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1 April 2021

Justin Field MLC  
NSW Legislative Council  
Macquarie St  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
Via: <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/10591>

### **Submission: Snowy 2.0 - Transmission Connection**

Thank you for accepting this submission to the public exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the *Snowy 2.0 - Transmission Connection* major project. While I support the Snowy 2.0 project and its important role in the transition to a renewable energy future, I object to the plans to build 75 metre-high transmission lines through 8 kilometres of the Kosciuszko National Park (Kosciuszko) and want to see more attention paid to the alternative underground options.

Kosciuszko is world-renowned and a place of significant environmental, cultural and scenic value; it supports threatened and vulnerable species, rare ecosystems, and protects significant Aboriginal cultural heritage.

In my view the EIS that has been placed on public exhibition does not adequately address the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements in regards to assessing alternatives and overplays the risks associated with underground options. I recently wrote, jointly with Independent MLAs, Alex Greenwich, Greg Piper and Joe McGirr, to the NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes, calling on him to ensure the alternative underground options are adequately assessed. I have included a copy of that letter below for information.

I ask that DPIE reject this EIS and direct the proponent to provide a more detailed assessment of the underground alternatives and that expert independent advice be commissioned to assess

information provided by Snowy Hydro about alternatives to inform the ultimate decision by the Planning Minister.

If the overhead transmission lines as proposed are built, 1 square kilometre of national park will be permanently cleared, decimating and fragmenting critical habitat of threatened species such as Yellow bellied glider, Squirrel Glider, Eastern Pygmy Possum, Gang Gang Cockatoo, Powerful Owl, Masked Owl and the Boorolong Frog and damaging forever the scenic values of Kosciuszko.

The Kosciuszko Plan of Management requires that any additional transmission lines needing to be constructed in the park should be underground; this requirement has been in place since 2006 and should not be changed or overturned. Overhead transmission lines are not suitable or acceptable in environmentally sensitive locations such as national parks and that is why they have not been constructed in a NSW national park since the 1970's, more than half a century ago. As seen in the 2019-2020 'black summer' bushfires, when the transmission connection between NSW and Victoria was destroyed, overground transmission lines are far more vulnerable during emergencies and complicate land based and airborne fire-fighting efforts.

Underground transmission lines have far less environmental impact and are more resilient than overhead options. The potential for an underground connection to the existing substation infrastructure at Lower Tumut could help reduce costs by shortening and rationalising the HumeLink project that would in turn reduce impacts on communities and landholders across hundreds of kilometres. This option would also significantly reduce impacts on the Bago State Forest and could lower costs for NSW energy customers. Any additional costs incurred from undergrounding transmission infrastructure must be assessed in the context of massive long term savings from lower maintenance and higher reliability, without risks from bushfires or lightning.

Kosciuszko National Park is already under incredible stress from the bushfires that decimated much of the park in 2019-2020. The National Park is extremely fragile and will continue to suffer from the increasing effects of climate change without the added threat of more permanent damage from clearing. People from across Australia and the world visit Kosciuszko National Park for bushwalking, camping, climbing, skiing and many other activities that take advantage of the unspoiled environment and scenery. If these 75 metre tall transmission lines go ahead then they will be visible across an astonishing 250 square kilometres of wilderness area. Such an impact on a rare national park is unheard of anywhere else in any modern progressive democracy and in the absence of every effort being taken to avoid the use of overhead transmission, to proceed, would only be seen as wilful vandalism.

Our National Parks should be preserved for future generations. Any development that degrades their ecological, cultural and aesthetic values should be avoided and minimised where possible. Any additional cost to a proponent is more than offset by the value of what is protected.

It is short-sighted to put intensive industrial infrastructure like overhead transmission lines through this scenically beautiful and biodiverse-rich national reserve, especially when alternatives are available.

I urge the NSW Department of Planning to reject the EIS as it is currently presented and to require more information about underground options. This assessment by the proponent should also be independently reviewed to ensure the Minister as decision maker has complete information about the alternative options.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Justin Field', is written in a cursive style.

**Justin Field MLC**



11 February 2021

The Hon. Matt Kean MP

Minister for Energy and Environment  
GPO Box 5341

SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Minister

### **Snowy 2.0 Transmission Infrastructure**

We write to you regarding the Snowy 2.0 project in the Kosciuszko National Park and ask you to ensure that the transmission infrastructure for the project is buried underground.

Kosciuszko National Park is a place of significant environmental, scenic and cultural value. It supports threatened and vulnerable species, rare ecosystems, majestic landscapes and Aboriginal heritage. It is a world-class national park.

We were recently alarmed to learn that TransGrid proposes to connect Snowy 2.0 with overhead transmission lines through this pristine national park wilderness. We understand the transmission lines will be suspended on sets of massive steel lattice towers up to 75 metres high and require easements up to 200 metres wide, meaning one square kilometre of national park is to be cleared.

Such an impact on rare national park is unheard of anywhere else in any modern progressive democracy and in the absence of every effort being taken to avoid the use of overhead transmission, to proceed, could be seen as wilful vandalism.

Technology exists to bury the infrastructure underground and significantly reduce the project's environmental impacts. We understand there are a number of ways to do this, including connecting a tunnel to existing substation infrastructure at Lower Tumut. This option also opens up opportunities to shorten and rationalise the proposed HumeLink project, significantly reducing its impacts on local communities and landholders over hundreds of kilometres, as well as Bago State Forest. Not only would there be substantial community and environmental benefits, but New South Wales electricity consumers would face lower costs.

Any additional costs incurred from undergrounding transmission infrastructure must be assessed in the context of massive long term savings from lower maintenance and higher reliability, without risks from bushfires or lightning. The recent 'black summer' bushfires took out the connection between New South Wales and Victoria and burnt electrical equipment in the Snowies, causing tens of millions in damages and losses from constrained generation. Overhead lines also threaten to complicate fire-fighting efforts by interfering with road and air operations.

We believe it would be short-sighted to build such industrially intense infrastructure through this scenically beautiful and biodiverse-rich national reserve, leaving a greatly diminished legacy for future generations.

***We urge the NSW Government to direct TransGrid to underground the transmission infrastructure for the Snowy 2.0 project.***

Yours Sincerely



Greg Piper, MP  
**Member for Lake Macquarie**



Alex Greenwich, MP  
**Member for Sydney**



Dr Joe McGirr, MP  
**Member for Wagga Wagga**



Justin Field, MLC  
**Member of Legislative Council**