

# Basslink doing its job in drought-proofing state

THE first year of Basslink operation has highlighted its importance in drought-proofing the state, according to Hydro Tasmania.

Basslink has also avoided the possibility of power restrictions this winter as a result of the current drought and declining hydro storages in Tasmania.

In the past year, the state received only 70 per cent of its average annual rainfall.

Tasmania's hydro storages currently stand at 18 per cent, the lowest they have been since April 1968 when they fell to 14.2 per cent. Great Lake is currently at 12 per cent.

Hydro Tasmania CEO Vince Hawksworth said Basslink – the 360km electricity link between Victoria and Tasmania – had been an invaluable asset since it began full operation a year ago.

“Basslink has been critical in keeping the lights on in Tasmania at a time of severe drought and following 10 straight years of below-average rainfall,” Mr Hawksworth said.

“2006 saw the lowest inflows into Tasmania's hydro storages since the 1967 record low.

“That shortfall can be translated into water worth \$100 million to Hydro Tasmania.

“Having Basslink in place has enabled us to import power equivalent to 70 per cent of the total annual power demand for Tasmanian homes to ensure supplies are maintained.

“Basslink has drought-proofed the state and avoided the need for power restrictions and blackouts this winter. It is doing a great job for Tasmania in difficult and challenging circumstances.”

Mr Hawksworth said low inflows into hydro storages and increased market prices as a result of drought conditions nationally had resulted in Hydro Tasmania paying an additional \$75 million on imported power and extra gas to keep

the power on in Tasmania and protect hydro storages wherever possible.

He said Hydro Tasmania had absorbed the additional costs but they would have an impact on its financial result for the year.

“The current drought in Tasmania has seen greater than expected imports across the link during the first 12 months of what is a 25-year investment,” Mr Hawksworth said.

“The level of imports and exports will vary from year.

“After one full year of operation, Basslink has proven to be a wise investment in the state's economic future.”

Without Basslink in place during this prolonged drought:

- Tasmania's hydro storages would be six per cent lower than they are currently.

- Tasmania would be facing the prospect of power rationing and potential blackouts this winter which would cause significant damage to the state's economy.

- The Great Lake would be virtually emptied of useful energy with little or no possibility of being adequately refilled for many years to come.

- Hydro Tasmania would be paying for much greater quantities of gas to compensate for ongoing low lake levels at a generally higher cost than Basslink imports.

## **Basslink performance details of first year:**

**Amount imported:** 1920 GWh

**Amount exported:** 450 GWh

**Net Import:** 1470 GWh or equivalent to 70 per cent of the state's annual domestic demand

**Total usage time of Basslink:** 80.9 per cent importing, 19.1 per cent exporting

**Availability:** 99.3 per cent