

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 424

asked on Thursday, 24 March 2005

MR ROWELL ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POLICY (MR MICHEL)—

QUESTION:

With the Federal Minister for the Environment providing support in principle for the coastal route for Powerlink's 275kV power link between Tully and Innisfail—

- (1) What is the exact length of the power line, the location of the towers, the average and maximum width of the area required and the distance from any building?
- (2) What is the overall length of the vegetation and the range of species to be cleared for the power line and how will the issues of connectivity be addressed for a range of species that will be disrupted and the list of species identified by Powerlink?
- (3) How will compensation be assessed for those affected and what is the estimated cost to Powerlink for this disruption?
- (4) What restrictions will be placed on aircraft using the Tully airstrip by CASRA with the 275 kV power line proposed route?

ANSWER:

The transmission line is needed to replace an existing line which is approaching the end of its useful life and runs through the Wet Tropics World Heritage area, an area described by the Honourable Member for Hinchinbrook as a 'forest.'

The Member for Hinchinbrook should support this project. It will ensure that communities in his electorate such as Tully and El Arish will continue to receive a reliable and secure power supply.

The line is also needed to keep pace with the growing demand for electricity being driven by economic and population growth in far north Queensland. In the 2003-04 financial year, the peak demand for electricity in the Cairns region grew by almost 12 per cent while annual demand was forecast to increase by more than 21 per cent over the next five years.

Put simply, if the replacement line is not built, jobs and industries such as tourism would be at risk.

On 10 March 2005, the Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage announced that he had approved a coastal route for the transmission line between Innisfail and Tully.

In relation to your questions Powerlink advises:

1. The length of the 132/275kV transmission line route is approximately 60 km. The final location and alignment of towers will only be confirmed after negotiation and consultation with affected property owners. It is after this process occurs that Powerlink can carry out a preliminary line design to identify tower locations.

As described in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the easement width for the transmission line route is 60m. The distance from any building can only be determined after the final alignment is negotiated with property owners. Powerlink at all times practices prudent avoidance in the design and siting of its network assets, and operates all powerlines within the guidelines of the National Health and Medical Research Council.

2. The overall length of the vegetation and the range of species to be cleared can not be determined until the final alignment is negotiated with property owners, as outlined in Powerlink's EIS. The actual area to be cleared cannot be ascertained until the detailed survey as required under the conditions set by the Commonwealth Department of Environment & Heritage is conducted.

Powerlink has committed in the EIS that an over the canopy type of construction will be used for those areas where vegetation connectivity is considered to be important.

3. The EIS describes in detail the basis for compensation. It is paid directly to affected landowners in accordance with the Acquisition of Land Act and the interpretation of that Act by the Courts. Landholders are only entitled to claim compensation if their land is subject to the acquisition process. Until the final alignment is determined compensation cannot be assessed.
4. The location of the line in the vicinity of the Tully airport will be the subject of consultation with the appropriate stakeholders, as outlined in Powerlink's EIS.