

Submission Regarding TasNetworks Direction and Priorities Consultation Paper of August, 2015

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Energy availability is the main driver of modern civilisation hence TasNetworks, as the distributor of electrical energy in Tasmania, plays a strategic role in the future well-being of Tasmanians.

Having been interstate at critical periods, we only became aware of the Consultation Paper very recently and did not have the time, information or resources to respond in detail to many areas.

We have concern regarding the governance of Tasmanian Government Business Enterprises (GBE's) including TasNetworks. It has been our observation that politicians become involved in decisions and announcements concerning GBE's when they believe that it is to their advantage but plead independence and "arm's length" involvement when unpopular decisions are announced. We believe that the management team of TasNetworks should be strong and independent of short-term politics and should resist political interference in pursuit of long-term objectives.

We note that TasNetworks is strongly aware of the role of changing technology in the challenges that confront the organisation. We believe that TasNetworks should become part of the change in that it should have (and significantly fund) a research, development and demonstration arm that not only keeps abreast of developments but also helps drive those particular developments that are judged highly appropriate and advantageous for Tasmania. We would like to see Tasmania become a place of innovation and an international show-case for the technology and practice of integrating a wide range of energy sources and energy users into a distribution grid. Not only photovoltaics, but mini-wind and mini-hydro generation sources should be considered together with various storage technologies and transmission technologies. For example fibre optics may be used instead of metal conductors for energy transmission and there are current developments in both long and short distance wireless energy transfer technologies.

As an alternative electrical energy user and petroleum replacer, electric vehicles (EV's) are already widely available from automobile distributors. The range of EV models available in Tasmania (and the rest of Australia) is significantly smaller than that available in Europe and Asia. TasNetworks should consider integrating an EV charging network with its distributing system but the charging network should be designed to work both with EV technology that is currently offered to Australians and EV technology that is available internationally. TasNetworks should encourage EV manufacturers to make their full range of vehicles available in Tasmania.

Tasmania has no significant natural liquid fossil fuels and is at the end of the petroleum fuels supply chain, making it particularly vulnerable to fuel supply disruption. Consequently Tasmania should be considering the use of electrical energy for all forms of transportation. The use of electricity in the vehicles used by the rural industries should also be considered.

TasNetworks should be a leader in assisting the replacement of energy derived from carbon-based fuels with electrical energy in all parts of the Tasmanian economy as a contribution to the mitigation of climate change. This should be considered as an insurance payment rather than a cost.

We would like to see Tasmanians involved in the manufacture of equipment for electrical energy generation, storage and utilisation and believes that TasNetwork's strategy should be consistent with this aim.

The consultation paper has only generalisations concerning the link between electrical energy distribution and bush-fires. We believe that TasNetworks should become a leader in the development and implementation of technology that minimises bush-fire ignition potential but is able to operate under conditions of high bush-fire risk. Modern emergency communications are highly dependent on the availability of electrical energy.

The consultation paper is quiet concerning BassLink and the future possibility of a second interstate cable. We believe that the existing cable must affect network operation and that a second cable would also have a significant additional effect. TasNetworks should openly discuss the affect of BassLink on its operations. We are sceptical of the net economic benefits to Tasmania that have been linked to these interstate cables.

We believe that Tasmanian individuals and businesses would do better directing their drive and capital to productive parts of the Tasmanian economy rather than have to consider the generation and/or storage of electrical energy for their own use. To this end it is important that TasNetworks endeavours to supply electrical energy at a cost that is competitive and does not artificially distort the electricity market. We believe that the current low feed-in tariff has not been adequately justified and is causing the strong consideration of private electricity storage and off-grid operation.

Dr Michael Wadsley