

Submission on draft terms of reference

Australia-Asia Powerlink Assets Pty Ltd – Muckaty Solar Precinct

This submission is made under regulation 53 of the *Environment Protection Regulations 2020*

Government authority: Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW/the department)

Summary: AAPowerlink Australia Assets Pty Ltd (SunCable) proposes to construct a large-scale solar and battery storage precinct, transmission corridor and associated infrastructure on Muckaty Station, approximately 125 kilometres (km) north of Tennant Creek, Northern Territory. On 19 November 2025, the department received a valid referral for the proposed action. On 17 December 2025, a delegate for the Minister for Environment and Water decided that the proposed action is a controlled action and stopped the clock on the assessment approach decision to request further information on whether the bilateral agreement applies. On 19 March 2026, the NT EPA informed the department that, following a variation under the EP Act to align discrepancies between the two referrals, the project requires assessment under the EP Act and that the bilateral agreement applies.

DCCEEW comments on the draft TOR

Section of referral report	Theme or issue	Comment
1.1 - Overview	EPBC Regulations	Update reference from “Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Regulations 2000” to “Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Regulations 2025”.
2.2 - Proposal description	Background and context	The proposal forms part of the broader AAPowerLink project. The EIS should clearly articulate how the action relates to this approved action or other actions being taken in the region, such as Powell Creek Station.
2.4.2 – Terrestrial ecosystems	Environmental values	Include the following EPBC-listed threatened species: • Southern Whiteface (<i>Aphelocephala leucopsis</i>) • Curlew Sandpiper (<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>) Additionally, given the precautionary approach in assessing potential impacts towards listed migratory species, the department recommends requesting information on estimates of population parameters and survey efforts to determine the likelihood of occurrence, and potential impacts, towards the EPBC-listed migratory species: • Oriental Pratincole (<i>Glareola maldivarum</i>) • Oriental Plover (<i>Charadrius veredus</i>) • Pectoral Sandpiper (<i>Calidris melanotos</i>) • Common Sandpiper (<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>)

Environmental impact assessment under the Environment Protection Act 2019

2.4.2 – Terrestrial ecosystems	Potential significant impacts and risks	Given the proximity of Lake Woods and its importance for migratory shorebirds, the EIS should explicitly assess potential downstream impacts on migratory species habitat, including indirect impacts associated with altered surface water flows, groundwater use and sediment transport. Additionally, specific monitoring and adaptive management measures for potential ‘lake effect’ impacts should be included.
2.4.3 – Hydrological processes	Lake Woods connectivity	The department recommends including a clear requirement for the EIS to conceptualise hydrological connectivity (if any) between drainage systems, intermittent creeks and Lake Woods, and to assess the nature, extent and risk of impacts associated with sediment transport and altered water regimes on the wetland.
3.1 - Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES)	List of guidance documents	Consider whether guidance documents for Ghost Bat, Crested Shrike-tit, Painted Honeyeater, Northern blue-tongue skink and Plains Death Adder can be removed from the list of guidance documents for EPBC-listed MNES, as these species are not listed at 2.4.2. Alternatively, for the avoidance of doubt, these species could be added at 2.4.2 for the proponent to definitely address the impacts of the action on these species. The department recommends including the following statutory documents for EPBC-listed MNES: • Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds- https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/publications/wildlife-conservation-plan-migratory-shorebirds-2016 • Greater Bilby recovery plan - https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/publications/recovery/greater-bilby-2023 • Grey Falcon conservation advice - https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/env/consultations/ad34afee-a901-4c94-8e71-654e9f15f29c/files/consultation-document-falco-hypoleucos.pdf • Gouldian Finch conservation advice - https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/413-conservation-advice-07122016.pdf • Gouldian Finch recovery plan - https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/recovery-plans/national-recovery-plan-gouldian-finch-erythrura-gouldiae • Southern Whiteface conservation advice- https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/consultation-document-aphelocephala-leucopsis.pdf • Australian Painted Snipe conservation advice - https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/77037-conservation-advice.pdf • Australian Painted Snipe recovery plan - https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/publications/recovery/australian-painted-snipe-2022 • Curlew sandpiper conservation advice - https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/856-conservation-advice-18122023.pdf • Sharp-tailed Sandpiper conservation advice- https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/874-conservation-advice-05012024.pdf

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		• Threat abatement plan for competition and land degradation by rabbits- http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/tap/competition-and-land-degradation-rabbits-2016 • Threat abatement plan for predation, habitat degradation, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs- http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/publications/tap/feral-pig-2017
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