


NOTICE OF DECISIONS AND STATEMENT OF REASONS

Section 56 of the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act)

Regulations 174, 175 & 189 - Environment Protection Regulations 2020 (EP Regulations) for a decision on a significant variation and a decision on the draft amending terms of reference for a significant variation

Name of proposed action	Australian ASEAN Power Link (proposal)
Proponent	Sun Cable Pty Ltd
NT EPA reference	EP2020/002 - Significant variation accepted 11 August 2021
Description of proposed action	Sun Cable Pty Ltd is proposing to establish a large-scale solar farm and energy storage facility in the Barkly region, NT, with power exported via a high-voltage direct current transmission network to Murrumujuk on Gunn Point Peninsula, north-east of Darwin, and then sub-sea cable through NT, National and International waters to Singapore.
Nature of the significant variation	<p>Key changes to the proposal include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deviation of the overhead transmission line (OHTL) from the rail corridor at Livingstone for 66 kilometres to Murrumujuk via a future utilities corridor, adding 37 kilometres to the OHTL route • increase in transmission capacity of the OHTL from 3.2 GW to 6.4 GW • a new converter site at Murrumujuk with an increased footprint from 10 ha to 55 ha to accommodate increased size and number of voltage source converters (from two to four) • relocation of land sea joint station from Middle Arm to Gunn Point Beach • sub-sea cable route through Shoal Bay, with three cables added.
Decisions	<p><u>Decision on significant variation</u></p> <p>In accordance with EP regulation 173(1)(c)(ii), the assessment can continue with the existing assessment method (environmental impact statement) with amended terms of reference.</p> <p><u>Decision on draft amending terms of reference for significant variation</u></p> <p>In accordance with EP Regulation 188(3)(b), the draft amending terms of reference (TOR) are approved with changes the NT EPA considers appropriate.</p>
Person authorised to make decision	Dr Paul Vogel AM – Chairperson, as delegate of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA)
Signature	
Date of decision	5 October 2021
Matters considered	<p>EP Regulation 172 and 173(6):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the accepted notice of significant variation • whether the variation would change the potential for, or extent of, significant environmental impacts already identified for the proposal

- the objects of the EP Act and the purpose of the environmental impact assessment process
 - submissions received in relation to the significant variation and draft amending terms of reference during the public consultation period 13 August to 24 September 2021
 - government authority submissions received: 7
 - public submissions received: 1
 - EP Regulation 59.
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Consultation Public and government authority submissions identified that the potential for a significant environmental impact remains with regard to the quality of land and soils, the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater resources, the quality and processes of marine, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, air quality, cultural heritage, atmospheric processes, communities, the economy and human health. Submissions recognised that knowledge gaps remain about threatened terrestrial and marine species, heritage places and objects, future planning and land use impacts, operational requirements, and social impacts and values.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Overview

The NT EPA recognises that the changes proposed in the notice of significant variation may reduce the overall environmental impact of the proposal. However, there is the potential to have a significant impact on environmental values associated with the 13 [environmental factors](#) previously identified in the NT EPA's [Notice of Decision and Statement of Reasons](#) of 10 March 2021.

Justification

The assessment can continue with the existing assessment method and the amended TOR because the:

Regulation 172(2)(a) potential for a significant impact on the environment does not differ in a material way from the impacts already identified in the assessment process

Regulation 172(2)(b) significant variation will not result in a substantial change to the type or amount of any output of the proposal in a way that significantly changes the potential significant impacts from those already identified in the assessment process

Regulation 172(2)(c) matters raised in the significant variation do not remove the potential for significant environmental impact. A decision to continue with the existing assessment method is consistent with the objects of the EP Act and purpose set out in section 42 of the EP Act

Regulation 188(1) submissions received under regulations 186 (Public consultation) and 187 (Consultation with government authorities) have been considered, and the amended TOR includes changes the NT EPA considers appropriate.

Conclusion

The NT EPA considers that the significant variation does not reduce the potential for the proposal to have a significant impact on environmental factors due to the location, scale and extent of the proposal. The uncertainty regarding the values that may be impacted by some components of the proposal, and the magnitude of those impacts, remain due to the preliminary nature of the information available. Management and mitigation measures proposed in the design, planning, construction and operational phases of the proposal require further development during preparation of an environmental impact statement, with consideration of environmental values identified through studies and stakeholder engagement. The NT EPA considers that the assessment can continue to assess the proposal and significant variation within the environmental impact statement process.
