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Subject:

Tuesday, 3 October 2023 1:57 PM

Community Engagement Review

Submission to the Community Engagement Review

There is no transition without building new infrastructure. Our grid was built for coal power, not renewables. Without new transmission lines, we can't build and connect the critical renewables needed to close coal and gas in line with what the science tells us.

We are in a race, which we are losing, to rapidly reduce emissions and keep global warming within 1.5 degrees. We need to use every tool at our disposal to achieve this. We have less than a decade to change course, and transmission is critical to achieve this. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said: "Our world needs climate action on all fronts — everything, everywhere, all at once".

Not building renewable energy infrastructure will mean more coal and gas power and more emissions. Our transmission network is already at capacity. We need more capacity to come online so we can build the renewables needed to replace coal and gas power. As we hurtle towards climate catastrophe, we cannot run the risk of increased emissions. We need to be doing everything possible to reduce them.

We need the small stuff AND the big stuff. Rooftop solar can do a lot more, but we'll need large scale renewables too. As we electrify everything - including vehicles, heating, homes and businesses - we'll need twice as much power as we need today, and that power must be renewable!

Transmission and new renewable generation are essential public infrastructure. Like our roads, train networks, broadband, and other major infrastructure projects, transmission is critical to ensuring all Australians have access to clean, reliable and affordable energy, and our industries can power their operations.

The potential benefits are huge. Lower power prices, local jobs and economic development, community enhancement and renewal, cleaner air and more robust ecosystems. There are so many benefits available to us through transitioning away from fossil fuels to renewable energy supported by transmission. Let's seize the opportunity!

First Nations' right to self-determination must be central to the transition. We all live on unceded Aboriginal land. Over half of the Australian continent has some kind of formal First Nations land tenure. First Nations people must be active agents in the energy transition, including being supported to develop their own clean energy infrastructure, develop local energy systems in remote communities, and be engaged and remunerated for infrastructure that crosses their lands and waters.

Hosting renewable energy infrastructure can provide steady income streams for farmers. Hosting transmission lines, solar or wind farms can add to the strength of farming businesses, not detract from them. Farmers along planned routes should receive payments for hosting the infrastructure that are fair and enable all farms to continue to be productive through dual land use design.

Poorly sited and planned renewable energy and transmission development will have impacts on land and nature, we must take measures to avoid and minimise these as much as possible. If poorly planned, transition to clean energy will have impacts on people, land and nature. But the impacts of catastrophic climate change will be astronomically more damaging. As such, governments must ensure policies, frameworks and planning regimes for clean energy development robustly consider, avoid and minimise impacts on people and nature.

Communities can benefit from clean energy development if it is done in a way that is just, equitable and sustainable. This means engaging and sharing benefits with communities and ensuring the least impact development possible, that fosters support among host communities. Project proponents have a key role in ensuring transmission projects deliver for people and nature.

Communities hosting transmission lines must be involved in pre-decision planning to ensure local impacts are minimised and genuine benefits achieved. Transmission companies have a responsibility to ensure that the people

