

ENERGY ROADMAP AMENDMENT BILL 2025

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Submitted by:	Remote Area Planning and Development Board and VisIR Pty Ltd
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Submission to the Inquiry into the Energy Roadmap Amendment Bill 2025

Submitted to: Governance, Energy and Finance Committee of the Queensland Parliament

Submitted by: Jointly by Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) and VisIR Pty Ltd (VisIR)

1 Introduction

RAPAD and VisIR thank the Governance, Energy and Finance Committee for the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process regarding the Energy Roadmap Amendment Bill 2025, which proposes significant changes to Queensland's energy legislation, including the renaming of the principal Act, the reframing of infrastructure planning, and the restructuring of governance and oversight mechanisms.

We commend the Queensland Government on the Bill, and we believe it lays a strong foundation to drive economic development in the North West and Central West of Queensland to facilitate important industries and make use of Australia's best clean energy resources in those communities.

As the Queensland Government pursues the initiatives, projects, and objectives that underpin this Bill, we urge the State to consider how broad economic development, particularly decentralised economic development in central western Queensland, can be achieved.

The Bill marks a very important policy shift "to facilitate energy infrastructure and investment to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for Queenslanders" and facilitate economic development through transmission projects such as CopperString that "will facilitate investment in new generation and economic growth across the regions".

This submission offers commentary on these provisions and provides recommendations to ensure that Queensland's Energy Roadmap remains transparent, equitable, and aligned with the State's environmental objectives and always with economic development at the heart of decision-making.

Our submission has three areas of focus: (i) to support the State's commitment to CopperString to connect the North West Minerals Province to the National Transmission grid; (ii) to support the recognition of local government as a critical input into the appropriateness of electricity development and planning as an alternative to the advisory bodies disbanded under the new Act; and, (iii) to support the involvement of the private sector in ensuring the efficient and effective development of energy infrastructure to complement the Government Owned Corporations.

RAPAD is a regional organisation of Councils across 7 Local Government Areas (LGAs) that covers approximately 24% of Queensland in the central west region.

VisIR is a Queensland business founded in Townsville that has worked closely with regional communities across north and western Queensland to develop energy infrastructure, including as founders and owners of the CopperString transmission network until 2023 when it was transferred to the State of Queensland.

RAPAD and VisIR initiated the RAPAD Power Grid as a unique collaboration and economic development initiative for the central west in partnership. RAPAD Power Grid will significantly strengthen Queensland's electricity transmission system through interconnection in North Queensland Central Queensland and unlock vast sources of high-quality renewable energy generation capacity. RAPAD and VisIR believe this Bill is a positive legislative framework that can facilitate development and delivery of the RAPAD Power Grid in the future.

2 Considerations specifically related to the Bill

2.1 CopperString

The Bill (Part 8) highlights and reinforces the importance of the CopperString project to connect the North West Minerals Province to the National Grid. We believe the aspects of the Bill that give the Minister the powers to direct activity will help ensure the development and delivery processes are efficient and cost effective. The uniqueness of major transmission (and some other major energy developments) that is driven by economic and regional development as well as conventional policy and central planning (to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy) is best suited to decision making outside the conventional [regulated, administrative and bureaucratic] process.

2.2 Local Government, System Outlook and Governance Arrangements

We support the objective of making the oversight, strategic planning and governance more streamlined. We note that this does not undermine the importance of seeking and accepting input from those who are impacted by or who have insight into opportunities for the energy system development.

The new governance arrangements highlight the importance of local government as a key source of input and insight into the issues, risks and opportunities that energy system development and planning can create. We encourage the Minister to ensure that the input and insight of local councils- particularly in the rural and non-coastal zones- influences the Ministers use of the discretionary powers in relation to proposed developments.

We support the policy intent "for a flexible and market-based approach to electricity system planning to facilitate investment and support evolving energy system needs". The more active and directive role of the Minister in the decision-making processes covering the Priority Transmission Investment and system planning and development decisions can be valuable and should complement the analytical, system operations, and technical standards role of Powerlink. This is also important in the use of the Transitional Regulatory Powers (Sect 193) to facilitate the desired new infrastructure development to participate in the National Electricity Market (NEM).

We support the role of the private sector in contributing to the vision, planning, development and investment in the energy infrastructure. The objective of strong public participation in the energy infrastructure is supported. The private sector ideas and involvement can complement the centrally planned pathways of the Hubs and Prescribed Transmission Investments. We support a structure that allows these different pathways to develop in parallel under the guidance and oversight of the Minister.

3 Conclusion

In conclusion, we support the intent of the Bill to ensure the State policy and decision making in relation to the development of the Queensland energy system supports the affordable, reliable and sustainable energy supply and economic development particularly for the regions.

The application of more flexible and responsive decision-making processes for efficient and effective planning, development and delivery of infrastructure is supported.

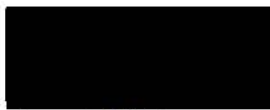
Consistent with the Bill, local government's crucial role in complementing a more streamlined governance and decision-making structure is emphasised in our submission. The appropriate role of the private sector in innovation for system development, efficiency and delivery also needs to be facilitated in the new structure to complement the conventional approach of the existing government bodies such as Powerlink.

Thank you for considering this submission. Should any member of the Committee wish to discuss this submission further, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



Cr Tony Rayner
Mayor
Longreach Regional Council



Joseph O'Brien
Co-Founder
VisIR Pty Ltd