



Hon Stephen Robertson MP
Member for Stretton



**Queensland
Government**

**Minister for Natural Resources,
Mines and Energy and
Minister for Trade**

CLLO/09065

30 NOV 2009

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Cnr George and Alice Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 11 November 2009, forwarding Petition No. 1290 on the subject of proposed construction of high voltage overhead power lines by Powerlink from Ridgewood to Eerwah Vale. I have considered the petition carefully and am pleased to provide my response.

In order to meet forecast electricity demand and ensure the reliability of electricity supply in the northern Sunshine Coast and Gympie areas, Powerlink needs to augment its network to this region.

As required by the Australian Energy Regulator, and prior to making any decision in respect of a preferred solution to the demand issue, Powerlink considered a number of network and non-network options, including demand side management initiatives and localised small-scale alternative energy supplies. However, these investigations confirmed that a new high voltage electricity transmission line will be needed by around 2014.

Approximately 90 per cent of the new line is expected to be located alongside an existing transmission line on existing easements which were acquired around 30 years ago. However, the last 8.5 kilometres of the line will require new 60 metre wide easements to provide the link from the existing easements to the proposed new substation at Eerwah Vale.

Powerlink is adhering to its *Integrated Planning Act 1997* (IPA) approved process with regard to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and consultation for the project, thereby ensuring environmental, social and economic impacts are identified and managed. Consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB) were appointed by Powerlink to undertake the EIA and prepare the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

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I am advised that Powerlink commenced environmental investigations and consultation with affected landowners and stakeholders in 2007. Additionally, the draft EIS, which provides a comprehensive assessment of the potential environmental, social and economic impacts and which includes a draft Environmental Management Plan for the project, was released for public comment on 31 March 2009 for a period of six weeks – three weeks longer than the minimum submission period specified in the IPA approved process.

I understand the draft EIS addressed both non-network (demand side management and embedded generation options) and network alternatives (options to reconfigure/augment the network elsewhere). The draft EIS concludes that, with the environmental management plans that Powerlink will apply, there are no environmental factors that should prevent the project from proceeding.

Submissions on the draft EIS are currently being reviewed prior to the finalisation of an Environmental Management Plan for the project.

The draft EIS is subject to independent review and assessment by a number of parties, including State Government agencies. Powerlink also voluntarily referred the project to the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts, which reviewed the project under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* and declared that the project will not be a controlled action and needs no further Commonwealth assessment or approvals.

While I am well aware of the concerns raised by locals to Powerlink's new transmission line project, I am confident that Powerlink will meet all legislative obligations in respect of the project, and will take all actions necessary to manage its environmental responsibilities.

Should you have any queries regarding my advice to you, Mrs Jenny Downie, Assistant Policy Advisor, will be pleased to assist you and can be contacted on telephone 3225 1861.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Robertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP