Key Points

- When we build new transmission lines or substations, we aim to ensure we take all reasonable and practicable measures to avoid or minimise harm to all types of Cultural Heritage.

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage can be defined as a significant area or object that holds archaeological or historic evidence of Aboriginal occupation, or is of particular significance to Aboriginal people.

- Historical Cultural Heritage are places, sites or objects of historical significance from 1788 onwards that are usually not of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in origin.

- We consult with many stakeholders, including Aboriginal people, cultural heritage consultants, local communities, landowners and government agencies to meet our cultural heritage compliance requirements. This enables us to put in place all reasonable and practical measures such as developing Cultural Heritage Management Plans to avoid or minimise harm to significant Cultural Heritage.

- Cultural Heritage is different to ‘Native Title’. Having a site of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage on your property does not mean that your property is subject to Native Title.

What are the types of Cultural Heritage Powerlink considers when building new infrastructure?

Powerlink considers two kinds of Cultural Heritage when planning our developments:

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage – areas and objects that are significant to Aboriginal people.
- Historical Cultural Heritage – areas and objects of historical significance post 1788 that are not solely associated with Aboriginal tradition and custom.

When building new transmission lines, Powerlink acquires easements so that we can safely construct and maintain our lines. An easement is a legal ‘right of way’ over a portion of land which allows Powerlink to access and carry out work on the land. We also acquire land for substations, often by purchasing the site outright from the owner. In these cases ownership of the land transfers to Powerlink.

When planning new infrastructure we are required to meet various obligations including those outlined in the Queensland Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003, the Queensland Heritage Act 1992 and Federal cultural heritage legislation.

We consult with local communities, environmental groups, Aboriginal people, landowners and government agencies to identify any places of spiritual, cultural or historical significance. This enables us to put in place all reasonable and practical measures to avoid or minimise harm to Cultural Heritage.

Cultural Heritage areas and objects, whether of historical or Aboriginal origin, are valued by the community for their meaning and connection with our history.
What is Historical Cultural Heritage?

Historical Cultural Heritage is a term used by Powerlink to refer to places, sites or objects from 1788 onwards that are not solely associated with Aboriginal tradition and custom.

The Queensland Heritage Act 1992 provides for the conservation and protection of Historical Cultural Heritage by:

- establishing heritage registers
- regulating development that may impact on registered places
- establishing a process for reporting discoveries of objects that may be of cultural heritage significance.

A cultural heritage area, object or place may be significant because of a range of factors – such as its importance to Queensland’s history, because it has unique or rare aesthetic qualities, or has a strong or special association with a particular community or group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

Historical Cultural Heritage does not have to be from the first European settlements to be significant. For example, some archaeologists are interested in the study of industrial developments from the turn of the century, such as railways, mines, bridges and other industry that demonstrate engineering and technological achievements.

Historical Cultural Heritage is identified through consultation with local landowners or community groups, and by archaeological and anthropological field inspections. It is recorded on the Queensland Heritage Register (the Register) which is maintained by the Queensland Heritage Council. The Department of Environment and Heritage Protection supports the Queensland Heritage Council in administrating the Register and employs experts such as architects, historians, archaeologists, and conservationists to advise on how to best conserve and use properties listed. More information about the Register and Historical Cultural Heritage conservation can be found at www.ehp.qld.gov.au

What is Aboriginal Cultural Heritage?

Aboriginal people are the owners of their Cultural Heritage. This is recognised by legislation (e.g. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003) and Powerlink.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage can be defined as an Aboriginal area, or an object/s of particular significance to Aboriginal people.

Some examples of common types of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage that may be found near Powerlink’s infrastructure are:

- stone artefact scatters
- scarred trees
- hearths (fire places)
- grinding grooves
- stone tool quarries
- rockshelters
- story places.

These types of Cultural Heritage can inform Aboriginal people about their history, including the occupation dates of an area, the types of tools and objects that were made, where they lived, what their people did in certain areas, and how significant an area/s or object/s may be to them.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage found near our infrastructure are generally identified through consultation with the relevant Traditional Owners. The Queensland Government’s Aboriginal Cultural Heritage database and register also provides information about the location of Cultural Heritage and the relevant Traditional Owners for an area or region.
Our commitment to protecting our Cultural Heritage

Before our employees and contractors undertake a project for Powerlink they complete a range of activities to ensure that they take all reasonable and practicable measures to avoid or minimise harm to Cultural Heritage.

Some of these processes may involve (but are not limited to):

**Research**
- We seek to identify the Aboriginal parties, Native Title parties and knowledge-holders for a project.
- We search the relevant State and Federal databases for evidence of Cultural Heritage.
- During project investigations an assessment may be conducted along the proposed transmission line easement or substation site to identify significant Cultural Heritage and assess the potential project activities. This is generally done in accordance with a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) or an agreement with the Aboriginal parties.
- A professional Historical Archaeologist may also be engaged to identify Historical Cultural Heritage and make recommendations to Powerlink. The assessment is included in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – a written report that examines the environmental, community, and economic aspects of proposed projects and identifies ways to manage any potential impacts.

**Consultation**
Consultation is important because there is limited recorded information about the location of Aboriginal or Historical Cultural Heritage. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage does not always contain physical markings and the whereabouts of some significant areas and objects are only known to members of a particular Traditional Owner group. Other Cultural Heritage areas or objects may not yet have been discovered.
- We talk to local governments, interests groups and landowners.
- We consult with the relevant Aboriginal party which may involve developing a CHMP or similar agreement. A CHMP is an agreement between Powerlink and the relevant Aboriginal party. A CHMP can contain steps for conducting an assessment and recommendations for Powerlink to avoid or minimise harm to significant Cultural Heritage during the clearing, construction, operation, and maintenance of a transmission line.

**Action**
- Before construction, all Powerlink staff and contractors are briefed on their responsibilities about any identified significant cultural heritage areas or objects in the project area.
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage areas and objects are cordoned off to avoid or minimise harm to significant Cultural Heritage.
- Our Cultural Heritage team is involved at all stages of a project to act as a liaison with Aboriginal parties and community groups, and to provide advice to staff and contractors on the ground about how to manage Cultural Heritage and comply with their duty of care and our Cultural Heritage management process.

**Is Aboriginal Cultural Heritage the same as Native Title?**

No. Having Cultural Heritage on your land does not mean your property is subject to Native Title. Most freehold land is not subject to Native Title, irrespective of the presence of any Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. It does not affect your legal title to your land.

Places or items of special significance to Aboriginal culture are protected under State and Federal legislation. They can only be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the law, regardless of whether they are on your land.
Explanations and frequently used terms

Cultural Heritage
Cultural Heritage is any area or object that is of significance to Aboriginal people including evidence of Aboriginal occupation of an area. It is also anything post 1788 that is of archaeological or historical significance to the community.

Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP)
A formal agreement developed in consultation with Aboriginal parties to ensure the management of significant Aboriginal Cultural Heritage areas and objects during the clearing, construction, and maintenance of a proposed transmission line or substation.

Easement
An easement is a legal ‘right of way’ over a portion of land which allows Powerlink to construct and maintain our transmission lines. The landowner continues to own the land over which the easement is acquired and retains most of the rights and responsibilities of ownership. To help ensure community safety and the security of electricity supply, there are some restrictions on the landowner’s use of the land within the easement. However, the restriction of rights to the resumed land is converted to a right to compensation.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process to ensure any environmental, community or economic impacts associated with the project are identified and managed.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
The written report that is produced as part of the EIA process. An EIS examines the environmental, community, and economic aspects of proposed projects including cultural heritage impacts and identifies ways to manage any impacts. The EIS is an important part of Powerlink’s consultation process and is advertised for public comment.

Substation
The role of a substation is to monitor and control the flow, stability, quality and voltage of electricity on the transmission lines connected to the facility. Equipment located within the substation is used to transform the voltage of electricity, protect the network, measure the flow of the electricity, and switch electricity between the different transmission lines and transformers on the grid. A substation is not a power station – it does not generate electricity.

Transmission line
A transmission line is a powerline which is capable of carrying large amounts of electricity at high voltages. Transmission lines are larger and taller than the everyday distribution power lines which deliver electricity to your home and business. Transmission lines are normally built on tall steel towers or concrete and steel poles.
About Us

Powerlink Queensland is a State Government Owned Corporation which owns, develops, operates and maintains the high voltage transmission network in Queensland.

Our network of high voltage substations and transmission lines extends 1,700km from Cairns to the New South Wales border – approximately half of Australia’s eastern seaboard.

Powerlink’s transmission network is the central link in the electricity supply chain, transporting electricity from power stations where it is generated, to distributors Energex, Ergon Energy and Essential Energy that deliver electricity to around two million customers.

Powerlink also transports electricity directly to industrial customers and to New South Wales via the Queensland/New South Wales Interconnector transmission line.

Powerlink does not generate or buy or sell electricity – we simply transport it ‘in bulk’ from wherever it is generated across our high voltage transmission network to where it is needed.

For more information see our About Powerlink Queensland information sheet.

More Information

Other useful guides can be accessed from www.powerlink.com.au including:

- Consultation and Environmental Impact Assessments

Contact Us

- Call FREECALL 1800 635 369 (during business hours)
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