Question on Notice
No. 371
Asked on 12 March 2008

MR KNUTH asked the Premier (MS BLIGH)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent announcement of the significant project to be undertaken by IsaLink Pty Ltd, to connect Mount Isa's mining hub into the national electricity grid —

Will Jericho Shire residents be able to hook into this reliable source of electricity, and not rely on the worn out infrastructure that they currently rely on from Barcaldine?

ANSWER

IsaLink Pty Ltd is proposing to construct a high voltage direct current transmission line to connect Queensland's North West Minerals Province to the National Electricity Market at Stanwell in Central Queensland. IsaLink is supported in this project by Cheung Kong Infrastructure Ltd and Hong Kong Electric Holdings Ltd.

Stage one of the project involves:

- the construction of 1,100 kilometres of high voltage direct current transmission line from Stanwell to Ernest Henry Mine near Cloncurry;
- a converter station at the point of connection with the national electricity grid and a converter station at or near the mine; and
- an upgrade of the existing alternating current line between Ernest Henry Mine and Mount Isa.

The transmission line will also have the potential to be extended to serve key centres in the Northern Territory under Stage two.

On 21 January 2008, the Coordinator-General declared the Isalink high voltage direct current project to be a significant project for which an Environmental Impact Statement is required in accordance with the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*. The decision to declare the project as 'significant' does not infer Queensland Government backing of the project; rather it signals that the project warrants a robust Environmental Impact Statement.

Direct current transmission has a number of technical advantages over alternating current transmission lines over long distances. However, it is not generally suited to the provision of distribution services to relatively small loads along the way, because of the need for expensive converter stations at each off-take point for converting direct current to alternating current.

Now that Significant Project status has been granted to the IsaLink project, the proponents will proceed with the Environmental Impact Statement and feasibility studies.

It is anticipated that IsaLink will conduct a detailed feasibility study to examine in detail all the market demand, technical and economic issues before a decision is taken on the project and its scope.

Jericho Shire is serviced by a 22 kilovolt feeder from Barcaldine, approximately 160 kilometres long. The feeder, which is operated by Ergon Energy, also services numerous single wire earth return lines to other areas in the region. An embedded generator is located at Alpha to assist with managing periods of peak demand and improve reliability of the network.

Ergon Energy is currently undertaking a detailed review of supply options in this area, which includes options for reinforcing electricity supply to Jericho Shire.