



Media statement

22 December 2017

Basslink responds to Hydro Tasmania reports

Chief Executive Malcolm Eccles today said that Basslink refutes Hydro Tasmania's claim that it has solved the mystery of the cable failure; such claim is not supported by Hydro Tasmania's own expert reports which merely posit one possible cause of the December 2015 outage, without providing conclusive and definitive proof.

"Having conducted an initial review of the reports – which are yet to be made public – there are a number of key points that we would like to highlight," said Mr Eccles.

"Firstly, Hydro Tasmania's experts did no actual testing on the Basslink cable or any similar HVDC cables. They used a theoretical model based on certain assumptions to come to a set of conclusions. These assumptions make the experts' conclusions speculative and not based on actual facts," he said.

As Hydro Tasmania's own experts recognise, their reports do not conclude their answer is a proven cause of the cable failure. The reports offer an opinion based on certain assumptions, that overheating was caused by excessive transmission of electricity from Tasmania to the mainland.

"The reports have not solved any 'mystery' as alleged by Mr Stephen Davy the CEO of Hydro Tasmania," Mr Eccles said.

Basslink has operated and maintained the Basslink facilities in accordance with the instructions from the manufacturers, Siemens and Prysmian, and in accordance with good electricity industry practice. The manufacturers have in place a control system and Cable Load Prediction System to protect the Basslink facilities from overheating. As reported in December 2016, when the Basslink interconnector fault investigation was completed, Cable Consulting International's (CCI), one of the world's leading submarine power cable experts, report noted that the other section of the cable it sampled was in sound condition.

Basslink received the reports 45 minutes before Hydro Tasmania and the Minister for Energy made their announcements. Compounded by the closeness of the Christmas break, Basslink does not expect that it can get an adequate view on the reports, the assumptions contained in them, as well as advice from the manufacturers or from Basslink's experts in the short term. Less than two days after providing the reports to Basslink, Hydro Tasmania has asked Basslink to confirm that it would implement the recommendation to limit the operation of the interconnector to the continuous rating of 500MW while continuing to review the provided reports.

The Basslink facilities are designed to be operated at the continuous rating of 500 MW or at 630 MW for limited periods. In the circumstances which Basslink has received these reports, and while not accepting the conclusions and recommendations in the reports, Basslink will operate the interconnector at the continuous rating of 500 MW in line with good electricity industry practice. This will be an interim measure and this position coincides with Hydro Tasmania's request.

As a prudent and responsible operator, Basslink will consult its manufacturers, Siemens and Prysmian, on the matters raised in the Hydro Tasmania reports.

“Another point to highlight is neither Basslink, nor its cable system manufacturers, Siemens and Prysmian, were consulted during the drafting of Hydro Tasmania’s reports, which makes the reports one-sided,” added Mr Eccles.

Basslink stands by the independent investigation that was undertaken by CCI, who described the exact cause of the subsea cable fault as “cause unknown”.

Based on the findings of CCI, Basslink maintains the cable fault was a force majeure event.

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For further media enquiries on Basslink, please contact:

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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.