

Proposed changes to Powerlink's laboratory services

December 2017

Q: Why has Powerlink lodged a Development Application with Brisbane City Council?

A: Powerlink is seeking approval from Brisbane City Council for a Material Change of Use (MCU) at its Harold Street premise, Virginia, to increase the onsite reprocessing – via a new sealed system gas servicing and separation cart – of Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF₆), a gas commonly used in electrical equipment.

The application also seeks to streamline its onsite waste oil tracking process and storage to align with the electronic system implemented by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP).

Q: What is SF₆?

A: SF₆, or Sulphur Hexafluoride, is a chemically inert, colourless, odourless, non-toxic and non-flammable gas, which is used primarily in high-voltage transformers.

In its pure state, SF₆ is not poisonous or toxic to people, or other forms of plant and animal life. The gas is also non-flammable. The characteristics of SF₆ allow it to be recycled and reused many times.

Q: What are the benefits of reprocessing SF₆ and storing new and waste oil for Powerlink?

A: From an environmental perspective, reprocessing existing gas negates the requirement to manufacture and import additional SF₆, and eliminates the need for disposal of the gas. The gas is effectively 'recycled' for safe reuse on an ongoing basis.

Storing oil onsite allows Powerlink to temporarily hold waste oil returned from Powerlink's electrical equipment maintenance prior to removal for recycling or disposal.

Q: How many times can the gas be recycled?

A: The benefit of using SF₆ is that it has an unlimited reprocessing lifespan. The SF₆ gas servicing and separation cart ensures high purity of SF₆ (>99 per cent) which enables the gas to be reprocessed indefinitely.

Q: How will the reprocessing amount of SF₆ differ from Powerlink's current amount?

A: Powerlink has lodged a Development Application with Brisbane City Council to seek approval to increase its reprocessing activity of SF₆ from 50 kilograms per week to 300 kilograms per week, via a specialist sealed system SF₆ gas servicing and separation cart.

Q: Will the amount of waste oil stored onsite at Powerlink increase?

A: No, the amount of waste oil brought to site will remain the same. Powerlink is seeking to formally align its waste oil tracking process and storage with the electronic system implemented by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP).

Q: How many trucks will be accessing Harold Street to transport the recycled gas and oil?

A: Truck activity is anticipated to have minimal impact on neighbouring residents and businesses. Powerlink is seeking to engage a specialist external consultant to conduct a traffic management study to analyse truck movements. Reprocessing works will be conducted during normal business hours, 7am – 5pm, Monday to Saturday.

Q: Where can I find more information about what Powerlink is proposing?

A: Information regarding Powerlink's oil testing and SF₆ reprocessing is available on our website - https://www.powerlink.com.au/Services/Oil_and_insulation_testing/

For questions regarding our Development Application, please contact our Landholder Relations Advisor, Bernie Jefferies on bjefferies@powerlink.com.au.

Feedback concerning Powerlink's Development Application can be sent to:
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