



Media Statement

14 January 2015

Basslink interconnector update

- Cable vessel sailing to Bass Strait after more than 1200 man-hours of works;
- A team of more than 60 experts to work on the vessel through the campaign, over 100 people involved in the project
- Works may take up to nine weeks to complete, allowing for contingencies which would see it operational by 19 March

The Basslink interconnector experienced a fault mid-afternoon on Sunday 20 December 2015. While the exact cause of the fault has not been determined, evidence to date suggests that it is a subsea cable fault approximately 100km off the Tasmanian coastline in Bass Strait. Investigations into the cause are still ongoing and cannot be progressed until the cable has been inspected.

CEO Malcolm Eccles said: “Basslink has worked every day since the outage on 20th December to identify the problem and prepare for its rectification. This is a highly complex operation, and involves many experts from around the world.

The cable fault is believed to lie approximately 100km off the Tasmanian coastline in Bass Strait, where the water depth is around 80m. The cable has been on the seabed in this location for almost ten years, and to inspect the cable adequately, it must be brought to the surface. This will require the cable to be cut by one of two remotely-operated submarine vehicles (ROVs) that will work on this project. The cable bundle weighs around 60kg for every metre of length, and lifting this weight at sea poses a range of challenges.

A specialist telecommunications cable vessel – the *Ile De Re* – will provide the platform for cable works. Over the past fortnight, more than 1200 man-hours have been invested to make modifications to the vessel to allow for this operation, and make the vessel ‘power cable friendly’. This work has been conducted in the Port of Auckland (NZ). Further work has been underway in the Port of Geelong (AUS) where a frame for the 80-tonne cable reel has been constructed, which will be fitted to the deck of the *Ile De Re*. Other specially constructed components will also be fitted to the vessel while in Geelong. An extensive range of spare parts – including more than 60-tonnes of cable – has also been despatched to Geelong, where it will be loaded to the vessel.

The *Ile De Re* is now enroute to Australia and is scheduled to conduct an initial survey of the area in Bass Strait on 17 January ahead of its arrival in Geelong the following day. A team of more than 60 people will work on the vessel at sea during the campaign, in addition to those on land, which sees the total number involved exceed 100 people. Cable partner Prysmian has identified a team of world leading cable joiners who are travelling to Australia to work on the project. In addition to Basslink’s



spare parts, Prysmian is air freighting three shipping containers of equipment to Australia for the project.

There are a number of phases to the project, and it is expected the *Ile De Re* will make several returns to the Port of Geelong throughout the campaign. It is hoped that the interconnector will return to normal operations within nine weeks, although there remains a significant number of unknown variables such as weather and seabed conditions that may impact the timeframes. Contingencies have been built into this timeframe, and there is a possibility that the interconnector may be operational ahead of the indicative date of 19 March 2016 which has been provided to AEMO.

Basslink continues to be advised that this fault has not resulted in any electricity supply disruptions to Victorian or Tasmanian residential or commercial customers to date," said Mr Eccles.

Basslink will continue to update and advise its key stakeholders as more information becomes known about the problem, and the likely return to service date.

Key facts:

- Cable vessel *Ile De Re* is 143m in length and will have a capacity workforce of 60 people during the campaign
- Total people involved in project exceeds 100
- Cable partner Prysmian will assign 13 cable joiners from Italy to the project, complementing local experts
- Basslink is the second-longest subsea HVDC cable in the world
- Two remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) will aid fault location, deburial, cut and recovery of the cable at a depth of around 80m

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About Basslink www.basslink.com.au

The Basslink Interconnector enhances security of supply on both sides of Bass Strait; protecting Tasmania against the risk of drought-constrained energy shortages while providing Victoria and southern states with secure renewable energy during times of peak demand. The Basslink Interconnector is the world's second longest undersea electricity cable. Owned by Keppel Infrastructure Trust, Basslink delivers excellence in the areas of safety, reliability and performance.

Basslink has a number of fibre optic assets which carry high speed telecommunication traffic. Basslink Telecoms offers a range of wholesale transmission services between Tasmania and Victoria.