



Hon M.F. (Matt) Benson JP MLC

Member for Agricultural Region

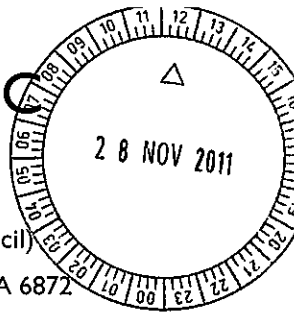
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Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Chair

The residents of Geraldton are proud of their recent success in the International Awards for Liveable Communities 2011. A part of the success is due to the community history of action and attention to the management of the local environment. To continue to promote the best interests of the community and the environment, the residents of Geraldton seek the proposed upgrades of the substation power lines to be installed underground, particularly in the Beachlands area.

The City of Greater Geraldton has actively promoted urban renewal in recent years. New property owners have invested considerably in the area's aesthetic appeal. Residents have informed me that overhead power lines will damage the visual amenity of the surrounding community. The property owners do not wish to see unsightly poles and subsequently have their investment adversely impacted. Above ground power lines will decrease the value of properties, particularly those that have views of the ocean and surrounding area. An added concern is the fact that the City of Greater Geraldton has landscaped this entry location to the inner city area at some considerable expense, not expecting unsightly power poles to diminish the intended tourist/visual effect.

The proposed power lines need to be underground for several reasons, but few more important than safety. Considering that the location is a coastal, residential community, the towers and poles that uphold overhead power lines present a safety concern. Underground power is much safer and requires less maintenance than above ground power. Due to the coastal nature of the area corrosion, strong coastal winds and fire are all of significant concern. Underground power removes many of these potential problems.

Research has also highlighted additional dangers to the community due to the high electromagnetic levels from overhead power lines. The British Medical Journal has established a link between power lines and childhood leukaemia. The individuals affected in the study were between 0-14 years old. The proposed 132kV overhead power lines pass by schools and households of families with young people, such as those described in the journal. The proposed overhead power lines place a health risk on young families that live within the community that is unnecessary and avoidable.

Installing the overhead power lines in the Beachlands area ignores the requests, health, safety and visual appeal of the entire community. It will diminish the value of the area and create health and safety problems that are unnecessary. My request on behalf of constituents and the City of Greater Geraldton is that the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs recommends against Western Power's 132kV overhead power line proposal.

Yours sincerely

Hon Matt Benson MLC
Member for Agricultural Region
28th November 2011

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