

## **Response to ABC media article 12 July 2023**

The Mt Rawdon gold mine has been an important contributor to the communities and economy of the North Burnett and Bundaberg region (and Queensland more broadly) for more than 25 years.

It spends \$7 million - \$10 million per annum in the region and about 85% of the 200 strong workforce currently resides in the Wide Bay Burnett region.

Our proposal to transition Mt Rawdon occurs at the end of its economic life as a gold mine with mining planned to end in FY25, and ore processing to end in FY26.

Mt Rawdon Pumped Hydro (MRPH) project proposes to begin repurposing the existing mine site into a world class pumped hydro energy storage facility soon after the end of mining in FY25, and with the potential to store excess renewable energy during the day and make it available when needed.

It will make renewable energy available to keep the lights on at times when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine as we transition away from coal-fired generation.

The MRPH is a project with a 70 year life and will provide a pathway to transition Mt Rawdon's existing workforce. It will also have significant economic benefits for Queensland and the region, with an estimated multi billion-dollar capital spend and greater than 50% Queensland content.

We've been meeting with key stakeholders across the region to understand their concerns and work collaboratively with them on solutions as we progress and fully scope our proposal.

The proposed MRPH project is subject to state and federal regulatory approvals processes, requiring us to develop detailed plans in areas of potential economic, environmental and social impact as contained in the recently released Environmental Impact Statement terms of reference for the project. We are currently developing our response and intend to submit once our study work is more fully completed.

An ABC article published on 12 July 2023 included comments from a number of local stakeholders expressing various concerns about our proposal.

We had spoken with all of these people prior to the article being published and are aware of the issues raised. We would like to provide responses to all of these issues here as we were not given the opportunity to do so in the article.

### Biosecurity

We are aware rats tail weed infestation is prevalent in the local area. It is mainly spread via animals (native land animals and birds) and vehicles. MRPH supports mitigation strategies to reduce its spread and has established a vehicle washdown protocol before entering landowner sites to conduct environmental and heritage survey work. We would expect this policy to remain in place into the construction and operation phases of the transmission line connection.

### Land values

Powerlink has recently announced an improved compensation regime for landowners where transmission lines and towers are located on or across land holdings. The MRPH supports this approach.

#### Water security for local agriculture

The project is a closed loop off river system which requires a one-off 24GL first-fill of water in the lead-up to commissioning. Thereafter the water required for evaporative purposes is similar to what the mining operation currently takes. The water for first-fill would almost certainly come from the Paradise Dam. We are tailoring our proposal to reduce any impact of the first-fill on local water users.

At this stage MRPH is planning to take its first-fill water requirements over 2-3 seasons from 2026, depending on the climate conditions. The volume of water required represents less than 1% of the annual river flow downstream of Paradise Dam, if taken in this way.

While small on an annual basis, we understand there is a concern about the project taking this quantum of water while Paradise Dam may be at reduced capacity and a desire to see the MRPH's water requirements well integrated with the broader agricultural needs.

We are already working with stakeholders in planning for this. While it is too early to predict accurately, we are currently expecting first-fill water supply to be by way of temporary transfers of water allocations obtained through the water market. In this scenario the owner of the water allocation will be compensated through a commercial agreement and the MRPH's rights to water will be the same as any other allocation holder.

#### Protection of the Burnett and Perry rivers

Dam safety, over pumping and overtopping scenarios are all key parts of the engineering design work which is currently underway to protect the environmental, economic and social values of the catchments and watercourses. The proposed pumped hydro facility will be a closed-loop system that will not be connected to a watercourse and will see minimal inflows of water from direct rainfall, or groundwater given the relatively small surface area and catchment areas of the reservoirs relative to other dams. It will also have a maximum operating height in the lower reservoir which is approximately 100 metres below the top rim of the open pit void providing 28,000 Mega litres of spare capacity to accommodate major rainfall events, providing additional mitigation.