

Borumba Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Project Exploratory Works – Geotechnical and Investigations

Project Report

August 2024

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Acknowledgement of Country

The department acknowledges the First Nations peoples in Queensland: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their connections to the lands, winds and waters we now all share. We pay our respect to Elders, past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the continuous living culture of First Nations Queenslanders – their diverse languages, customs and traditions, knowledges and systems. We acknowledge the deep relationship, connection and responsibility to land, sea, sky and Country as an integral element of First Nations identity and culture.

The Country is sacred. Everything on the land has meaning and all people are one with it. We acknowledge First Nations peoples' sacred connection as central to culture and being. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of First Nations peoples and commit to shaping our state's future together. The department recognises the contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to the State of Queensland and how this continues to enrich our society more broadly.

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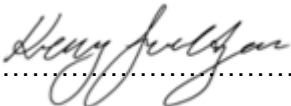
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Purpose of this report

This report supports amendments to the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Regulation 2020* to facilitate the undertaking of exploratory works and environmental investigations supporting the Borumba Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Project. The amendment regulation is provided for under ss. 99, 100, 108, 109 and 173 of the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*.



.....
Kerry Smeltzer
Assistant Coordinator-General
New Economy and Transition Coordination
(as delegate of the Coordinator-General)
23 August 2024

1. Background

1.1 Borumba Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Project

The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan (QEJP) outlined the State's pathway to a clean, reliable, and affordable energy system. A significant part of this transition is the development of pumped hydro energy storage (PHES) as a key long-duration 'deep storage' component of the renewables-based Queensland energy grid. The Borumba PHES Project was identified as one of two key facilities to deliver on the proposed renewable energy targets.

The Borumba PHES Project is near Imbil in south-east Queensland and is proposed to provide 2,000 megawatts/24hr energy generation capacity. Prompt delivery of the Borumba PHES Project is crucial to enhance energy reliability, facilitate decarbonisation, and contribute to Queensland's legislated renewable energy targets of 70% by 2032 and 80% by 2035 under the *Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024*.

The Queensland Government's plan, outlined in the QEJP, is to deliver the Borumba PHES Project by 2030 when renewable energy is anticipated to exceed 50 per cent of Queensland's electricity supply. This ambitious timeframe is required to enable the renewable energy targets of the QEJP to be met with first power proposed in 2030 and full operations in 2031. The Queensland Government has committed \$6 billion in funding to progress the proposed \$14.2 billion PHES facility at Borumba Dam.

On 12 October 2023, the Borumba PHES was declared a coordinated project for which an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*. Further details about the evaluation process for the EIS are published on the department's website at <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/BorumbaPHES>.

1.2 Borumba Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Project Exploratory Works

Exploratory works will inform the design development and constructability of the Borumba PHES Project Main Works and aid data capture to inform the EIS. Exploratory works include works as described in the Project Works.

Some exploratory works have commenced for works where approval has been granted or is not required including, new minor access tracks and geotechnical investigations on Queensland Hydro owned land, road safety improvements to Bella Creek and Yielo Roads and establishing temporary site offices.

In August 2023, the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Regulation 2020* was amended to insert a direction to the proponent and the Coordinator-General in relation to the Borumba PHES Project Exploratory Works – Temporary Workers Accommodation Camps. This enables the establishment of two temporary workers accommodation camps to support the exploratory works, including some associated road upgrade works.

1.3 Project Report

This project report identifies the exploratory works to be undertaken and any works required to support Queensland Hydro in facilitating these works.

The works regulation directs Queensland Hydro to undertake the Project Works and removes the requirement for development permits such as material change of use and operational works under the Somerset Regional Council and Gympie Regional Council planning schemes. The works regulation also enables the Coordinator-General to use functions and powers under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* to support the exploratory works.

Importantly, the making of a works regulation does not impact:

- the requirement to obtain relevant state approvals from State government agencies including but not limited to, vegetation clearing and environmentally relevant activities (ERAs);
- the requirement to obtain relevant state approvals for Project Works under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (NC Act) and under the *Forestry Act 1959*;
- the requirement to obtain relevant Commonwealth approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act);
- the general environmental duty and duty to notify of environmental harm under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*;
- obtaining permits or approvals such as for road works under the *Transport Infrastructure Act 1994*;
- to meet the duty of care requirements under the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*;
- the assessment requirements for the project main works where an EIS is required; and
- the requirement to comply with any other laws.

2. The Project Works

The scope of the Project Works are exploratory works carried out by Queensland Hydro for the purpose of environmental and geotechnical studies, to inform project design development and constructability of the Borumba PHES Project Main Works, and aid data capture to inform the EIS, including:

- geotechnical investigations and soil sampling to inform project or engineering design development (including geotechnical boreholes and test pits);
- exploratory tunnels and associated infrastructure and activities (including explosive magazine facility);
- access tracks, road upgrades, realignment or improvements to the transport network to support site access and associated works (including watercourse crossings);
- any excavation and/or fill, clearing of native vegetation, water management and stockpiling of material required for the works; and
- all works and uses to be undertaken that are temporary, or ancillary, or incidental to the works described above.

An Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) was reached between the Kabi Kabi First Nation Traditional Owners Native Title Group (Federal Court number: QUD20/2019) (Kabi Kabi People) and Queensland Hydro that allows the exploratory works to be carried out within ILUA areas mutually agreed upon. The Project Works must not be inconsistent with native title rights and interests under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

Queensland Hydro will prepare a traffic impact assessment and a construction environmental management plan (CEMP) and supporting management plans for the Project Works. The traffic impact assessment will identify the extent of works and potential impacts to be managed on local and state road networks. The CEMP and supporting management plans will outline the environmental and cultural heritage matters to be managed, mitigated and monitored. Works are to be carried out generally in accordance with the plans. The traffic impact assessment, CEMP and supporting management plans for the exploratory works are to be submitted to the Coordinator-General and agreed prior to commencement of construction and published on Queensland Hydro's website.

The majority of the exploratory works have been determined a controlled action (EPBC2023/09461) requiring assessment under the EPBC Act. Authorities, permits and / or approvals under the NC Act and the *Forestry Act 1959* will be required for activities located within Conondale Resources Reserve and Imbil State Forest Works are proposed to commence late 2024, following all relevant approval decisions, and are expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

Should the Borumba PHES Project Main Works not proceed, Queensland Hydro will decommission and remove the exploratory works physical infrastructure and rehabilitate impacted areas, where not required for ongoing management of the land parcels (i.e. access tracks).

2.1 The responsible entity

The project proponent is Queensland Hydro Pty Ltd (ACN 661 444 515) (Queensland Hydro). Queensland Hydro is a publicly owned proprietary company established by the Queensland Government to design, deliver, operate and maintain long duration pumped hydro energy storage assets in Queensland. All shares of the company are held by the Under Treasurer in trust for the State.

2.2 Location

The Project Works are located within the Gympie and Somerset Regional Council local government areas and are within the proposed footprint of the Borumba Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Project.

A project locality map is provided in Appendix 1 with the location for the Project Works provided in Appendix 2.

3. Facilitation Works

The Coordinator-General has functions and powers to facilitate large-scale and complex projects, while ensuring their environmental and social impacts are properly managed.

Facilitation Works are works required for parts of the Project Works that can be carried out by the exercise of Coordinator-General powers or functions under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* and works reasonably required to support the Project Works.

4. Consultation

An ILUA was reached between the Kabi Kabi People and Queensland Hydro that allows the exploratory works to be carried out. The National Native Title Tribunal registered the ILUA on 21 June 2024 (Tribunal file number: Q12024/003). Queensland Hydro has committed to regularly engage with the Kabi Kabi People throughout the duration of the Project Works and Reserved Works.

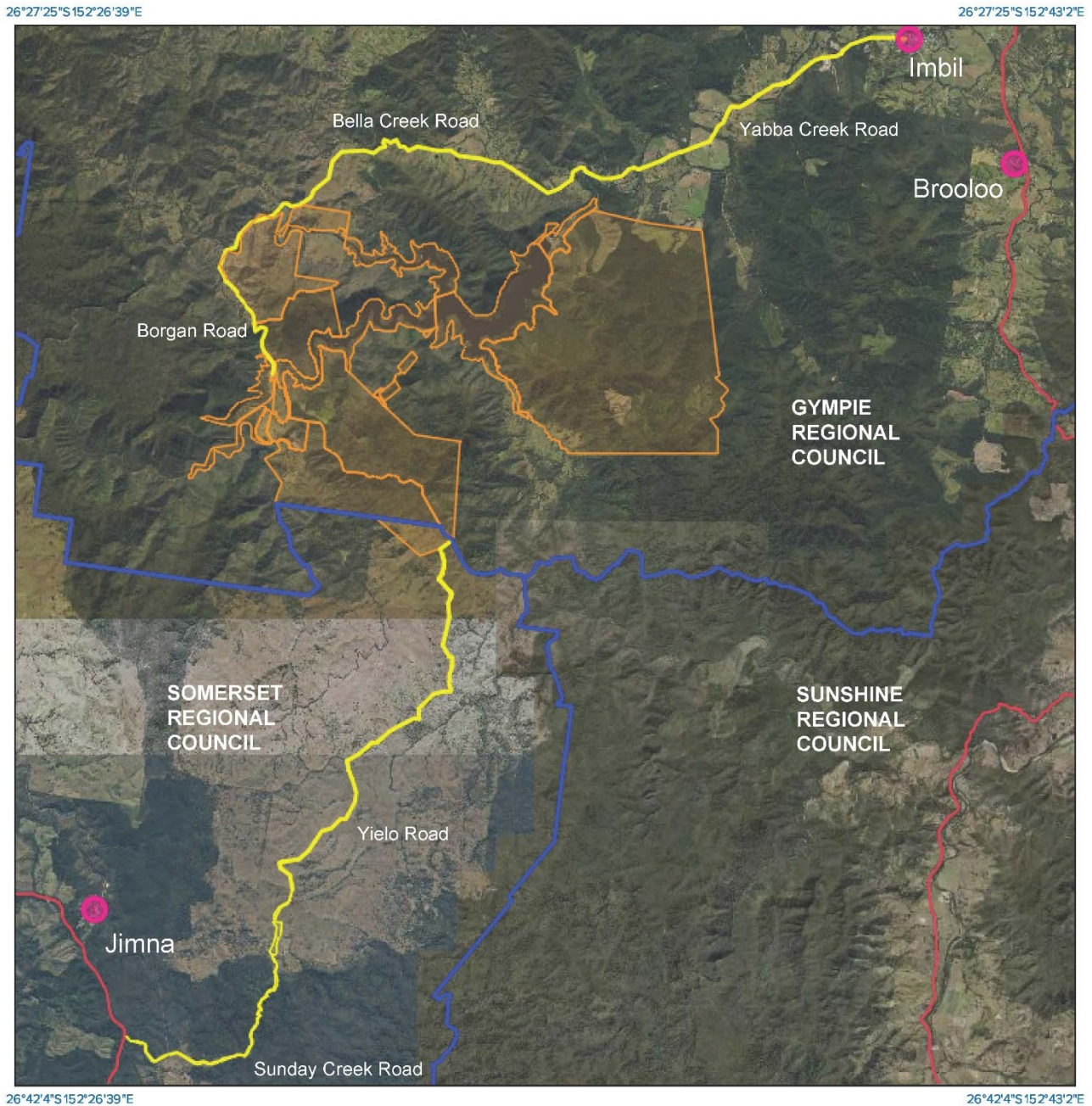
Queensland Hydro will continue to regularly engage with the Department of Transport and Main Roads, Gympie Regional Council, Somerset Regional Council, landowners and relevant stakeholders and to prepare a Social Assessment Management Plan and Community Stakeholder Engagement Plan for the exploratory works. These plans will be submitted to the Coordinator-General prior to commencement of construction and published on Queensland Hydro's website.

The Commonwealth assessment process under the EPBC Act includes a statutory public consultation process in which the Commonwealth Minister (or delegate) must consider all public comments.

Appendices





- Appendix 1. Project Locality Map
- Appendix 2. Project Works Map

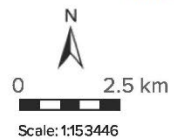
Appendix 1. Project Locality Map



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- Legend**
-  Main Road
 -  Access Road
 -  Local Government Area
 -  General area of the exploratory works for the pumped hydro project



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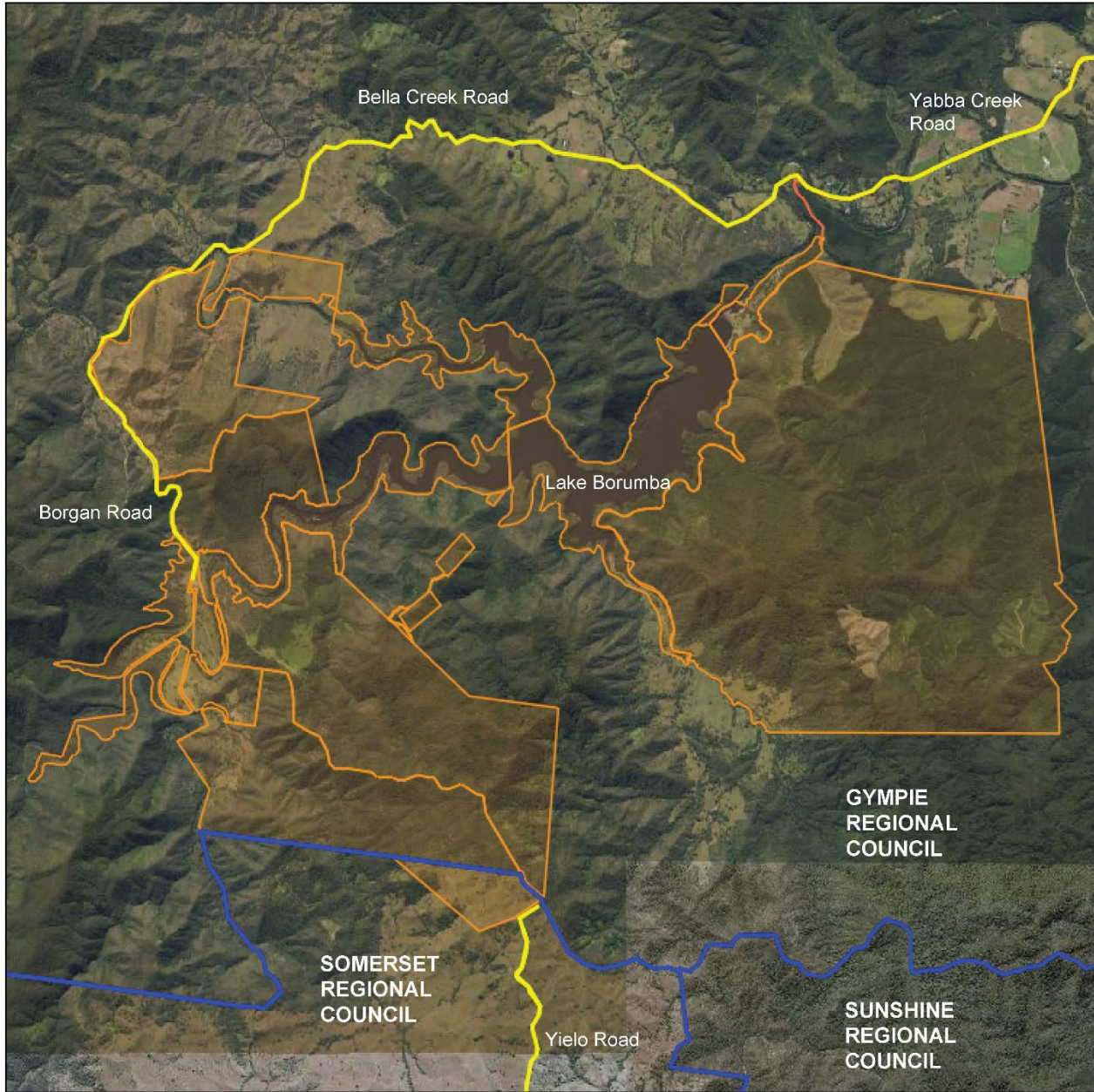
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Appendix 2. Project Works Map

26°28'9"S 152°29'9"E

26°28'9"S 152°37'49"E



26°35'54"S 152°29'9"E

26°35'54"S 152°37'49"E





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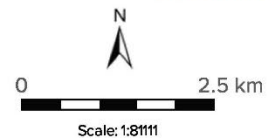


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Legend

-  Main Road
-  Access Road
-  Local Government Area
-  General area of the exploratory works for the pumped hydro project



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