

## GRANT HARDWICK ON THE COST OF ELECTRICITY AND RENEWABLES

As consumers we need to talk about how the Australian electricity market operates, how often prices change, the impact of large-scale solar farms on agricultural land, and, most importantly, how major electricity companies are profiting at the expense of everyday Australians—especially those of us in regional and rural areas.

The National Electricity Market (NEM) operates on a dynamic pricing system where wholesale electricity prices change every five minutes. This means when demand spikes, like on a hot summer day when everyone turns their aircon on—prices can soar. But when there's too much supply, especially from solar and wind, prices can even go negative, forcing some generators to pay to supply electricity to the grid or be paid to **use** electricity in charging battery storage facilities or to pump water back up hill in hydro generation.

These fluctuations don't just affect energy producers. Retailers pass these costs onto consumers, meaning our bills go up even when generation costs remain low.

Australia's push for renewable energy is necessary, but almost entirely profit driven. We must be smart about where we put large-scale solar and wind farms; instead of taking up prime agricultural land, which should be reserved for food production, we should be prioritizing:

- Rooftop solar on homes, businesses, and industrial buildings.
- Degraded land that isn't viable for farming or grazing.

If we continue putting large solar and wind projects on farmland, we're not only losing food-producing capacity, but we're also increasing competition for land, which drives up food prices—an additional burden on consumers, while lowering the resale value of neighbouring properties and isolating communities.

Another major issue is the cost of large-scale transmission projects like Humelink, which is planned to connect renewable energy from the Snowy Mountains westward and eastward to major cities. While these projects are pitched as essential for a cleaner energy future, the burden of their construction and impact falls squarely on rural communities.

These massive transmission lines will cut through farms and private properties, devaluing land, disrupting livelihoods, and fragmenting communities. Yet, the benefits flow almost entirely to the metropolitan areas, where residents get cleaner, more reliable electricity without having to sacrifice their own land or property values.

This is part of a broader pattern where rural and regional Australians bear the costs of infrastructure that overwhelmingly benefits metropolitan areas. Farmers and landholders see their landscapes altered, but they receive little or no compensation unless directly impacted, while urban consumers—who rely on this infrastructure—pay no direct cost for the impact it has on the regions.



## MEDIA RELEASE: THE COST OF ELECTRICITY AND RENEWABLES

Meanwhile, electricity companies are making record profits while Australians struggle with rising power bills:

- Origin Energy made over \$1.2 billion in profit last financial year.
- AGL Energy saw a 190% surge in profit to \$812 million.
- Snowy Hydro, a government-owned entity, reported a \$418.5 million net profit, with underlying earnings nearing \$900 million.
- Electricity networks responsible for transmission made \$4.35 billion in supernormal profits, far exceeding their regulator-approved revenue.

The reality is that these profits don't come from innovation or efficiency—they come from everyday Australians paying higher electricity bills. And once again, it's those in the regions who pay the highest price, while the big cities reap the benefits of lower energy costs.

### What Needs to Change?

1. **Transparency & Fair Pricing:** We need stronger regulation to ensure energy companies don't just pass every cost onto consumers while pocketing their profits.
2. **Smarter Renewable Planning:** Large-scale solar should be built on rooftops, degraded land, or industrial areas—not prime farmland.
3. **Fairer Transmission Costs:** If major transmission projects like Humelink are necessary, affected landholders must be properly compensated, and regional areas should share in the benefits, not just the costs.
4. **A Fairer Energy Transition:** Rural Australians should not be expected to sacrifice their land, their views, and their homes and businesses so that people in the cities can enjoy cheap and convenient power.

The energy transition must be built on fairness. Right now, it isn't. The government and energy companies need to listen to the people who are affected, instead of just focusing on the demands of the big cities.

It's time to put **People Before Profits** and ensure that regional Australians are not just seen as a dumping ground for infrastructure that benefits everyone else.

For media inquiries, interviews, or further information, please contact:

### Grant Hardwick



Independent Candidate for Riverina  
[info@granthardwick.com.au](mailto:info@granthardwick.com.au)  
[www.granthardwick.com.au](http://www.granthardwick.com.au)  
0477040572

