



22.0 POWERLINK ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

Powerlink is committed to responsible environmental management as an integral part of our business activities. This commitment includes the maintenance and implementation of an Environmental Management System that takes a structured approach to managing the environmental aspects of the business, including but not limited to areas such as construction, maintenance, land management and substations.

Powerlink strongly encourages ownership of environmental care among our workforce by providing training and support, including involvement and encouragement, for operational excellence in environment from the executive levels of the business. Innovation and excellence in environmental care by our people is recognised and rewarded.

Powerlink has a strong history of environmental performance across the business and is committed to continuous improvement in our environmental care to ensure that we continue to address the changing expectations of our own people, our stakeholders, the general community and changing legislative requirements.

22.1 POWERLINK ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Powerlink is responsible for the operation, maintenance and development of the high voltage transmission network in Queensland. We are committed to responsible environmental management as an integral part of our business activities. We demonstrate that commitment by:

- Consulting openly, honestly and proactively with the community and statutory authorities on the potential environmental impacts of our plans and activities. We are responsive to constructive suggestions to eliminate or minimise potentially adverse impacts;
- Recognising that environmental factors such as land use, public health and safety, noise and visual impact, protection of flora and fauna, environmentally hazardous materials management and waste management are all environmental aspects of our business;
- Maintaining a structured approach to managing our environmental aspects by implementing an Environmental Management System;
- Seeking continual improvement in the environmental performance of our operations;
- Complying with relevant environmental legislation; and
- Building and encouraging ownership of environmental care among our people by providing training and support.

22.2 RECENT PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Powerlink has demonstrated commitment to environmental management during the asset development phase, through undertaking route selection studies, Environmental Impact Assessments and the integration and monitoring of environmental requirements and performance during the construction of Powerlink assets. Recent construction project environmental management includes:



- **Millmerran to Middle Ridge 275kV Transmission Line.** This project demonstrated a high level of environmental management performance during construction, including compliance with legislative requirements, integrated stakeholder liaison, and management of interaction with species of national significance subject to referral under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC).
- **Tully to Innisfail 275/132kV Transmission Line.** This Project has been planned and designed to minimise environmental impacts in tropical north Queensland. Due to potential interactions with nationally significant species, this project was also subject to a referral under the EPBC Act. This project was selected randomly by the Department of Environment and Water Resources to be audited against referral conditions. Generally a high level of compliance was noted throughout the project.
- **Middle Ridge to Greenbank 275kV Transmission Line.** This project has demonstrated a sound to high level of environmental management performance during construction. Powerlink has in place financial incentive processes for construction contractor environmental performance against the Environmental Management Plan. Environmental performance of the construction activities is monitored by the construction contractor and Powerlink, and actions taken to address identified areas of potential or actual non-conformance with the Environmental Management Plan or legislative requirements.
- **Belmont to Murarrie 275kV Transmission Line.** This project has demonstrated a high level of environmental management performance during construction, including compliance with legislative requirements, integrated stakeholder liaison, and working with community groups to improve biological diversity and habitat for native fauna. An example of the habitat enhancement works, Powerlink installed around 80 habitat boxes in trees within Minniipi parklands as homes for the Squirrel Gliders and other animals prevalent in the area, including lorikeets, kookaburras, kingfishers, owls, possums and bats. Monitoring of the habitat boxes following the construction of the Belmont to Murarrie 275kV Transmission Line showed just how successful this simple yet effective environmental initiative was, with a 90% usage rate within just a few months.

22.3 GREENHOUSE CHALLENGE PLUS

Powerlink has been a signatory to the Greenhouse Challenge Plus (formally the Greenhouse Challenge) since 1999 until the program ceased to operate on 1 July 2009 and successfully continues to report on a variety of emission generating sources. Powerlink's inventory consists of industrial processes (fugitive emissions), stationary energy, transport energy and wastes. Continued efforts are undertaken to decrease greenhouse emissions from Powerlink's transmission and company assets including the adoption of energy efficient technologies, regular recycling, reducing input resources and exploring emission offsets. Additionally, ongoing innovation and technical design knowledge is promoted and applied throughout the organisation.

22.4 ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Powerlink demonstrates commitment to environmental management of activities through the whole of the life cycle of Powerlink's assets through commissioning and undertaking research that both directly and indirectly relates to Powerlink activities. Research presently funded by Powerlink includes:

- Investigations into arboreal species movement across easements;
- Investigations into nest box adoption by arboreal species;



- Direct seeding trials in Southern, Central and Northern Queensland;
- Weed seed destruction and mobile cleandown investigations;
- Selection of native ground cover species for revegetation under high voltage power lines;
- Edge effects on natural systems within Queensland's protected area estate; and
- Investigations into the potential impacts from transmission lines on endangered frog species in the Tully-Innisfail area, with particular interest in the potentially fatal fungus Chytridiomycosis.

Powerlink has previously funded research in areas such as:

- Internal fragmentation in the rainforest: edge effects of highways, powerlines and watercourses on tropical rainforest understorey microclimate, vegetation structure and composition, physical disturbance and seedling regeneration. C.L.Pohlman 2006 (PhD thesis – James Cook University); and
- Impact of roads and powerline clearings on rainforest vertebrates with emphasis on ground-dwelling small mammals. M.W.Goosem 2000 (PhD thesis – James Cook University).