



Meeting minutes

Meeting name	Borumba pumped hydro project: Transmission sub-group meeting
Location	Gympie & District Landcare Group Incorporated Nursery, 350 Old Maryborough Road, Araluen and Microsoft Teams (online)
Date and time	22 March 2023, 1:00 pm to 3:20 pm
In-person attendees	<p>Transmission sub-group members:</p> <p>Ian Stehbens (community member) (IS), Dan O'Regan (HQPlantations) (DOR), Graeme Elphinstone (Gympie District Beef Liaison Group) (GE), Mike Moller (Wide Bay-Burnett Environmental Council) (MM), Shea Rule (Say No To The Lines group) (SR), Simon Kinchington (Gympie Regional Council) (SK).</p> <p>Office of the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement:</p> <p>Mick de Brenni MP (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) (Minister), Nick Heath (Chief of Staff) (NH), Joshua Lyons (JL).</p> <p>Powerlink:</p> <p>Gerard Reilly (GR), Colin Langton (CL), Luke Duncan (LD), Dana Boxall (DB), Narelle Titman (NT), Nicole Gagen (NG), Nicole Maguire (NM).</p> <p>Queensland Hydro:</p> <p>Leah McKenzie (LM), Rebecca Powlett (RP).</p>
Online attendees	Stuart Traill (Electrical Trades Union) (ST), Gregg Davey (Queensland Police Service) (GD), Rebecca Grady (Queensland Hydro) (RG).
Apologies	Petra Van Beek (Gympie Chamber of Commerce)

Meeting purpose

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the progress with corridor options analysis for the two transmission connections of the Borumba Pumped Hydro Project.

This meeting is part of the ongoing stakeholder engagement program for the Borumba Pumped Hydro Project and associated transmission connections.

The expected outcome is to meet the following objectives:

- to increase Powerlink's awareness of local issues related to the transmission corridor options and that the interests of a broad range of stakeholders are considered;
- leverage community knowledge to fully understand potential local benefits and investment and how they can be captured;
- provide an opportunity for stakeholders to better understand the project;
- provide a formal communication channel between Queensland Hydro, Powerlink, and stakeholders to disseminate and gather information.



Minutes

Agenda Item	Minutes and Actions
1.0	<p>Acknowledgement of Country, introduction and housekeeping</p>
	<p>RP spoke to acknowledgement of country, and new members and staff.</p> <p>The Minister introduced himself, and spoke to the impacts of climate change, the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan (QEJP) and the need (recognised by both governments and consumers) for renewable energy systems including pumped hydro systems.</p> <p>The Minister also spoke to the process of investigating the feasibility of the Borumba pumped hydro site.</p> <p>Transmission sub-group members, Powerlink and Queensland Hydro representatives introduced themselves to the rest of the group.</p>
2.0	<p>Transmission subgroup custodianship</p>
	<p>RP spoke to a change in custodianship of the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Powerlink to take responsibility for this transmission stakeholder reference sub-group for the Woolooga connection. This sub-group will become a stakeholder reference group under Powerlink's ownership and remain focussed on transmission matters. - Queensland Hydro to maintain responsibility of the Borumba Pumped Hydro Project Stakeholder Reference Group and any other subgroups tied to the reference group <p>RP noted open door policy with regards to questions and concerns for both Powerlink and Queensland Hydro – all stakeholders will be directed to the most appropriate organisation to address their questions.</p>
3.0	<p>Borumba Pumped Hydro Project – Transmission Line Connection project engagement update</p>
	<p>GR spoke to the project's engagement activities undertaken to date, noting engagement commenced in December 2021. Key statistics of the engagement process included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commenced engagement in December 2021 - Released study area in July 2022 - Released draft corridors in November 2022 - 37 community information drop-in sessions held - more than 2,100 residents have attended the community information sessions - more than 1,800 individual pieces of feedback received via email, feedback forms, phone calls, meetings and comments on interactive project map <p>SR asked how many community information sessions would have been scheduled if there was not backlash from the community and further clarified that letters were sent from Powerlink to stakeholders in December 2022 to advise of upcoming community drop-in sessions. GR clarified that a characteristic of good engagement is being responsive to community needs. Powerlink responded to growing interest in the project by organising a series of information sessions in December and January to provide the opportunity for feedback.</p> <p>GR noted that a recommended corridors will be released with the Draft Corridor Selection Report on 27 April 2023. Powerlink will endeavour to make phone contact with all landholders who are located within the recommended corridor prior to the public release of the report.</p> <p>GR noted that in-person community drop-in sessions, meetings, emails, phone calls and Social Pinpoint (online mapping) engagement have all contributed to identification of the key themes raised by stakeholders</p> <p>Feedback themes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State-owned land - Investigating the use of 'state-owned land' including State Forests and National Parks - Areas of cultural significance and connection to country



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Potential for bushfire mitigation <p>Property impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Property impacts throughout planning, construction and operation- Compensation and land values- Loss of lifestyle and generational ownership- Amenity impacts and future use <p>Lifestyle impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Broader negative impact the project will have on lifestyle- Visual amenity impacts- Disruption of key recreational activities- Changes to lifestyle features that attracts residents and tourists <p>Biosecurity and agricultural impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Focused on operation and maintenance- Management of Giant Rats Tail Grass and Parthenium- Contractor compliance with biosecurity regulations- Devaluation of land and business operations- Broader threats to agricultural industry in the wider region <p>Wildlife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Presence of endangered species- Damage and destruction of wildlife habitats- Wildlife has a significant value to the community- Key reason for living in the region and lifestyle issues <p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Health impacts to residents living near transmission lines- Community concerns around electric and magnetic fields (EMF) <p>Corridor alternatives and preferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Potential of undergrounding sections of the transmission lines- Building a new substation closer to Lake Borumba- Opportunities around the co-location of corridors- Avoidance of communities and private properties- Minimising impacts to flood areas- Overall opposition to project and proposed corridors <p>Vegetation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vegetation clearing and acquisition of offsets- Impacts to remnant vegetation and management <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Environmental impacts including biosecurity and conservation management- Compliance with environmental legislation



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	<p>GE asked what vegetation offset strategies would be used for areas such as koala habitat. NT noted that this would depend on the type of vegetation being offset, and that more information would become available as environmental approvals continue. GR noted that the preference is to not impact koala habitat.</p> <p>LM also commented that this process is legislated through the <i>Environment Protection Bio-diversity and Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)</i> (EPBC Act) rather than is being a Powerlink controlled process.</p> <p>IS noted that vegetation clearing is a concern, but in the case that transmission towers are situated on ridges or peaks (higher topographical points) this can provide opportunities to minimise clearing. CL noted that options for vegetation clearing will be detailed in the design stage. LD noted that the exact vegetation impacts will not be known until the preferred corridor is selected. IS noted that studies have shown that most fauna movement is in low area; however do see also fauna seeking refuge in the high country.</p> <p>GE asked if there is a list of broad guidelines for vegetation clearing which can be distributed to stakeholders? CL noted that this information can be shared.</p> <p>IS noted that it would be possible to reduce the number of transmission lines from two to one with 500kV, which would also raise the towers in height/topographical height and this can assist with fauna movement in the lower country. IS said this provided significant advantages in terms of what's 'under the line'. CL noted that the voltage (which is a determining factor in deciding line height) is likely to be 500kV. At 500kV, one line would still be needed to Halys and one line to Woolooga. CL noted the importance of wildlife corridors, and extra height would support, but also spoke about the balance required as stakeholders have registered concern with the aesthetics of the transmission lines and additional height typically means greater aesthetics issues. SR noted that 100% of people are complaining about the aesthetics of the transmission lines. IS noted that there needs to be a balance between vegetation clearing and aesthetics.</p> <p>NT noted that engagement has been undertaken with Traditional Owners of the land in the study areas.</p>
4.0	<p>Borumba Pumped Hydro Project – Transmission Line Connection multi-criteria analysis</p> <p>NT spoke to the multi-criteria analysis (MCA) including factors applied to compare corridor options. NT noted that the preference would be to avoid impacts; however, where impacts are required Powerlink will manage, minimise or mitigate these impacts.</p> <p>GE noted that slide 14 is misleading in the statement: "To ensure a balanced approach to corridor selection with the least practicable impact on environment and heritage values". GE would prefer this read: "To ensure a balanced approach to corridor selection with the least impact on environment and heritage values which is practical". Powerlink to amend.</p> <p>NT spoke to the assessment frameworks of social (considering the use of land and the community livelihood within and adjacent to corridor options), environment (considering a balanced approach to corridor selection with the least practicable impact on environment and heritage values) and economic (considering construction and operational factors such as cost be considered at a preliminary level, given the scale of project).</p> <p>SR noted that of the three criteria (social, environmental and economic) they believed social to be the most critical. SR asked if there is a figure available to show what 10,000 km of transmission lines look like? GR noted that the number of '10,000 km of transmission lines' is on a national scale rather than state scale. SR asked how many kilometres of transmission line is planned for Queensland. GR noted that this is difficult to estimate as it depends on where renewable projects will be located in the future. He noted the QEJP outlined up to 2,000kms of new line would be needed and that this now needed to include the Copperstring project which is 1,100 km in length.</p> <p>SR requested a figure which shows what the transmission lines would achieve for the state's energy supply, and which of the two Queensland Hydro projects is larger. GR noted that of the two pumped hydro projects, the project with the larger energy storage capacity is Pioneer Burdekin project. SR asserted that the 'burden' of the transmission lines should be hosted by state owned land as the area had a lot of National Park and State Forest. GR noted that environmental factors also need to be considered. IS noted that he did not agree with SR's assertion.</p>



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	<p>GE asked if the social impacts were weighted more highly than environmental or economic impacts. NT noted that no, social impacts are not weighted more highly, this was highlighted for purposes of an example only.</p> <p>LD spoke to the MCA including each of the social, environmental and economic criterion and rationales.</p> <p>LD noted that social criteria are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Agricultural land- Residential homes- Use of State-owned land- Number of properties- Intensive use <p>LD noted that social analysis rationales are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Feedback received through community consultation- Analysis derived from spatial data sets- Understanding land which provide livelihoods for local communities including agriculture, grazing, cropping, intensive land uses, biosecurity matters, tourism, recreational and property usage etc.- Consideration for size of land required, lifestyle and visual impacts, farming or other business operations, potential utilisation of state-owned land within investigation area and corridors- Proximity to homes<ul style="list-style-type: none">o LD noted that transmission lines will not be built over houses, and Powerlink will discuss with landowners to keep transmission lines as far away from homes as possible. <p>SR noted that Powerlink has noted a respect for the Traditional Owners of the land. SR noted that 'actual' ownership is not being respected. LD noted that both Traditional Owners and landholders are being engaged with significantly. SK noted that Gympie Regional Council has also analysed the corridor study areas from data on owners and the environment, and this information [subject to privacy restricted details] can be shared with stakeholders.</p> <p>IS noted that historical 'matchbox management' of land has resulted in changed landscapes, which means the remnants of the original country is very important. IS noted that the country on which the upper Borumba pumped hydro energy storage (PHES) facility is proposed to be located has huge environmental significance, but will also be a water source for fire fighters. IS said this project provided an opportunity to look closely at what vegetation is there, to look closely at it and learn together. IS said he was delighted Powerlink was listening to these perspectives.</p> <p>CL noted that environmental criteria are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Endangered species- Areas of concern- Areas of least concern- Essential habitat- National parks, conservation areas and nature refuges <p>CL noted that environmental analysis rationales include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Environmental criteria under the <i>Vegetation Management Act 1994</i>- Essential habitat values and preference to minimise impacts to protected areas managed under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>- Cultural heritage and Native Title under the <i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i> and <i>Native Title Act 1993</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">o CL noted that three groups have traditional ownership claims to different study areas and are being engaged with as such.o IS noted that there is an opportunity to manage the vegetation together so that the area is taken care of.- State and local heritage sites



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uphold general biosecurity obligation under the <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i> - Multiple uses of National parks including recreation <p>GR asked HQPlantations (DOR) if they had any comments on environmental factors? DOR noted that HQPlantations places great value on all three criteria (social, environmental and economic). He said there was significant values and linkages, and it also needed to be recognised that a lot of people used the area.</p> <p>GE asked if offset requirements are required when assessing impacts to threatened aquatic species like frogs or the Mary River cod? RP noted that ecological offset requirements also apply. GE asked that this is noted in collateral as it is important to stakeholders.</p> <p>SK noted that any impact to environment may also have an impact that is of economic significance. For example, environmental impacts may impact on scenic amenity and tourism. LD noted that any impact to landowners or tourism providers is considered under the 'social' criteria (including economic). SK asked if there is a cost/benefit analysis which occurs throughout this process. LD noted that a cost benefit analysis is not undertaken as part of Powerlink's multicriteria analysis. LD noted Powerlink will review if a cost benefit analysis is feasible to be undertaken at this late stage of the corridor analysis and will share the outcome of this with this group. IS noted that rail lines are not a concern to the study areas. The group clarified that the Mary Valley rail line is within the Study Area.</p> <p>NT noted that economic criteria are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corridor option length - Minimise land with a 30% slope or greater. CL noted that range crossings for trucks are 10% - 15%. 30% gradient would have an impact on access tracks. - Co-location with existing lines. NT clarified that this involves installing new transmission line infrastructure with existing transmission infrastructure. <p>LD noted that economic analysis rationales include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constructability including length of corridors considering terrain and technical construction method and overall costs implications to project - Further considerations including topography and contours, soil types and landslide potential, areas of flood inundation of land, crossing of water courses, rail lines, roads and crossing existing infrastructure - Co-location opportunities (putting services together) <p>NT noted that further technical considerations criteria are also being investigated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor ground conditions - Unexploded ordnances (UXO) - Power supply resilience <p>NT noted that technical considerations analysis rationales include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor ground conditions can have significant impacts to project cost and constructability - High-level mapping and geotechnical investigations will confirm ground conditions, potential impacts and mitigation measures - Consider proximity to land used land by Australian Defence Force, potential risk of UXO - Specialist advice to be sought including risk assessment and management plan - Consider the exposure of the corridor to natural or other disasters, with the aim of ensuring resilience of power supply <p>GE asked if an example of poor ground conditions is if the area is prone to land-slips. CL confirmed that this is a consideration. SK noted that Gympie Regional Council is looking at ground conditions as part of a new planning scheme.</p>
5.0	<p>Q&A</p> <p>The Minister noted that the Borumba project team will be developing a community benefits package and environmental package to be released at a further date.</p>



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	<p>The Minister asked transmission sub-group members if they have any questions for him to answer.</p> <p>SR asked a question in regards to who pays for the project. The Minister outlined that costs for projects of importance would be borne by all Queenslanders, much the same as costs for schools, roads, hospitals, etc.</p> <p>SR asked if the 'say no to the lines' group could email with further questions. The Minister responded that he was open to responding to additional questions and specified that technical questions in relation to transmission would be answered by Powerlink.</p> <p>SR noted that the \$62 billion quoted for the Borumba PHES project does not seem consistent with 'cheaper energy' messaging. GR corrected that \$62 billion is for implementation of the entire Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, and not just the Borumba Pumped Hydro Project. The Minister noted that analysis shows power bills will be reduced by approximately \$150.</p> <p>SR asked whether there was merit in developing renewables when India and China weren't doing it. The Minister replied that the biggest contractor of renewable energy in the world was China.</p> <p>SR queried whether all the solar and wind farms required could actually be built. The Minister replied that there was a 'monumental amount of work' to do and that the level of engagement being seen by the community was because Queenslanders own the transmission network. This is not the case in other states.</p> <p>SR asked if there is a list of the solar projects in the pipeline for development in Queensland, and asked for details regarding the environmental benefits of the State Government's renewable energy scheme. The Minister noted that the aims of the scheme are to reduce carbon emissions, and that the plan outlines a mechanism to do this. In other parts of Australia, renewable energy schemes have been privatised.</p> <p>SR noted that they believe nuclear energy should be investigated. The Minister noted that nuclear energy is not part of the QEJP or part of plan to reduce carbon emissions in Queensland.</p> <p>IS commented that there needed to be consideration of global vs local impacts, which often compete. The Minister responded that there are varying levels of responsibility across all this work, and it was very important that we get it right in Queensland.</p> <p>The Minister left the meeting at 2:40 pm</p> <p>IS noted that fire clearing in State Forest was insufficient during last fire season and led to 2 ½ months of fire burning.</p> <p>MM (online) asked can you please ensure the State forests that are transitioning to National Parks in both in 2024 and 2026 are considered as part of the environmental criteria in the MCA? NT noted that the existing criteria does take this into account, and this statement will also be taken on notice by Powerlink. IS noted that he believes that there is some 'wobble room' in this statement and is happy to talk to Powerlink directly to resolve this.</p> <p>All member of the sub-group were asked if Powerlink needs to consider any other criteria?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- GE noted that everyday management of best-practice land management will need to be taken into consideration.- DOR noted that 'social' criteria needs to take into account the public interest of the plantation, and for this reason may need to be tied to legislation rather than listing specific impacts.- SK asked if it is worth mentioning the life of the asset in the criteria? <p>No major objections were raised to the criteria by sub-group members.</p> <p>NT thanked all for these contributions.</p> <p>LD noted that stakeholders have asked for less technical terms and more plain English communication, and this is being taken into account.</p> <p>IS noted that compensation needs to be considered and at a minimum comparable with NSW and Victoria. GR noted that this is absolutely going to be undertaken, once a draft corridor is released. SR noted that</p>



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	<p>compensation needs to be competitive. GR noted that Powerlink is currently reviewing the compensation process and that this could be presented at the next group meeting.</p> <p>DB noted that there were challenges in reconsidering compensation paid to landholders and that Queensland was potentially taking a different approach to other states. SR asked if the transmission towers can be painted black, and also noted that there is a low fly zone in Widgee. CL noted that pre-aging the galvanising could be an option that will make the colour match the native Australian bush colour, but also avoided the environmental issues associated with paint.</p> <p>GE noted that 'best practice' in construction of the towers is not discussed. GE noted that works to construct the towers has caused issues with erosion, unstructured tracks and drainage. CL noted that this will be outlined as part of the environmental approvals documents which will dictate the manner in which construction will be undertaken.</p> <p>SK asked if there would be a referral under the EPBC Act undertaken in transmission line planning. GR said that a referral under the EPBC Act will occur as part of the environmental approvals for the transmission lines.</p>
6.0	<p>Outline next steps</p> <p>GR spoke to Powerlink's next steps, including:</p> <p>On 27 April 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Release of Draft Corridor Selection Report identifying the recommended corridors (one north to Woolooga Substation and one west to Halys/Tarong Substation) – each recommended corridor is around 1 km wide. - Comprehensive engagement process to gather input on the recommended corridors and wider report. Powerlink will endeavour to contact all landholders in the recommended corridors before the document's public release (phone call then letter). <p>In mid-2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final Corridor Selection Report will be released which will identify a 'study corridor'. Then Powerlink will work with landholders, and seek input from the community and other stakeholders, to identify a 70 m easement within each study corridor (north to Woolooga Substation and west to Tarong/Halys Substation). <p>In mid-2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following comprehensive environmental and technical assessments, and ongoing engagement with landholders, the community and other stakeholders, Powerlink will release the environmental assessment report (EAR) for public review and comment. The EAR will identify a preferred alignment for the transmission line. - Powerlink will also progress other project approvals as required, including Federal environmental approvals under the EPBC Act. GR noted that this process can be quite long. <p>In 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After around two years of finalising project approvals, transmission line construction is expected to commence. <p>In 2029:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transmission lines are expected to be operational, enabling the pumped hydro site to connect into the electricity grid, providing energy up to Central Queensland, out to Western Queensland and down to Southeast Queensland.



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7.0	<p>closure</p> <p>GR noted that slides and minutes will be distributed to members and uploaded to the Queensland Hydro website.</p> <p>GR thanked Gympie Landcare for their use of the room.</p> <p>GR thanked all in attendance for their valuable input.</p> <p>IS noted that he appreciated the listened-to experience of these groups.</p> <p>GE noted that shorter time periods between meetings, and less information being shared, would be appreciated.</p> <p>SR asked to be included in the 27 April 2023 report release, to assist in managing the mental health of some local stakeholders. LD noted that Powerlink will provide an opportunity to talk through the draft report with SRG. GR noted that Powerlink will be in contact with landholders in the recommended option.</p> <p>DB noted that employee assistance program (EAP) assistance is available to any stakeholder requiring mental health assistance. RP noted that SR may need to discuss the specific cases confidentially with either Powerlink or EAP.</p> <p>IS noted that three corridor study options do not mean that all three areas will be affected and work should be done to clarify terminology in regards to that aspect. SR noted that landholders are still concerned until they are given a reason not to be.</p> <p>GE noted that there was a lot of information presented at the meeting and consideration should be given to meeting more regularly so that there was not so much information presented at once. Two hours was a good timeframe but meetings could be more frequent.</p>
	Meeting closed 3:20 pm