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CopperString calls proposals for nation-building construction contract; 750 full-time jobs

CopperString 2.0, the transmission line development that will finally integrate Queensland's expansive North West Minerals Province (NWMP) into the National Electricity Market (NEM) and extend the national transmission grid across Northern Queensland moves closer today with the release of a formal Request For Proposal (RFP) for construction of the scheme. Following the recent completion of a comprehensive resource economics study that validates the immense untapped potential and long-term sustainability of the NWMP, Townsville businessman Mr John O'Brien, Founder and Executive Chairman of the CopperString 2.0 project, said backers of the transformative \$1.5 billion CopperString 2.0 project have decided to proceed with the next stage of procurement by issuing a formal RFP to qualified contractors.

"Today is another key milestone for CopperString 2.0 with the release of the formal procurement RFP that takes us closer to starting construction on the iconic "missing link" of the Queensland transmission grid linking Townsville to the NWMP and, importantly we create 750 jobs for the 3 year construction program and around 2,500 additional minerals-sector jobs for the next 30 years" said Mr O'Brien.

CopperString 2.0 is a fantastic opportunity for the construction industry to participate in a significant Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contract for a genuine nation building project which will link the NWMP's isolated electricity supply network into the NEM. With the known in-ground resources in the NWMP including copper, zinc, phosphate and new-economy minerals valued at US\$455 billion (AUD\$749 billion), access to the NEM will dramatically reduce wholesale electricity prices and make energy purchasing more flexible for mining businesses and is expected to result in significant new mining investment and extensions to existing operations.

The proponents for the CopperString 2.0 project, CuString Pty Ltd, a local Townsville company, is seeking submissions from shortlisted contractors who demonstrate an ability to effectively and collaboratively participate in an Early-Contractor Involvement (ECI) process and to manage EPC projects of the scale and nature of CopperString 2.0's transformative common user energy infrastructure.

While the construction phase is expected to create 750 new FTE jobs for the 3 years program, CopperString's significance is the economic benefit that will be seen across Northern Queensland for the next 40 years by ensuring a sustainable minerals mining and processing industry for the region. "Constructing a \$1.5 billion transmission network will certainly create important short-term stimulus in Townsville and the west, and I'm committed to ensure this benefit flows through to our local community, however it's the decades of investment and employment in our minerals sector that CopperString facilitates that is the truly remarkable.", said Mr O'Brien.

"While the world is a challenging and uncertain place at present we can't take our eye of the future; we want to drive 40 years of prosperity for Northern Queensland by making our minerals mining and processing industries sustainable providing well-paying jobs for the community."

Mr O'Brien said that in recognition of the significant potential of CopperString to contribute to investment and jobs growth in Northern Queensland, the procurement process has been designed to allow collaboration with shortlisted Participants to develop high-quality, innovative, value for money solutions that will allow CuString to select the best party to provide the required construction works to deliver this critical piece of common user energy infrastructure.

This procurement approach is designed to encourage expertise to efficiently design and construct a system that is also efficient over the long-term via optimised whole-of-life cost to deliver value for money and outstanding performance for users of the transmission network. Consideration has been given in the development phase to a wide range of future uses for the Townsville to Mount Isa transmission grid, including large-scale clean-energy production, integration of existing gas-fired generation in the North West, and strategic opportunities such as hydrogen production around Townsville.

"The engineering strategy for CopperString has always focused on maximising strategic value for existing industries such as copper and zinc, but also with an eye to more clean-energy investment and game-changing opportunities such as hydrogen production.", said Mr O'Brien.

"These important strategic opportunities will flow through to our collaboration with construction businesses to deliver the network infrastructure in a way to maximises the short-term and long-term benefit for our community here in Northern Queensland., Mr O'Brien added.

Mr O'Brien said, "The outputs of the ECI process will facilitate the smooth and sustainable progression through the delivery phase of the CopperString 2.0 project, comprising the construction of approximately 1,100 km of extra high voltage overhead electricity transmission line that will extend from Mount Isa to the NEM grid, via a connection point to Powerlink Queensland's network at Woodstock, south of Townsville.

The Project comprises:

- 803 km of 330 kV transmission line;
- 320 km of 220 kV transmission line;
- 1,100 km of dual Optical fibre Ground Wire (OPGW) and associated communications facilities; and
- integration with the Ergon Energy power system at two brown-field substations in the NWMP.

Mr O'Brien said the Project Terms of Reference provides for connection options for power users and generators, including one option for an additional spur line connecting to the proposed Kennedy Wind Farm, near Hughenden.

In recognition of CopperString 2.0's importance to provide cheaper energy into the NWMP and making our resources sector more globally competitive, CuString is focused on protecting the environment and minimising the footprint of its operations. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared for the Project and for public consultation and we are actively working with local landowners regarding the potential impact of the Project on their land.

Mr O'Brien said CuString will require all Contractors to implement strategies to protect the environment for the duration of the Project.

CuString is also acutely aware that the Project intersects areas of known cultural sensitivity, including rock art and burials, as well as artefact scatters. We acknowledge the protection of these areas and the implementation of strategies to protect Cultural Heritage are required and we will work with traditional owners to accommodate this.

Mr John O'Brien says the estimated \$1.5 billion transmission line's key objective is to create billions of dollars in economic benefits to Queensland by delivering reliable and competitively priced electricity to the North West Minerals Province and the minerals mining and processing industry across the Townsville to Mount Isa corridor.

The closing date for the submission of proposals in response to the RFP is 1 July 2020.

About CopperString 2.0

- CopperString 2.0 is a circa \$1.5 billion, 1100-kilometre, overhead high-voltage electricity transmission network connecting the North West Minerals Province, centred on Mount Isa and Cloncurry, to the National Electricity Market (NEM) near Townsville.
- CopperString 2.0 will create up to 750 jobs during construction and up to 30 operational jobs.
- CopperString 2.0 will use an estimated 60,000 tonnes of steel for transmission towers and reinforcement in foundations and 125,000 cubic metres of concrete.
- More than \$40 million spent on feasibility and development since 2009.
- \$4.75 million grant from the Federal Government in April 2019.
- \$1.18 million grant commitment from the State Government in August 2019.
- The Queensland Government declared CopperString 2.0 a Coordinated Project. Terms of Reference for the Environmental Impact Statement were released on 4 September 2019.
- Construction is anticipated to commence in the first half of 2021 subject to all approvals.

For further information: <http://www.copperstring2.com.au> or email info@copperstring2.com.au

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