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POWER IT UP

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CITY BEAT

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IT's the essential last piece of the puzzle.

Just one final approval from the State Government is all that's needed before a vital \$700 million energy project in North Queensland can kick off construction in September.

At stake are 500 well-paying jobs on the Kidston pumped hydro storage project, which will take four years to build and has been likened to our version of the Snowy Hydro 2.0 scheme.

But Genex Power top gun **Simon Kidston** (illustrated) and his crew are still waiting to wrap up talks with the government over the co-funding of an indispensable 185km transmission line to be built, owned and operated by state-owned Powerlink.

Premier **Annastacia Palaszczuk** announced last September that her government would kick in \$132 million to build the line.

Although Kidston has been waiting 10 months to nail down the final terms for the construction, operation and maintenance of the line, he didn't seem terribly irritated when City Beat rang for a chat on Wednesday.

"The Queensland Government has been a great supporter of this project and it's a great example of Federal/State co-operation," Kidston told us. "We've got all the contracts in place with builders and the funding's ar-

ranged."

Genex, which has secured a concessional loan of up to \$610 million from the Federal Government's Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, nailed down a 30-year deal in March to sell the power to EnergyAustralia.

The project, based about 280km northwest of Townsville, will see water pumped between two former gold mining pits to drive turbines. It's the first of its kind in the national electricity market in nearly 40 years.

A spin doctor for Energy Minister **Dr Anthony Lynham** said government support "remains subject to agreement on final conditions with Genex to ensure value for money for taxpayers".

"The Queensland Government has also been in discussions with NAIF regarding their decision to defer a final decision on the project until 30 September," he added.



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