



Hon Geoff Wilson MP
Member for Ferny Grove



**Queensland
Government**

Your Ref: Petitions
Our Ref: ME/08/3115, MC2167

18 DEC 2008

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

LAI UPON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE **for Mines and Energy**

No.: 5208T4945

22 DEC 2008

MP: Hon. G. Wilson MP

Clerk's Signature: _____

22/12/08

Dear Mr Laurie

I am in receipt of Petition number 1120-08 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 10 September 2008. I have considered the Petition carefully and in accord with the requirement of Standing Orders of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, I am pleased to provide my response to this Petition.

Powerlink, in joint planning with ENERGEX, has identified the need to reinforce the bulk electricity supply network near Cooroy. This upgrade of the electricity supply is necessary to meet the ongoing high growth in electricity demand in the Sunshine Coast, Gympie and surrounding areas. To meet demand, Powerlink plans to construct a new transmission line from its existing substation at Woolooga, approximately 14 kilometres north west of Gympie to a proposed new substation at Eerwah Vale (named Cooroy South).

In 2007, a Study Corridor was identified as a starting point for discussions with landowners and stakeholders. This Study Corridor is much wider than the land which would ultimately be required for an easement for the replacement transmission line. I have been advised that such an approach allows for optimal siting of the line route within the Study Corridor based on consultation with landholders and environmental factors.

The Study Corridor for the project was identified by specialist environmental consultants after taking into account a wide range of constraints and siting considerations, including social, environmental, visual and economic factors.

I have been advised that these factors, along with consideration of existing and potential infrastructure and suitability of the substation location, helped determine a study alignment within the study corridor for discussion with landowners and other stakeholders. Ongoing consultation, as well as the full environmental impact assessment (EIA) to which the project is subject, will continue to refine the study alignment.

The EIA will ensure environmental, social or economic impacts associated with the project are identified and managed. As part of this assessment a formal report, known as the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is produced and released for public comment.

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An EIS is a formal report that addresses the potential impact of a proposed transmission line development. It looks not only at the natural environment but also identifies community, cultural and economic impacts.

Independent consultants prepare a draft EIS using all the information gathered, including feedback from the community, traditional owner groups and other stakeholders. Copies of the draft EIS report are circulated widely to relevant agencies and community members or groups who have been identified as having a special interest in the proposal.

To ensure that all local residents have the chance to comment on the draft EIS report, copies are made available at public libraries and local council offices. Powerlink advertises in the local newspaper and a letter or newsletter is sent to local landowners who may be directly affected by the proposal.

Powerlink, and its independent consultants engaged to prepare the EIS report, consider and document all comments received. The final EIS will address all comments and suggestions received, including options for undergrounding the transmission line, to determine the best way to design, construct and maintain the line.

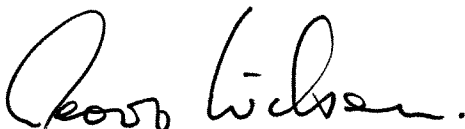
This consultation, including individual discussions with property owners, will continue throughout the EIA process. As a result of ongoing consultation with landowners and stakeholders, as well as EIS investigations, the study alignment for the new transmission line easement and substation location will continue to be refined to reduce environmental and social impacts, including visual impacts and where possible, increase the distance of the line from existing houses.

In regards to the final alignment for the new line, the public can be assured that no decision will be made until landowner and stakeholder consultation has been completed. This process includes members of the community being invited to make submissions to the draft EIS. The draft EIS is expected to be released for public comment later this year.

Apart from finalisation of the EIS, there are other processes to be completed before final determinations regarding this project are made. Powerlink has indicated that it intends to request Ministerial designation under the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* ('the Act') of the corridor of land required for this project as land for community infrastructure. In order to proceed with such a request, Powerlink will be required to formally advise landowners and other stakeholders of its intention and provide a further opportunity for landowners to make submissions regarding the project. This would occur after the final EIS is released.

While I acknowledge the matters raised in the Petition, as Powerlink is still undertaking the processes necessary for implementation of the project, it is important that the views and concerns of affected landholders, the community and other stakeholders be addressed through those processes. For this reason, I encourage all interested parties to raise any concerns about the project through the consultation processes being undertaken for the project, including in response to the draft EIS once it is released.

Yours sincerely



GEOFF WILSON MP

Minister for Mines and Energy