Prepared for
Powerlink Queensland
ABN: 82 078 849 233

Chapter 1

Introduction

Oct-2021
Genex Kidston Connection Project - Ministerial Infrastructure Designation Assessment Report

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

Genex Power Limited (Genex) is seeking to establish the Kidston Renewable Energy Hub, a combination of solar and pump storage hydro, power generation facility at the Old Kidston mine in northwest Queensland. Queensland Electricity Transmission Corporation Limited (trading as Powerlink Queensland) has been engaged by Genex to connect this facility to its existing transmission network at Mount Fox, via a new 275 kilovolt (kV) electricity transmission infrastructure project known as the Genex Kidston Connection Project (the Project).

The Project comprises the following components:

- a 275 kV switching station proposed in the locality of Mount Fox, Queensland (the 'Mount Fox switching station')
- an up to 185 kilometre (km) 275 kV single circuit – twin conductor transmission line between Mount Fox switching station and the Kidston Renewable Energy Hub (the 'transmission line').

A Draft Environmental Assessment Report (Draft EAR) for the Project was lodged with the Ministerial Infrastructure Designations Team (MID Team) in September 2018. The Draft EAR was pursuant to the requirements of the *Planning Act 2016*, Planning Regulation 2017, and the Ministers Guidelines and Rules in effect at the time. Subsequent community and stakeholder consultation and State Interests Review was undertaken on the Draft EAR.

The MID Team's 'Notice of Assessment Outcomes' and the requirements for the completion of a Final Environmental Assessment Report (Final EAR), was provided to Powerlink in December 2018. The Final EAR was not submitted to the MID Team for final approval due to the Project being put on a temporary hold in early-2019.

In April 2021, the Project was re-commenced upon execution of a connection agreement between Powerlink and Genex. This Report presents the updated Draft EAR, in the form of the Ministerial Infrastructure Designation Assessment Report (MID Assessment Report).

1.2 Project Proponent

The Project owner, developer, operator and maintainer is:

Powerlink Queensland
33 Harold St, Virginia,
PO Box 1193, Virginia, QLD 4014
Telephone: (07) 3860 2111, Facsimile: (07) 3860 2100
Website: https://www.powerlink.com.au/

Powerlink Queensland (Powerlink) is the registered business name of the Queensland Electricity Transmission Corporation Limited (ABN: 82 078 849 233), a Queensland Government Owned Corporation. It was established under the *Government Owned Corporations Act 1993* and is a Transmission Entity under the *Electricity Act 1994.*

Powerlink owns, operates and maintains Queensland's high voltage electricity transmission network. As a Transmission Network Service Provider in the national electricity market, Powerlink's primary role is to provide a secure and reliable network to transport high voltage electricity from generators to electricity distribution networks owned by Energex, Ergon Energy (Ergon) and Country Energy, which supply to nearly 4 million Queenslanders. Powerlink also transports electricity directly to large Queensland customers such as mines, gas producers, industrial smelters, rail network operators and to New South Wales via the NSW/QLD Interconnector.

Powerlink's operations are guided by the *Electricity Act 1994* and the *Electrical Safety Act 2002*. The *Electricity Act 1994* sets out the requirements which all electricity industry participants must follow to ensure a safe, efficient and reliable supply of electricity. It also requires the supply of electricity to be undertaken in an environmentally sound manner. Under Section 31(b) of the *Electricity Act 1994*, a Transmission Entity is required to properly take into account the environmental effects of its activities under its transmission authority.

The *Electrical Safety Act 2002* seeks to prevent through regulation, the death, injury and destruction that can be caused by electricity. Accordingly, the purpose of the *Electrical Safety Act 2002* is to establish a legislative framework for preventing persons from being killed or injured by electricity; and preventing property from being destroyed or damaged by electricity. The design of the Project will satisfy the requirements of the *Electrical Safety Act 2002*.

1.3 Approval Framework

The Project is proposed as 'Infrastructure' assessable under the *Planning Act 2016* Ministerial Infrastructure Designation (MID) process. MID is a planning process under Chapter 2, Part 5 of the *Planning Act 2016* that allows the Minster to designate premises for a type of infrastructure. The process provides infrastructure entities a streamlined, considered whole-of government response on a request for infrastructure.

Three statutory instruments support the MID function, namely:

- *Planning Act 2016*, which includes provisions for making, amending, extending or repealing MIDs
- Planning Regulation 2017, which identifies the types of infrastructure that may be designated
- Ministers Guidelines and Rules (MGR), which includes processes for making or amending ministerial designations (Chapter 7 of the MGR).

Section 35 of the *Planning Act 2016* identifies that the Planning Regulation 2017 describes the types of infrastructure that may be designated by the Minister. Schedule 5, Part 2, Item 7 of the Planning Regulation 2017 identifies '*electrical operating works'*, being operating works under the *Electricity Act 1994,* as infrastructure which may be designated. Section 36 of the *Planning Act 2016* provides criteria for making an MID, stating:

> *(1) To make a designation, a designator must be satisfied that—*
>
> *(a) the infrastructure will satisfy statutory requirements, or budgetary commitments, for the supply of the infrastructure; or*
>
> *(b) there is or will be a need for the efficient and timely supply of the infrastructure.*

The Project achieves the requirements of Section 36(1) of the *Planning Act 2016* through providing for the efficient and timely supply of infrastructure through the following points.

- Evaluation of feasible solutions has identified the Project as the least cost, most technically efficient solution to enable the Kidston Renewable Energy Hub to connect to the Queensland Electricity Transmission Network.
- The Kidston Renewable Energy Hub is an integrated solar and pumped storage hydro power generation project. This Project facilitates connection of this and potentially additional projects in the geographical area to the Queensland transmission network, supporting diversification of Queensland electricity generation mix.
- The Project providing firming support and system strength for the Northern Queensland Power system and supports the Commonwealth and State Renewable Energy Target.

In order to make a designation under Section 36 of the *Planning Act 2016* the Minister must also be satisfied that adequate environmental assessment, including adequate consultation has been carried out in relation to the Project. This MID Assessment Report has been developed to address the MGR requirements prescribed under the Planning Regulation 2017 to satisfy the requirements of the Minister. The MID Assessment Report process is discussed further in the following section.

1.4 MID Process

In 2020 the MID process underwent reform. As a result of this reform the Minister released the *Operational Guidance – Making or Amending a Ministerial Infrastructure Designation (MID)* (Ver. 2020) (Operational Guidance). The Operational Guidance provides guidance for Infrastructure Entities requesting to make a MID. The Operational Guidance details the whole MID Process.

The key steps of the MGR process are outlined below.

- **Initial Advice Request:** Request to the Minister for initial advice on the suitability of a Project for a MID.
- **Preliminary Stakeholder Engagement:** Preliminary stakeholder engagement is undertaken by an entity.
- **Endorsement Request:** Formal request to the Minister to seek endorsement to lodge a MID Assessment Report.
- **MID Assessment Report:** Preparation of a MID Assessment Report (this Report) in line with the requirements of the MGR.
- **Consultation and State Interest Review:** Consultation is undertaken by the Minister and by the Entity. A State Interest Review of the MID Assessment Report is also undertaken by the relevant Queensland Government Departments.
- **Decision:** The Ministers decides the outcomes of the MID.

1.5 Structure of MID Assessment Report

This MID Assessment Report is to take into account the potential effects relating to the construction, operation, maintenance and eventual decommissioning of the Project. In particular, this MID Assessment Report identifies the values of the Project area and assesses the potential impact of the Project on these values. The scope of this MID Assessment Report also included the preparation of an Environmental Management Plan for the transmission line and the switching station.

Where this MID Assessment Report identifies 'Project area' reference is made to the wider area in which the Project is situated. Where this MID Assessment Report identifies the Preferred Alignment, reference is made to the easement corridor.

A Terms of Reference (ToR) was developed by Powerlink and public consultation was undertaken during May to July 2018. A copy of the final ToR is provided in Appendix I Terms of Reference. The ToR is not prescribed by the MGR but is an initiative by Powerlink to ensure a robust environmental assessment is undertaken for the Project. A checklist against the ToR is included in Appendix J Terms of Reference Cross Check.

The structure of this MID Assessment Report is as follows.

- An Executive Summary, which contains an overview of key issues and findings.
- Chapter 1, which provides an overview of the Project, details of the proponent, Project scope, and the ID approvals process.
- Chapter 2, which details the Project justification along with alternatives examined.
- Chapter 3, which provides a detailed Project description.
- Chapters 4 to 24, which provide a description of the existing environmental, economic and social values, potential impacts from the Project and mitigation and management strategies reduce impacts where possible.
- Chapter 25, which summarises the short, long–term and cumulative impacts of the Project.
- Chapter 26, which provides a summary of Powerlink's environmental record and a summary of the Environmental Management Plan detailing how impacts will be minimised and proposed environmental protection conditions for the Project.
- Chapter 27, which assesses the planning and approval obligations triggered by the Project.
- Chapter 28, which provides a summary of the consultation activities undertaken and issues raised by stakeholders and the community.
- Appendices including the final ToR, ToR checklist, Ministers Requirements, relevant technical reports, and draft Environmental Management Plan.