

## STATEMENT OF REASONS

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Section 69(1)(a) of the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act)

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<b>Environmental approval holder</b>	AAPowerlink Australia Assets Pty Ltd ABN 653 396 948
<b>Environmental approval number</b>	EP2020/002-001
<b>Action</b>	<b>Australia-Asia Powerlink Project</b> Establish, operate and decommission a large-scale solar farm and energy storage facility in the Barkly Region, NT, with power exported (via a high-voltage direct current transmission network to Murrumujuk on Gunn Point Peninsula, north-east of Darwin, and then sub-sea cable through NT waters.
<b>Material considered</b>	Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) advice received on 25 June 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessment Report 107</li><li>• A draft environmental approval setting out recommended conditions.</li></ul> Fit and proper person advice – signed declaration.
<b>Decision</b>	In accordance with sections 69(1)(a) and 82(4)(a) of the EP Act, I <b>accept the draft environmental approval, adopt the proposed conditions of the NT EPA and grant the approval.</b>

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## REASONS

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This Statement of Reasons has been prepared in accordance with sections 82(3) and 82(4) of the EP Act.

### Overview of Action

AAPowerlink Australia Assets Pty Ltd proposes to establish:

- solar precinct on Powell Creek station in the Barkly Region of the NT where electricity will be generated, stored, and transmitted
- overhead transmission line will transmit electricity from the solar precinct to the Darwin converter site
- Darwin converter site comprising a voltage source converter, energy storage and an operations and maintenance facility
- cable transition facilities at Murrumujuk and Gunn Point Beach to transition power cables between land and sea
- subsea cable system to transfer electricity from Darwin through NT waters.

The granted approval under the EP Act is limited to the action within the Northern Territory.

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## Environmental context

The onshore proposed action infrastructure is wholly within the NT. The proposed action extends across seven local government areas including the Barkly Region, Roper Gulf Region, Katherine Municipality, Victoria Daly Region, Unincorporated (Marrakai-Douglas Daly) Area, Coomalie Shire and Litchfield Municipality.

The solar precinct is located on Powell Creek Station, approximately 65 km south west of Elliott. The overhead transmission line will be approximately 800 km and within a transmission easement to be established predominantly in the AustralAsia Rail Corporation railway easement. The northern 66 km of the overhead transmission line from Livingstone through to the Darwin Converter Station follows a future utilities corridor designated in the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan 2023. The Darwin converter station and the cable transition facilities are located just south of the future Murrumujuk township. The offshore subsea cable system extends approximately 895 km to the limit of the Commonwealth Marine Area as defined by section 24 of the EPBC Act. Components beyond that limit are within the jurisdictions of Indonesia and Singapore.

## Matters considered under section 73 of EP Act

### Section 73(1) Principles of environment protection and management

In considering Part 2 (principles of environment protection and management) of the EP Act, I have considered the meaning of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) and applied each of the principles of ESD. I have reviewed the NT EPA's consideration of the principles of ESD as summarised in Assessment Report 107. I have considered and weighed all the principles of ESD in making my decision.

The NT EPA's assessment process has considered, and I have applied approval conditions, to mitigate environmental impacts associated with construction, operation and decommissioning of the action. The assessment of the proposal, the NT EPA's advice to me and consequently my decision, has been informed by public and government authority consultation processes.

I have considered and applied the hierarchies for environmental decision-making and waste management. I have given particular consideration to the application of the environmental decision-making hierarchy, and proposed measures to avoid, and then mitigate and manage potential adverse impacts on the environment.

I am satisfied that through compliance with the environmental approval, the action is consistent with the ESD principles and the management hierarchies.

### Section 73(1)(a) Objects of the EP Act

I have had regard to the objects of the EP Act. I note in particular that through the environmental impact assessment of the action and the granting of the environmental approval, significant adverse impacts on the Territory environment are likely to be avoided and the protection and management of the Territory environment have been promoted.

The approval of the action will allow construction and operation of the solar farm, energy storage facility, overhead transition line, Darwin converter station and the sub-sea cable within the Northern Territory while maintaining environmental protection including protection of terrestrial environmental quality, terrestrial ecosystems, hydrological processes, inland water environmental quality, aquatic ecosystems, marine environmental quality, marine ecosystems, atmospheric processes, community and economy, culture and heritage and human health. I also note the opportunity provided to the community for involvement in the environmental impact assessment of the action.

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**Section 73(1)(b) Assessment report on the action**

I have considered the advice of the NT EPA in its assessment report on the action (Assessment Report 107) which provides the NT EPA's assessment of the potential significant impacts of the action and recommendations for avoiding, mitigating and managing those impacts. The NT EPA identified that the action has the potential to have a significant impact on environmental values, and conditions were recommended for 10 environmental factors including terrestrial environmental quality, terrestrial ecosystems, hydrological processes, inland water environmental quality, aquatic ecosystems, community and economy, culture and heritage, marine environmental quality, marine ecosystems, and atmospheric processes. Assessment Report 107 states that the action is likely to meet the NT EPA's environmental objectives and can be implemented and managed in a manner that is environmentally acceptable. The NT EPA recommended an environmental approval be granted subject to implementation of the approval holder's commitments in the referral information and the recommended conditions in the draft environmental approval.

I have considered the potential that the NT government may be required to take action to prevent, minimise or remediate environmental harm resulting from e-waste, and I have applied approval conditions requiring an environmental protection bond.

The proposed conditions of the NT EPA have been adopted in the environmental approval.

**Section 73(1)(c) Fit and proper person to hold environmental approval**

I have had regard to whether the approval holder is a fit and proper person to hold an environmental approval. I consider the approval holder to be a fit and proper person to hold an environmental approval.

**Section 73(1)(d) Any other matters the Minister considers relevant**

No other relevant matters have been identified.

**Section 73(2) of the EP Act**

Overall, having regard to the above and the materials I considered, I am satisfied that:

- the community has been consulted on the potential environmental impacts and environmental benefits of the proposed action through public consultation on the referral information, significant variation, draft Environmental Impact Statement, supplement to the draft Environmental Impact Statement, additional information; and
- the significant impacts of the action have been appropriately avoided or mitigated or can be appropriately managed to acceptable levels through compliance with the environmental approval. The NT EPA's Assessment Report 107 supports this view.

No significant residual adverse impacts on the environment were identified that would require an environmental offset.

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Signature



Hon Kate Worden MLA

Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security

DATE 14/07/24