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MANAGEMENT STRATEGY VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to outline the strategy guiding Aurora's program of vegetation management in accordance with legislative requirements, stakeholder expectations and good electricity industry practice.

2. SCOPE

This strategy applies to all activities related to building, owning, operating and maintaining Aurora's distribution network assets within Tasmania with the exception of the Bass Strait Islands.

This strategy makes reference to other plans, manuals, standards, policies, procedures and work instructions that cover all of the activities that contribute to the vegetation management program.

3. INTRODUCTION

Aurora Energy is Tasmania's largest electricity distributor and retailer. Aurora manages a network of more than 22,000 km of high and low voltage overhead powerlines, upon which Tasmanians have a very high dependency for contemporary living, wellbeing and business.

Aurora has the regulatory responsibility to manage trees growing near powerlines and mitigate risks associated with trees coming into contact with powerlines. The minimum standard to which Aurora must achieve is compliance with Chapter 8A of the TEC (Tasmanian Electricity Code) – Distribution Powerline Vegetation Management.

Aurora is responsible for implementing a Vegetation Management Strategy that ensures the risks from electricity distribution in relation to vegetation management are mitigated in a way that is cost effective, and consistent with industry standards.

4. LEGISLATION

Key legislation that requires Aurora to implement programs relating to vegetation management includes:

1. Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995 (ESI Act);
2. Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act (1997) (ESI&A Act);
and
3. The Tasmanian Electricity Code (TEC).

The requirement of each of these are summarised in the following sections.

4.1 Electricity Supply Industry (ESI) Act 1995

The Electricity Supply Industry (ESI) Act exists to:

1. Promote efficiency and competition in the electricity supply industry;
2. Establish and maintain a safe and efficient system of electricity generation, transmission, distribution and supply;
3. Establish and enforce proper standards of safety, security, reliability and quality in the electricity supply industry; and
4. Protect the interests of consumers of electricity.

The ESI Act covers safety aspects at a fairly high level and is implicit regarding vegetation management risks.

4.2 Electricity Industry Safety and Administration (EIS &A) Act 1997

The Electricity Industry Safety and Administration (EIS&A) Act exists to establish safety standards for electrical articles, to provide for the investigation of accidents in the electricity industry and for related purposes.

The ESI&A Act covers:

1. Powers of entry and inspection;
2. Powers to order rectification;
3. Powers to order disconnection; and
4. Emergency powers relevant to Aurora's vegetation management activities.

4.3 The Tasmanian Electricity Code (TEC)

The Tasmanian Electricity Code (TEC) provides, inter alia, a statement of the relevant technical standards of the electricity supply industry, an access regime to facilitate new entry, guidance on price setting methodologies, a means of resolving disputes that may arise and establishes advisory committees to assist the Regulator. There has been on-going development and refinement of the TEC to ensure that it best meets the needs of the Tasmanian electricity supply industry and customers.

Specifically, Chapter 8A of the TEC includes a framework for the management of vegetation around distribution powerlines. This framework is explicit regarding works requirements and practices in various fire hazard categories.

5. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Effective vegetation management is a key component of the Network Management Strategy objective:

To minimise cost of supply to the customer whilst:

- a. *Maintaining network performance;*
- b. *Managing business operating risks; and*
- c. *Complying with regulatory, contractual and legal responsibilities.*

The Vegetation Management Strategy supports the delivery of these objectives by meeting the regulatory obligations for vegetation management under the TEC, addresses the risks associated with vegetation interaction with the network and supports improved network performance.

6. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Aurora Energy's Vegetation Management Program is designed to:

1. Ensure compliance with Chapter 8A of the TEC, as well as the ESI Act and the ESI&A Act as appropriate;
2. Control vegetation interaction with the network to:
 - a. Minimise the probability of starting bush fires;
 - b. Increase public safety; and
 - c. Improve network reliability;
3. Satisfy customers and stakeholders;
4. Ensure cost effectiveness.

6.1 Compliance with Regulatory Requirements

Aurora will design its vegetation management practices to ensure compliance with Regulatory obligations.

6.2 Control Vegetation Interaction with Network Assets

Aurora will use the principles and approaches contained within Chapter 8A of the TEC as a basis for managing the vegetation within Aurora's statutory easements.

6.3 Customer and Stakeholder Satisfaction

Aurora will consult with customers and stakeholders affected by Aurora's vegetation management practices to obtain the best outcome while allowing Aurora to meet its statutory responsibilities.

6.4 Cost Effectiveness

Aurora will provide cost-effective vegetation management by internally managing the overall program and planning whilst engaging specialist external vegetation cutting contractors. The external contractors will be engaged through a tender process to ensure the most efficient prices are obtained.

7. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Aurora's Vegetation Management Strategy has the following key components:

1. Full compliance with regulatory requirements, in particular Chapter 8A of the TEC, ensuring the minimum standards and practices are delivered.
2. Ensure appropriate risk mitigation measures for public safety, bushfire, and reliability are in the program.
3. Ensure that the program is aimed at achieving an efficient *maintenance cycle*, (as opposed to a *trimming cycle*). *Trimming cycle* refers to the practice of removing the minimum vegetation to comply with TEC 8A, whilst *maintenance cycle* removes additional vegetation reducing the cycle (and cost) over time despite its initial higher cost.
4. Deliver a Vegetation Management Program that delivers longer term cost reductions (includes input into system design, asset component selection and vegetation planting).

- Continually review performance of the program, contractor efficiency, customer satisfaction and the business risks (including bushfire mitigation) associated with vegetation management.

8. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Vegetation Management Strategy is delivered through the Vegetation Management Program detailed within the document *Management Plan 2011 – Vegetation Management* (reference 10).

The management plan details Aurora's application of risk management for the management of vegetation near the network together with the various treatment plans and control actions.

The management plan also details the development of the work program based upon spans and vegetation classification and the profiling of the necessary works.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES

Maintenance and implementation of this management strategy is the responsibility of the Group Manager – Asset Performance and Information.

Approval of this management plan is the responsibility of the General Manager – Network.

10. REFERENCES

- Tasmanian Electricity Code (Chapter 8A)
- Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995
- Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act 1997
- CO#10399975 - Aurora Energy Risk Management Framework - HL-RM-002
- AuroraSafe Standards
- AuroraGreen Standards
- NW-#30065608 - Network Management Strategy
- NW-#1024784 – Policy - Vegetation Management Near Powerlines NN R EC 04
- NW-#30146570 –Management Strategy: Bushfire Mitigation
- NW-#30165991 - Management Plan 2011: Vegetation
- NW-#30170189 - Management Plan 2011: Bushfire Mitigation (General Programs)
- NW-#30043347 - Management Plan 2011: Bushfire Mitigation (Asset Programs)
- NW-#10265144 - Risk Treatment Management Plan
- NW-#10180859 - Procedure - Vegetation Management near Powerlines – NP R EC 04
- ENA National Guideline for Safe Vegetation Management Work Near Live Overhead Powerlines
- NW-#30011791 – Procedure Fire Mitigation Management NP R AM 23

17. NW-#10264880 - Project Plan - Fire Prevention Strategies For Overhead Powerlines In High Risk Areas 09/10 - NA R AM 01
18. NW-#10247107 - Project Plan – Vegetation Fire Mitigation Plan - NA R EC 04.
19. NW-#174491 Procedure - Auto Reclose Suppression in Total Fire Ban Periods NP R NO 16
20. NW-#10149822 - Procedure - Inspection And Defect Rectification Of Privately Owned Powerlines NP R EC 23
21. NW-#10273136 – Policy - Distribution Technical Design, Construction and Maintenance Standards NP R AM 01
22. NW-#10277265 – Manual - Distribution Overhead Line Design and Construction Standard DS D OH 1
23. NW-#10149719 – Policy Inspection And Maintenance Of Overhead Lines - NN R AM 05
24. NW#30161322- Management Plan 2011: Overhead System and Structures
25. NW-#30014040 – Procedure - Identification and management of overhead line defect components Procedure NP R AM 03
26. NW-#30148794-v1-Operational Plan - Vegetation Management
27. NW-#10230331 – Procedure - Asset Risk Management NP R AM 08
28. NW-#10270980 - Procedure Environmental Management NP R EC 11