



Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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EUDLO CREEK, ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION LINES

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (9.28 pm): Many members would now be aware that there is a battle brewing in Eudlo Creek. On the one side are concerned residents, business owners and educators and on the other is Energex. In the middle sit the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. The battle is the latest in a string of confrontations surrounding the decision to construct 110kV overhead transmission lines rather than fully explore the long-term benefits of undergrounding the same powerlines. There is a lot of emotion involved. On Thursday a delegation from the concerned communities will be visiting parliament to express their frustration and call on the ministers to intervene. What I would like to do tonight is present some of the facts so that the ministers can see there is sense behind the emotion.

No-one is questioning Energex's need to operate under the National Electricity Rules that require it to develop the most cost-effective solution within the broader context of its environmental, technical and community responsibilities. Energex states that in most cases overhead powerlines deliver the best value for customers although there are some circumstances where placing high-voltage powerlines underground offers the best social, environmental and economic outcome. I and my constituents believe that this is one of those situations where the underground option delivers the better outcome.

Let us look at the three realms of consideration. In relation to the social aspect, the proposed route traverses the Bruce Highway, it passes adjacent to the Sunshine Coast Grammar School and it follows an important waterway—one that is highly valued by locals. Undergrounding also reduces community concern around electric and magnetic fields, or EMFs.

In relation to the environmental aspect, I am glad to see that the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability is willing to enter the debate. I quote from her recent interview on the *7PM Project*—

Unless the company can demonstrate that they are going to protect the platypus and its habitat, including those burrows, it can't proceed. They need to show that through a species management plan in order to get the tick of approval.

In relation to the economic aspect, here is where the debate gets hazy, largely due to confusion created by Energex. The original Parsons Brinckerhoff route selection report of December 2006 dismissed undergrounding on the basis that the cost was significantly higher than the equivalent aerial option—approximately eight times the overhead cost. But in subsequent correspondence Energex admits that overhead construction costs have risen in greater proportion to those of undergrounding and the true multiplier is closer to 2½ to three times, not eight. But there are additional economic benefits: a reduction in land compensation costs by more than 75 per cent, given the corridor is reduced from 40 metres for overhead to 10 metres for underground; fewer legal costs due to court action associated with an overhead solution; a 40-year life cycle as opposed to 15 years for overhead aluminium conductors in Queensland's climate conditions; reduced maintenance and outage costs; reduced bushfire danger; and increased efficiency due to a 30 per cent reduction in power loss for an underground solution.

Ministers, please consider carefully your approval of this project as it stands. There are alternatives. They make sound social, environmental and economic sense and they have the support of the local community.