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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

The effectiveness of threatened species and ecological communities' protection in Australia

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the effectiveness of threatened species and ecological communities' protection in Australia. I represent a local community group located in the Local Government area of Logan in South East Queensland.

Over the past 4 years we have been fighting for a review of Alternatives rather than the proposal by the SE Qld Electricity Distributor Energex to locate a high voltage 110kV powerline in the Logan River bioregional corridor. Energex want to construct this second 110kV powerline from Loganlea to Jimboomba, with a 40 metre cleared easement and 5 river crossings within 6kms along the Logan River north of Logan Village. This powerline will also require the clearing of 42.5 ha of high and medium value koala habitat as shown in Appendix 1.

This powerline is a classic “\$44 million gold plating of the Energex network with another poles& wires” powerline to duplicate the existing 23 km F820 110kV powerline from Loganlea to Jimboomba. This proposal has been justified on the basis of delivering reliability, but the proposed construction with 29 poles to be located in the Logan River Flood Hazard zone, plus sharing poles at the busy Logan Motorway and Kingston Road crossings undermines this justification.

Rather the impact of building these poles to Bridge Specification, with each pole to be mounted on substantial concrete footings, the cleared 40 metre easement and the building of 7 kms of access tracks to support construction and maintenance is expected to fragment the remaining Logan River riparian vegetation and have a high ongoing impact on remaining threatened and vulnerable species habitat in the Logan River bioregional corridor. Appendix 2 provides a map of Spotted Tail Quoll sightings in the area. With a separate document prepared by Anne Page of Logan & Albert Conservation Association (LACA) previously submitted to the Dept of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities on 4 Sept 2011, included as it provides more detail on the expected impacts to the threatened Spotted Tail Quoll as well as other species in our region.

Despite the strong support of Logan City Council, our Community, our 4 State LNP Members and 2 Federal LNP Members representing the affected electorates and all calling for a full and open review of Alternatives (including a local substation at Greenbank), Queensland's Energy and Water Supply Minister McARDLE issued a [Media Release](#) on 28 Nov2012 approving the Community Infrastructure Designation for this powerline duplication.

The Minister's Media Release and letters were despatched on the same day to directly affected private residents (who comprise 60% of the powerline route), emphasised the inclusion of Special environmental conditions.

However these "Special environmental conditions" are disappointing as they are basically what any community would expect to be the bare minimum requirements for any habitat clearing along a river. A narrow scope review and report by Oakley-Greenwood (OGW) prepared in November 2011 and kept secret until after the Media Release, was used to justify this second powerline. This [OWG Report](#) includes a map (Appendix 9.2.1) that purports to show planned tree clearing but does not include the southern half of the powerline route through the high value koala habitat area shown in Appendix 1.

Overall our experience with the Queensland State Government, both the previous Labor Government and now the LNP Government is that preservation of threatened and vulnerable species habitat is easily overridden by the need to facilitate development. Even the stated policy that vegetation offsets will only be pursued when no other Alternatives are available is reversed, with offsets proposed up front. Accompanied with assurances "of hope to" be delivered and with funding to actually deliver meaningful offsets reduced and subject to availability at the end of the project.

Our community is not against development, we just want to see the value of the environment that we enjoy living in and share with native flora and fauna, recognised. We see the Logan River bioregional corridor as a unique community asset, poorly treated and in need of remediation but certainly not an easy easement for another overhead powerline when other alternatives do exist. Instead the riparian vegetation along the Logan River needs to be restored, both for the health of the river and to provide habitat for threatened species especially as a moist retreat during drought conditions and the more severe weather events predicted by climate change scenarios. Instead we see our State Government claiming to care but when Government Operating Corporations (such as Energex), Agencies or Developers require habitat clearing this is more easily approved than forcing them to co-locate services or fully explore alternatives that would genuinely minimise impacts.

We will continue to pursue all options to stop this powerline, including lodging an objection when this proposal is lodged for EPBC approval. Fortunately this opportunity appears to still remain available and within the means of our community to register an appeal against the decision of the Queensland Minister on environmental impacts.

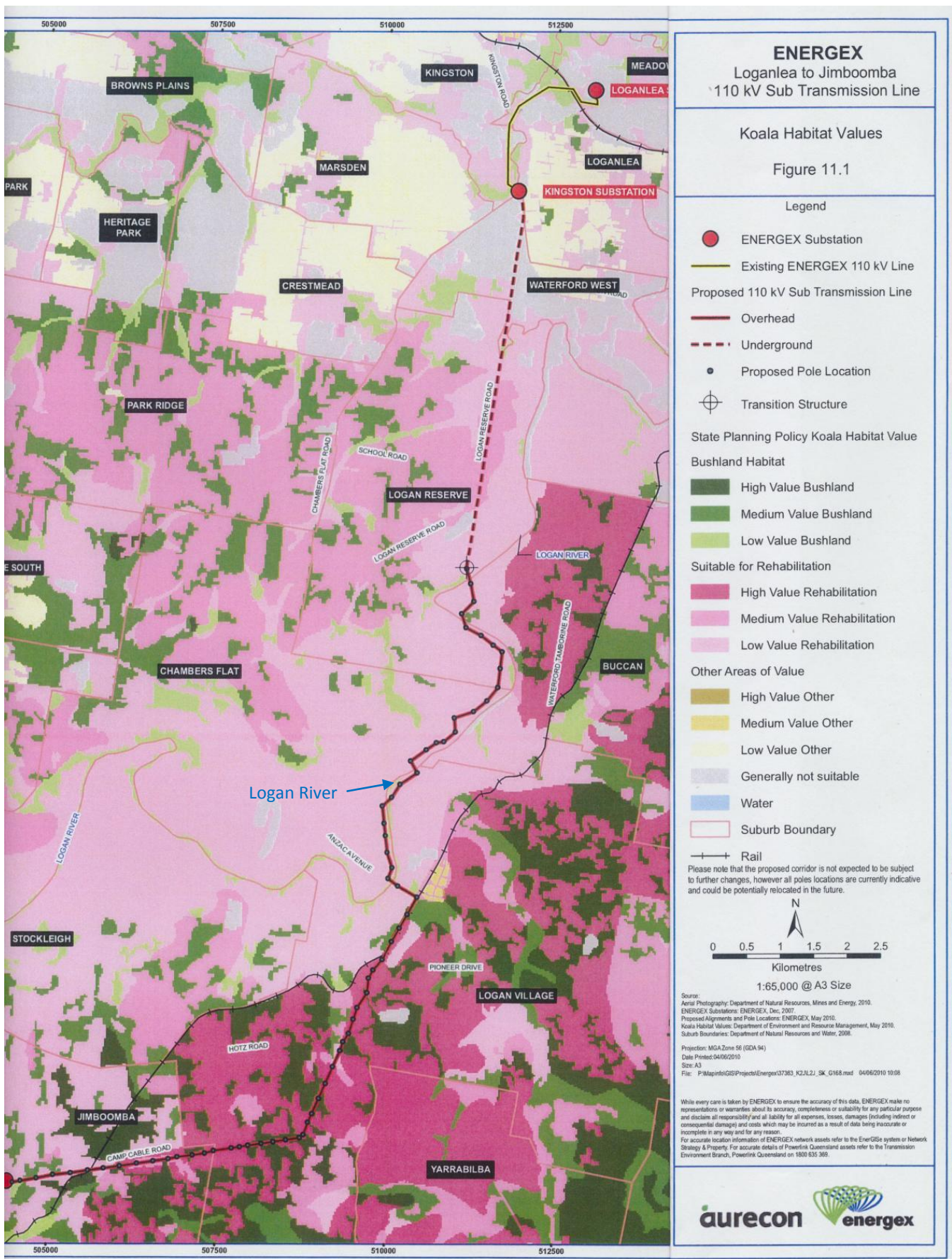
So in closing, I ask on behalf of our community for the Senate to look for ways to strengthen environmental protection for threatened (as well as vulnerable) species and certainly not to consider devolving powers to the Queensland State Government as they cannot be trusted to value our environment other than for development.

Yours sincerely



Paul Casbolt
VETO President

Appendix 1 - Map showing location of planned powerline through Koala Habitat



Appendix 2 - Map showing location of planned powerline in relation to Quoll Sightings

