*Innovation Competitions - Full Submission*

*Supplementary Answer Form*

Tick if this answer has been provided verbally:

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| Project code | TCPEN01 | Question Number | 37 |
| Question date | 18 September 2014 | Answer date | 26 Sept 2014 |
| Submission section question relates to | Criteria (d) Innovative | | |
| Topic | Other vessels | | |
| Question | We would be interested to understand more about the vessel that provides support to Basslink. In particular what do you understand to be its funding arrangements? | | |
| Notes on question |  | | |
| Answer | The Basslink interconnector in Australia has a call-off support contract with Alcatel-Lucent, who operate a telecom cable ship based in New Caledonia, some 2,700km from Basslink. However this arrangement is quite different to ACMA membership:  i) The vessel that would be used by Basslink is not dedicated to cable repairs. Instead it undertakes a mixture of telecommunications cable installation, repair and maintenance work. Should a fault occur on the Basslink cable during one of the times when the vessel is engaged in laying a new telecom cable, then Basslink would need to wait – potentially for several months - until this installation work was completed.  ii) The vessel has not been converted so that it can repair both power cables and telecom cables. Instead a number of pieces of repair equipment have been purchased by Basslink and are available to be used for the conversion of the vessel to a power cable repair ship. This conversion project, once started, is understood to take several weeks to complete. This aspect of Basslink’s arrangements bears more similarity to the “vessel of opportunity” approach to repairs used in Europe than to our proposal. Following any repair of the Basslink cable the vessel would need to be converted back to being telecom cable repair and installation vessel.  iii) The design of the equipment for power cable repair is based solely on the requirements of the Basslink cable. The equipment is unlikely to be suitable for other cables which may be larger, heavier, have different storage requirements or a larger minimum bend radius.  iv) In contrast to our proposals, which include full sea trials, we understand that Basslink’s power cable repair equipment has not been tested.  The arrangement described above, if applied in Europe, would not provide a substantial improvement over the current situation where vessels of opportunity and power cable repair equipment can generally be chartered at a few months notice. We understand that it has been selected for Basslink because the situation in Australia is substantially worse than in Europe: since there are very few offshore cables in Australia little or no repair equipment is available locally and much longer times are required for vessels and equipment to arrive on site. Relative to the unattractive alternatives such as waiting for a repair vessel to arrive from Europe, Basslink’s arrangement represents an improvement.  We understand that the equipment needed to modify the vessel for power cable repair has been purchased by Basslink at their sole expense. Again, we understand that this reflects the absence of any acceptable alternatives due to the distance between Australia and the base locations of power cable vessels and power cable repair equipment. It also reflects the fact that there are no other submarine power cables in the vicinity for Basslink to share the costs with. For European cables this approach to repair would not be attractive, and – as would be expected – no European cables have adopted it. | | |
| Attachments |  | | |