

Our Ref: CM-10622 | DOC/22/1090

Your Ref: SAC21_1078

18 February 2022

[REDACTED]
General Manager Electricity Networks
Powercor Australia Ltd
Locked Bag 14090
MELBOURNE VIC 8001

[REDACTED]

DECISION ON POWERCOR'S RESPONSE IN RELATION TO ESV'S REQUEST PURSUANT TO SECTION 109(1) OF THE *ELECTRICITY SAFETY ACT 1998*

Thank you for your submission dated 4 February 2022 made in accordance with sections 109(3) and (4) of the *Electricity Safety Act 1998 (Act)* in response to our request under section 109(1) of the Act dated 23 December 2021 that you submit a revised bushfire mitigation plan (**BMP**).

In accordance with sections 109(5) and (6) of the Act, we have decided as follows:

Increasing pole interventions

We agree that the approach you have proposed is consistent with our request with one exception. We are concerned with the references you have made to 'target' intervention volumes. We require you to deliver to the intervention commitments that you have made, both on a year on year and overall basis.

Currency of documentation

We do not agree with the approach that you have proposed to adopt to address this part of our request. While we support your acknowledgment of the need for us to have certainty about which documents form part of your BMP and which documents are provided only to support your plan, we do not agree that only documents whose primary purpose is to manage bushfire risk should be incorporated into your BMP.

We will only accept a BMP if we are satisfied that the plan includes sufficient controls to minimise the risk of fire ignition arising from the supply network to which it relates, as far as practicable. The BMP must therefore include all controls that you commit to adopt for this purpose, along with sufficient detail to enable us to understand how the control measures will be implemented to minimise bushfire risks. Therefore, regardless of the 'primary purpose' of a document, if it includes bushfire mitigation controls not covered in another document that is incorporated into the BMP, that document should also be incorporated (or the relevant controls should be lifted up into the BMP itself).

In relation to revisions to incorporated documents, our expectation is that you will submit a revised BMP to us for acceptance if circumstances change that make it appropriate to revise or if you propose modifications that will result in a significant increase in the overall level of risk to

the safety of any person or property arising from your supply network. Where you revise an incorporated document without submitting it to us for acceptance, the onus is on you to maintain clear records of each of the revisions and to be able to demonstrate to us that the revisions have not resulted in a significant increase in the overall level of risk. We retain the right to refuse to accept revisions where they were not submitted to us for formal acceptance in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Conductor clearances

We accept the proposal in your submission to include a section in your BMP that describes your plans in 2022 and 2023 to improve management of conductor clearances including the use of LiDAR technology and associated algorithms and details of planned tasks and milestones.

However, until the efficacy of the LiDAR and algorithm based approach to managing conductor clearances has been established and proven to be effective across your supply network, we require you to develop and commit to an asset inspector based program to identify, prioritise and correct conductor clearance defects. We believe it is practicable for you to make this commitment and require this to be demonstrated in your BMP through the inclusion of key tasks and milestones as well as by addressing the matters outlined in part 10(a)(iv)2-12 of our request, being:

- The standards that determine the clearance between conductors on the same or different circuits both at a structure and in span in respect of both construction and maintenance, including whether the standard specifies a measurement for the purpose of the clearance or sets a formula for the purpose of determining the clearance that applies;
- The method by which asset inspectors will assess the risk of conductors clashing, whether on the same or different circuits, both at a structure and in span;
- The method by which clearances between conductors, both at a structure and in span, are to be measured both at a structure and in span;
- The method by which asset inspectors will determine whether to report a potential lack of clearances between conductors on the same or different circuits both at a structure and in span;
- The method by which asset inspectors will determine whether the effect of a leaning pole may result in a lack of clearance between conductors, whether on the same or a different circuit, or a lack of ground clearance;
- The time period within which a reported potential lack of clearance between conductors on the same or different circuits both at a structure and in span will be investigated;
- The method by which asset inspectors will determine the most appropriate spans to measure for ground clearance;
- The process and procedures for ensuring each person assigned to carry out inspection of conductor clearances is trained and competent to carry out such inspections;
- The process and procedures by which PAL will monitor the effectiveness of the conductor clearance inspections carried out under the plan; and
- The process and procedures by which PAL will audit the effectiveness of the conductor clearance inspections carried out under the plan.

In deciding this, we have had regard to the defence sentencing submissions that you made in the recent prosecution arising from the St Patrick's Day fires at Terang and Garvoc, including your advice to the Court that:

- In February 2021 you commenced an initiative to develop algorithms to identify potentially non-compliant conductor clearances using its LiDAR data;

- The algorithms were completed in May 2021 and trialled and validated in your highest fire consequence areas (Electricity Line Construction Areas); and
- In 2022 you will continue to develop and implement this new approach to managing conductor clearances. You will use LiDAR to survey and manage conductor clearances across the entire network, putting into practice the algorithms that have been trialled in 2021 in ELCA. You will amend your policies to reflect the use of LiDAR to manage conductor clearances across your whole supply network.

Next steps

Pursuant to section 110(b) of the Act, we are required to provide you with not less than 60 days from the date of this decision to submit a revised BMP that addresses our request.

Accordingly, we expect to receive your revised BMP for our assessed by **19 April 2022**.

We note that provisional acceptance of your current BMP lapses on 31 March 2022. If you wish to apply to us to extend the period of provisional acceptance to allow you sufficient time to respond to our request, please make an application and we will consider it.

If you have any queries regarding this matter, please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Marnie Williams
**COMMISSIONER AND CHAIRPERSON
ENERGY SAFE VICTORIA**