



Political Risk Assessment

The Australia-Asia Power Link: A Risk Assessment of the Sun Cable Project

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Figure 1: Solar Farm

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Executive Summary

Solar farms are large-scale installations of photovoltaic panels that captures sunlight, converts it to electricity and delivers that power to the electrical grid for distribution and use by consumers.¹ Sun Cable is owned by a group led by Grok Ventures, and its leadership team is in charge of developing the AAPowerLink project.² The Australia-Asia Power Link project, colloquially known as AAPowerLink, is a renewable energy initiative that aims to build the world's largest solar farm in Australia's Northern Territory.³ This solar farm aims to have a 5,000km high voltage direct current (HVDC) system to and transmit up to 6GW of 24/7 green electricity to Singapore and Darwin via a submarine cable.

To continue with the project, Sun Cable required approval from key stakeholder, including the governments of Australia, Singapore, and Indonesia.⁴ With an estimated total investment of A\$22 billion, the project represents one of the largest renewable energy infrastructure undertakings globally. Northern Australia's high solar irradiance, vast open land, and wind potential make it an ideal location for such utility-scale developments. Singapore was selected as a primary recipient due to its strategic location, limited land for large-scale renewable installations, and current heavy reliance on fossil fuels for electricity. The project is expected to support regional decarbonization goals, enhance energy security, and contribute meaningfully to Singapore's net-zero emissions targets by 2050.⁵

This political risk report is separated into seven sections:

- Geopolitics
- Political Risks in Australia
- Political Risks in Indonesia
- Political Risks in Singapore
- Economic Issues
- Opposition
- Indigenous Considerations

Geopolitics

The Indo-Pacific region has proven to be extremely politically charged, with numerous actors asserting their influence in the area. The three countries involved in the Australia-Asia Power Link project, colloquially known as AAPowerLink, are significant actors in the region, with Australia widely considered to be a regional power and Singapore and Indonesia growing in influence. This risk analysis examines the current state of relations between Australia, Singapore, and Indonesia, tensions between the three countries, the effect of the AA Powerlink project on the geopolitical landscape, as well as the influence of other regional actors such as China.

Australia-Singapore-Indonesia Relations

Australia shares a very close relationship with both Singapore and Indonesia, underpinned by strong economic ties as well as trade and defence partnerships. As of 2015, Australia and Singapore have operated under a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) encompassing aspects of cooperation on trade, defence, science and innovation, education and arts, and digital and green economies.⁶ The two countries signed the Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement in 2003 and

subsequently became one of each other's largest trading partners, with Singapore being Australia's sixth largest source of foreign direct investment and overall largest two-way trading partner.⁷ This longstanding friendship between the two nations stems from 1965, when Australia was the first country to recognize Singapore's independence, and it has been strengthened by regular diplomatic visits between the leaders and officials of their respective governments for decades.⁸ Overall, the relationship between these two nations is considered cooperative, cordial, and mutually beneficial to both parties. Areas of disagreement are limited, typically revolving around addressing the growing influence of China and regional leadership disputes. Both countries share concerns regarding China, however due to its smaller size and reliance on trade, Singapore may be more inclined to develop further economic ties with China while Australia retains greater economic and military might to take a stronger stance against Chinese aggression, perceived or realized. Further, while Australia asserts itself as a regional leader in the Indo-Pacific, Singapore has shown a preference for a

cooperative multilateral leadership approach through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).⁹

Australia also shares a similarly cordial relationship with Indonesia, underpinned by strong economic ties and development cooperation along with cooperation on climate change initiatives and regional security concerns. In 2019, the two countries signed a bilateral agreement, the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA), fostering economic cooperation between business entities and individuals that has facilitated a total of \$18.35 billions of two-way trade in goods and services in 2021-22.¹⁰ Indonesia is one of the fastest growing economies in the region and as such presents a significant opportunity for Australian business investments. In addition, Australia provides substantial development assistance to Indonesia in areas such as education, health, infrastructure, and responsible governance practices. The Australia-Indonesia Development Partnership's overarching goal is to promote Indonesia's prosperity and resilience and maintain regional stability in the Indo-Pacific.¹¹ Furthermore, given their geographical proximity the two countries collaborate on a number of regional

security issues including counterterrorism and maritime security.¹² While the relationship between Australia and Indonesia is on the whole a cooperative one, the two countries do have a number of issues on which they disagree. First, Australia's strict policies surrounding asylum seekers and its practice of turning away boats at the shoreline has been a source of tension. Many of these boats travel through, and as such are stranded in, Indonesian waters on their way to Australia.¹³ Second, the signing of the AUKUS pact in 2023 that kick-started cooperation between Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom on the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines has led to Indonesia expressing concerns over provoking China and the militarization of the region.¹⁴ Third, relations between the two countries were significantly strained in 2013 when Australia was caught wiretapping Indonesian officials, including the President, and this fanned an underlying mistrust on the part of the Indonesian government.¹⁵ Lastly, tension between Australia and Indonesia stems primarily from the 1999 East Timor crisis where Australia strongly supported East Timor's independence from Indonesia.¹⁶ Despite these tensions, however, deepened cooperation

between Australia and Indonesia in the areas aforementioned has improved relations between the two and fostered a cordial partnership.



Figure 2: Map of AA Power Link

The AA Powerlink Project Effect

The governments of Australia and Singapore granted approval for the Australia-Asia Power Link project in August and October of 2024 respectively, marking a significant area of cooperation between the two nations.¹⁷ This mutually beneficial project will result in millions of dollars contributed annually to the Australian economy from the sale of the renewable energy to Singapore, and supply up to 15% of Singapore's energy needs, reducing its reliance on

fossil fuels and cutting their CO2 emissions by six-million tons annually.¹⁸ As such, both countries committed to collaboration on the project with little domestic resistance.

The geopolitics of national and regional transitioning to renewable energy is a relatively new topic of study, however, like other resources renewable energy has the potential to be used as geopolitical leverage and to change regional power dynamics around the globe. As a regional power in the Indo-Pacific, Australia is in an advantageous position to leverage its suitable environment for wind and solar power and the resulting electricity exports to strengthen bilateral and multilateral relations with key trade and defense partners in Asia.¹⁹ Through this project there has been a strengthening of the long-standing cooperative ties between Australia and Singapore, and increased cooperation between democratic countries in the region can counter the increasing threat of China in the Indo-Pacific.

The submarine cable that will connect solar farms in Australia to energy grids in Singapore will ultimately have to transit through Indonesian waters, and as such cooperation with the Indonesian

government is essential. Strained relations in the past between Australia and Indonesia could come to bear on the completion of this project, however, the government has agreed to let the submarine cable to transit their territorial waters with the exact route still being finalized.²⁰ Part of the deal includes the future possibility of branching off the submarine cable to provide power to the Indonesian archipelago as well, further interconnecting the countries in that region and fostering cooperation and stability between democratic partners.²¹

The Role of External Actors

The entire Indo-Pacific region faces the challenge of the assertion of power and rise of influence of the Chinese government. While the Australia-Asia Powerlink project has no direct involvement from China, their ambitions and influence in the region undoubtedly has effects on the geopolitics of the project and the relations between the countries involved. The development of the world's largest solar farm in Australia and the expansion of a transnational renewable energy production, storage, and transmission network may come to conflict with China's dominant position as a major producer and exporter of solar technology. China exports solar panels, in particular to

countries across Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, making them a key player in the region's renewable energy sector.²² Australia's assertion of regional leadership and the ambitious AA Powerlink project may increase tension in the region over the renewable energy sector.

In addition, Australian assertiveness and the interconnectedness of democratic countries turning away from China threatens to undermine China's Belt and Road Initiative ("BRI"). The BRI includes projects to expand trade routes, spur economic growth, and promote regional integration in the Indo-Pacific and exclude the influence of western countries aligned with the United States, such as Australia.²³ Further, China's close economic ties with its neighbors in the region mean that the Chinese government has a large stake in maintaining their sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific. China is ASEAN's largest trading partner, an organization of which Indonesia and Singapore are both members.²⁴ Increasing trade relations, energy connectivity, and overall cooperation between ASEAN countries and Australia, to the exclusion of China, is likely to be a source of conflict. Lastly, as part of the Belt and Road Initiative China has launched joint

ventures with numerous countries in the region to cooperate on technological advancement and infrastructure development. For example, Indonesia and China have been cooperating on infrastructure projects such as industrial complexes, power plants, tourism facilities, and roads, all of which benefit Indonesia and expand Chinese influence and connection with the country.²⁵ As Indonesia is a part of the AA Powerlink project, there is a risk of provoking China by undermining its own initiatives in favour of cooperation with Australia and the West.

Given China's track record on foreign interference and extreme measures to protect its interests abroad, one could assume there is a possibility of Chinese interest in undermining the AAPowerLink project and overall connectivity between ASEAN countries and Australia. China has consistently and fervently warned against any effort on the part of other

countries to undermine cooperation on the Belt and Road initiative, and has spoken out about western influence in the region and the confrontation between the Chinese and opposition camps.²⁶ As such, the players in this project must be cognizant of the potential threat that China poses to the initial completion, and possible expansion, of the Australia-Asia Power Link.

Political Risks: Australia

Australia is a federal parliamentary democracy with power divided across the national, state, and local governments. It operates under a constitutional monarchy, with the Governor-General, currently Sam Mostyn, serving as the representative of the Crown. Political power is primarily concentrated in the federal Parliament, consisting of the Australian Labor Party (“ALP”), Liberal Party, and the Nationals.²⁷ The Prime Minister is Anthony Albanese, leader of the ALP, along with Richard Marles who serves as the Deputy Prime Minister.²⁸

Australia is widely recognized as a stable and well-functioning democracy. Its compulsory voting system and preferential voting method contribute to high voter turnout and majority-backed governments. Although political scandals have occasionally shaken public confidence, such as the 2021 Macdonald-Obeid scandal involving corrupt mining licenses in New South Wales, studies have shown Australians largely maintain trust in their government, especially during times of national crisis (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic).²⁹

Political Support and Opposition

The Albanese government has been a strong supporter of the AAPowerLink project, emphasizing its potential to position Australia as a leading renewable energy exporter. The Treasurer has also reinforced the government's commitment, highlighting the project's significant role in helping Australia meet its net zero emissions target by 2050.³⁰

However, political risk arises from the possibility of a change in leadership. The next federal election is scheduled to occur between March and May 2025, and the Liberal Party, currently in opposition, has expressed a preference for nuclear energy over large-scale solar initiatives. Ted O’Brien, the Liberal Party’s energy spokesperson, claimed that “a grid with nuclear energy would cost 44% less by 2050 than the mostly renewable energy system being built under Labor”.³¹

If the Liberal Party wins the 2025 election, there is a risk that public funding and policy support could shift away from solar energy, potentially affecting the AAPowerLink project. This scenario is not without precedent. A similar shift occurred in the United States, when the pro-renewables Obama administration (which

supported clean energy through tax credits and international initiatives like the Clean Energy Ministerial)³² was succeeded by the Trump administration, which favored fossil fuels and rolled back solar subsidies.³³

Within Australia, the Nationals, (who often partner with the Liberal Party) are divided in their stance on renewable energy. While some members support clean energy projects, others prioritize rural industries such as mining and agriculture, which could conflict with the goals of the AAPower Link project.³⁴ If the political leadership were to change, the project could face risks such as reduced funding, regulatory delays, or policy redirection. However, these risks could be mitigated through private-sector investment and long-term contractual agreements, which can help insulate the project from shifts in political leadership and ensure its long-term viability.

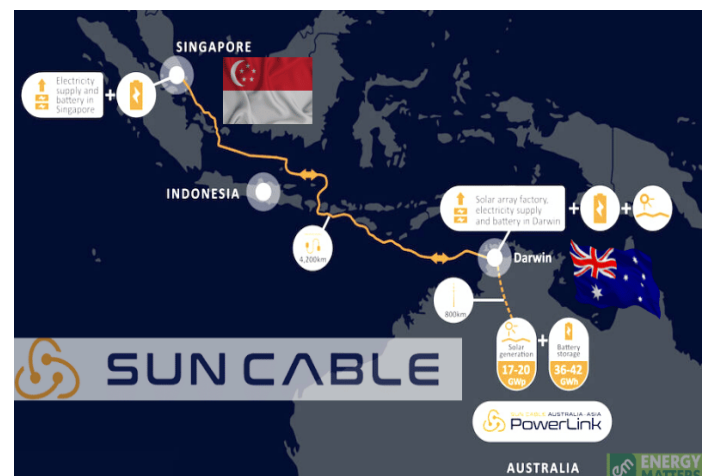
Key Sub-National Government Actors

The Northern Territory plays a significant role in the regulatory approval process for the AAPower Link project. Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro is responsible for overseeing major land lease agreements, environmental approvals, and ensuring

compliance with Indigenous Land Use Agreements (“ILUA’s”).³⁵

The Northern Territory has a history of supporting economic development through infrastructure projects, and as a result, local support for Sun Cable is generally strong. However, for the project to proceed smoothly, local governments in Northern Australia must also facilitate infrastructure access, including roads and logistics support for transporting materials to the project site.³⁶

A key requirement for project approval involves consultation with Indigenous communities, whose consent is essential under existing agreements and ethical protocols.³⁷ One potential risk is the disapproval of the project from the local Indigenous communities, which could lead to delays or legal challenges.



To mitigate this risk, the Northern Territory government and Sun Cable should consider allocating additional resources to accelerate environmental impact assessments and ensure meaningful, transparent engagement with Indigenous stakeholders. Proactively addressing environmental and cultural concerns can help build trust and support among local communities, ensuring long-term project sustainability.

Parliamentary Hearing and Public Discourse

As of February 16th, 2025 there have been no formal parliamentary hearings regarding the AAPower Link project. Despite this, the project has received considerable media attention, with coverage highlighting both its potential economic benefits, such as job creation in remote regions, and its possible environmental impacts. The absence of formal parliamentary review can result in a governance risk, as it may result in oversights, unaddressed concerns, or lack of accountability during the project's

implementation. To mitigate this risk, the federal government should initiate formal hearings or inquiries into the AA Powerlink project. This would allow for a comprehensive evaluation of the project's scope, identify potential challenges, and ensure that appropriate measures are in place.

Political Risks: Indonesia

The Indonesian government plays an important role in the implementation, as the submarine cables must pass through its territorial waters and require government approval.³⁸ Although the project has already been approved by the relevant government bodies, the project's execution introduces several political risks as Indonesia underwent a change in presidency. While Indonesia's 2024 general elections are completed, the unfolding direction of the new administration's policies will influence whether Sun Cable can proceed smoothly with their project or face additional political obstacles.

Indonesia's Current Political Condition

Under Joko Widodo, Indonesia was a democratic society where Widodo paid attention to infrastructure development, foreign investment, and economic growth.³⁹ During his administration, Indonesia looked for foreign investments to develop infrastructure and energy projects, like Sun Cable, with minimal political obstacles.⁴⁰ As of 2024, Indonesia had a transition in leadership with President Prabowo Subianto taking charge. Subianto's presidency triggered a shift towards nationalism, increased

military influence for government issues, and strict participation in foreign dependency in certain sectors.⁴¹

These shifts can influence the Sun Cable Australia-Asia Power Link as Indonesia may introduce stricter supervision and insist on local participation in Sun Cable's development. Unlike Widodo, who supported foreign-led initiatives, Subianto is more likely to push for changes in the agreement to ensure Indonesia receives greater benefit from this project. A stipulation in this situation could include increasing subcontracting Indonesian companies for the implementation process of the submarine cables.

Stance on Foreign Investment and Renewable Energy

Under Subianto's administration, the government continues to pursue renewable energy goals by boosting the proportion of renewables in Indonesia's energy portfolio, which is a key factor in the nation's energy transition. In order to meet its goals, the government continues to encourage foreign direct investments in the energy sector, even though there has been heightened caution around strategic investments.⁴² Recent policies that have been changed include easing specific local content requirements for renewable energy projects, which refers to the regulations that mandate a certain percentage of goods

or services in a project to come from domestic companies, to allow for more international partners.⁴³ However, in comparison to Widodo's era, Subianto exhibits extra scrutiny over foreign investments and is strict on the local benefits for Indonesia.

Local Economic and Social Benefits

Before President Prabowo Subianto, Sun Cable was required to include partnerships with local academic and research institutions to help technology and knowledge transfer. As the initiative focuses on strengthening local expertise and skills in the renewable energy sector, around 5,000 people will participate in programs designed to train them for jobs within this industry.⁴⁴ Establishing domestic expertise can foster long-term innovation for renewable energy. By negotiating for knowledge transfer, Indonesia plans to enhance local industry participation and prepare a future workforce that can sustain the country's energy.⁴⁵ The project itself can lead to economic benefits by delivering an estimated investment of around \$2.5 billion over the project's lifetime. In terms of ameliorating the workforce, the Power Link is projected to create around 7,500 jobs for Indonesians, simultaneously boosting local employment and economic growth. This program also supports local

industries by integrating Indonesian companies into the project's supply chain.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, there is a possibility of renegotiating the terms of agreement with the country's change in presidency and greater nationalistic leadership.

Mitigation Strategies

To ensure that the Australia-Asia Power Link project is implemented smoothly under a new nationalistic government, Sun Cable must align its values with the new administration's priorities. Since Prabowo has increased scrutiny over foreign investments, Sun Cable should emphasize its commitment to local economic growth by increasing opportunities for Indonesian companies and allowing greater local participation within the project itself. By reassuring the transfer of knowledge and strengthening partnerships with Indonesian institutions beyond the agreed 5,000 participants, they will demonstrate commitment and be able to secure long-term political stability. Additionally, maintaining communication with key regulatory bodies in their administration, such as the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, will be beneficial to ensure compliance with any policy changes. Sun Cable must position themselves as partners in Indonesia's renewable energy transition

rather than foreign entities operating within their country borders. By taking these steps, Sun Cable can modify their process moving forward according to Indonesia's new political landscape and secure long-term stability in the implementation of the Australia-Asia Power Link.

Political Risks: Singapore

Singapore is a unitary parliamentary republic, governed by three branches: the legislative, executive, and judiciary. As of May 2025, Lawrence Wong serves as the Prime Minister and head of government.⁴⁷

Wong's administration has shown strong support for energy diversification and the importation of green energy. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Wong held various senior government roles, notably serving as the Chief Executive of the Energy Market Authority ("EMA").⁴⁸

The EMA is a governmental agency under the Ministry of Trade and Industry which is responsible for advancing, regulating, and developing Singapore's energy sector.⁴⁹ In October 2024, the EMA granted conditional approval for the AAPowerLink project, allowing up to 1.75 gigawatts of low-carbon electricity to be imported into Singapore. This decision aligns with Singapore's long-term strategy to decarbonize its energy supply.⁵⁰ This support is consistent with the goals outlined in Singapore's Green Plan 2030, which reflects the country's commitment to the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Paris

Agreement. The plan aligns with Singapore's goal toward achieving net zero emissions by 2050.⁵¹

As a unitary state, Singapore does not have sub-national (state or provincial) governments with independent authority, unlike the federal systems the other key stakeholders have, such as Australia or Indonesia. Consequently, all decisions regarding national energy policy, including the Sun Cable project, rest solely with the central government. The People's Action Party ("PAP"), Singapore's long-standing ruling party, places significant emphasis on clean energy and sustainability. The AAPowerLink project aligns well with PAP's platform and the government's Energy Transition policy, which aims to import up to 4 GW of low-carbon electricity by 2035—approximately 30% of Singapore's projected electricity supply.⁵²

Currently, Singapore remains heavily reliant on natural gas, with 95% of electricity in 2020 generated from this fossil fuel, primarily imported from Indonesia and Malaysia.⁵³ While this provides energy security, it conflicts with Singapore's climate goals. Recognizing this, the government has made reducing emissions a key national priority.

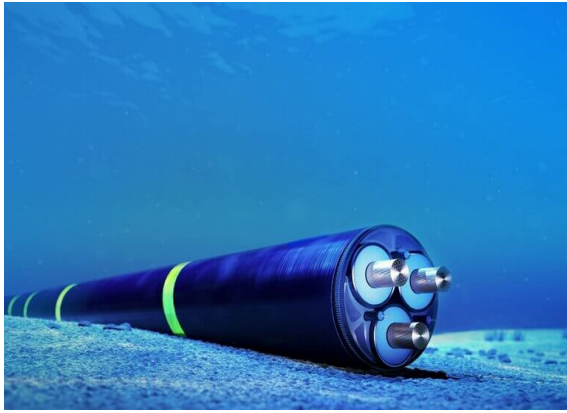


Figure 4: Submarine Cable

In Budget 2022, then-Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong announced that Singapore would raise its climate ambition by targeting net zero emissions by 2050, reinforcing the country's commitment to a low-carbon and sustainable future. The AA Power Link would allow Singapore to be on a path to achieve its long-term sustainability goals to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and achieve the country's commitment to net zero emissions by 2050.⁵⁴ The project is expected to provide as much as 15% of Singapore's electricity supply when it becomes operational in the early 2030s.⁵⁵

Associated Risks

The AAPowerLink project carries several technical and environmental risks for Singapore. The proposed 4,300 km subsea cable would be the longest and deepest of its kind, with no existing precedent of

this scale. This raises concerns about reliability, potential transmission losses, and high maintenance costs. Environmentally, the cable could disrupt marine ecosystems through electromagnetic fields and construction impacts, especially as it passes through the habitats of endangered species like turtles and whale sharks. So, while Singapore's Energy Market Authority has granted conditional approval in October 2024 to Sun Cable to import up to 1.75 GW of electricity, the project's complexity and risks may explain why no formal purchase agreement has yet to be signed.⁵⁶

Economic Considerations

Australia

The construction and implementation of the AA Powerlink project would involve numerous economic considerations and implications. The project has a large, estimated budget, at AU\$35 billion.⁵⁷ Consequently, the largest financial hurdle for the project yet has been covering its initial capital costs.⁵⁸ In 2022, initial funding from Australian billionaires Mike Cannon-Brookes and Andrew Forrest through their companies, Grok Ventures and Squadron Energy, respectively, totalling tens of millions of dollars.⁵⁹ Following internal leadership disputes over funding and project viability, Cable was sold to Grok Ventures after a bidding process in 2023, with Ryan Willemsen-Bell operating as the company's current CEO^{60, 61}.

While the Australian government has helped the project attain funding through regulatory procedures, they have not directly invested money in the project. In mid-2022, the project was placed on a government investment high priority list, an important signal for investors which aided the project in

attracting external funding, while leaving the door open for potential government funding as well.⁶²

Infrastructure Australia has similarly provided an endorsement for the potential economic benefits of the project.⁶³ The Singaporean government and Indonesian governments are also not directly funding the project but have similarly shown their support for the project through approvals and recommendations for the project.

The project is also predicted to bring business to local Australian high-technology companies. For example, Sun Cable has contracted Australian company 5B to supply prefabricated solar panels to accelerate the scaling of the solar farm, a crucial part of the project, by allowing for quick assembly.⁶⁴

Australia is the second largest exporter of coal globally, which has been scrutinized as climate change intensifies and there is an increasing push towards renewable energy.⁶⁵ However, the country is working to expedite the shutdown of its coal energy plants, and transition to renewable energy sources.⁶⁶ The Australian economy is heavily reliant on export revenues from coal and gas, despite their substantial negative environmental impacts.⁶⁷ Sun Cable would

instead harness Australia's wealth of renewable energy resources, providing an alternative to the often-critiqued coal and gas export industries. The economic boost from Sun Cable thus provides a significant opportunity for the Australian economy to ease the impending transition – in Darwin, for example, Sun Cable is projected to replace a large amount of the city's fossil fuel-generated electricity.⁶⁸

The positive outlook for the renewable energy industry because of increasing innovation and commitment to implementation also corresponds with the large economic potential of the project. The cost of generating solar energy is falling significantly. The low marginal cost associated with generating and transporting one unit of renewable power demonstrates another economic advantage of pursuing the opportunity.⁶⁹

Singapore and Indonesia

The Singaporean government has shown its support by declaring the project viable and giving it conditional approval, with no direct government funding.⁷⁰ The project stands to result in some economic benefits for Singapore by diversifying the country's technology and imports.⁷¹ Furthermore, the

project will result in increased resilience of the country's energy grid, which would make economic activities less vulnerable to unexpected outages.⁷² However, Singapore will also face a moderate level of economic risk from the project. Sun Cable proposed to supply 15% of the country's energy needs through the cable.⁷³ Having the energy supplied by another country and running through international waters leaves Singapore's energy grid somewhat vulnerable in the case of conflict, damage, or failure of the power system.

Sun Cable has also received support from the Indonesian government, who has given Sun Cable a recommended route through which the transmission cables will pass through Indonesian waters and granted a permit allowing subsea surveying.⁷⁴

Opposition

The project, although poised to be a potentially transformational opportunity environmentally and for the Northern Territory of Australia, is not without opposition. Criticisms from external stakeholders center around the high cost of the project, while its failure to meet certain milestones when compared to initial projections has also drawn scrutiny.⁷⁵ The commercial viability of the project has also been brought into question due to “line loss” – the difference between the energy that enters the cable and the energy that exists it due long travel distances, especially as the 4300 kilometers from Australia to Singapore is significant.⁷⁶ The enormous costs of the project, including building the solar and battery facility, cable manufacturing facility, and the cable itself have also faced criticism.⁷⁷ The costs of the batteries and cable are also uncertain when compared to more easily predictable variables like energy prices and demand.⁷⁸

Australian locals have also expressed opposition to the project, regarding several concerns. Sun Cable aims to manufacture necessary components at a facility in the north of Australian state Tasmania, citing the state's stable climate, convenient access to

power, and proximity to a deep-sea port as reasons for the location choice.⁷⁹ Locals have expressed concerns about potential disruptions that years of construction would bring to the otherwise quiet and fairly unobstructed area.⁸⁰ A 200-metre tower that would be built, critical to the manufacturing and performance of the cable, is also a cause for concern, as locals worry it will place their homes in shadow and spoil otherwise uninterrupted views.⁸¹ Sun Cable has administered multiple community consultation opportunities; however, community members are worried whether their input will be actually taken into consideration for the project.⁸² There is no significant international opposition to the Sun Cable project.

The government of Tasmania, conversely, has expressed that it is strongly in favor of the project. The projected economic impacts of the manufacturing facility are significant, as AUD\$350 million would be injected into the state's economy each year.⁸³ 800 jobs in construction and 400 jobs in operation are also estimated to be added, and the project would provide “green” jobs for young locals entering the workforce, while also contributing to decarbonization efforts²⁸. From their view, the community stands to greatly

benefit from the project, despite the fact that a large influx of workers could reduce housing affordability and availability.

While Sun Cable's project to export solar power from Australia to Singapore has received conditional

approval from the Singaporean government, potential opposition could come from concerns regarding the project's cost and risk when considering the possibility of closer, more affordable renewable energy imports from nearby Indonesia.⁸⁴

Indigenous Considerations

The engagement of Indigenous groups, environmental concerns, and land rights are all likely to be contentious and a subject of debate in a project of this size. The participation of local Indigenous groups in Australia will play a key role in broader land use agreements, with formal discussions expected to establish arrangements that support Indigenous communities while also ensuring mutual benefits for all stakeholders involved in this large-scale project, particularly given its significant reliance on Northern Territory land and the supporting infrastructure in Indonesia and Singapore.

Australia

Two main legal instruments used in Australia to protect Indigenous land rights are Indigenous Land Use Agreements (“ILUAs”) and Native Title deeds.⁸⁵ These frameworks give traditional landowners a voice in development projects that affect their ancestral lands. Since the Northern Territory is rich in Indigenous history, culture, and sacred sites, Sun Cable must navigate this legal and cultural landscape carefully. Sun Cable has reportedly begun negotiations with

Indigenous communities, although the specific terms remain unclear.⁸⁶ However, it is likely that ILUAs—or similar agreements—are being considered or negotiated. These agreements typically include provisions for environmental stewardship, job opportunities for Indigenous peoples, and economic benefits such as compensation or revenue sharing.⁸⁷ Formal agreements are also expected to address the preservation of sacred sites, employment opportunities, and conditions of environmental management. Past agreements in similar contexts have included such terms, and representative Indigenous organizations often engage in these negotiations to ensure their communities benefit tangibly from development projects.⁸⁸

However, the success of these agreements depends on more than just what's written on paper. Their real-world effectiveness hinges on strong government regulation, corporate accountability, and whether Indigenous communities have the resources and support to assert their rights. If ILUAs or similar agreements are finalized and implemented as part of the AAPowerLink project, they will serve as a key

measure of how well Indigenous interests are integrated and protected in this ambitious development.

Indonesia

The Indonesian project entails the installation of an underwater cable through territorial waters, and this raises fears about the rights of Indigenous coastal peoples who live off marine ecosystems. Indonesia has laws in place that acknowledge the rights of Indigenous peoples to land and resources, but these are not consistently enforced. The Indonesian recognition of Indigenous rights is less clear and more dependent on direct government intervention, as opposed to Australia where the Native Title legislation has established clear standards for Indigenous land negotiations. To what extent the Indonesian Indigenous have been legally consulted regarding the possible effects of AA Power Link on local economies, marine life, and fishing grounds is poorly covered in public media. There are valid concerns that arise, as to whether indigenous people have ever had a chance to express objections or negotiate a fair agreement because of this lack of transparency.⁸⁹

Singapore

Singapore, the project's main energy recipient, is less subject to pressures of Indigenous land rights than Australia and Indonesia. However, issues of sustainability, corporate accountability, and ethical provision of energy do arise still exist.⁹⁰ Whereas Singapore has allowed the importing of solar power via an undersea cable, overall impacts upon Indigenous peoples for energy production and distribution do not appear to have been considered. In addition to environmental concerns, social justice concerns such as Indigenous people's land rights and fair compensation to impacted groups are becoming involved in ethical buying of energy.⁹¹ With Singapore's global reputation for environmental sustainability, there is room for more vigilance over the ethical implications of the project and whether it upholds international standards for Indigenous rights and corporate responsibility.

The AA Power Link project's success must ultimately be gauged not just by the amount of electricity produced and revenue generated, but also by looking at how well it upholds Indigenous rights and incorporates Indigenous values into its planning. As renewable energy projects expand globally, ethical

considerations regarding Indigenous land rights and social impact must be at the forefront of decision-making.

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