The world is changing, and Australia needs to change with it. Rewiring the Nation is a centerpiece of the Australian Government’s plan to switch to more renewable energy sources by 2023 (DCCEEW, 2023). A critical factor in this switch to renewables is the large-scale building requirements of transmission lines to carry renewable energy from generation sites to communities (DCCEEW, 2023).

Regional community support to build powerlines is hindered by misinformation (Hong et al, 2023). Misinformation stems from limited trust in those communicating messages (Kwon et al., 2020). Therefore, we see false information circulating in regional communities, driven by fear and mistrust, as a result of lack of relationship with decision makers.

We identify barriers that perpetuate misinformation challenge;
- Fear of harm to families/animal health - linked to cancer.
- Heard mentality surrounding entire communities following status quo.
- No direct benefit to stakeholders when giving up land (it’s even a cost).
- No recognition of value.

Through identifying these barriers, an opportunity to group population into sub-populations by values arose using Customer Value Framework and Social Support Theory.
- The Voice of the People: Community perception focused
- The Old Schooler: Resistant to change
- The Family Leader: Cautious for the future

Family Leader persona presented as the most prominent.
SOLUTION

We believe that in order to target the cycle of misinformation, we must first build a relationship of trust.

We propose a community festival designed to initiate a relationship between local landholders and the Australian Government through a shared goal.

Identified that a community fear surrounds harm to children - we propose to redirect this fear from ‘fear of powerlines’ to ‘fear of losing power’. The idea of losing power aims to target the heart-strings of targeted communities to redirect attention towards a goal of preparing the next generation for success.

This is presented in the form of a festival - ‘Keep Our Lights On’ festival (KOLO). A key driver of this event is to highlight that the community and the government have a shared interest in protecting the next generation - working together not against. Strongly emphasise that we can ensuring a ‘bright’ future for our youth by keeping the lights on.

The event and the shared goal would create an initial connection with the community, laying the groundwork and preparing the community for the transmission lines before the construction process begins.

EAST allows for a targeted solution that directly links to the identified barriers and needs of the community. Further, the festival uses the Exchange Framework, aiming to ‘Hug’ the community through the festival, acting as an incentive to build the initial relationship. This strong relationship supports ‘nudging’ the community towards transmission line acceptance by opening channels to correct the cycle of misinformation. Building a trusting relationship aims to counteract any disinformation spread with malicious intent.

Logistically, funding would be provided to regional communities to host KOLO events themselves, based around a highly replicable framework provided. This ensure maximum impact through use of endowment effect and personalisation. The proposed funding and budget is based on the Australian Government’s regional funding budget for arts festivals, approximately $12,500 per event.

To enhance the relationship to continue correction to misinformation cycle, we propose offering the first festival at no charge to individuals to encourage initial participation, with a transition toward ticket sales to increase profitability in future years to ensure the solution is sustainable (Loop Model).

The relationship will enable successful targeting of misinformation circulating within regional communities, built on a solid foundation of trust.