidence that EnergyCo has not completed any comprehensive assessment of the visual impacts to property owners impacted by this project.

The EIS Technical Report 3: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment states that “Millfield is an attractive residential area sited well within the valley and landscape. However, there are no unique or distinctive qualities. Housing and streets are typical of rural suburban residential areas in the vicinity, and there are no sites or features of local or regional importance”⁴ To say we are offended by the assumption Millfield offers “no unique or distinctive qualities” is an understatement and we adamantly dispute this conclusion. Not only is the landscape pristine and vistas incredible, but the town also has a rich history and culture which is undermined by statements such as these. For example, “The settlement of Millfield related to the construction of the Great North Road, which provided an inland connection from Sydney to the Hunter Valley. The village began as a cluster of buildings and was named for a large flour mill⁵. Another example is that “The Millfield Public School was opened as a provisional school in 1868 and became an established school in 1871.”⁶ Millfield is a town with local and regional importance, and a beautiful landscape which appears to have been overlooked or devalued in the planning process. The Millfield locality also contains known and potential archaeological deposit sites, along with known artefacts and modified trees that hold significance and which will be impacted by the project.⁷ Based on the information in the EIS and appendices reports it appears the assumptions that Millfield has no “unique or distinctive qualities” and “no sites or features of local or regional importance”⁸ has been used in determining the path of the project which is extremely concerning and disappointing.

Millfield is currently zoned a combination of RU5 Village and R5 Large Lot Residential and Mount View is currently zoned as RU2 ensuring a landscape that supports agriculture, rural industries, and compatible uses while maintaining the rural character and landscape. The development of

² EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 436

³ Community Information Session and The EIS exhibition, Cessnock Scout Hall (284 Maitland Rd, Cessnock), Tuesday 16th September 2025 from 3pm-7pm

⁴ Iris, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 3: Landscape character and visual impact assessment Part 1*, Pg. 54

⁵ State Heritage Inventory, 2021, Rising Sun Inn (former), <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=5045088>, accessed 16 November 2021

⁶ State Heritage Inventory 2021, Millfield Public School and Memorial Gates, <https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=1340484>, accessed 16 November 2021

⁷ EMM, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 2 - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report*, Chapters 8 & 12

⁸ Iris, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement Technical Report 3: Landscape character and visual impact assessment part 1*, Pg. 54

the transmission infrastructure is in direct contradiction with this classification, and the visual impact on our property, local town and landscape is unacceptable. Properties within close proximity to the transmission corridor, including our own will experience actual reductions in value.

Millfield is growing and will increasingly support surrounding rural areas like Wollombi and Laguna, places that currently struggle with basic services like parcel delivery and emergency supports. Installing high-powered transmission towers will likely deter future residents and stall this growth in Millfield.

The proposed worker accommodation near Wollombi Road will introduce sustained artificial lighting into a previously low-impact rural setting. As noted in the EIS factsheet, such sites may disrupt nearby homes, and in this context, the resulting light pollution would directly affect my residential amenity, altering night-time conditions and threatening both residential amenity and local ecological balance.

Section 12.2 of the EIS, within Chapter 12 on Land Use and Tenure, acknowledges that properties located near the transmission corridor may experience ‘perceived or actual reductions in value’ due to visual, social, and environmental impacts. This concern is not speculative, local residents and landowners along the proposed route, including those near Mount View Road and Millfield, have already reported diminished buyer interest and stress over declining property valuations⁹. Real estate agents and buyers advocates consistently note that proximity to high-voltage transmission infrastructure can deter potential buyers, reduce aesthetic appeal, and raise health-related anxieties, all of which contribute to lower market demand and financial loss¹⁰. Independent research confirms that high-voltage transmission lines are widely regarded as a “negative externality” in property valuation, with the Real Estate Institute of Australia reporting reduced buyer interest and longer time on market, and a Bond University study (Boyd & Melik, 2014) demonstrating statistically significant declines in sale prices for properties located within 100–200 meters of 500kV infrastructure.^{11 12} Our property, which lies within direct line-of-sight of the proposed towers, is therefore at genuine risk of devaluation, and our family is at risk of significant financial loss and this impact has not been fully considered in the EIS which is obligated to fully review this as part of the EIA process.

EnergyCo have not formally advised us of the potentially visual impact of the project or advised how they will mitigate this risk to us as property owners on Mount View Road. The impact on our local biodiversity as a result of the construction and the project is also likely to further reduce property values in the area. As resident’s whose home faces the proposed corridor, we will be subjected to constant visual intrusion, undermining the amenity and tranquillity that drew our family to Millfield in the first place.

Residents living close to 500 kV transmission lines may experience intermittent noise disturbances, primarily caused by corona discharge, a phenomenon where electrical energy

⁹ NSW Farmers Association. (2023). *Submission to NSW Planning on the Hunter Transmission Project*. Retrieved from <https://www.nswfarmers.org.au>

¹⁰ Australian Property Institute. (n.d.). *GN 2: Impact of infrastructure on property value*. Retrieved from <https://www.api.org.au>

¹¹ Bond University. Boyd, T., & Melik, A. (2014). *The effect of overhead transmission lines on residential property values in Australia*. Bond University Research Repository. Available via Google Scholar

¹² Real Estate Institute of Australia. (n.d.). *Market commentary and infrastructure impact reports*. Retrieved from <https://reia.asn.au>

ionises the air around conductors, producing audible crackling or humming sounds. This effect is most pronounced during wet or humid weather, when moisture increases the likelihood of corona activity. Under fair weather conditions, however, the EIS for the Hunter Transmission Project notes that noise levels are generally low and often fall below typical rural background levels.¹³ Despite this, the cumulative impact of corona noise, combined with operational maintenance activities and residual construction effects, may still affect the acoustic amenity of nearby homes. The EIS establishes Noise Management Levels (NMLs) to guide mitigation but acknowledges that sensitive receptors, including residences and schools, may experience exceedances during peak construction periods.¹⁴ While broader health literature, including findings from the World Health Organisation and Australian radiation authorities, indicates no confirmed adverse health effects from noise exposure near high-voltage transmission lines¹⁵¹⁶¹⁷, the psychological and lifestyle impacts of persistent low-frequency noise in quiet rural settings remain a valid concern for affected communities. As such, residents near the proposed corridor, including those on Mount View Road, may face a reduction in acoustic comfort and liveability, particularly during adverse weather or maintenance operations.

The proposed Hunter Transmission Project will irreparably damage the residential amenity of Millfield, Mount View, and surrounding communities. It disregards the lived experience of families like ours, who have invested everything to build a home in a peaceful, rural setting. The towering infrastructure, visual scarring, and persistent noise intrusion are not minor inconveniences, they are permanent violations of our right to enjoy our property, our landscape, and our community. To suggest Millfield lacks distinctive qualities is not only factually wrong, but also an insult. This project, as currently proposed, is incompatible with the values, heritage, and zoning of our region, and must be rejected or fundamentally re-routed to protect what we call home.

2. Disruptions to Mount View and Wollombi Roads during construction

As residents of Mount View Road, Millfield, we object to the proposed Hunter Transmission Project on the grounds of significant and inadequately mitigated traffic and transport impacts during construction. According to *Technical Report 4* of the EIS, Mount View Road is identified as a local road proposed for use during construction for worker travel, material transport, and water delivery.¹⁸ This includes access to a temporary construction support site located in Millfield, which will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with activities such as equipment deliveries, waste removal, and light vehicle movements.¹⁹

¹³EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Chapter 16

¹⁴EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Chapter 16

¹⁵ World Health Organization (WHO) – Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region (2018) *Highlights the health implications of chronic exposure to environmental noise, including sleep disturbance, annoyance, and cardiovascular effects.*

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789289053563>

¹⁶ Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) – Fact Sheet: Electric and Magnetic Fields (2021), <https://www.arpansa.gov.au/resources/fact-sheets/electric-and-magnetic-fields>

¹⁷ National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) – Power Line Noise and Worker Exposure (2020) <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise>

¹⁸ WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment*, Pg.43

¹⁹ WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment*, Pg.44

Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment states “Mount View Road and Mount Baker Road – provide access to approximately 10–15 rural residential properties. Mount View Road is sealed and sufficient for two-way traffic closer to Wollombi Road”²⁰ This information is simply factual incorrect. Mount View Road and Mount Baker Road provide access to approximately 40 rural residential properties²¹ including properties from Lewis Road and Bellamy Streets. The EIS has obviously downplayed the amount of affected road users during the installation of the transmission towers. Can we assume other incorrect information has been used during assessment processes to determine the path of the project? EnergyCo must complete a more detailed traffic impact assessments for residents of Mount View Rd, including legitimate and resident designed mitigation strategies.

Mount View Road is a rural dirt road which, with the current vehicle load, is not maintained satisfactorily. It regularly has pot holes posing risks to driver safety. The EIS acknowledges that some trucks will carry oversized equipment and that short delays on local roads are “unavoidable” during construction.²² Mount View Road cannot support these kind of vehicles and we are concerned as local residents the road will be damaged as a result of construction. Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment notes construction will take place over a potentially 2 and half year period, dependent on weather, and acknowledges an increase of construction vehicles on Mount View Road. This is an unacceptable risk to the safety of our local road. No acknowledgement or planning has occurred to ensure Mount View residents commute times will not be significantly impacted by the construction vehicles accessing Mount View Road.

Building our new home just 15 metres from Mount View Road has become a source of deep frustration due to the anticipated influx of construction vehicles associated with the Hunter Transmission Project. What was meant to be a peaceful residential setting now faces the prospect of heavy machinery, water trucks, and oversized equipment travelling along this narrow local road, often during peak hours and weekends. The proximity of my home means I will be directly exposed to noise, dust, vibration, and traffic hazards, with little buffer from the disruption. The EIS confirms that Mount View Road will be used for access to a 24/7 construction support site in Millfield, with peak traffic occurring between 6:00am–7:00am and 5:00pm–6:00pm, times that coincide with school drop-off and pick-up, and my own daily routines²³. The lack of meaningful mitigation measures or alternative access routes in the project documentation only compounds the stress and disappointment of investing in a home that now risks being overshadowed by the project.

The EIS acknowledges the increase of traffic to Wollombi Road during construction will result in 85 ‘traffic movements per hour’ (including heavy vehicles) during peak construction expected between 6:00am–7:00am and 5:00pm–6:00pm²⁴ which is an untenable increase for our local

²⁰ WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment*, Pg. 168

²¹ Cessnock City Council, *Online Mapping Tool*, https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6c7626ed701646d9966b96ba1ca96b70#data_s=id%3AdataSource_5-1971ea16144-layer-42%3A41110, accessed 21/9/2025

²² WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment*, Pg. 46

²³ WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment*, Pg. 44–45

²⁴ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 503

roads. The EIS notes constructions hours are between Monday to Friday 7am to 6pm and Saturday 8am-1pm²⁵ but does not detail the 'traffic movements per hour' due to construction outside of 6:00am–7:00am and 5:00pm–6:00pm 'peak' construction periods. 'Peak' construction periods coincide with daily commutes and potentially school drop-off and pick-up times. This overlap poses a direct risk to residents and student safety and will exacerbate congestion on the narrow school access road, which is already under strain during peak periods. Millfield Public School does not have a carpark which is able to cater to current enrolments at the school, forcing most parents to pick up and drop-down children on Wollombi Road. Our children are also accustomed to quieter roads with limited traffic. The noted increase of 85 'traffic movements per hour' (including heavy vehicles)²⁶ on Wollombi Road during construction poses an unacceptable risk to the safety of our school children and other vulnerable road users, especially considering the lack of formal and detailed consultation with residents and Millfield Public School as noted further below in this submission.

Furthermore, the report outlines that road and access track upgrades, including widening and resurfacing, will be undertaken to accommodate increased traffic volumes and heavy vehicles. However, it fails to provide sufficient detail on how these works will be staged to minimise disruption to residents and school operations. The cumulative impact of construction traffic, road upgrades, and 24/7 support site operations represents a substantial and sustained intrusion into the daily life of Millfield residents, particularly those living along Mount View Road.

Given the proximity to Millfield Public School and the residential nature of Mount View Road, the proposed traffic volumes and timing are incompatible with the safety, amenity, and functioning of our community. I urge the NSW Planning to reconsider the use of Mount View and Wollombi Roads for construction access and to explore alternative routes that do not compromise the wellbeing of local residents and schoolchildren.

The proposed creation and upgrade of access tracks through bushland surrounding Mount View Road as part of the Hunter Transmission Project presents a serious and unacceptable increase in fire risk, community safety concerns, and environmental degradation. According to *Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment*, these tracks are intended to support construction activities including equipment delivery, water transport, and maintenance access, with works occurring 24 hours a day, seven days a week.²⁷ Many of these tracks traverse vegetated areas classified as bushfire-prone, and their construction introduces ignition risks from vehicle movements, fuel spills, and increased human activity. The report also notes that road and track upgrades, including widening and resurfacing, will be undertaken to accommodate heavy vehicles²⁸, yet it fails to outline how these works will be staged or secured to prevent unauthorised access.

Community feedback summarised in *Appendix G: Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report* highlight widespread concern that new access routes will invite illegal dumping, vandalism, and trespass, particularly in previously secluded bushland areas²⁹. These concerns

²⁵ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg 189

²⁶ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 503

²⁷ WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment*, Pg. 44

²⁸ WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment*, Pg 47

²⁹ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Appendix G, Pg. 22–23

are especially relevant in Millfield, where emergency response capacity is limited and bushfire events pose a real and recurring threat. Despite these risks, the EIS does not provide a comprehensive fire management strategy or post-construction rehabilitation plan for access corridors near residential zones and Millfield Public School. The cumulative impact of increased fire risk, reduced bushland integrity, and heightened exposure to illegal activity undermines the safety, amenity, and resilience of our community. As a resident of Mount View Road, I strongly oppose the construction of new access tracks in bushfire-prone areas and appeal to NSW Planning to require a detailed fire risk assessment and community safety plan before any such works proceed.

As a resident of Mount View Road, I strongly object to the proposed worker accommodation and construction set-down sites on Wollombi Road due to their proximity and cumulative impact on our community. These facilities will significantly increase traffic, noise, and disruption throughout the construction period, with heavy vehicles and worker movements spilling into surrounding residential areas, including Mount View Road. The EIS fails to adequately address how these impacts will be managed or mitigated for nearby residents, and the scale of operations poses a serious threat to local amenity, safety, and the quiet rural character of Millfield.

3. Inadequate Community Consultation

Despite claims of extensive engagement, many residents, including myself, feel blindsided by the final corridor alignment. As previously noted in this submission our property is within 3 kilometres of the project and we will be affected by the visual impact, property devaluation as well as by the construction of the project. The first formal notification that we had from EnergyCo was undated but arrived end of August 2025, after completion of the EIS, despite the EIS noting an 'engagement approach' for "Directly impacted landowners (<5km proximity)" of "landowner letters and notifications"³⁰ As affected landowners we have not been made aware of the potential impacts of the project to date and neither have we been afforded the opportunity to voice our concerns about the project.

We also voice our concerns on behalf of the broader community including the elderly, disabled, non-English speakers and socially disadvantaged who were not fully included in the consultation process and have not been afforded any support to raise objections to the project. Technical Report 6 Social impact assessment noted that "Older people (65+ years) represent 17% of the population mix in the corridor social locality, which aligns with the State average"³¹ as well as noting "households in rental stress (paying over 30% of income on rent) are prevalent in Cessnock UCL (43%) and Millfield suburbs and localities (SAL) (50%); these areas are more vulnerable to economic shifts."³² It is evidence from this information in the Social impact assessment that Millfield, Cessnock and surrounding suburbs have significant levels of vulnerable residents who deserved assistance during the consultation process, a right that has not been afforded to them.

We also note that the primary way to lodge a submission with NSW Planning is online via the NSW Planning Portal. Requiring people to submit using a process that requires internet usage is

³⁰ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 216

³¹ EMM, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 6 Social impact assessment*, Pg. 70

³² EMM, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 6 Social impact assessment*, Pg. 71

excluding a significant amount of our community. Given the release of the 1064-page EIS on the 27th August 2025 and noting submission are due by the 24th September 2025 how have the elderly, people with disabilities, or who are culturally diverse or socially disadvantaged been fairly given a chance to voice any objections to the project.

The EIS Social impact assessment identified our child's local school (Millfield Public School) as well as other schools and childcare locations as sensitive locations "where traffic construction could intersect with vulnerable road users"³³ Although the EIS acknowledges that Millfield Public School will be significantly impacted by the project as a sensitive location, particularly the significant effect on the school road and associated risks to student safety, no meaningful communication with the school regarding these concerns has taken place. We are concerned has been replicated with all 'sensitive locations' identified in the assessment and question whether other schools/daycares have also not been afforded the opportunity to voice their concerns. The EIS should have included a detailed consultation with all affected parties.

Section 6 of the EIS claims 'extensive community consultation,' yet many residents, including our family, were not meaningfully engaged in route selection or mitigation planning. We note EnergyCo have acknowledged the impact to our property will be significant, however all communications were instigated by us as residents and occurred after the release of the EIS. The EIS also notes that the number of affected landowners was reduced from 78 to 252, yet those remaining face disproportionate burdens. The lack of transparency and genuine negotiation has left our community feeling unheard and undervalued. The final corridor appears to have been drawn with minimal input from Millfield landowners, despite our proximity to the most disruptive infrastructure. The 'token' community consultation that has taken place as part of the EIS has been wholly inadequate a project of this magnitude requires.

4. Environmental and Biodiversity Damage

Millfield is home to rich biodiversity, including native flora and fauna. The EIS admits that construction will disrupt habitats, including those of threatened species. My property, like others nearby, serves as a sanctuary for wildlife, such as wombats, wallabies and birdlife, that will be displaced or harmed. In June 2024 we had a Biodiversity/Ecological Assessment Report completed by an accredited Biodiversity Assessment Method Assessor of our property on Mount View Road. It identified seven endangered species as being present in the broader area including the Regent Honey Eater and the Swift Parrot. Section 8.2 of the EIS states "Important habitat for the Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot were also avoided."³⁴ Given that our property lies within three kilometres of the planned project we can guarantee these critically endangered species (as well as other native flora and fauna) will be affected by the proposed construction and development path of the transmission project. Impact on these critically endangered species cannot be avoided by a development of this scale and size. This risk is unacceptable to our local community and the broader Australian community. It is our responsibility to protect our threatened biodiversity for generations to come.

The proposed corridor cuts through ecologically sensitive areas in Wollombi, Millfield and surrounding areas, contradicting the project's stated goal of 'treading lightly'. We are particularly concerned about the projects predicted path that directly impacts on the "12.37 hectares

³³ EMM, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 6 Social impact assessment*, Pg. 139

³⁴ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 322

Warkworth Sands Woodland in the Sydney Basin BioRegion”³⁵. “Only approximately 800 hectares of Warkworth Sands Woodland remains, none of which occurs within a conservation reserve.”³⁶ Any loss, but particularly one to this extent, of critically endangered woodlands is of concern to our local community.

Another concern related to the Warkworth Sands Woodlands, is that it consists of “small tree and ground strata that is restricted to Quaternary sands”³⁷. The EIS notes clearing requirements for installation and ongoing maintenance of the transmission towers, which when compared to the make-up of fauna in the Warkworth Sands Woodlands, match almost exactly ensuring the complete destruction of the impacted area of these woodlands. Surely the impact to this woodland given the clearance requirements for installation must be mitigated by avoiding the Warkworth Sands Woodlands.

The EIS acknowledges that the project will result in significant disturbance to the local flora and fauna, including sensitive habitats and local waterways. Section 8.8 of the EIS outlines the clearing of over 762 hectares of native vegetation, including habitat for thirty-eight threatened flora and twenty-eight threatened fauna species. Mount View is a biodiversity-rich area, and my property regularly hosts wombats, wallabies, echidnas, and native threatened birdlife. The corridor will fragment these habitats and disrupt ecological connectivity, with irreversible consequences. These environmental disturbances are unacceptable and threaten the biodiversity and ecological health of the area, which is a value shared by ourselves, other local residents and the wider community.

We are also concerned about TransGrid (as the preferred network operator) who historically have a range of indiscretions noted during project installations such as unauthorised tower climbing, asbestos-related subcontractor disputes, and community complaints. In relation to biodiversity the recent example of the National Parks Association of NSW calling on the NSW Government and Transgrid to remediate environmental damage to Kosciuszko National Park.³⁸ That community was assured through their EIS the impact would be kept to a minimum, risk mitigations strategies, such as outlined in this EIS, were not adequate. We are concerned of similar lapses during the project build leading to irreversible damage in our area.

5. Loss of Cultural and Heritage Values

Millfield is steeped in local heritage and Aboriginal cultural significance. Much of the landscape around the village of Millfield has high to very high cultural heritage significance. This is particularly evident in areas around natural waterways. The EIS references ongoing assessments of cultural sites, but these are incomplete and lack community input. Approving the project before these studies are finalized risks irreversible damage to sacred and historical landscapes.

³⁵ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 388

³⁶ NSW Office of Environment and Heritage,

[https://threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/profile?id=10833#:~:text=Small%20drainage%20lines%20within%20the,disturbance%20\(including%20fire\)%20history.](https://threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/profile?id=10833#:~:text=Small%20drainage%20lines%20within%20the,disturbance%20(including%20fire)%20history.), last updated 23 Mar 2022

³⁷ WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 1 Biodiversity development assessment report*, Pg. 273-275

³⁸ National Parks Association of NSW, <https://npansw.org.au/2025/03/31/transgrid-inflicts-massive-permanent-damage-to-kosciuszko-national-park/> 31 March 2025

As previously noted in this submission the destruction of “12.37 hectares Warkworth Sands Woodland”³⁹ which is noted in the EIS as being critically endangered and “a geological deposit known to contain significant cultural materials found in the general vicinity of Wollombi Brook”⁴⁰ is a pitiful reflection of our country’s lack of respect for culturally significant sites and poor approach to planning for large infrastructure.

Section 9 of the EIS references ongoing Aboriginal heritage assessments, yet many areas including Millfield remain under-surveyed. The lack of completed studies and community consultation raises serious concerns about the integrity of the approval process. Millfield’s colonial and Indigenous heritage deserve thorough protection, not post-approval remediation.

Of the 32 Aboriginal sites and places within the project impact area, around 14 are likely to be subject to direct impacts from the project resulting in their complete or partial loss.⁴¹ We are struggling to comprehend how in 2025 any partial or total loss of any culturally significant site is acceptable. We implore NSW Planning to confirm any agreements made with local indigenous communities throughout the projects projected path have been fully independently consulted about the project and that any strategies put in place to lessen the impact on culturally significant sites are stringently monitored.

6. Alternatives Not Fully Explored

As a resident of Mount View Road, Millfield, I strongly object to the proposed alignment of the Hunter Transmission Project on the grounds that the route selection process has failed to adequately consider less impactful alternatives and has prioritised expedience over community wellbeing.

At the Community Information Session which took place at Millfield Community Hall on 11th September 2025 James Cahill from EnergyCo advised the Millfield route selection was chosen as the existing access roads made construction easier for EnergyCo. When questioned why an 18-month convenience for construction was being prioritised over the long-term wellbeing of our community, including property devaluation, visual impact, and disruption to future growth, he was not able to provide an answer.

We advocate for an alternative approach that does not impose such profound and irreversible impacts on the Millfield community. The current proposal appears to be driven primarily by economic and financial considerations, yet it remains unclear whether the full cost differential, including long-term social, environmental, and cultural consequences, has been adequately assessed. A more balanced evaluation could reveal that less disruptive options offer comparable value without sacrificing community wellbeing. Millfield deserves a solution that reflects thoughtful planning, not just short-term budgetary convenience.

Additionally, the EIS concedes that “alternative routes to the west of the corridor were considered but dismissed due to constructability and cost constraints.”⁴² This suggests that economic considerations were given undue weight over social and environmental factors, particularly in areas like Mount View Road where the transmission line will have a direct and lasting impact on residents’ quality of life, property values, and landscape amenity.

³⁹ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 388

⁴⁰ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 402

⁴¹ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 432

⁴² EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 85

Section 3 of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) outlines several route alternatives, including the use of existing transmission corridors and co-location with infrastructure such as roads and rail lines. Notably, the EIS acknowledges that “co-location with existing infrastructure corridors was considered to reduce environmental and social impacts”⁴³. However, the preferred route deviates significantly from this principle in the Millfield area, opting instead for a new corridor that cuts through rural residential zones and sensitive community assets, including Millfield Public School and the surrounding residential streets such as Mount View Road.

The EIS further states that “avoidance of sensitive receptors such as schools and residences was a key consideration in route refinement.”⁴⁴ This claim is contradicted by the proposed alignment’s proximity to Millfield Public School and the school access road, which raises serious concerns about student safety, traffic disruption, and long-term community impact.

In light of these findings, I urge the NSW Planning to reconsider the proposed alignment in the Millfield region. Viable alternatives exist that would better align with the stated objectives of minimising community disruption and protecting sensitive receptors. The current proposal fails to meet these standards and should not proceed without substantial revision and genuine community consultation.

7. Concerns over Safety and Maintenance

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Hunter Transmission Project identifies several ongoing safety concerns associated with the transmission infrastructure, particularly in relation to severe weather events and long-term asset management. As a homeowner living near the proposed corridor, and with children at a school close to the project, safety is a paramount concern. The EIS acknowledges that transmission towers and associated infrastructure may be vulnerable to high winds, lightning strikes, and bushfires, which could result in structural failure, conductor detachment, or pole collapse—posing direct hazards to nearby residents and properties.⁴⁵ These risks are exacerbated in bushfire-prone areas like Millfield, where vegetation clearing and access track construction may increase ignition potential and reduce natural firebreaks.

While the EIS states that TransGrid will be responsible for ongoing maintenance and inspection of the infrastructure,⁴⁶ it provides limited detail on the frequency, scope, and resourcing of these activities, particularly in remote or difficult-to-access locations such as Mount View Road. Furthermore, the EIS concedes that extreme weather events may disrupt access to transmission assets, delaying emergency response and repair efforts⁴⁷. This raises serious concerns about the adequacy of contingency planning and the potential for prolonged exposure to safety risks following storm or fire events. Without a clearly defined and community-accessible maintenance and emergency management framework, the project risks leaving residents vulnerable to infrastructure-related hazards well beyond the construction phase. As

⁴³ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 62

⁴⁴ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, Pg. 74

⁴⁵ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, (Chapter 21 & 22)

⁴⁶ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, (Chapter 21 & 22)

⁴⁷ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, (Chapter 21 & 22)

such, I strongly object to the current proposal and urge NSW Planning to require a comprehensive safety and maintenance strategy, with transparent commitments to long-term risk mitigation and community protection.

8. Insufficient Mitigation Measures

While the EIS proposes a range of mitigation strategies to address the impacts of the project, I believe these measures are insufficient to counteract the significant and cumulative adverse effects identified across multiple domains. For example, the EIS outlines standard mitigation for traffic disruptions, including signage, scheduling, and intersection upgrades,⁴⁸ yet it concedes that delays and safety risks from oversized vehicle movements are “unavoidable” and that local roads such as Mount View Road will experience sustained heavy vehicle traffic over several years. Similarly, the EIS proposes vegetation clearing protocols and erosion controls to manage biodiversity impacts,⁴⁹ but acknowledges that habitat fragmentation and loss of native vegetation will occur across hundreds of hectares, including areas of high conservation value. Noise and vibration impacts are addressed through construction hour restrictions and monitoring,⁵⁰ yet the EIS admits that sensitive receptors, including Millfield Public School and nearby residences, may still experience exceedances of acceptable thresholds during peak activity.

Importantly, the EIS does not provide a robust framework for managing the cumulative impact of these disturbances over the project’s lifespan. While individual mitigation measures are listed, there is limited integration across disciplines to assess how overlapping impacts, such as traffic, noise, dust, and visual intrusion, will affect community wellbeing, property values, and rural amenity in the long term. The EIS also lacks clarity on post-construction rehabilitation, particularly regarding access tracks, tower sites, and vegetation recovery.⁵¹ Without enforceable commitments, transparent monitoring, and community oversight, these mitigation strategies risk becoming aspirational rather than operational. As a resident of Mount View Road, I am deeply concerned that the cumulative burden of construction and operation will erode the safety, character, and liveability of our community, and I urge the Department of Planning and Environment to require a more comprehensive and enforceable mitigation framework before approving this project.

9. Safety of Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)

The EIS downplays EMF exposure risks yet fails to provide long-term health studies for residents living near 500kV lines. A landmark UK study by Draper et al. (2005), published in the *British Medical Journal*, found that children living within 200 meters of high-voltage power lines had a significantly increased risk of developing leukemia⁵². In Australia, Finkelstein (1998) reported a 106% higher cancer risk for individuals residing within 50 meters of such lines, compared to

⁴⁸ WSP, August 2025, *EnergyCo Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement, Technical Report 4: Traffic and Transport impact assessment*, Pg. 44-46

⁴⁹ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, (Chapter 8)

⁵⁰ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, (Chapter 16)

⁵¹ EnergyCo, August 2025, *Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement*, (Chapter 15 & 20)

⁵² Draper, G., Vincent, T., Kroll, M.E., & Swanson, J. (2005). *Childhood cancer in relation to distance from high-voltage power lines in England and Wales: a case-control study*. *British Medical Journal*, 330(7503), 1290. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.330.7503.1290>

those living 300 meters away (*Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*)⁵³. More recently, a 2021 review in *Environmental Research* by Huss et al. examined long-term exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMFs) and found associations with neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's⁵⁴. As a resident of Mount View Road, where the proposed route would bring transmission infrastructure close to homes and schools, I appeal to NSW Planning to fully consider these findings and explore alternative alignments that avoid populated or vulnerable areas.

Conclusion

The Hunter Transmission Project, in its current form, prioritises infrastructure over people. As a homeowner in Millfield, I urge the NSW Planning to reject the project's approval until a more balanced, community-sensitive solution is developed. Acknowledging the many inadequacies and concerns noted from current 'token' impact assessments we recommend that the project be put on hold until more detailed impact assessments have been completed.

Our homes, environment, and heritage deserve protection, not sacrifice. For the reasons outlined above, I request that the NSW Planning Authority thoroughly reconsider the approval of the Hunter Transmission Project. I believe that the environmental, social, and economic risks outlined in the EIS warrant a rejection or substantial revision of the project to better protect the interests of local residents and the environment.

The Hunter Transmission Project, as proposed, sacrifices Millfield's environment, heritage, and community wellbeing for expedience. I appeal to the NSW Planning to reject the current proposal and require EnergyCo to explore less intrusive alternatives, complete heritage assessments, and engage in genuine consultation with affected residents.

As Darryl Kerrigan famously said in *The Castle*, "It's not a house, it's a home." That line speaks to something far deeper than bricks and mortar, it speaks to belonging, memory, and the quiet dignity of ordinary Australians protecting what they've built. For residents of Mount View Road, the proposed transmission corridor threatens far more than property boundaries; it strikes at the heart of our community's identity, safety, and emotional wellbeing. We are not just objecting to towers and wires, we are defending sunsets watched from the verandah, the silence of rural evenings, the heritage of Millfield, and the hard-earned peace of a place we call home. To dismiss this as a planning inconvenience is to ignore the human cost. This project, as proposed, disregards the very values that define our community, and we urge decision-makers to recognise that what's at stake here is more than just land, it's our way of life.

⁵³ Finkelstein, M.M. (1998). *Cancer incidence among residents near high-voltage transmission lines*. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 22(5), 603–605. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-842X.1998.tb01434.x>

⁵⁴ Huss, A., Spoerri, A., Egger, M., & Röösli, M. (2021). *Residence near power lines and risk of neurodegenerative diseases: a population-based cohort study*. *Environmental Research*, 194, 110620. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2020.110620>

Sincerely,

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