

Basslink has saved power cuts

By ALISON ANDREWS

TASMANIAN homes would be on power restrictions now without supplementary Basslink power because of record low levels in Great Lake, says Hydro's Michael Cromarty.

Hydro Tasmania yesterday instigated special measures to try to maintain the health of the major storage facility including for the first time, an environmental monitoring programme, Dr Cromarty said.

The energy and market analysis manager said that Hydro's water storages overall had fallen in recent weeks to 27.5 per cent of capacity while Great Lake is down to 15.7 per cent.

Poatina power station operation will be cut back to reduce additional pressure on the lake, Dr Cromarty said.

"With Basslink imports and the reinstatement of the Gordon power station following refurbishment, we now have other generation options," Dr Cromarty said.

"However, as the key asset, we will be keeping a close watch on the conditions in Great Lake and take action to mitigate any environmental and social risks.

"With the water level of the lake continuing to fall, it is important that we monitor what is happening in the lake with regard to turbidity levels



and the impact on vegetation and fish life.

Hydro Tasmania has closed all boat ramps on the lake except the low water ramp at Boundary Bay because of falling water levels.

"We are regularly monitoring the condition of the ramps which we will reopen as soon as conditions improve," Dr Cromarty said.

Hydro's power imports from mainland states via Basslink has increased to 7 per cent of the State's total power needs since the link became operational last May.

Dr Cromarty said that this could rise to 10 per cent before exceptionally dry summer weather eases.

"When we had the last record low levels in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were restrictions on both industrial and mums and dads style customers," he said.

Even if the amount of power that Tasmania imported via Basslink went up, the commodity would still be cheaper than using the Bell Bay power station even though its turbines are now gas-fired instead of oil-fired, Dr Cromarty said.