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Mr. Sebastian Roberts, General Manager Regulatory Officer  
A.C.C.C.

RE: Application by Murraylink for Regulatory Status

This submission is made in favour of Murraylink  
Transmission Companies application to the ACCC for  
conversion to a prescribed service and maximum  
allowable revenue for 2003 - 2013.

My interest in the Murraylink application is focussed on  
the technology involved in the use of UNDERGROUND  
transmission cables to convey electricity across country.

I live with my wife and six children on a farm at hobby on  
the Darling Downs in Queensland. Our farm is certified "A"  
level organic under a licence agreement with the Biological  
Farmers of Australia, as are an increasing number of farms  
in this area. Fifty miles away at Millmerran, a new  
coal fired power station has just been commissioned  
and power generated at present goes to the grid via Westlink.  
Powerlink has the task of connecting the power station to  
Toowoomba in answer to a request from the generating company

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'Powerlink' is the name of the Authority responsible for planning the type of transmission line and the preferred route it will take. Maps showing the preferred route, as well as several alternate routes, have been published and have caused much consternation in the communities on the Eastern Downs and near Bowamba regions. The preferred route travels across some of the richest agricultural land in the world; hence, the area is reasonably closely settled by farming families all the way along the proposed route. Similar situations exist along the alternate routes. The mode of the construction of the proposed line is an above ground, very high voltage, 340 megahertz, transmission line, suspended from forty five metre steel pylons.

The Powerlink Company claims that it is governed by National Competition Policy and answerable to the ACCC to provide a transmission line at the cheapest possible price of construction. This "cheap is best" policy is a disgrace, and does not reflect the short and long term costs borne by the community, some specific, some not so obvious. The communities of the Eastern Downs in general and especially those in close proximity of the proposed routes

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are very concerned about the health risks associated with the large electromagnetic fields along the entire length of the line and extending either side of it. The adverse effects of the electromagnetic fields on livestock and crop production in such a productive area is also a considerable difficult to assess. The accompanying loss of value of the real estate across which the line traverses is also of major concern. For my part, I see the overhead transmission line as a real threat to the certification of organic farms and to the continuation or commencement of organic farming of crops and livestock along ~~the~~ and in proximity to the line. Organic certification standards demand that such production must be a certain distance from such lines. One important case in point is "Kalla" farm at Greenmount, fifteen miles from Toowoomba. This is one of the biggest and well known organic farms on the Darling Downs. The Powerlink preferred route for the proposed transmission line passes directly across its paddocks and passes within a kilometre or so of the "Kalla Pure Foods Pty Ltd" certified organic processing plant, just down the road.

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Organic farmers from all over Queensland and northern New South Wales and beyond, consign produce to this facility for processing. This factory sends organic food to all States in Australia and exports to New Zealand Japan and Southeast Asia. Anything which threatens the viability of this plant will affect the livelihood of the farmer-suppliers.

If UNDERGROUND TRANSMISSION OF POWER was utilised, all these dangers, concerns and costs would be removed, and TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY technology would be employed to serve the people living in the twenty-first century and beyond. Here in Australia, although world leaders in inventiveness, always seemed to be lumbered with outdated, discredited, found to be flawed schemes which eventually prove to be very costly in lost opportunity, waste of time and cost of replacement. Put another way, if the A.C.C.C. would unharness companies such as Powerlink from horse and buggy schemes and the predicament of "cheapest is best", we may see a new spirit of co-operation from communities involved in projects designed to protect their health, livelihood and lifestyle.

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From Michael Comerford

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