Wongalea BESS

475 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), Armidale NSW 2350

For Eku Energy

29 May 2025

cogency

Planning | Engagement | Strategy

cogency

Document Details

Wongalea BESS

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Cogency Australia Pty Ltd
cogencyaustralia.com.au
office@cogencyaustralia.com.au

Document history

Revision	Date	Description	Author	Approved
1	07/04/2025	Draft Scoping Report	KD, DMM	RW
2	17/04/2025	Final Scoping Report	KD, DMM	RW
3	29/05/2025	Updated Scoping Report	KD, DMM	RW

We celebrate the physical and spiritual connections between Indigenous people and place expressed through the Birrarung Wilam (Common Ground) art project on the banks of Melbourne's Yarra River.

Acknowledgement of Country

Cogency acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet, work and write, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin nation, and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and emerging.

Cogency also extends that respect and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Armidale, the Anaiwan. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection with the land and waterways. We also recognise the resilience, strength, and pride of the Anaiwan and First Nations communities and acknowledge that Sovereignty was never ceded.

Executive Summary

This Scoping Report has been prepared by Cogency Australia (Cogency) on behalf of Eku Energy (the Proponent) for the proposed Wongalea Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure (the Project). The State Significant Development (SSD) is a BESS (with a nominal capacity of up to 300MW / 1200MWh) located in Armidale, New South Wales (NSW).

The purpose of this Scoping Report is to request and inform project-specific Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) which will guide the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Project.

This Report has been prepared in accordance with the *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report (DPIE, 2022)*.

A range of preliminary assessments have been undertaken to support the preparation of this Scoping Report and to provide a basis for further technical impact assessments that will form part of the Project's EIS. These include preliminary ecological, Aboriginal and historic heritage, fire, noise, and visual impact assessments, the results of which have informed the Project's potential Development Area and engagement strategy. They have been summarised and included in this Scoping Report to help determine the scope of work to be set under the project-specific SEARs.

A summary of the application is provided in Table 1111Table 11 below and further detailed in the following chapters.

Table 1111 – Application Summary

Application Summary	
Site	
Address	475 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), Armidale NSW 2350 (BESS Site) 473 Grafton Road, Armidale (primary access option 1) 495 Grafton Road, Armidale (primary access option 2 & transmission connection option 2) Grafton Road reserve (transmission connection option 1 & 2) 452 Grafton Road, Armidale (Armidale Substation)
Title Description	1//DP777437 (BESS Site) 19//DP112693 (primary access option 1 & transmission connection option 1) 115//DP755808 (primary access option 1) 2//DP777437 (primary access option 2 & transmission connection option 2) 1//DP999496, 8//DP112694, 2//DP99496 (Armidale Substation)
Project Site	~75 hectares
Development Area	~14 hectares
BESS Footprint	~6 hectares
Local Government Area	Armidale Regional Council
Restrictions on title	Caveat by Wongalea Land Holdings Pty Ltd Four electricity transmission easements
Planning	
Local Environmental Plan	Armidale Local Environment Plan 2012
Consent Authority	Minister for Planning & Public Spaces, coordinated by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)
Zones	Primary Production Small Lots (RU4) Special Purpose Zone - Public Utility Undertaking (SP2 Infrastructure)
Protection Layers	Site of Abattoir - "Wongalea" (Archaeological item #A032)

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Glossary

Abbreviation	Meaning
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACHAR	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report
AHIMS	Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
CEC	Clean Energy Council
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CIA	Cumulative Impact Assessment
CSEP	Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	NSW Environmental Protection Authority
EPBC	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
LGA	Local Government Area
LSC	Land Soil Capacity
LVIA	Landscape Visual Impact Assessment
kV	kilovolt
MER	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
MNES	Matters of National Environmental Significance
MW	Megawatt
NEM	National Energy Market
NVIA	Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
O&M	Operations and Management
OSOM	Oversized Overmass
PMST	Protected Matters Search Tool
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
RFS	NSW Rural Fire Service
SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SSD	State Significant Development
SHI	State Heritage Inventory
SOHI	Statement of Heritage Impact
TECs	Threatened Ecological Communities
TIA	Transport and Transport Impact Assessment
VRE	Variable Renewable Energy

1. Introduction

1.1 Project and Report Overview

Cogency Australia has prepared this Scoping Report on behalf of Eku Energy (the Proponent), to accompany an application for a State Significant Development (SSD) for the Wongalea Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (the Project). The Project involves the construction, operation and decommissioning of a BESS with a nominal capacity of up to 300MW/1200MWh and a direct connection to the existing TransGrid managed 132/330kV Armidale Substation.

The Project is predominantly located at 475 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), Armidale 2350 on approximately 6 hectares of land. It is approximately 5km east from Armidale township and 500m north of the Armidale Substation, within the Armidale Regional Local Government Area (LGA).

The Project aims to provide additional storage for the electricity grid, strengthen the region's energy stability, lower wholesale electricity costs, and support the transition to net-zero. It is located within the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), one of five NSW Government-designated REZs planned to host renewable energy generation and storage projects as the State replaces its ageing coal fired generators.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) with information regarding the Project, to inform and obtain project-specific Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs). This report has been prepared with consideration to the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and other Local, State and Federal Government policies and guidelines. This report has been guided by the *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* (2022).

A range of preliminary assessments have been undertaken to inform the siting of the BESS, support the preparation of this Scoping Report, and provide a basis for further technical impact assessments that will form part of the Project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). They include:

- Preliminary Ecological Assessment
- Preliminary Noise Impact Assessment
- Aboriginal & Historical Heritage Scoping Assessment
- Preliminary Transport Impact Assessment

The findings gathered from the preliminary assessments have helped inform the potential Development Area layout and will continue to influence the EIS and its contents. To help determine the scope of work to be set under the project-specific SEARs, the findings have been summarised and included in this Scoping Report.

1.2 Project Background

As major coal power stations continue to retire and government decarbonization policies accelerate, the percentage of renewably generated electricity has increased in the national electricity market (NEM). The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) forecasts the NEM will need to almost triple its generation capacity in response to increased electricity demand as a result of households and businesses switching from fuel and gas to renewable energy[1].

The Project intends to provide critical storage and firming services for the local and regional electrical grids as a greater share of variable renewable energy is continually developed across the New England REZ. Storage and firming technologies will help maintain grid stability and inertia to balance the peaks and troughs of renewable generation.

The Project has been intentionally sited to avoid potential environmental impacts and heritage items of historical and cultural significance. It is located at least 300 metres away from the Wongalea Abattoir heritage

[1] https://aemo.com.au/-/media/files/major-publications/isp/2024/2024-integrated-system-plan-isp.pdf?la=en

site and Commissioners Waters River and is adjacent to an existing substation which minimises the need for additional land clearing for lengthy transmission connections. Furthermore, it is located on surplus agricultural land, avoiding valuable productive land, that currently hosts four different transmission lines connecting Armidale to Inverell, Glen Innes, Koolkhan, and Coffs Harbour. As battery projects are generally less spatially intensive and require smaller land holdings than other renewable energy projects (such as wind or solar farms), they can largely avoid or minimise potential biodiversity, heritage, noise, visual and bushfire impacts through intentional design choices and manage any expected traffic impacts during construction and operation.

1.3 Project Location and Site

The Project will be located approximately five kilometres east of Armidale City, within the Armidale Regional LGA (Figure 1111Figure 11).

The Project Site consists of six lots on either side of Grafton Road (Waterfall Way) and is a total of 75 hectares. It is strategically located on surplus agricultural land and hosts existing electrical infrastructure including the Armidale Substation. The Project Site includes:

- The BESS Site, a single land parcel of approximately 48 hectares, which is located at the southwest corner of 475 Grafton Road, a large agricultural property.
- Site access from Grafton Road (Waterfall Way) to the BESS Site. Two options are being considered for the primary access.
- Direct transmission connection to Armidale Substation that crosses Grafton Road (Waterfall Way). Two transmission route options are being considered.
- An existing dwelling used by farmer workers that will continue residential use during the Project's operation.
- The Site of Wongalea: Abattoir at 475 Grafton Road, which is an archaeological heritage site outside of the proposed Development Area.

Table 2222Table 22 sets out the lot details that comprise the Project Site.

The Development Area (earthworks and construction) is estimated to be a maximum of 14 hectares which will be further refined during the EIS phase.

Table 2222 – Project Site Lot Details

Project Site	Property	Lot
BESS Site	475 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way)	1//DP777437
Primary Access 1 (preferred option)	475 Grafton Road	19//DP112693
Primary Access 2 (alternative option)	495 Grafton Road	2//DP777437
Transmission connection option 1	475 Grafton Road Grafton Road reserve 452 Grafton Road (Armidale Substation)	19//DP112693 1//DP999496, 8//DP112694, 2//DP99496
Transmission connection option 2	495 Grafton Road Grafton Road reserve 452 Grafton Road (Armidale Substation)	2//DP777437 1//DP999496, 8//DP112694, 2//DP99496

The Project will seek to connect to TransGrid's Armidale Substation via a direct 132kV transmission connection, following a similar route to the four existing transmission lines that cross east-west through the centre of the BESS Site. There is an additional 330kV transmission line that runs south through the Project Site to the Armidale Substation on the adjacent lot west of the BESS Site.

Primary access to the Project will be created from Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), a State Road that provides access to Armidale City and the New England Highway. Primary access option 1 crosses through an existing access on 473 Grafton Road, and option 2 proposes a new access on 495 Grafton Road. Secondary access will also be created from Grafton Road, utilising an existing cattle track, south of the Project Site.

The two nearest renewable energy facilities are the adjacent Armidale BESS and Eathorpe Battery, located south of Grafton Road (Waterfall Way). Both projects surround the Armidale Substation and are in the planning phase.

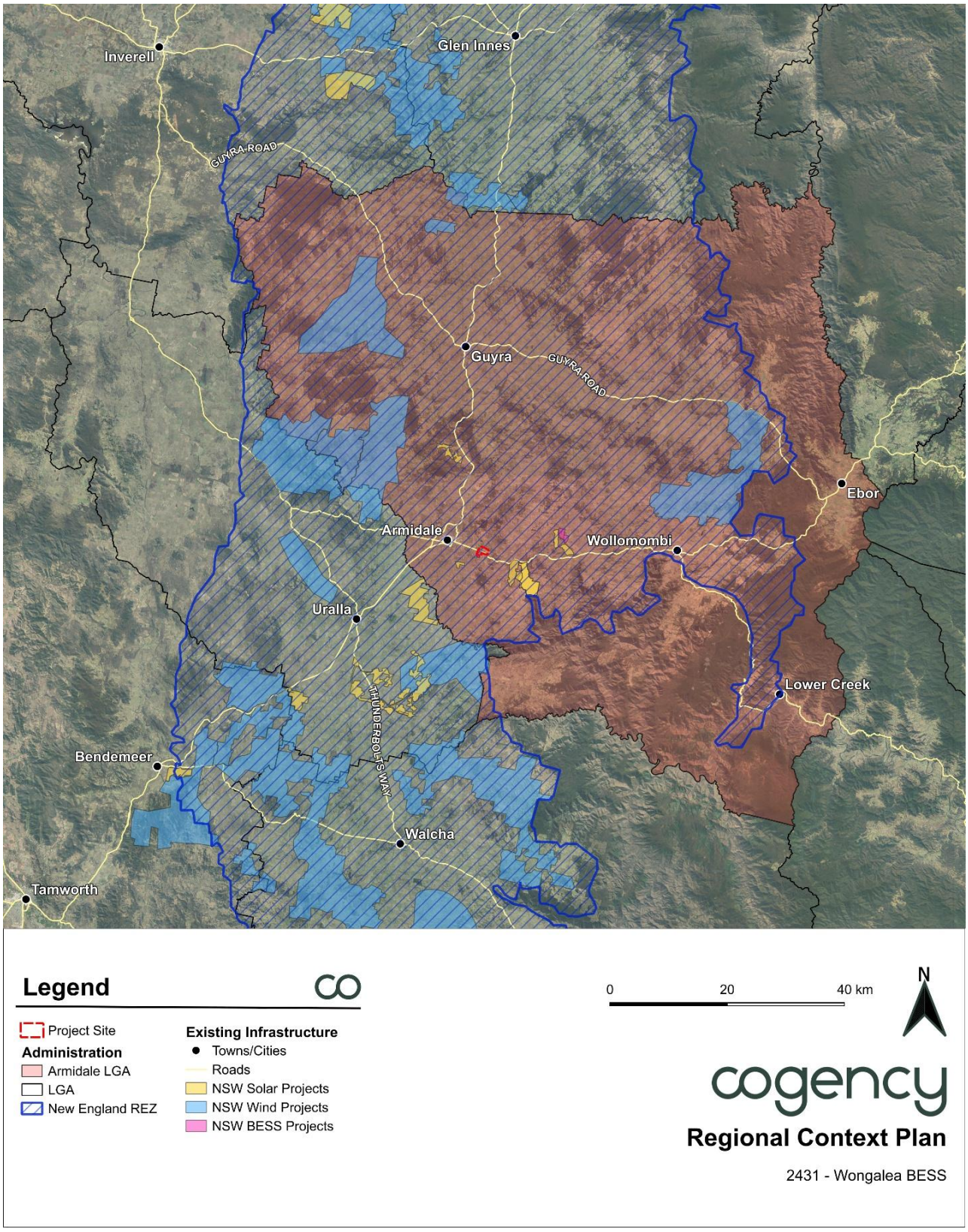

Figure 1111 – Regional Context Plan

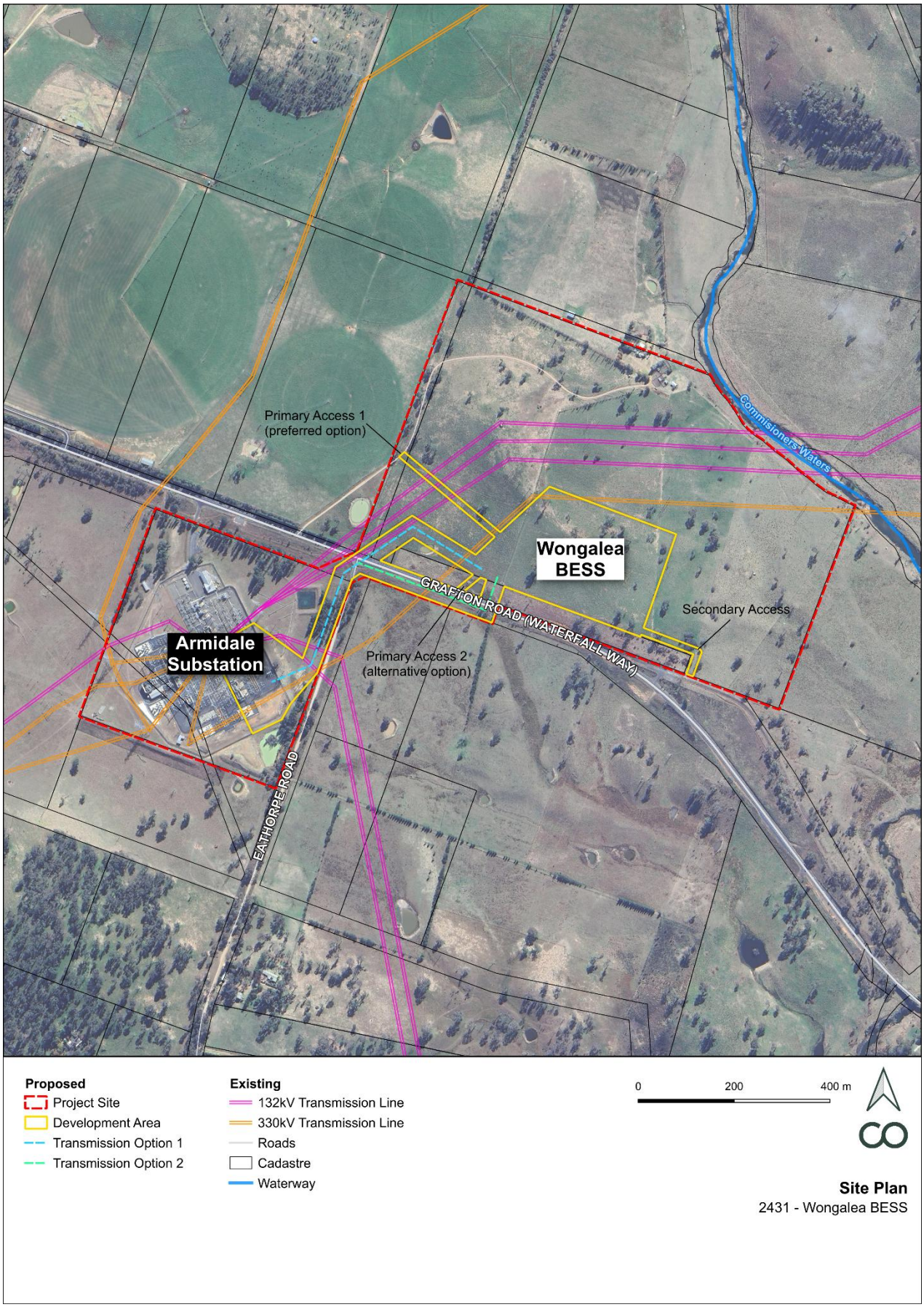

Figure 2222 – Site Plan

1.4 Project Applicant

Eku Energy (the Proponent) is a global energy storage development specialist who develop, build and operate battery energy storage systems with a key focus in Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom. Owned by two global financial powerhouses, a Macquarie Asset Management (MAM) managed fund and British Columbia Investment (BCI) Management Corporation, Eku Energy was established to meet the growing need for utility-scale battery storage worldwide, and exclusively focus on BESS technologies and their applications.

Their mission centres around developing and managing advanced energy storage systems that enhance grid stability, integrate renewable resources, and provide reliable, clean energy to communities. With a commitment to excellence and sustainability, the Proponent leverages cutting-edge technology and industry expertise to deliver projects that not only meet but exceed environmental and performance standards.

The Proponent currently has three other projects in Australia, including the operational Hazelwood BESS in Gippsland, and the Rangebank BESS in Cranbourne, Victoria and Williamsdale BESS in the Australian Capital Territory under construction.

Key details of the Proponent are provided in Table 3333Table 33.

Table 3333 – Applicant Details

Requirement	Details
Full Name/s	Eku Energy Australia Pty Ltd
Postal Address	Suite 1, Level 34, 360 Collins St Melbourne VIC 3000
Street Address (Project Site)	475 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), Armidale NSW 2350 495 Grafton Road, Armidale NSW 2350 Grafton Road 452 Grafton Road, Armidale NSW 2350
ABN	99 662 797 382
Nominated Contact	Rebecca Wardle, Cogency Australia on behalf of Eku Energy

1.5 Project Objectives

The key objective of the Project is to leverage the Site's proximity to the Armidale Substation and location within the New England REZ to store excess energy during periods of high generation and disperse during periods of high demand.

The Project will help support grid stability, reliability and efficiency to the NEM and help integrate a greater share of renewable energy generation. Generally, BESS projects are increasingly being developed to offer support services for the rollout of renewable energy generation facilities including supporting imbalances between supply and demand of locally and regionally generated renewable energy, providing voltage support and backup power when necessary and providing load leveling support.

The Project will offer benefits to the local community by providing direct and indirect employment opportunities and a collaboratively developed benefit sharing scheme. The Project's engagement strategy has been guided by the applicant's extensive experience engaging with local landowners, the broader community, and relevant stakeholders.

1.6 Purpose of this Document

This Scoping Report has been prepared to support a request to DPHI for project-specific SEARs. The Project is considered SSD under Section 2.6 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021. This Scoping Report has been prepared in accordance with the DPIE guidelines *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* (2022).

Accordingly, approval for the project is required under Part 4 of the EP&A Act.

The Scoping Report aims to:

- Describe the Project in simple terms.
- Give an early indication of community views of the Project and provide an overview of the community engagement that will be carried out during the preparation of the EIS.
- Identify the key matters requiring further assessment in the EIS and the proposed approach to assessing each of these matters, having regard to the relevant Government legislation, plans, policies, and guidelines.

This Scoping Report also aims to provide a description of the Project to key regulatory agencies and to identify the key environmental, social, and economic matters of relevance to the Project to inform the preparation of the SEARs. Under the provisions of Clause 4.12(8) of the EP&A Act, an EIS is required (and will be prepared) to accompany the SSD application for the Project, to be lodged with the NSW DPHI on behalf of the Planning Secretary. The SEARs will identify specific assessment considerations relevant to the Project that must be addressed in the EIS.

2. Strategic Context

This chapter provides a high-level identification of the key strategic elements that provide a preliminary justification for the development of the Project in the context of local, regional, state and national strategic planning and policy commitments.

2.1 Strategic Alignment

The Project addresses key federal, state and local planning policies as set out below.

Table 4444 – Summary of Strategy and Policy Alignment

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
National and International Context		
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP21) – The Paris Agreement	▪ The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 in December 2015, is an international treaty aiming to combat climate change. Its primary goal is to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, with efforts to keep it below 1.5°C. To achieve this, the Agreement requires countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient economies. ▪ Each country sets its targets, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), which are reviewed and updated every five years to reflect increasing ambition and progress. ▪ The Agreement also emphasises the importance of financial and technical support for developing countries to help them mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts.	▪ By increasing the availability of renewable energy in the electricity grid and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the Project will directly support the goals of the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement seeks to keep global temperature rise below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. The Project will contribute by storing clean, renewable energy. ▪ The Project aligns with Australia's NDCs under the Paris Agreement. These NDCs include targets for reducing emissions and increasing the use of renewable energy sources. By providing additional storage for renewable energy generation, the Project supports these targets and helps Australia meet its emissions reduction commitments.
Integrated System Plan 2024 **(Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO))**	▪ AEMO's Integrated System Plan (ISP) is a roadmap for the transition of the NEM power system, with a clear plan for essential infrastructure that will meet future energy needs. The ISP's optimal development path sets out the needed generation, storage and network investments to transition to net zero by 2050 through current policy settings and deliver significant net market benefits for consumers.	▪ The Project would contribute to the energy storage targets as outlined in the ISP and provide grid support services and stability as new variable renewable energy sources enter the NEM.
Net Zero Plan	▪ The Net Zero Plan will guide the Australian Government in the transition to the legislated target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Plan will determine a 2035 emissions reduction target which is due by the end of February 2025. The Plan will set out government priorities, establish policies and measures to drive down emissions and support ongoing	▪ The Project will support the transition towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and the 2035 emissions reduction target.

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
	and new investment in low emissions and renewable activities.	
State Context		
Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023	The *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* legislates NSW's ambitious approach to addressing climate change, enshrining a whole-of-government climate action to deliver net zero by 2050.	The Project will support the transition towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and the interim targets of 50% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 and 70% reduction on 2005 levels by 2035.
NSW Electricity Strategy	The NSW Electricity Strategy is the NSW Government's plan for a reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity future that supports a growing economy. The Strategy sets out three major goals. The first includes ensuring investment in generation technologies. The second guarantees an Energy Security Target if a level of capacity is not met by the market. The third is to ensure the NSW Government has the power to handle electricity emergencies. The Electricity Plan details the generation, transmission, distribution, and retail elements that combine to provide the State's electricity network. While the Plan states that the NSW Government has a neutral approach to electricity generation technology, it details that both NSW and Commonwealth laws prohibit the development of nuclear power stations. Furthermore, the Plan explains that the State's aging coal-fired power stations are reaching the end of their technical lives.	The Project aligns with the *NSW Electricity Plan* by contributing to the replacement of ageing generation equipment (i.e. coal-fired power stations) by storing renewable energy for the electricity grid. The Project will help manage demand and maximise share of renewable energy in the NEM.
NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy	The *NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy* is a comprehensive plan by the NSW Government aimed at transforming the state's energy infrastructure. This plan seeks to support the development of REZ's in the Central-West, New England, and South-West regions, projected to generate significant private investment, regional economic growth, and job opportunities.	The Project aligns directly with the Strategy by storing excess energy during periods of high generation and disperse during periods of high demand which will help lower household electricity costs.
NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap	The NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap is the State's comprehensive plan to transition to renewable energy. It aims to ensure reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy for the future. Key components include the development of REZ's, supporting new transmission infrastructure, encouraging investment in renewable	The Project will significantly contribute to the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap by enhancing the state's renewable energy capacity. The Project aligns with the Roadmap's goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
	generation and storage, and creating jobs.	lowering electricity costs for consumers. The Project will create construction and ongoing jobs and stimulate economic growth in the region, further supporting the state's broader economic and environmental objectives outlined in the Roadmap.
Regional Context		
New England North West Regional Plan 2041	*The New England North West Regional Plan 2041* is a 20-year land use plan that applies to multiple LGAs including Armidale Regional. The regional plan recognises a number of growth opportunities including the renewable energy sector, green technology and intensive agriculture. The vision for the region to 2041 is implemented through objectives, strategies and actions for the five parts of the plan: growth, change and opportunity, productive and innovative, sustainable and resilient, housing and place, and connected and accessible.	Elements of the Project directly apply to the following strategic objectives listed in the Regional Plan: **Objective 9: Lead renewable energy technology and investment.** The Project will support the future development of renewable energy facilities by storing excess renewable energy and discharging it in times of increased demand. **Objective 10: Support the transition to net zero by 2050.** The development of the BESS will create employment opportunities in the growing renewable energy sector and contribute to economic self-reliance.
Local Context		
Armidale Plan 2040	The *Armidale Plan 2040* is a strategic planning framework that will guide the development of the region for the next 20 years. The plan draws upon existing State and Local policies, strategies, masterplans, and prior studies to provide a consolidate and coordinated planning strategy. The plan identifies the four overarching goals of a developing economy, culture and belonging, health and wellbeing, and sustainability. The goals inform the Planning Principles which identify specific initiatives for the region,	Elements of the Project directly apply to the following Planning Principles of the Council Plan: **8.5.1 A Developing Economy: 1 Growth, Economic + Employment** **8.5.4 Sustainability: 10 Sustainability, Biodiversity + Smart City** The Project will help to stimulate growth in the renewable energy sector by increasing the storage capacity for future renewable energy developments and encouraging further investment in the Armidale Regional LGA.

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)	The Local Strategic Planning Statement sets out the strategic planning vision for Armidale Regional Council local government area. The LSPS is focuses on attracting new jobs and residents to the region by 2043 in response to slow population growth. The LSPS identifies three planning visions and their associated Planning Priorities.	Elements of the Project directly apply to the following Planning Priorities: **Planning Priority A2.2: Support the growth of identified Engine Industries through the provision of required supporting facilities and infrastructure.** **Planning Priority C4.1: Support the growth of appropriate renewable energy projects that provide benefits to the region.** The Project will support the growth of the renewable energy sector by increasing the storage capacity of renewable energy and create jobs during the Project's construction and operation phase.

2.2 Project Site and Context

2.2.1 Regional Setting

The Project is located within the Armidale Regional LGA and is part of the broader New England Northwest region in NSW. The Northwest region is one of Australia's most productive agricultural areas, with agricultural land in the tablelands area occupying approximately 80% of the region. The region is strategically located between Sydney and Brisbane and is well connected to adjoining regions and major cities via highways and regional airports. Tamworth and Armidale are regional cities where the majority of population growth is expected.

Armidale Regional Council LGA is predominantly rural with highly productive agriculture land. It is known for its natural beauty and extensive National Parks, State Forests and nature reserves including world heritage Gondwana rainforests. The LGA consists of the regional city of Armidale, Guyra township, and other village settlements including Ben Lomond, Ebor, Hillgrove, Black Mountain and Wollomombi.

Agriculture and education are the key economic industries that drive the local economy. Agriculture directly accounts for approximately 15% of jobs in Armidale Regional LGA with agricultural land largely used for sheep and cattle grazing, supported by fruit growing and viticulture.

There is a strong education sector based around the University of New England (UNE) and TAFE NSW in Armidale City. The UNE is the oldest regional Australian university and the largest individual employer in Armidale. It services the surrounding urban centres and the greater New England North West region.

Controlled environment horticulture, renewable energy and manufacturing are growth industries which build on the LGA's locational advantages that have the greatest potential to drive economic growth over the next 20 years.

The majority of Armidale Regional LGA is located within the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) which has the largest planned capacity in Australia (Figure 3333Figure 33). Most renewable energy facilities are expected to be located proximate to major transmission corridors in the region. Renewable energy projects are required to provide community dividends to support the growth of the region and recognise the region's contribution to national and state energy security.

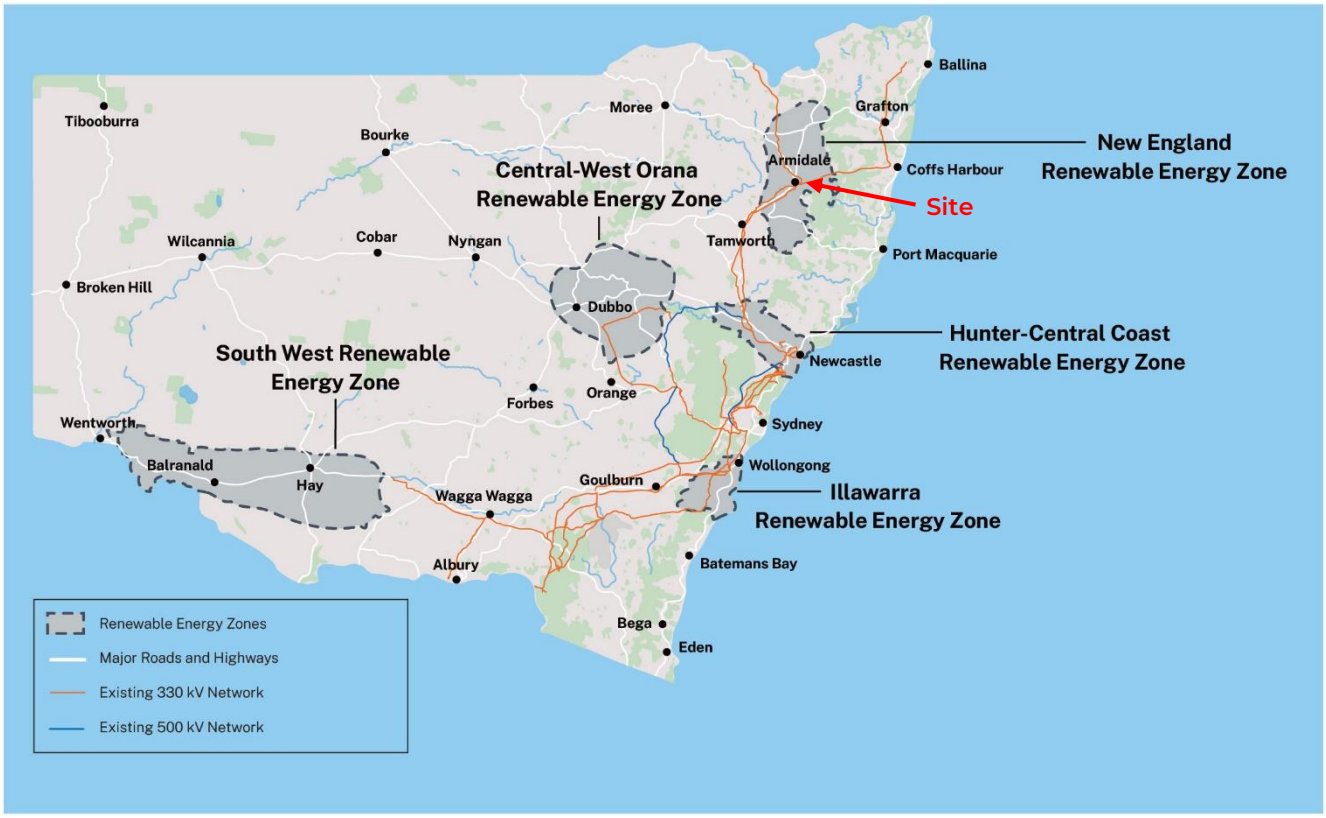

Figure 3333 – Location of NSW REZs[2]

2.2.2 Community Profile

The Project Site is located on Anaiwan Country, traditionally owned by the Anaiwan peoples. The lands of the Anaiwan people historically spans through the Northern Tablelands of NSW. Anaiwan land is situated in the high-elevation region west of the Great Dividing Range, traditionally a ceremonial gathering point on the Tablelands for neighbouring groups on the coast.

Located in Armidale City, approximately 5km east of the city centre (Figure 4444Figure 44), the regional city has a population of 23,967 (ABS 2021). The majority of future economic and population growth is expected to occur in Armidale City which currently accommodates 82% of homes in the LGA. Armidale differs from most inland regional centres because of its long-established university and has a wider range of jobs and business opportunities not usually found in the country. Education is the largest employment industry with primary, secondary and higher education making up 16.4%. of employment in Armidale city.

[2] https://www.transgrid.com.au/energy-transition/what-are-renewable-energy-zones-rezs-and-why-are-they-important-for-our-sustainable-future/

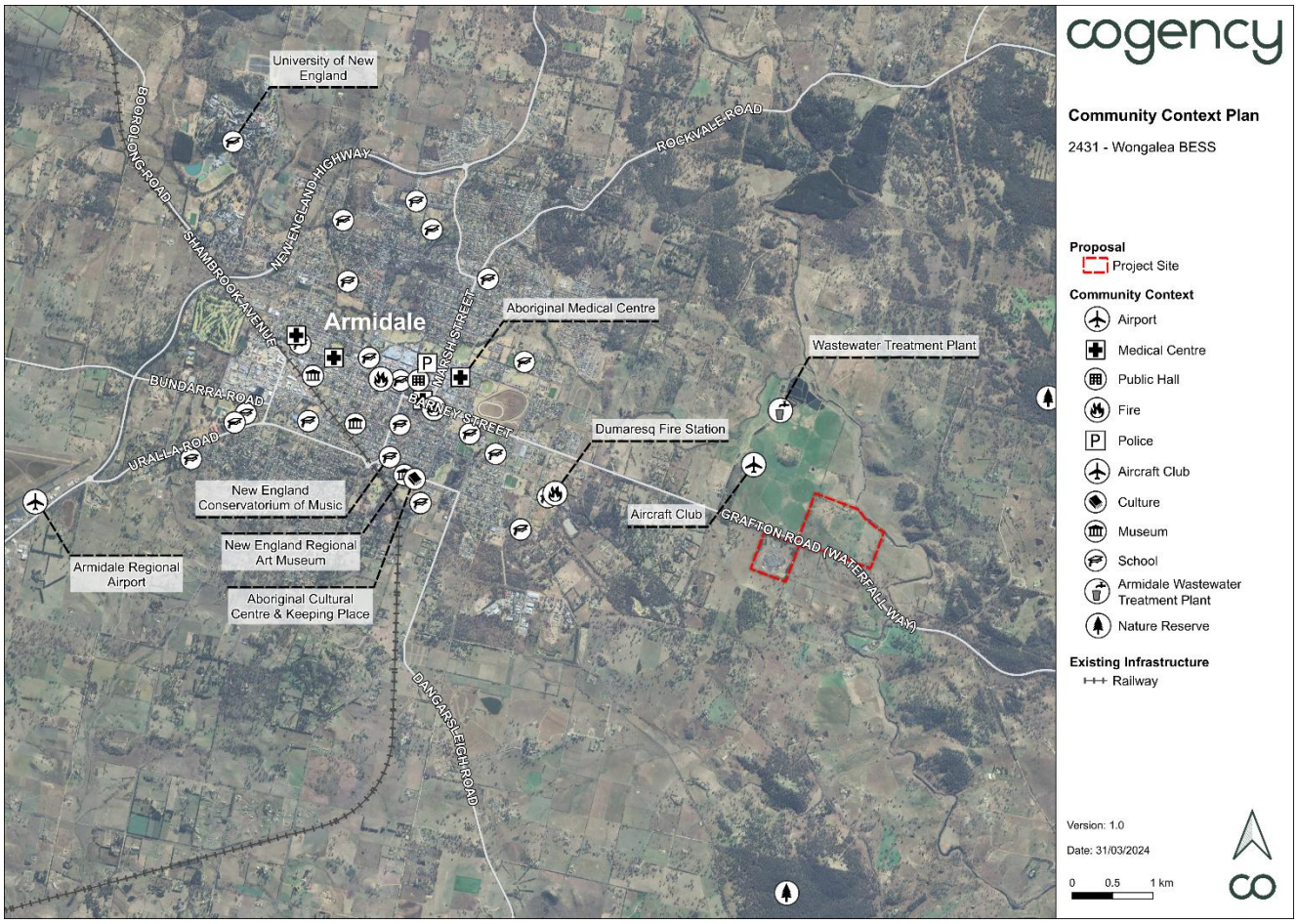

Figure 4444 – Community Context Plan

2.2.3 Location and Features

The BESS Site is approximately 48 hectares and part of a larger rural landholding currently used for agricultural activities. It contains one dwelling used by farm workers, farming infrastructure, an internal access track and the Wongalea Abattoir, a local heritage item listed in the Armidale Local Environmental Plan (LEP). The terrain includes a small hill in the south-west corner that slopes down towards Grafton Road (Waterfall Way) and Commissioners Waters that runs long the north-eastern boundary of the BESS Site. One 330kV and four 132kV transmission lines cross east-west through the centre of the BESS Site, connecting to the Armidale Substation. The BESS Site is predominately cleared farmed land with some patches of trees and small water bodies in the south-west corner. Significant disturbances to the natural environment have occurred due to a history of grazing and cropping activities.

The Project Site sits within a rural landscape, bisected by Grafton Road (Waterfall Way) and is immediately surrounded by rural residences, the Armidale Council Wastewater Treatment Plant and the New England Model Aircraft Club. To the west is Armidale City (5km), UNE (8.5km), New England Highway (8.5km) and Armidale Airport (9.5km). There are a number of nature reserves in the wider landscape, including Yina Nature Reserve (3km north) and Imbota Nature Reserve (4km south).

Within a 2km radius of the Development Area boundary, 1 associated and 85 non-associated dwellings have been identified, of these are 7 dwellings within a 1km radius (Figure 5555Figure 55).

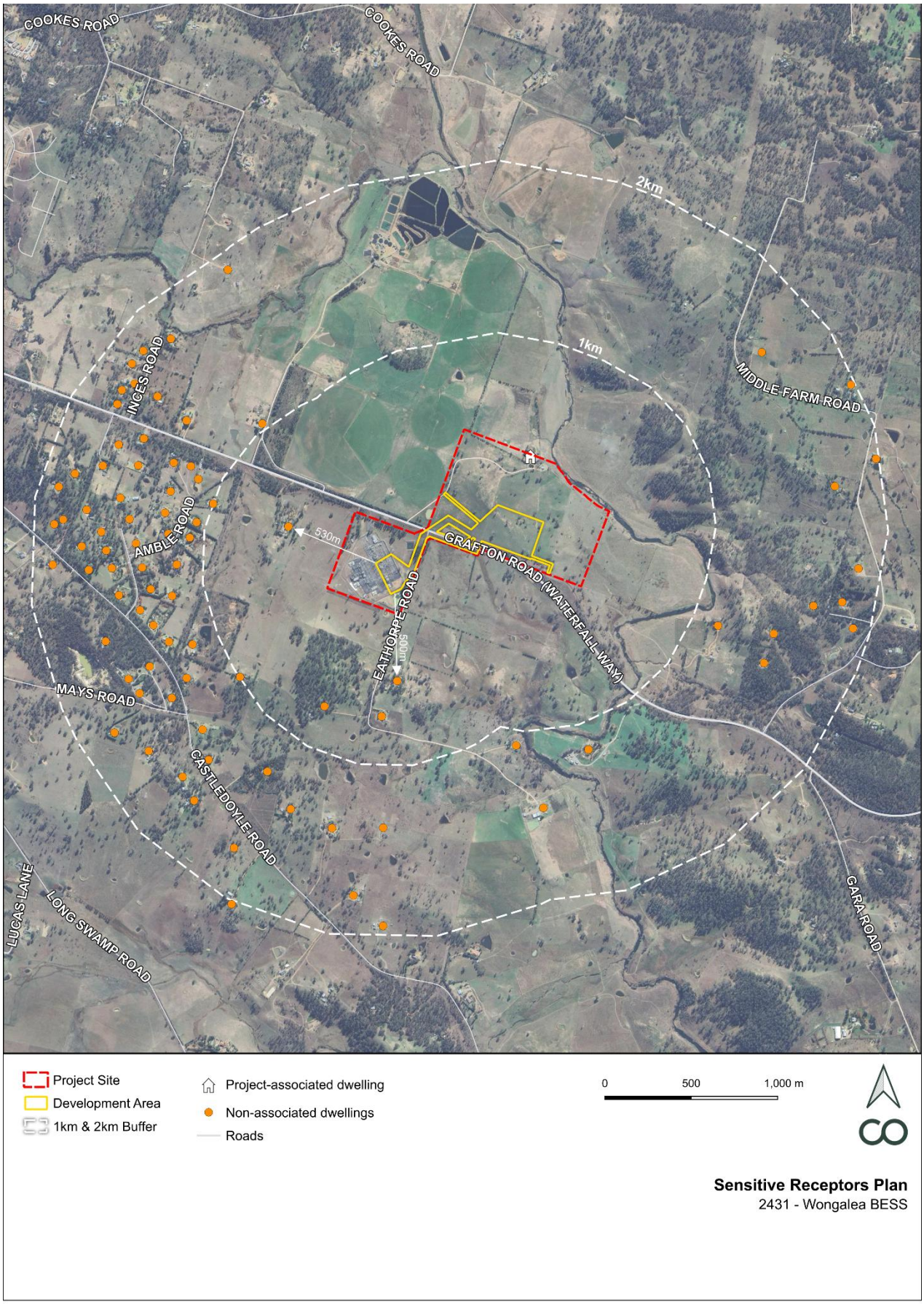

Figure 5555 – Dwellings Plan

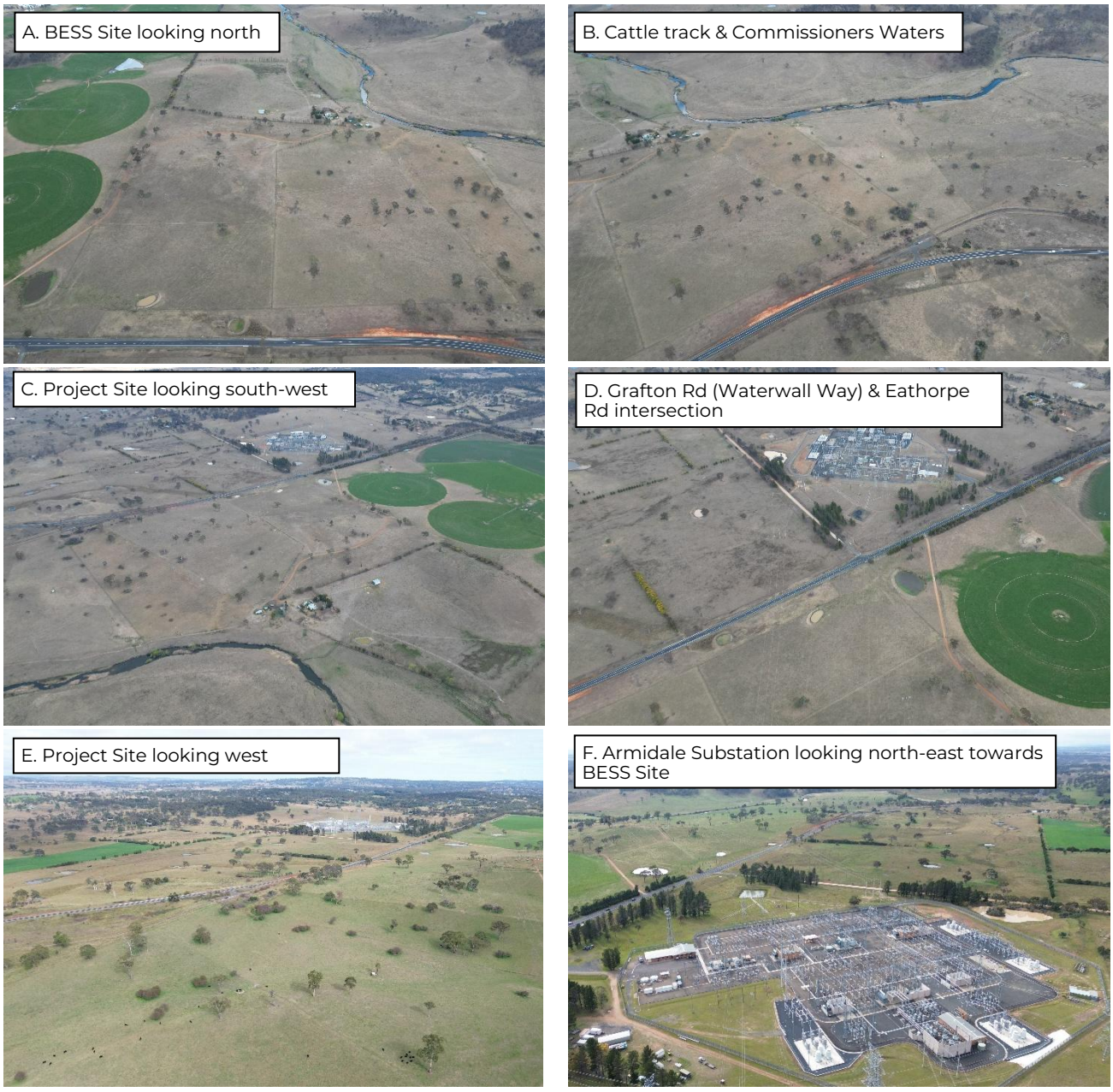

Figure 6666 – Site photographs

2.2.3.1 Access and Transport

Grafton Road (Waterfall Way) runs east-west through the middle of the Project Site providing direct access to the New England Highway through Armidale City.

Current access to the BESS Site is via an existing, unsealed track partially located on the adjacent western lot, 473 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), which leads to the dwelling on Site. There is a second access point, south of the BESS Site through a farm gate accessed via an unsealed cattle track that intersects at Grafton Road (Figure 6666Figure 66, photo B).

2.2.3.2 Biodiversity

Consistent with the broader landscape area, much of the Project Site comprises cleared naturalised grasslands, remnant tree patches, and scattered trees. The Project Site contains small, disjunct patches of native vegetation, in addition to scattered native trees. The remainder of the Project Site comprises

introduced and planted vegetation, present as pasture grass, windrows, and ornamental gardens around dwellings. There are biodiversity values along Commissioners Waters that includes some land along the Project's Site northeastern boundary (Appendix E).

2.2.3.3 Hydrology and Waterways

Commissioners Waters River runs along the north-east boundary of the Project Site, outside of the proposed Development Area. It forms part of the part of the Macleay River catchment. In addition, two small water bodies are present at the southwest corner of the Site.

2.2.3.4 Bushfire Risk

The Project is not located within a designated bushfire prone area under the NSW Rural Fire Service Bushfire Prone Land mapping. Furthermore, there are no vegetation categories or buffers intersecting the site.

2.2.3.5 Historic Heritage

Formally referred to as the *Site of Abattoir, "Wongalea", Item #A032* in the Armidale LEP, the Wongalea Abattoir is an archaeological heritage site of local significance located on the north side of the hill within the Site (Figure 88).

The building is significant because of its unusual construction and impressive craftmanship. The walls survive to the roof level and are built of ironstone boulders with smaller stones and mortar infill, edged in blue brick at the quoins and wall ends. The interior walls and floor are thickly plastered with concrete which curves around the corners (Figure 7). It is located on the northern side of the hill on the BESS Site and cannot be seen from Grafton Road (Waterfall Way). The building no longer operates as an abattoir.

Figure 7777 – Wongalea Abattoir

2.2.3.6 Aboriginal Heritage

The Project is located on Anaiwan Country, traditionally owned by the Anaiwan people. The lands of the Anaiwan people historically spans through the Northern Tablelands of NSW. Anaiwan land is situated in the high-elevation region west of the Great Dividing Range, traditionally a ceremonial gathering point on the Tablelands for neighbouring groups on the coast.

Aboriginal sites comprising the locations of observed Aboriginal objects such as flaked stone artefacts have been recorded in the local area. A search of the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) on 17 January 2025 within nine square kilometres of the centre of the Project Site found a total of 34 site records. Those site records comprise of 28 stone artefact sites, four scarred trees, one quarry and one potential archaeological deposit.

The Commissioners Waters river forms the northern boundary of the Wongalea property. An area of creek bank and creek-side land up to 200 metres from the creek channel may be archaeologically sensitive.

2.2.4 Topography

The Site is undulating with a hill in the centre and a 15-metre fall across the entire Site.

2.2.5 Land Categorisation under the Land Management Framework

The Project Site is zoned RU4 – Primary Production Small Lots and SP2 – Public Utility Undertaking under the Armidale Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP) (Figure 10101010Figure 1010). Under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021* electricity generating works are permitted with consent in RU4 and SP2.

Under the NSW Land and Soil Capacity (LSC) assessment scheme, the land within the Site is classified as Class 5 & 6 (Figure 9999Figure 99). These land classes represent low agricultural capability, meaning they are generally unsuitable for regular cultivation but may support grazing with occasional crop cultivation.

2.2.6 Site Selection

The BESS Site has been intentionally chosen due to its location adjacent to existing electrical infrastructure and on surplus agricultural land. The Project is located away significant public viewpoints and sensitive noise receptors.

The Site's characteristics are high conducive to BESS development. The Site contains four existing transmission lines, is located along a main road with access to a highway, on surplus agricultural land with low agricultural capacity and has limited significant vegetation growth. Importantly the Site is immediately adjacent to existing electrical infrastructure including, the Armidale Substation, six 132kV and 330KV transmission lines, and two proposed BESS projects.

Due to the small footprint of the Project, it will have minimal impact on adjacent agricultural land, Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), waterways and heritage items. It will promote and encourage diversification of appropriate land uses and is highly compatible with adjacent electrical infrastructure.

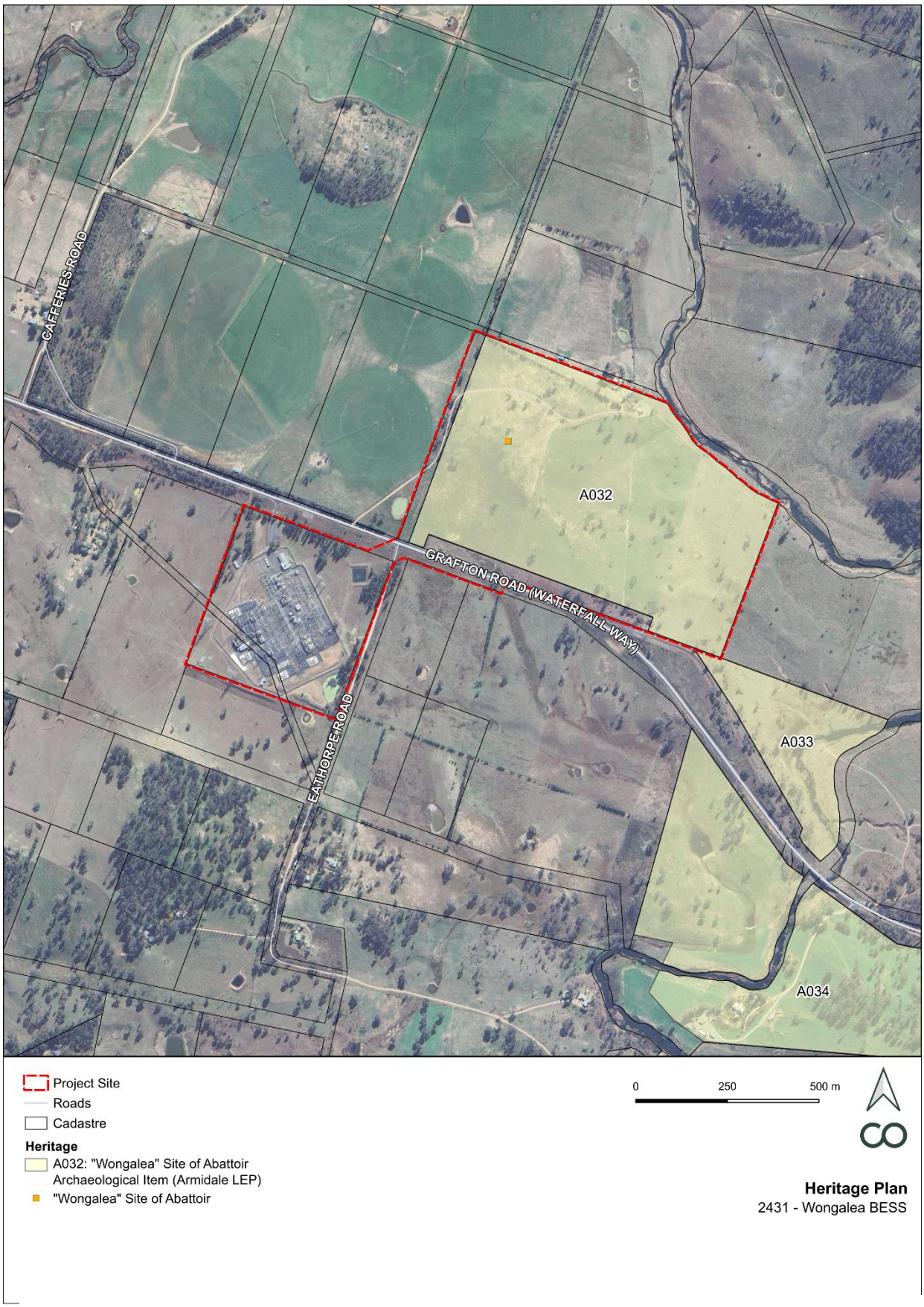

Figure 8888 – Heritage

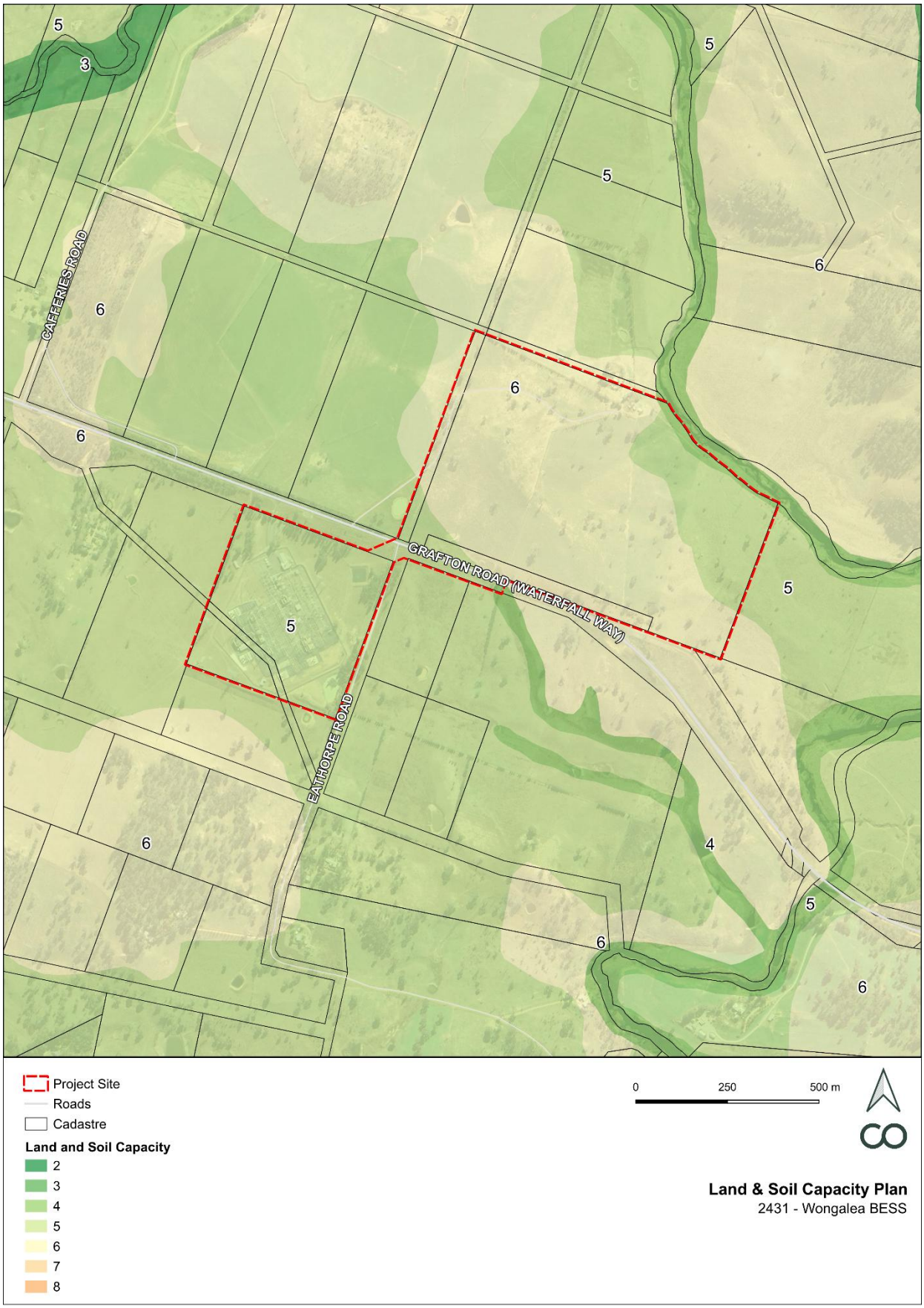

Figure 9999 – Land and Soil Capability Mapping

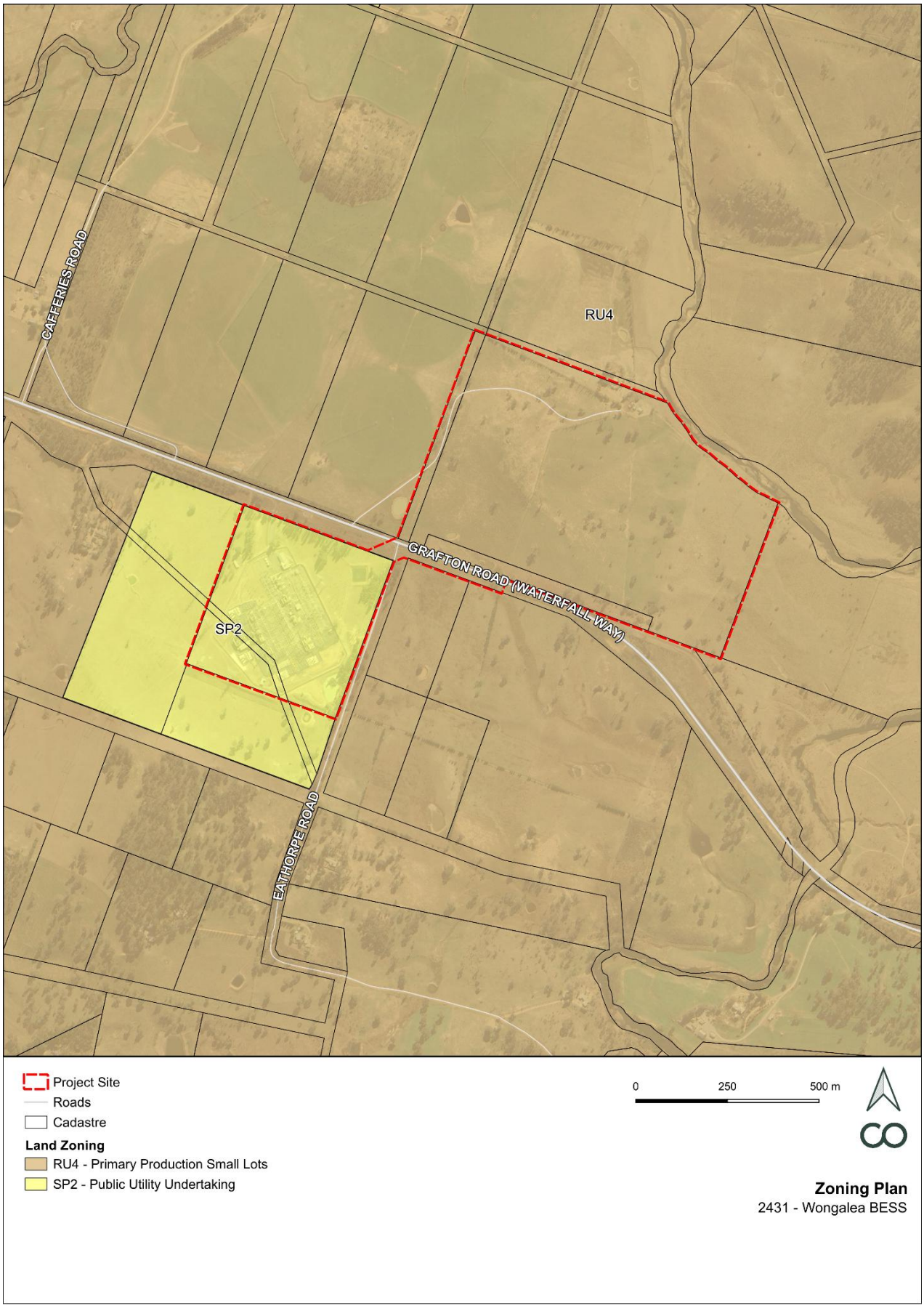

Figure 10101010 – Zoning

2.3 Cumulative Impact Considerations

An evaluation of potential cumulative impacts will be undertaken in accordance with the *Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects* (CIA Guidelines) (DPIE, 2021), that scopes the cumulative impact assessment to be undertaken as part of the EIS and addresses the six key questions as detailed in Table X. The findings of this scoping process will assist in determining the assessment approach for the identified key matters. Considering the number of approved and proposed renewable energy projects in the region, it is necessary to thoroughly assess the potential cumulative environmental, social, and economic impacts of the Project during the EIS phase, in accordance with the CIA Guidelines.

2.3.1 Scoping Cumulative Impacts

Considerations	Discussion
What to assess	
The government's strategic planning framework for the area, having regard to any relevant legislation, plans, policies or guidelines.	Consideration of relevant strategic legislation, plans, policies or guidelines is provided in Section 2.1. The key matters raised were grid stability, renewable energy and the renewable energy economic sector.
The Project and other potentially relevant future projects that may be developed over the same time period or similar timeframes as the project.	Proposed, approved, and operational renewable energy and storage projects located close to the Project are listed in Table 5555Table 55.
Potential material impacts on features including National Parks and other protected areas, environmentally sensitive areas, threatened species and ecological communities, important natural resources, culturally significant resources, key infrastructure and industries, sensitive land use zones, population centres, settlements and residential areas.	Section 2.2.3 describes the surrounding landscape and identifies the nearby sensitive features that maybe impacted by the Project, including: ▪ Commissioners Waters ▪ Nearby dwellings ▪ Wongalea Abattoir ▪ Wastewater treatment plant ▪ Armidale City (5km west of the Project).
The likely scale and nature of the cumulative impacts of these projects.	The likely impacts of the Project are described in Section 6 and will be further investigated in the EIS. It is assumed that nearby renewable energy and storage projects will have similar impacts, however the scale and nature will require further investigation during the EIS phase.
What study area	
The study area selected for the cumulative impact assessment of each matter will vary depending on the specific characteristics of the assessment matter and the scale and nature of the potential impacts on the matter resulting from the project with other relevant future projects.	The study area for each matter subject to cumulative assessment will be determined by the relevant technical assessments and locality features.
Over what time period	
Like the study area, the time period selected for the cumulative impact assessment on each matter will vary depending on the characteristics of the matter and the scale and nature of the potential impacts on the matter.	The time period for each matter subject to cumulative assessment will vary depending on which Project phase the impact is likely to occur. For example, construction traffic impacts to local roads will be assessed during the construction phase of the Project. An estimate of the Project's timelines is discussed in Section 3.2.

What projects to include	
Like the study area, the time period selected for the cumulative impact assessment on each matter will vary depending on the characteristics of the matter and the scale and nature of the potential impacts on the matter.	Proposed, approved, and operational renewable energy and storage projects located close to the Project are listed in Table 5555Table 55. Appendix C summaries the likely cumulative impacts of the Project combined with other relevant future projects in the area. Given their proximity to the Project, it is expected cumulative impacts will rise from the Armidale BESS and Eathorpe BESS.
What is the proposed approach to assessment	
For each of the matters requiring cumulative impact assessment in the EIS, the proposed approach to assessment must be proportionate to the scale and nature of the potential cumulative impacts on the matter and is fit-for-purpose.	The matters requiring cumulative impact assessment are detailed in Appendix A and include: ▪ Amenity – Landscape and visual, noise and vibration ▪ Biodiversity ▪ Hazards and risks – Bushfire risk ▪ Social and economic impacts ▪ Traffic and transport - Access, traffic, parking and road facilities ▪ Hydrology - Flooding, supply, run-off and erosion, water quality. The proposed approach to assessment will be determined by relevant technical assessments, including whether the matter will be subject to issue-specific or combined cumulative impact assessment.
What are the key uncertainties?	
Outline the proposed approach to addressing any key uncertainties which may include a high-level assessment of scenarios or use of sensitivity testing.	Any key uncertainties that arise during the cumulative impact assessment will be identified and addressed in the relevant technical assessments. The approach to address any uncertainties will be discussed in a case-by-case basis within the EIS.

2.3.2 Renewable Energy Projects

There are several renewable energy projects within the region, at different stages of the approval process. It is anticipated that there will be additional renewable energy projects proposed in the vicinity of the Project Site that are not known at the time of preparing this report. At this time, the closest renewable energy developments to the Project are described in Table 5555Table 55 and shown in **Figure 11111111Figure 1111**.

Table 5555 – Nearby Renewable Energy Projects

Project Name	Project Type and Capacity (MW/MWh)	Status	Distance to Project Site	Developer
Armidale BESS (SSD)	150 MW / 300MWh BESS Proposed 132kV connection to the Armidale Substation.	Planning - respond to submissions	<150m south	GMR Energy / Valent Energy
Eathorpe BESS (SSD)	100MW / 200MWh BESS Proposed connection to the Armidale Substation.	Planning – Prepare EIS	1km south-west	Neon Australia
Gara BESS (SSD)	400MW / 1600MWh BESS	Planning – Prepare EIS	4km east	ACEnergy
Armidale Solar Farm	5MW Solar Farm	Operational	4.5km south-west	Sustainable Energy Infrastructure (SEI) & Yates Electrical Services Group
Oxley Solar Farm (SSD)	215MW Solar and BESS	Planning - determination	5km east	Oxley Solar Development Pty Ltd
Olive Grove Solar Farm	29.9MW Solar Farm	Planning	6km east	Infinergy Pacific

Stringybark Solar Farm	29.9MW Solar Farm	Approved	6km east	Infinergy Pacific
Armidale East BESS (SSD)	500MW / 1000MWh BESS	Planning – Prepare EIS	12.5km east	Fotowatio Renewable Ventures (FRV)
Metz Solar Farm (SSD)	115MWh Solar Farm	Operational	13.5km east	Fotowatio Renewable Ventures (FRV)
Boorolong Wind Farm (SSD)	400MW Wind Farm	Planning – preparing scoping report	23km north-west	Squadron Energy
Doughboy Wind Farm (SSD)	340MW Wind Farm	Withdrawn	50km east	Ark Energy

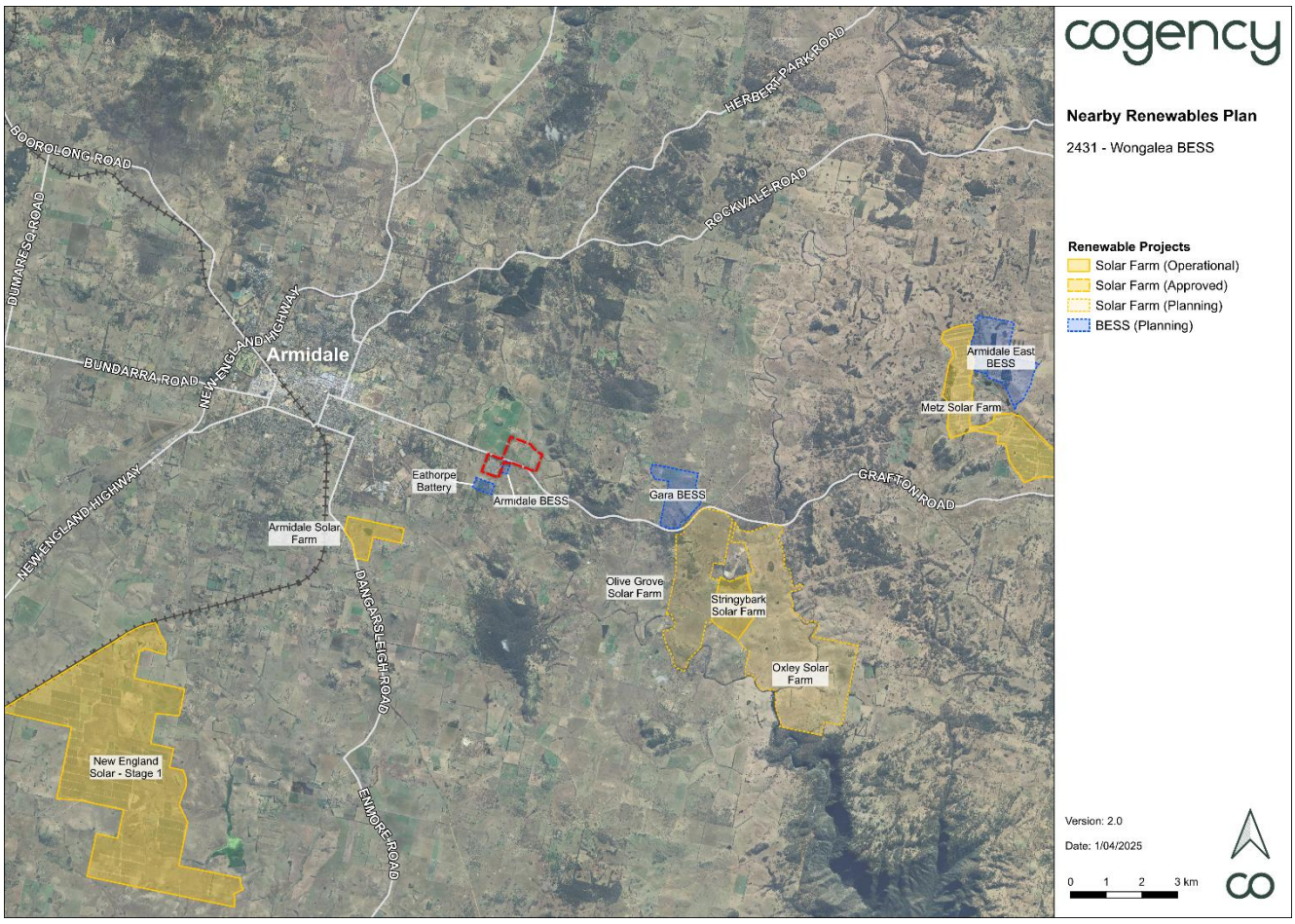

Figure 11111111 – Nearby Renewables

2.3.3 Other State Significant Development Proposals

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)'s New England REZ Transmission Project is a Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CCSI) project located approximately 28km west of the Project Site. The project involves new high voltage transmission infrastructure and four energy hubs connecting energy generation and storage projects within the New England REZ to the existing electricity network.

The project is about 350km in length and has undergone an extensive route selection process based on a set of key planning pillars including people, environment, economic, strategic, and technical. This resulted in the Preferred Study Corridor which will form the basis for detailed environmental assessments, stakeholder engagement, and for obtaining SEARs for the project.

The transmission corridor is currently being refined and the formal acquisition process for transmission easements aims to begin in mid-2025. The Scoping Report was lodged in 2024, and the project is now in the prepare EIS stage. Stage 1 of the project is expected to be delivered by 2032 and Stage 2 by 2034.

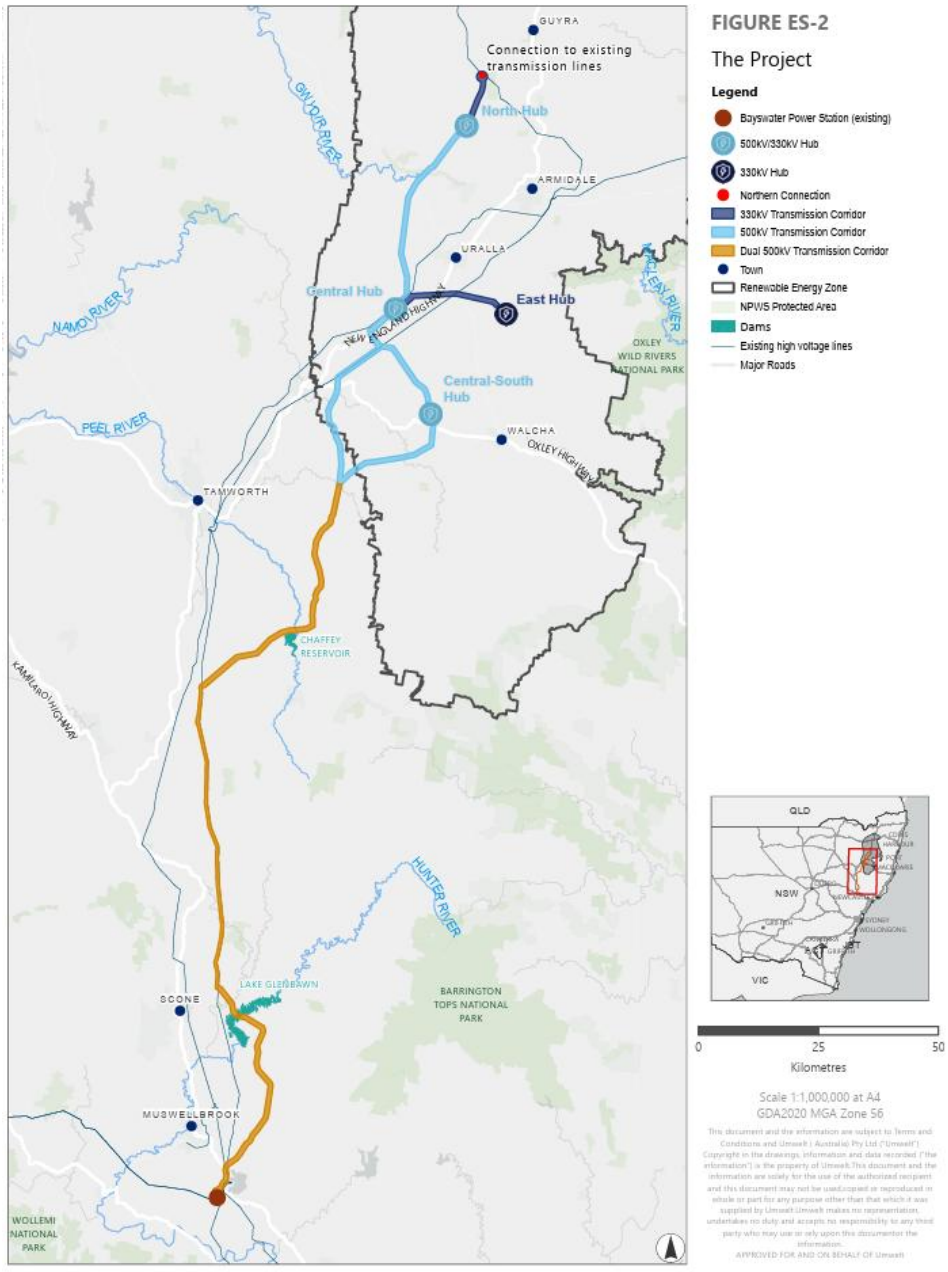

Image Source: ESRI Basemap (2023) | **Data Source:** NSW DFSI (2024), NSWSS (2024)

Figure 12121212 – New England REZ Transmission Project[3]

2.4 Project Benefits

2.4.1 Supporting the clean energy transition

The Project's primary justification is its ability to contribute to decarbonisation of the electrical grid and provide electricity reliability. Specific justifications include:

Voltage control

[3] https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/new-england-rez-transmission-project

TransGrid's 2024 Transmission Annual Planning Report (TAPR) predicts that over the next 10 years, NSW will experience increasing voltage control capability issues during both high demand and low demand conditions.

Low voltage issues have been identified in the Southern, Northern, Western Sydney and Central-West areas. At times of high renewable generation, high voltage issues have been identified in the Greater Sydney, Tamworth, South Coast and Southwest networks due to the high renewable levels during minimum demand scenarios. Since the Wongalea BESS would connect into the Armidale region, its reactive power capability would help to address the under-voltages in the area and reduce the need to constrain generation in the area.

System strength

Synchronous generators have traditionally provided system security services. However, the retirement of Eraring (2025/26), Vales Point (2028), Bayswater (2033) and Mt Piper (2040) power plants will create fault level shortfalls across the network. Wongalea BESS is proposed to utilise grid-forming inverters, meaning that it will also be able to contribute to the fault level in the network of approximately 360 MVA at the inverter terminals. While not big enough to replace a single coal-fired generator in its own right, it can provide support in combination with other generators to address the shortfalls created by the transition away from coal generation.

By improving the fault levels in Northern NSW, the Wongalea BESS will help the stability in the region and also increase the hosting capacity for inverter-based resource (IBR) technology.

Frequency control

Frequency control is provided in the form of inertia, Fast Frequency Response (FFR) and Frequency Control Ancillary Services (FCAS). The Wongalea BESS would be capable of rapid changes in active power output to provide FFR and FCAS services. FFR services provide rapid adjustments to power output levels to correct frequency deviations if there is a sudden mismatch between generation and consumption while FCAS can offer grid operators options for continuous and automatic adjustments of generation or consumption to correct minor frequency deviations. In addition, the grid-forming inverters of Wongalea BESS will be able to provide virtual inertia to the network. This is of particular importance, with the inertia levels forecast to decline over the next decade following the retirement of the coal generators.

Demand management

The growth of rooftop solar has shifted the peak demand to later in the day. As the peak demand shifts into the evening, it can no longer be supplied by large-scale solar farms. Wongalea BESS would be able to charge during periods of low demand and high renewable generation and discharge at times of high demand.

Other General Benefits

Currently, the majority of Australia's electricity is provided by coal-fired thermal power stations, many of which are functioning beyond their original anticipated operational lifespan. Many of these existing plants are scheduled to cease operations within the coming years, as announced by state and federal governments. AEMO's 'Optimal Development Path', as indicated in the 2022 Integrated Systems Plan outlines a Step Change scenario that will see a rapid transformation in the NEM, consisting of a significant investment in renewable generation, storage and firming generation as coal plants exit. This scenario involves the need for at least 2.3GW of energy storage capacity for 4 to 12 hours of duration to maintain system reliability and security by the mid-2030s, in additional to the proposed storage capacity of the Snowy Hydro 2.0 project. These closures will leave to a significant shortfall in generated electricity which will need to be rapidly filled with reliable renewable energy.

The Project directly responds to the need for additional storage capacity identified by both AEMO and the New South Wales government. It would benefit the electricity grid by balancing the network by providing an additional energy storage capacity. This stored energy would be utilised during periods of low renewable output to fill and stabilise generational and transmission deficiencies.

2.4.2 Job Creation

In addition to its energy benefits, the Project will create significant economic and employment opportunities, particularly during the construction phase. The Project is expected to create up to 150 jobs during construction and up to 2-5 full time operational and maintenance jobs.

The predicted increase of workers would generate economic stimulus in Armidale City and the wider region. These would require accommodation, food, fuel and trade equipment, and services. A full social and economic impact assessment will be completed during the EIS phase.

2.4.3 Local Benefits

The Project would offer a number of specific benefits to the local community, particularly in terms of opportunities for local landowners and community members to contribute to the Project's planning and design, and opportunities to benefit from the revenue generated during the Project's operation.

The Proponent has extensive experience working on energy storage projects that prioritise community benefit sharing arrangements and procuring social license early into the planning process and will rely on that experience during the planning and delivery of the Wongalea BESS Project.

The Project's construction and operation will generate local employment opportunities through procuring skilled labour and materials from a localised catchment area, in turn supporting local businesses and the regional economy. The Project will enhance local grid stability and energy security by providing essential electrical storage services, reducing the risk of blackouts or energy shortages.

Aside from technical advantages, the Proponent intends to invest long term in the local community through the establishment of a community benefit fund to support local community groups or other local initiatives.

3. Project

3.1 Project Description

The Project involves the construction, operation and decommissioning of a BESS with a nominal capacity of up to 300MW / 1200MWh. The Project includes a 132kV transmission connection between the Project's onsite substation and the adjacent Armidale Substation. It will supply electricity to the NEM during peak demand periods.

A BESS works by storing electrical energy for later use and is becoming increasingly crucial for grid stabilisation, integrating renewable energy and providing backup power during times of variable electricity generation. The Project will be a typical BESS installation, consisting of lithium-ion batteries, a Battery Management System (BMS) for monitoring, inverters to convert DC to AC electricity, a cooling system, noise suppression systems and a control system. The Project also involves a direct transmission connection, perimeter fencing, vegetative screening planting, internal access tracks and worksite accessways.

Access to the BESS will be facilitated via a new access point to be established along Grafton Road (Waterfall Way). Refer to Figure 13131313Figure 1313 for the two options being explored for the primary access, along with the proposed secondary/emergency access point.

The key elements of the Project include the following:

- Assembly containers, containing lithium-ion batteries
- Transformers and inverters to combine and step up voltage
- A switching room to convert low voltage current to medium voltage currant
- Intersection and road upgrades as required
- Direct 132kV transmission connection from the onsite switching station to the Armidale Substation
- Associated ancillary infrastructure including:
  - Electrical/power conversion systems
  - Switchgear
  - Control building
  - Cabling and collector units
  - Storage and maintenance area
  - Internal access tracks
  - On-site parking
  - Security fencing and lighting
  - Temporary construction laydown area
- Native vegetation screening

The Project will connect into two of the 132kV bays at the Armidale Substation. The details of the connection will be finalised during the EIS phase pending discussions with TransGrid.

The capital investment value (CIV) of the Project is currently valued at $500 million.

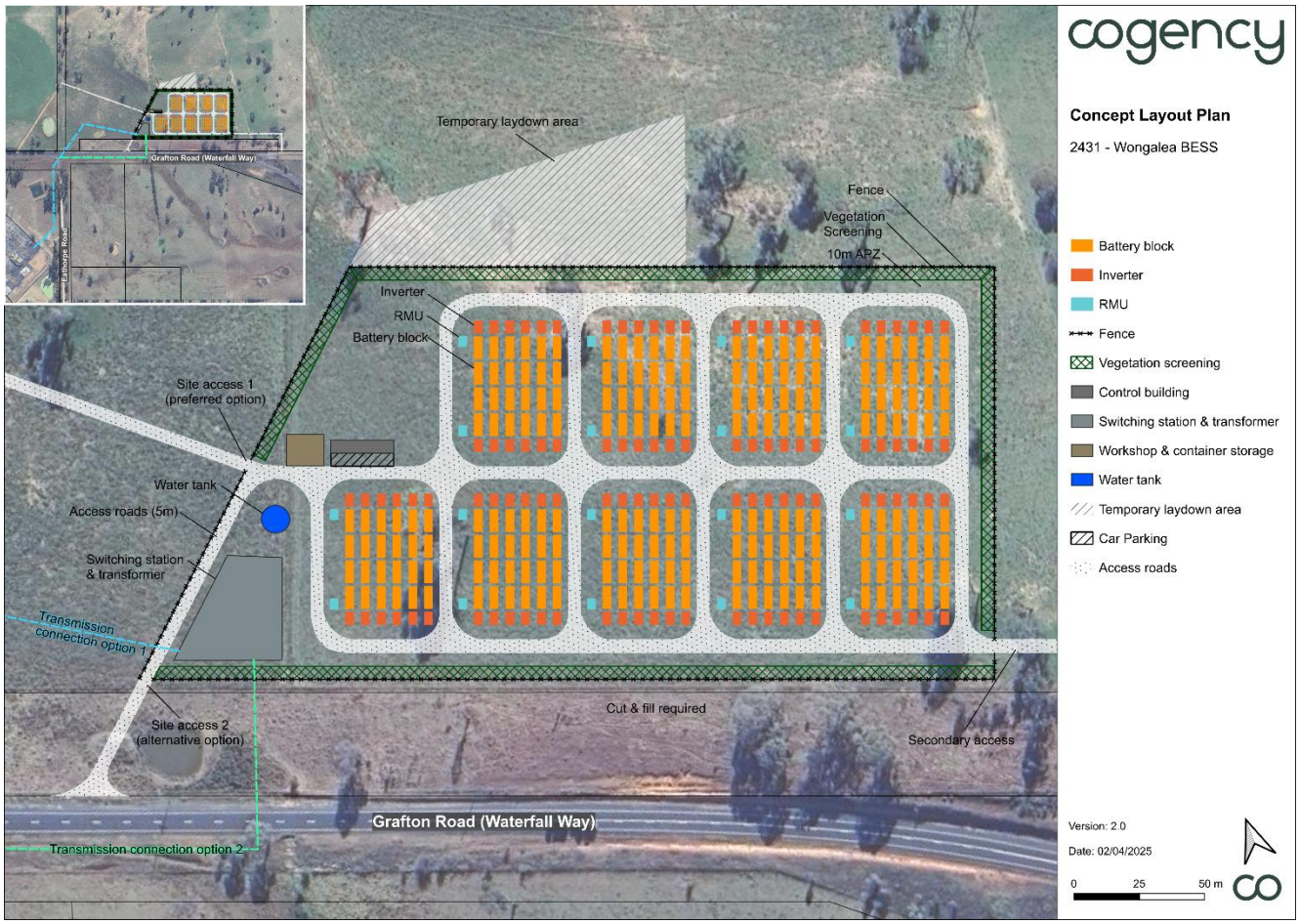

Figure 13131313 – Concept Layout Plan

3.2 Proposed Project Delivery

3.2.1 Construction

The Project construction period is expected to require 24-28 months (pending final design and capacity) and will be expected to operate for 20 years. Construction would involve:

Construction of permanent infrastructure, including:

- Battery containers
  - Inverters
  - Transformers
  - Cooling systems
  - Fire suppression systems
- Switch room
- Operations and Maintenance facilities and associated parking
- Access points
- Internal access tracks
- Transmission connection
- Native vegetation screening
- Boundary fencing

- Construction of temporary infrastructure:

- Site office and amenities
- Tool and material storage shed
- Construction laydown area
- Truck parking and unloading areas

The construction period will involve the delivery of construction materials and infrastructure and assembly of the BESS units. Some vegetation removal will be required to facilitate the development of the Project.

3.2.1.1 Transmission Connection

The Project will seek to connect to the Armidale Substation via a 132kV transmission connection into two of the 132kV bays. The exact bay is not known at this stage and will be confirmed during the EIS phase.

The connection between the BESS and Armidale Substation will be designed to minimise impacts on surrounding land and Grafton Road (Waterfall Way).

3.2.1.2 Site Access

Two primary access options are being considered for the Project.

- Option 1 (preferred option through Council's land) utilises the existing, unsealed track through the adjacent western lot at 473 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way). This lot is a separate property owned by Armidale Regional Council.
- Option 2 (via 495 Grafton Road) proposes a new road access from Grafton Road (Waterfall Way) through 495 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way). This lot a separate property owned by the Rural Lands Protection Board.

A secondary / emergency access is proposed from the southeast corner of the BESS to the cattle track that that intersects with Grafton Road (Waterfall Way).

3.2.2 Operation

The operational lifespan of the Project is expected to be 20 years.

Within the operational phase, there is minimal day-to-day activity relative to the construction phase.

The operation of the Project would involve the storage of energy during periods of low demand and discharged during periods of high demand. The storage and discharge of electrical energy occurs independently of any external activity or physical movements. In other words, the BESS structure and facility remain in a constant physical state regardless of operational status. Sophisticated computer systems control the functioning of each BESS unit.

Human oversight and maintenance are still required and during operation it is likely that up to 2-5 full time equivalent staff may present on site. A social impact assessment and economic impact assessment will be completed during the EIS to provide a more accurate estimate of the number of direct and indirect jobs generated.

3.2.3 Decommissioning

The Project has a finite life span. Upon reaching the expected lifespan of the BESS, upgrades could be undertaken subject to development application approval, or additional alterations or extensions to the facility would be considered as battery storage technologies continually improve.

In the event that the Project is not upgraded or altered, it would be decommissioned. In this case, the battery containers as well as the footings would be removed from the site. The cabling, transformers and switch gear would largely be able to be reused or recycled.

3.3 Project Development and Alternatives

3.3.1 Design Considerations

Several environmental, technical and commercial factors must be considered when selecting appropriate sites for a BESS development. Early technical investigations and due diligence have been undertaken which have informed the initial concept layout. The current Development Area will be further developed and refined during the EIS stage.

The BESS has been intentionally placed in the southern portion of the BESS Site to maximise proximity to the Armidale Substation and minimise any potential environmental disturbances and impacts during connection.

The following conditions were also considered in determining the location of the Project:

- Location on surplus agricultural land with minimal biodiversity values
- Setbacks from sensitive receptors to minimise impacts on nearby properties
- Direct adjacency to electrical infrastructure including a substation
- Avoiding heritage items
- Good access to existing major road networks
- Capacity of existing transmission lines

3.3.2 Alternatives

The following alternatives were considered during the site selection process:

- **Sites more distant from the substation** – these were ruled out as they would have required a longer transmission connection and increased the area of impact to the surrounding landscape
- **Cutting into the closest existing transmission line** – this was ruled out because the voltage of the closest 330kV transmission line to the BESS is too high
- **Smaller facility** – this was ruled out as it would not sufficiently support the local network.

In addition, once the Project Site was selected, large land area allowed for micro-siting in an ideal location. The location of the BESS within the Site was refined through consideration of:

- Proximity to Armidale Substation and existing transmission lines
- Setback from Grafton Road (Waterfall Way)
- Avoidance of the Wongalea Abattoir and Commissioners Waters.

The Project Site also provides an optimal combination of:

- Sufficient levels of available capacity in the grid
- Close proximity to the Armidale Substation
- Suitable land use planning context
- Low potential impacts for biodiversity and heritage
- Low potential social impacts, such as noise and visual impacts

Throughout the detailed design process, the design will be refined to minimise impacts as far as practicable. Furthermore, the construction methodology will be considerate towards sensitive receivers and minimise impacts where possible.

3.3.3 Proposed technologies

The Project will involve utilising an array of lithium-ion battery units, which is the most common technological approach for battery storage for electrical applications. At its core, lithium-ion batteries store energy by moving lithium ions between two layers, called electrodes, in the battery. Charging the battery with electricity from the grid causes the lithium ions to move from one electrode to other, storing energy. When the energy from the battery is discharged, the ions move back, releasing the stored energy.

The battery consists of a positive electrode (cathode), and negative electrode (anode), and a liquid or gel-like substance called an electrolyte that helps the ions move between the electrodes. A separator prevents the electrodes from touching and short circuiting. Lithium-ion batteries are commonly used because they can hold large amounts of energy in a small space, recharge quickly and a have a longer lifespan compared to other types of batteries. This makes them ideal for modern energy needs, and their large-scale application like that proposed by this Project, ideally complement the storage needs of a grid shifting to variable renewable energy sources.

Emerging battery technologies, such as solid-state batteries, sodium-ion batteries and flow batteries are being developed to address the limitations of current lithium-ion technology. These innovations promise benefits like higher energy densities, faster charging times and enhanced safety. However, despite these advancements, lithium-ion batteries remain the most advanced and dependable technology available today. Their proven track record, established manufacturing processes, and continuous incremental improvements ensure that lithium-ion batteries continue to be the preferred choice for a wide range of applications, particularly large-scale energy storage needs.

3.4 Project benefits

The Project will provide long-term, strategic benefits to the State of NSW, including:

- Contribute to and support the NEM by providing energy storage capacity and improving the security, stability, and resilience of the NEM.
- Contribute to demand management needs that are increasingly necessary as the growth of rooftop solar has shift peak demand to later in the day, when existing solar farms will not be generating.
- Support the transition to a net zero carbon emission State by 2050 (NSW Net Zero 2050).
- Help the State reach its goal of 2GW of long-duration storage as set out in the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.
- Capitalise on a changing regional economy and catalyst projects as a result of New England REZ.
- Accelerate economic growth to ensure regional NSW continues to play a critical role in the Australian economy/generate investment, economic growth and provide job opportunities.
- Facilitate the shift away from coal-fired power generation and traditional fossil fuel firming assets, supporting Australia's transition towards clean and renewable sources of energy.
- Provide energy storage for sustainable renewable energy to enable continuous and reliable electricity output as part of a rapidly expanding industry in NSW.
- Plan for the implications of climate change and the need for resilient and sustainable communities.
- Establish a strong network of positive and long-term relationships within the local community and contribute to economic and social growth with a community fund and a neighbour benefit fund that meets the unique needs of the wider community, and delivers long-lasting social, economic, and environmental benefits for decades to come.
- Making efficient use of existing electrical infrastructure.

4. Statutory Context

This section outlines the key statutory requirements for the Project under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and other Local, State and Federal Government Guidelines, with specific regard to the *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* (DPIE, 2022).

4.1 NSW Planning Framework

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 (EP&A Regulation) provide the overall framework for guiding land use planning and development controls within NSW. This broad framework establishes the roles of state, regional and local planning authorities and also includes regional plans that set long-term visions for growth and development. The EP&A Act and EP&A Regulation are supported by several Environmental Planning Instruments (EPIs), which include State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) and Local Environmental Plans (LEPs).

Part 4, Division 4.7, Section 4.36(2) of the EP&A Act states:

A State environmental planning policy may declare any development, or any class or description of development, to be State significant development.

Section 2.6(1) of the Planning Systems SEPP 2021 states:

(1) Development is declared to be State significant development for the purposes of this Act if-

a) the development on the land concerned is, by the operation of an environmental planning instrument, not permissible without development consent under Part 4 of the Act, and

b) the development is specified in Schedule 1 or 2.

Clause 20(a) of Schedule 1 of the Planning Systems SEPP 2021 declares electricity generating works (using any energy source including wind) that has an estimated development cost of more than $30 million.

Accordingly, the Project is considered SSD under Section 4.36(2) of the EP&A Act in conjunction with Section 2.6(1) and Clause 20(a) of Schedule 1 of the Planning Systems SEPP 2021, since it is not permissible without consent under Part 4 of the Act, defined as electricity-generating works, and has an anticipated development cost in excess of $30 million.

Under Section 4.12(8) of the EP&A Act, a development application for SSD is to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that meets the requirements the EP&A Regulation. An EIS will be prepared once SEARs have been received for the Project. This Scoping Report is the first step in that process and is intended to provide a broad overview of the Project, the Site and surrounds, and a range of potential impacts, to inform the issuing of SEARs.

4.2 Statutory Requirements for the Project

The main statutory requirements for the Project are summarised in Table 6666Table 66 and expanded further below.

Table 6666 – NSW Statutory Requirements

Statutory Matter	Statutory Reference	Consideration
Power to Grant Consent	▪ Part 4, Sections 4.5(a) and 4.36(2) of the EP&A Act ▪ Section 2.6 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 (Planning Systems SEPP) ▪ Clause 20(a) of Schedule 1 of the Planning Systems SEPP	▪ The Project is a SSD ▪ The consent authority for SSD is the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces or the Independent Planning Commission if the Council or community (over 50 submissions) object to the development
Consent Authority	▪ Section 4.5(a) of the EP&A Act	▪ The consent authority for SSD is the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces or the Independent

		Planning Commission if the Council or community (over 50 submissions) object to the development ▪ The assessment will be coordinated by DPHI.
Permissibility	▪ Part 2 of the Armidale Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012 ▪ Chapter 2, Section 2.7 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 ▪ Section 2.36(1)(b) of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 ▪ Part 5.10(2)(e)(i) of the Armidale LEP 2012.	▪ The Project Site is primarily located within the RU4 Primary Production Small Lots Zone. Under Part 2 of the Armidale LEP 2012, the use of electricity-generating works is not permissible with consent in this zone. ▪ Chapter 2, Section 2.7 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP: overrides any inconsistencies between the instruments. ▪ Section 2.36(1)(b) of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP: allows for the development for electricity-generating works with consent on land in a non-prescribed residential zone, which includes ▪ Part 5.10(2)(e)(i) of the Armidale LEP 2012: Development consent is required to erect a building on land which contains a heritage item. ▪ Considering the above, the Project is permissible with consent.
Other approvals	▪ *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) ▪ *Native Title Act 1993* ▪ *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* ▪ *Biosecurity Act 2015* ▪ *Contaminated Land Management Act 1997* ▪ *Crown Land Management Act 2016* ▪ *Electricity Supply Act 1995 and Electricity Network Assets (Authorised Transactions) Act 2015* ▪ *Native Title (New South Wales) Act 1974* ▪ *Protection of the Environment Operations (POEO) Act 1997* ▪ *Roads Act 1993* ▪ *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001*	▪ The Project may need to seek approvals as required under these Acts.
Mandatory Matters for Consideration	▪ Section 4.15 of the EP&A Act ▪ Requirements of other legislation (refer to 'Other approvals')	▪ Items the consent authority must take into consideration ▪ What approvals the Project will need to seek under other Acts (refer to 'Other approvals')
Pre-conditions to exercising the power to grant consent	▪ N/A	▪ There are no pre-conditions to exercising the power to grant approval that have been identified for the Project.

4.2.1 Power to Grant Consent

The EP&A Act sets out that the applicable approval pathway for the Project as the State Significant Development (SSD) process. The Project will require SSD Approval pursuant to Clause 4.36 of the EP&A Act:

> *4.36 Development that is State significant development*
>
> *(1) For the purposes of this Act, State significant development is development that is declared under this section to be State significant development.*
>
> *(2) A State environmental planning policy may declare any development, or any class or description of development, to be State significant development.*

Clause 2.35 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP defines the Project as 'electricity generating works', being:

> *a building or place used for the following purposes, but does not include a solar energy system—*
>
> *(a) making or generating electricity,*
>
> *(b) electricity storage.*

Clause 2.6 (1) of the Planning Systems SEPP defines a declared SSD under clause 4.36 of the EP&A Act:

> *(1) Development is declared to be State significant development for the purposes of this Act if-*
>
> *(a) the development on the land concerned is, by the operation of an environmental planning instrument, not permissible without development consent under Part 4 of the Act, and*
>
> *(b) the development is specified in Schedule 1 or 2.*

The Project is not permissible without development consent under Part 4 of the Act and is specified under Schedule 1, Clause 20 due to its type of development and economic value:

> *20 Electricity generating works and heat or co-generation*
>
> *Development for the purpose of electricity generating works or heat or their co-generation (using any energy source, including gas, coal, biofuel, distillate, waste, hydro, wave, solar or wind power) that—*
>
> *(a) has a capital investment value of more than $30 million, or*
>
> *(b) has a capital investment value of more than $10 million and is located in an environmentally sensitive area of State significance.*

As the estimated capital investment value of the Project is greater than $30 million, and the Project requires development consent under Part 4 of the Act, the Project is required to be assessed as an SSD.

Part 4 Division 4.7 of the Act allows the consent authority to determine and grant consent for SSD development applications.

4.2.2 Consent Authority

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces will be the consent authority for the Project in accordance with Division 4.2, Section 4.5 of the EP&A Act. However, in accordance with Clause 2.7 of the Planning Systems SEPP, the Independent Planning Commission (pursuant to clause 2.7 of the Planning Systems SEPP) is the consent authority for the following types of SSD:

a) *Development in respect of which the council of the area in which the development is to be carried out has duly made a submission by way of objection under the mandatory requirements for community participation in Schedule 1 to the Act,*

b) *Development in respect of which at least 50 persons (other than a council) have duly made submissions by way of objection under the mandatory requirements for community participation in Schedule 1 to the Act; and*

c) *Development the subject of a development application made by a person who has disclosed a reportable political donation under section 10.4 to the Act in connection with the development application.*

Therefore, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is the consent authority this SSD application, if none of the above criteria are triggered, and DPHI will determine the development application on behalf of the

Minister. The requirement for the IPC to be the determining authority is to be confirmed following the completion of the EIS public exhibition.

4.2.3 Permissibility

As identified above, the Project is considered 'electricity generating works' in accordance with Clause 2.35 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP. Pursuant to the Armidale LEP, 'electricity generating works' are prohibited in land zoned RU4 Primary Production Small Lots.

However, in this instance, and pursuant to Part 2.1, section 2.7(1), the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP prevails over the Armidale LEP and accordingly allows development of a BESS with consent on land zoned RU4 Primary Production Small Lots, as Part 2.3, section 2.36 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP states that:

> *(1) Development for the purpose of electricity generating works may be carried out by any person with consent on the following land –*
>
> *(b) any land in a prescribed non-residential zone.*

Both the RU4 Primary Production Small Lots and the SP2 Public Utility Undertaking are listed as non-residential zones, meaning the Project is permissible with consent.

The Wongalea Abattoir, located on the Site, is listed as heritage item in Schedule 5 of the Armidale LEP. The objectives of Clause 5.10 – Heritage Conservation include:

(a) to conserve the environmental heritage of the Armidale Region,

(b) to conserve the heritage significance of heritage items and heritage conservation areas, including associated fabric, settings and views,

(c) to conserve archaeological sites,

(d) to conserve Aboriginal objects and Aboriginal places of heritage significance.

Development consent is required to erect a building on land on which a heritage item is located.

A subdivision will be required as part of the Project, which will be in accordance with Part 4 of the Armidale LEP. More details of the proposed subdivision will be included within the EIS.

4.2.4 Other Approvals

4.2.4.1 State Legislation and Instruments

A number of pieces of state level legislation and instruments may be applicable to the Project (refer to Table 7777Table 77 and Table 8888Table 88). Their exact applicability will be determined during development of the EIS.

Table 7777 – Relevant NSW Legislation

Legislation	Requirement
Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016	This Act aims to conserve threatened species, populations and ecological communities through ensuring appropriate assessment, management and regulation of actions that may damage critical or other habitat for a listed threatened species, or may otherwise significantly affect a threatened species, population or ecological community. The EIS of the Project would include a detailed assessment of biodiversity impacts in accordance with the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.
Biosecurity Act 2015	Under this Act, all plants are regulated with a general biosecurity duty to prevent, eliminate or minimise any biosecurity risk they may pose. Section 22 requires that any person who deals with any plant, who knows (or ought to know) of any

Legislation	Requirement
	biosecurity risk, has a duty to ensure the risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised, so far as is reasonably practicable. The *Biosecurity Act 2015* may be applicable if listed weeds are identified within the Project Site. A detailed Flora and Fauna assessment which will determine the presence of identified weeds within the Project Site, will form part of the Project EIS.
Contaminated Land Management Act 1997	This Act outlines the circumstances in which notification of the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is required in relation to the contamination of land. This may become relevant during construction and/or operation of the Project and would be discussed in greater detail in the EIS.
Crown Land Management Act 2016	This Act provides for the administration and management of Crown lands in NSW. Crown land may not be occupied, used, sold, leased, licensed, dedicated, reserved or otherwise dealt with unless authorised by the Act. There are some areas of Crown land and travelling stock reserves/routes within the Project Site and should any work be proposed in these areas, approval would be sought from NSW Crown Lands.
Heritage Act 1977 (NSW)	This act provides for the identification and registration of items of State or Local Heritage significance. The Act seeks to protect and conserve items of State or Local Heritage significance through the operation and establishment of the Heritage Council of NSW and its associated functions. The Act provides for a State Heritage Register where items of State or Local Heritage significance can be listed and also provides for the issue of Heritage Orders by the Minister or the Heritage Council to control potential developments that may harm the heritage value of the item. Heritage Item may mean place, building, work, relic, moveable object or precinct.
Native Title (New South Wales) Act 1974	This Act provides for native title in relation to land or waters. The Project does not affect land subject to a native title claim or determination, or land to which an Indigenous Land Use Agreement applies.
Roads Act 1993	Section 138 of this Act states: *A person must not (a) erect a structure or carry out a work in, on or over a public road, or (b) dig up or disturb the surface of a public road, or (c) remove or interfere with a structure, work or tree on a public road, or (d) pump water into a public road from any land adjoining the road, or (e) connect a road (whether public or private) to a classified road, otherwise than with the consent of the appropriate roads authority.* Required approvals under s138 of the Roads Act 1993 (NSW) will be identified in the future EIS. Consultation has commenced with TfNSW. Consent under section 138 of this Act cannot be refused if necessary for carrying out an SSD if development consent has been issued.
Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001	This Act encourages the most efficient use of resources in order to reduce environmental harm. Waste and resource impacts associated with the Project would be considered as part of the EIS.

Section 4.41 of the EP&A Act exempts the following additional approvals for an approved SSD. These include:

- An excavation permit under section 139 of the *Heritage Act 1997*
- A permit under section 201,205, or 2019 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*
- An Aboriginal heritage impact permit under section 90 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1979*
- A bushfire safety authority under section 100B of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*
- A water use approval under section 89, a water management work approval under section 90 or an activity approval under section 91 of the *Water Management Act 2000*

Table 8888 – Relevant NSW Planning Instruments

Planning Instrument	Relevant Consideration(s)
Transport and Infrastructure SEPP	Under Division 4, Section 2.36(1) of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP, development for the purpose of electricity generating works (the Project), may be carried out by any person with consent on the following land: a) … any land in a prescribed non-residential zone The Project will be sited on land Zoned RU4 – Rural Production Small Lots and SP2 Public Utility Undertaking under the LEP, prescribed non-residential zones and therefore is permissible with consent.
State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021 (Resilience and Hazards SEPP) (formerly State Environmental Planning Policy No. 33 – Hazardous and Offensive Development)	Chapter 3 of the Resilience and Hazards SEPP aims to: a) Ensure that any measures proposed to be employed to reduce the impacts of a potentially hazardous or dangerous industry development are taken into account b) Ensure that the consent authority has sufficient information to assess whether the development is hazardous or offensive and to impose conditions to reduce or minimise any adverse impact In accordance with Section 3.7 of the Resilience and Hazards SEPP, consideration will be given to current guidelines published by the DPHI regarding hazardous or offensive development. Chapter 4 of the Resilience and Hazards SEPP provides a state-wide planning approach to the remediation of contaminated land. Under Section 4.6(1), a consent authority is required to consider whether a proposed development site is contaminated before granting consent. A land contamination assessment will be prepared as part of the Project EIS to determine the potential contamination risk of the Project on surrounding land. This assessment will take into consideration historical land use within and surrounding the Project Site, noting the predominately historic agricultural land use.
Armidale LEP	The Project EIS will directly address relevant components of the Armidale LEP, including: ▪ Section 1.2 – Aims of Plan: – To encourage the orderly management, development and conservation of resources by protecting, enhancing and conserving— (i) land of significance for agricultural production, and (ii) timber, minerals, soils, water and other natural resources, and areas of high scenic or recreational value, and (iii) native plants and animals, including threatened species, populations and ecological communities, and their habitats, and (iv) places and buildings of heritage significance, – To facilitate development for a range of business enterprises and employment opportunities, – To ensure that development has regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development and to areas subject to environmental hazards and development constraints. ▪ Land Use Table – Objectives and permissible uses of the RU4 – Primary Production Small Lots Zone. The objectives of the RU4 Zone include: ▪ To enable sustainable primary industry and other compatible land uses. ▪ To encourage and promote diversity and employment opportunities in relation to primary industry enterprises; particularly those that require smaller lots or that are more intensive in nature. ▪ To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones. – Objectives and permissible uses of the SP2 – Public Utility Undertaking Zone. The objectives of the RU2 Zone include: ▪ To provide for infrastructure and related uses. ▪ To prevent development that is not compatible with or that may detract from the provision of infrastructure. – Objectives and requirements for consent for heritage items.

4.2.4.2 Commonwealth Environmental Legislation

Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The EPBC Act is the Commonwealth Government's overarching environmental legislation providing a legal framework for protecting the Australian natural environment, its inherent biodiversity as well as naturally and culturally significant places. Its application primarily revolves around ensuring that the proposed development does not significantly impact the environment, particularly Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES).

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) (Commonwealth) provides the Protected Matters Search Tool (PMST) for project proponents. This tool supports preliminary desktop assessment to evaluate the potential impacts of development on MNES within a site and its surrounding areas.

At the time of writing this Scoping Report, an assessment of the Project Site was conducted using the PMST to gain a preliminary understanding of the Project's potential impacts on MNES. The assessment included the Project Site and an additional 10 km buffer zone. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 9999Table 99.

Table 9999 – EPBC Act PMST Search Summary

Matter	Comment
World Heritage Properties	One World Heritage Property was identified at the edge of the 10km buffer of the Project Site, approximately 9.6km southeast.
National Heritage Place	One National Heritage Place was identified at the edge of the 10km buffer of the Project Site, approximately 9.6km southeast.
Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar)	No Ramsar listed wetlands were identified in the PMST report area.
Listed Threatened Ecological Communities	Two listed TECs were noted in the PMST report as likely to occur within the Project Site. This included: ▪ White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland (Critically Endangered). ▪ New England Peppermint (Eucalyptus nova-anglica) Grassy Woodlands (Critically Endangered). One listed TEC was noted as likely to occur within the 10km buffer zone: ▪ Upland Wetlands of the New England Tablelands (New England Tableland Bioregion) and the Monaro Plateau (South Eastern Highlands Bioregion) (Endangered).
Listed Threatened Species	A total of 51 threatened species or species habitat were identified within the PMST report as having potential to occur within the 10km search area.
List Migratory Species	A total of 9 listed migratory species or species habitat were identified within the PMST report as having potential to occur within the 10km search area.

A detailed assessment of the Project's potential impact on MNES by a qualified ecologist will be undertaken to inform whether a referral under the EPBC Act to the Minister for the Environment is warranted and will inform a pre-referral meeting with DCCEEW. The Minister will determine if the Project will be considered a controlled action and whether it requires formal assessment and approval under the EPBC Act.

Native Title Act 1993

The *Native Title Act 1993* (Commonwealth) provides a legislative framework to provide a national system for the recognition and protection of Aboriginal land rights, tenure and land sovereignty and for coexistence with the national land management system. The Native Title Act 1993 sets up processes to determine where native

title exists, how future activity impacting upon native title may be undertaken and to provide compensation where native title is impaired.

A search of the National Native Title Register and National Native Title Tribunal Spatial Data did not identify any native title applications or determinations within the Project Site.

Heavy Vehicle National Law (NSW) 2013

As large, long structures, approval would be required for the transport of some of the electrical infrastructure components (for example, transformers). A detailed route study will investigate the most appropriate route from the Port to the Project Site and identify any required road upgrades.

4.2.5 Preconditions to exercising the power to grant consent

There are no pre-conditions to exercise the power to grant approval that haven been identifies for the Project.

4.2.6 Mandatory Matters for Consideration

Table 10101010Table 1010 sets out the mandatory matters for consideration under the relevant Environmental legislation and instruments, in addition to those set out in Sections 4.2.4.1 and 4.2.4.2 above. Any further requirements will be identified within the SEARs and addressed in the EIS.

Table 10101010 – Mandatory Matters for Consideration

Legislation or Instrument	Relevant Consideration
EP&A Act	Section 1.3 Objectives of the Act Section 1.7 Application of Part 7 Section 4.15 Evaluation: ▪ the provisions of environmental planning instruments, development control plans, planning agreements and regulations as relevant ▪ the likely impacts of that development, including environmental impacts on both the natural and built environments, and social and economic impacts in the locality, ▪ the suitability of the Project Site for the development, ▪ any submissions made in accordance with this Act or the regulations, ▪ the public interest.
EP&A Regulation	Clause 28 Development applications relating to *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* Clause 59 Additional requirements for State significant development—the Act, s 4.39 Clause 190 Form of environmental impact statement Clause 191 Compliance with environmental assessment requirements Clause 192 Content of environmental impact statement Clause 193 Principles of ecologically sustainable development
Armidale LEP	Objectives of the RU4 & SP2 Zones Part 4 Principal development standards (for subdivision) Clause 5.10 Heritage conservation Clause 5.3 Development near zone boundaries Clause 5.21 Flood planning Clause 6.1 Earthworks
Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016	Section 7.9 Biodiversity assessment for State significant development or infrastructure
Other Acts and Instruments	To be determined at EIS stage

5. Engagement

5.1 Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

The Proponent acknowledges that active and early engagement with the community and other relevant stakeholders is a crucial part of the development process, as it helps to foster a greater understanding of and support for the Project and to improve the design and development outcomes through the exchange of knowledge and information.

A Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (CSEP) was prepared at commencement of the Project to outline principles, objectives and an action plan to guide engagement through all phases of the Project. The CSEP includes social demographic analysis, stakeholder identification and key messaging.

The engagement approach developed in the CSEP for the Project highlights the importance of early and proactive engagement, building trustful relationships, partnering with key community stakeholders, and enabling open and transparent dialogue. It aligns with local engagement and benefit principles as identified in the *Undertaking Engagement Guideline for State Significant Projects* (DPE, 2022) that provides a framework for community engagement in the context of SSD.

Five key community engagement objectives have been derived using those guidelines:

1. Ensure transparent and accessible communication of project information to the community.
2. Engage a diverse range of stakeholders to gather input and address concerns.
3. Proactively address and mitigate potential negative impacts while maximizing positive project outcomes.
4. Respect and incorporate Indigenous perspectives, cultural heritage, and knowledge into the project.
5. Establish a flexible engagement strategy that can adapt to changing circumstances and address emerging issues.

These objectives aim to foster effective community engagement, build trust, and ensure that the development and delivery of SSD projects align with the values and needs of the local community.

The Proponent is committed to delivering best-practice engagement, with the overarching objective of ensuring that the identified community and stakeholder groups are proactively and meaningfully informed, consulted and involved and that the benefits of the project are genuinely felt by the local community. Furthermore, the proponent pledges to treat members of the local community and other stakeholders fairly, courteously, consistently and ethically.

The objectives are expected to be met through the implementation of the engagement principles, an implementation plan, and a monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) plan.

Key stakeholders outlined in the CSEP include: adjacent and near neighbours (Table 12121212Table 1212), broader public and community, local businesses, Traditional Owners, elected representatives at all three tiers of government, local media, government agencies and departments and other relevant organisations. The supporting engagement action plan set out activities to be undertaken in key phases of the Project:

- Feasibility & Early Concept (2024-Q2 2025): Early neighbour engagement
- Design & Planning Assessment (post SEARs-issue, during preparation and lodgement of EIS)
- Post-approval (Construction & Operation).

Engagement undertaken to date has informed the concept layout of potential Development Areas and is outlined in Section 5.2.

5.2 Engagement Undertaken to Date

5.2.1 Agency and Elected Official Stakeholder Engagement to Date

The project team has engaged with key agencies and officials before requesting project-specific SEARs. This preliminary consultation was undertaken to ensure alignment with regulatory expectations, identify any potential issues or opportunities for improvement, and address agency concerns in advance. Details of this engagement are discussed in Table 11111111Table 1111.

Table 11111111 – Stakeholder Engagement Overview

Agency	Date	Mechanism	Notes	Key feedback
Armidale Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)	7 April 2025	Online meeting	▪ LALC representative was pleased to be engaged at an early stage of the Project. ▪ Public Notice has been issued by the Project team's heritage consultant. ▪ Benefit sharing ideas discussed. ▪ Project timelines discussed.	▪ Armidale LALC is developing a register of First Nations organisations / businesses / candidates, which will be shared in due course. ▪ Local procurement of First Nations people/businesses is important. ▪ The Armidale community faces a lack of education and employment opportunities, as well as a lack of housing. ▪ The key benefit sharing idea raised was scholarships for Year 10-12 Indigenous students.
NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)	26 February 2025	Online meeting	▪ Traffic crossing between the BESS and Armidale substation on Grafton Road (Waterfall Way). ▪ Feasibility of three BESS projects around the substation. ▪ Timing of construction with other BESS projects. ▪ Cumulative impacts.	▪ DPHI will consider the worse-case scenario when assessing cumulative impacts. ▪ Review the department's cumulative impact guidelines. ▪ Engage with TfNSW regarding access and transmission routes over Grafton Road.
Armidale Regional Council	27 February 2025	Online meeting	Key items discussed included: ▪ Cumulative impacts if surrounding renewable and storage projects are developed concurrently. ▪ Opportunities for reuse and recycling. ▪ Importance of community engagement because of the nearby BESS projects. ▪ Utilisation of agricultural land. ▪ Local impacts on infrastructure.	▪ Check landownership for access options. ▪ The local community is becoming knowledgeable about BESS given the number being developed near Armidale. ▪ Review Council's renewable energy benefit sharing framework. ▪ Site access 1 crosses Council land.
Transport for NSW	12 March 2025	Online meeting	▪ Angle of access points and transmission lines along Grafton Road ▪ Route assessment ▪ Road closures ▪ Secondary access.	▪ Perpendicular road and transmission crossings are preferred. ▪ Consult relevant TfNSW guidelines. ▪ Ensure emergency vehicles have enough parking space near

				secondary access point. ▪ Prepare a route assessment from the port to the Site. ▪ Check vegetation due to the requirement of 300m clear safe intersection sight distances at all access points.
NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)	31 March 2025	Online meeting	▪ Bushfire risk Typical conditions within bushfire prone areas are: ▪ Water supply ▪ Maintain APZ conditions ▪ Consult with Armidale fire control centre ▪ Emergency operations plan	▪ Request fire consultant to provide accurate bushfire protection zone. ▪ Engage with fire control centre at the EIS stage.
NSW Fire & Rescue	19 March 2025	Online meeting	▪ Non-propagation between BESS units. ▪ Fire water ▪ Fire Safety Study	▪ Request proof of non-propagation from equipment supplier. ▪ Preliminary Hazard Analysis is required. ▪ Fire safety study is often a condition of consent.
Armidale Councillors & Chief Officer of Planning and Activation	2 April 2025	Online meeting	▪ Early planning & design. ▪ Early community & stakeholder engagement activities ▪ Benefit sharing ▪ Risk mitigation ▪ Sensitive receptors ▪ Heritage ▪ Traffic	▪ Water supply is a key issue in the region – must be considered in the hydrology impact assessment especially in relation to water needed for construction ▪ Workers' accommodation must be addressed in the EIS ▪ Other proponents of renewable energy / storage projects in the area have not appropriately considered cumulative impacts – this should be thoroughly addressed in the EIS.

5.2.2 Community Engagement to Date

The Proponent has taken a proactive approach to engaging with neighbours by addressing their feedback and concerns early in the Project's development. This approach demonstrates a commitment to fostering positive relationships with the local community and ensuring that potential impacts are identified and managed collaboratively from the outset.

By actively listening to and incorporating community input, the Proponent aims to build trust and promote transparency throughout the development process. Details of local community engagement are discussed in Table 12121212Table 1212.

Table 12121212 – Community Engagement Summary

Agency	Date	Mechanism	Notes	Feedback
Direct neighbours	16 January 2024	Letter mailout to direct neighbours by the landowner	The letter informed the neighbours about the Agreement entered into between the landowner and the Proponent for a potential BESS project on the land	None received in response to the letter

Nearby neighbours	17 March 2024	Letter mailout by the Proponent to ~60 residences within ~1.5km of the Development Area introducing the Project, informing residents of the upcoming door knock by the project team and inviting them to the CDIS.	During the door knock visit, 31 houses were visited within 1.5km of the Project. Neighbours were generally thankful for receiving a door knock and appreciated the project's time, manners and discussion.	The majority of neighbours were unconcerned with the Project given their awareness of other BESS proposals in the area. Concerns raised by neighbours included traffic, fire, visual impact, EMI, transmission and noise. Nuclear energy was raised by several neighbours who expressed that nuclear was their preferred outcome, but that they do not oppose of the BESS.
Local community	17 March 2024	Letter mailout to ~30 residences within ~1.5km - 2km of the Development Area introducing the Project and inviting residents to the CDIS.	One email response was received raising concerns about the location of the Project. One email was received regarding employment opportunities.	Concerns were raised about the proximity of the Project to residential areas.

Community Drop-In Session – 8 April 2025

The first Community Drop-In Session was held on 8 April 2025 from 12:00pm to 6:00pm at the Armidale Ex-Services Club, 137 Dumaresq St, Armidale. The purpose of the session was to give the local community and other stakeholders an opportunity to meet the project team, learn more about the Proposal and to ask questions in person. The drop-in session was hosted by Eku Energy and Cogency with attendees encouraged to provide contact information to receive updates on the Proposal.

Information presented included a tri-fold fact sheets, a site plan, multiple A1 information boards (including 'About Wongalea BESS', 'What is a BESS', 'About Eku Energy', 'Project Details', and 'Community Benefit Sharing', and an Artist Impression of the BESS, with copies of all information available in Appendix H.

The drop-in session was advertised in three local newspapers; the Armidale Express, the Northern Daily Leader and the New England Times to be published on 22 March and 5 April 2025. Letter invitations and the tri-fold fact sheet were sent to neighbouring properties within a 2km and email invitations, which included the project fact sheet, were sent to the following stakeholders:

- Armidale Regional Council
  - All councillors
  - Council Mayor and Deputy Mayor
  - Chief Officer, Planning and Activation
  - Acting Chief Officer, Corporate and Community
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- Transport for NSW
- Armidale-Dumaresq Fire Brigade.

The above stakeholders were invited to distribute the invitation email to their networks.

Seven attendees attended the drop-in session. These included the Project's closest neighbours, the landholder and two generally interested members of the community.

The following topics raised at the information session and discussed with the project team:

- Noise and visual impact, including questions about lighting at night

- Requests for two rows of trees for vegetation screening to be planted surrounding the BESS
- Local advice around tree species to avoid for vegetation screening to discourage koala nesting
- Advice about wildlife saving initiatives in the area particularly for Koalas and Turtles.
- Decommissioning and recycling plan for battery units
- Benefit sharing
- Hydrology and flooding impacts and how they would be avoided
- How BESS technology would work in the event of a power outage
- Biosecurity concerns as there has already been a weed outbreak from.
- Long term and continued ownership of the Project, questions around what would happen if the project was sold

The drop-in session showed that the community valued environmental protection, responsible development and long-term accountability. Requests and contributions towards effective vegetation screening and local input on tree species and wildlife, reflect the communities desire for meaningful involvement, while the discussion around decommissioning and ownership highlighted an interest in future and ongoing land stewardship.

A Consultation Summary Report will be prepared and lodged with the EIS that summarises community views based on additional rounds of engagement activities during the EIS process.

5.2.3 Community Influence

The engagement approach for the Project has been guided by the IAP2 Core Values and the Public Participation Spectrum (see Figure 14141414Figure 1414). The spectrum is founded on the premise that different stakeholders will have varied levels of involvement in decision-making.

The level of engagement for the Project will vary across stakeholders and phases of the engagement. The Proponent commits to **'inform', 'consult' and 'involve'** the appropriate stakeholders through an effective engagement process based on the objectives and promises outlined in the spectrum in Figure 14141414Figure 1414.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community engagement objective	Provide balanced and objective information. Assist the community in understanding all aspects of the project, including possible problems/issues.	Obtain feedback from the community on plans, options and/or decisions.	Work directly with the community throughout all stages of the project. Ensure community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the community in each aspect of planning, development and decision-making, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Place decision-making in the hands of the community, so the community leads the development of the renewable energy project.
Promise to community	Keep the community informed through all stages of development, including issues and delays.	Keep the community informed, listen and acknowledge suggestions and concerns. Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	Work with the community to ensure concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed. Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	Look to the community for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions. Incorporate advice and recommendations into decisions to the maximum extent possible.	Implement what the community decides.

Figure 14141414 – Approaches to community engagement (IAP2, Public Participation Spectrum)

Details of the Project will be dependent on several factors including Project Site constraints and the outcome of stakeholder and host landholder engagement and will be resolved during the EIS stage.

A number of elements of the Project may be influenced by the community, including:

- The Community Benefit Fund.
- Local Procurement.
- Potential worker housing and accommodation during the construction period.
- Design of mitigation measures such as the extent of landscaping/vegetation screening or noise mitigation measures such as walls.

5.3 Engagement Proposed

As the Project progresses, the Proponent will continue to actively engage with the community and other relevant stakeholders as outlined in the CSEP. Engagement is a crucial part of the development process, as it helps to foster greater understanding of and support for the Project, and to improve the design and development outcomes through the exchange of knowledge and information.

The CSEP identifies the relevant stakeholders to engage with and their interest in and influence on the outcomes of the Project. It also outlines the communication and engagement tools and activities that will be used to support the engagement for the Project.

The project team envisages the next engagement activities (within the design and planning assessment phase) to include:

- Mailout project update and ongoing website updates.
- A second round of meeting offers in person with nearby neighbours.
- A community information drop-in session(s)

- Stakeholder meetings as required/relevant
- Develop a benefit sharing framework
- Updates to community and stakeholders as technical investigations and design progress through the EIS phase
- Additional updates (newsletter, website updates, potential second information day) as required and depending upon the length of time taken to prepare the EIS.

EIS exhibition, assessment and response to submissions will be undertaken after the EIS has been prepared and submitted.

6. Proposed Assessment of Impacts

6.1 Key Environmental, Social and Economic Matters

As part of the initial scoping report, several environmental, social, and economic assessment matters relevant to the Project have been identified that will require further assessment during the EIS. Table 13131313Table 1313 outlines the proposed level of assessment for each key matter.

Table 13131313 – Matters Proposed for Assessment in Project EIS

Matter	Proposed Level of Assessment
Landscape and visual	Detailed
Noise and vibration	Detailed
Biodiversity, BDAR	Detailed
Hazards and risks – Bushfire risk	Detailed
Hazards and risks – Dangerous goods & groundwater contamination	Standard
Heritage – Aboriginal	Standard
Heritage – Historic	Detailed
Agricultural land capability, soil stability and erosion risk	Standard
Social Impacts	Detailed
Economic Impacts	Detailed
Other - Waste management	Standard
Other - Decommissioning and rehabilitation	Standard
Traffic and Transport – Access, traffic, parking and road facilities	Detailed
Hydrology – Flooding, supply, run-off and erosion, water quality	Standard

The following sections provide a preliminary assessment and assessment approach for each matter requiring further consideration (also summarised in Appendix A).

6.2 Matters Requiring Further Assessment in the EIS

6.2.1 Landscape and Visual

Existing Environment

The surrounding landscape is characterised by agricultural cropping and grazing and topography of the area is generally flat with minor isolated rises. The existing Armidale Substation and associated transmission lines are part of the visual character of the area. The Site is primarily used for agricultural grazing and hosts four transmission lines connecting to the adjacent Armidale Substation. The Site slopes upwards towards a small hill in the centre and benefits from generous distances to nearby sensitive receptors (dwellings) that are not associated with the Project. Public receptor viewpoints towards the BESS Site are likely to be located along Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), Eathorpe Road, Cafferies Road, and Inces Road. Views from Middle Farm Road may be limited by the surrounding forested area and views from Castledoyle Road and Amble Road are limited by the Armidale Substation.

A desktop study to locate dwellings from a satellite aerial was undertaken (See Figure 5555Figure 55).

Potential Impacts

The Project will increase the visual impact of electrical infrastructure but will not be a significant change to the existing visual character of the area. The Project has been sited adjacent to the existing Armidale Substation to help blend it in with the electrical infrastructure. While design iterations of the Project will involve visual screening to minimise potential visual impacts, the bulk and form of the main Project

components, particularly the battery housing units, inverters and transmission connection will be visually prominent within the existing landscape.

While the Project Site is distant from nearby sensitive receptors, particularly residential properties, some dwellings are located on hills which lend visual prominence to the Project from the surrounding road network.

Assessment Approach

A detailed assessment of the Project's impacts on the surrounding visual landscape will be undertaken in the form of a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) with a consideration of the potential cumulative impacts of the two nearby BESS projects.

While there are currently no Commonwealth, NSW or local government planning policies, guidelines or standards directly applicable to guide the visual assessment of BESS projects, the LVIA would be prepared with reference to the requirements and procedures outlined in the following guidelines:

- *Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Development* (DPIE, 2022)
- *Guidelines for landscape character and visual impact assessment* (TfNSW, 2023)
- *Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline* (DPE, 2022).
- *Technical Supplement Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline* (DPE, 2022).
- *Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment – Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, Third Edition (2013).
- *Wind Energy: Visual Assessment Bulletin for State significant wind energy development* (2016).

The LVIA will involve a methodology comprising on-site assessments, digital modelling and the development of photomontages to provide a preliminary understanding of the Project's expected visual impact and prominence.

It will further provide a number of potential mitigation measures to be employed during construction and operation. For similar battery projects, a range of vegetative screening measures are typically suggested to help mitigate the Project's visual prominence while simultaneously improving the BESS site's ecological profile.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to visual impact considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects.

6.2.2 Noise and Vibration

Existing Environment

The Project is located 5 km east of Armidale city and is surrounded by rural land, Armidale Substation and some isolated dwellings. Nearby land uses are predominately agricultural and rural residential and are considered to be low noise emitting in nature. The influence of existing and proposed additional noises to nearby sensitive receivers will need to be considered. The operation substation, nearby road networks and agricultural equipment will be likely sources of existing background noise levels.

Potential Impacts

A Preliminary Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment was completed by SLR (April 2025). Key project impacts in relation to noise and vibration were identified as:

- Noise from construction activities.

- Construction vibration (unlikely to be perceptible at the nearest receivers).
- Noise for operational activities: Compliance with the NPfI is demonstrated at all non-project involved receivers for each time period (see Figure 15151515Figure 1515).
- Cumulative noise emissions from the approved Eathorpe BESS and Armidale BESS developments and the existing Armidale Substation were also assessed. Cumulative noise impacts are not expected to exceed the most stringent recommended amenity criterion during the evening and night period.

It is noted that the closest sensitive receptor is located greater than 900m from Project.

Short term noise impacts during construction and decommissioning will be mitigated using contemporary best practice mitigation measures.

Figure 15151515 – Predicted Operation Noise Contours (Night Period)

Assessment Approach

A detailed Noise and Vibration Assessment (NVIA) will be prepared as part of the Project EIS. The NVIA would be prepared in accordance with:

- NSW EPA Noise Policy for Industry (Npfl) (EPA, 2017)
- Construction Noise Strategy (Transport for NSW, 2013)
- Draft Construction Noise Guideline (Environment Protection Authority, 2020)

- NSW Road Noise Policy (DECCW, 2011)
- Assessing vibration: a technical guideline (Department of Environment and Conservation, 2009).

The key elements of the NVIA will likely include:

- Defining the assessment scenarios for the construction and operation stages of development.
- Determination of the noise criteria for the Project and an assessment of likely noise impacts during construction, operation and decommissioning, including consideration of cumulative noise impacts as a result of other proposed developments in the area.
- Assessment of predicted noise levels for construction and operation of the Project against the relevant noise assessment criteria as determined by relevant legislation and acoustic guidelines.
- Recommendations of appropriate mitigation measures to manage potential impacts and to achieve compliance with relevant noise assessment criteria.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to noise and vibration considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects.

6.2.3 Biodiversity

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment and MNES report were completed by Ecology and Heritage Partners (February 2025) to determine the potential flora and fauna impacts associated with the Project. The ecological study area included the entire Project Site, including the development area and transmission connection to the Armidale Substation.

Existing Environment

The study area occurs within the New England Tablelands Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) bioregion and Armidale Plateau (NET04) IBRA sub-region.

Most areas within the study area have been subject to extensive clearing for agricultural purposes including cropping and modified pastures for livestock grazing. Small vegetation patches are present across the study area including intact and remnant vegetation, and riparian vegetation associated with old creek beds.

Key ecological values within the study area include:

- 4.35 hectares of native vegetation consisting of four Plant Community Types (PCTs) in highly modified states.
- Potential habitat for 21 national and state significant and/or migratory threatened fauna species.
- Habitat for threatened fauna species including remanent woodland, mature and hollow-bearing trees, and Commissioners Waters River.

EPBC Act listed TECs:

- Upland Wetlands of the New England Tablelands (New England Tableland Bioregion) and the Monaro Plateau (South Eastern Highlands Bioregion)
- White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland
- New England Peppermint (Eucalyptus nova-anglica) Grassy Woodlands

During the site assessment, vegetation was not observed to be consistent with the condition thresholds for these three TECs, as vegetation quality was overall very low.

The study area includes one large river (Commissioners Waters) and a few minor drainage lines and farm dames throughout the site. Commissioners Waters is considered 'Key Fish Habitat' as part of the Northern

Rivers Basin. There is a moderate likelihood of Glandular Frog (Litoria Subglandulosa) occurring within Commissioners Waters.

Potential Impacts

While the design layout seeks to avoid impacts to native vegetation as much as possible, with further minimisation in detailed design, it is likely that there will be some impacts to flora and fauna within the Project Site. Any unavoidable impacts will be offset as required.

Assessment Approach
The Proponent will engage Ecology and Heritage Partners to provide a detailed assessment of potential biodiversity impacts resulting from the development of the Project. The assessment and all associated site investigations will be undertaken in accordance with the DPHI's Biodiversity Assessment Method.

As there are recorded biodiversity values within the study area, the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) will need to be applied, and a Biodiversity development Assessment Report (BDAR) will need to be prepared and submitted to DPHI as part of the EIS.

The findings of the detailed biodiversity assessment will inform the refinement of the project's concept layout and include mitigation measures to avoid or minimise potential impacts on biodiversity.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to ecological considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects.

6.2.4 Heritage

6.2.4.1 Aboriginal Heritage

An Aboriginal Heritage Scoping Assessment was completed by Baker Archaeology (March 2025).

Existing Environment

The traditional custodians of the land surrounding Armidale are the Anaiwan people. As of the 2021 Census, 1,896 individuals in Armidale city identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, representing 7.9% of the city's population —slightly higher than the Regional New South Wales average of 6.1%.

On 17 January 2025, an extensive search of the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) database was conducted for the Project Site. The search identified 34 site records including stone artefact sites, scarred trees, quarry and potential archaeological deposit within a 3km-by-3km study area centred on the Project Site. No Aboriginal sites have been recorded with the study area indicating the absence of archaeological survey and lack of Aboriginal site recording efforts.

Commissioners Waters form the northern boundary of the Wongalea property. An area of creek bank and creek-side land up to 200 metres from the creek channel may be archaeologically sensitive according to the standard model of Aboriginal site location set out in current Heritage NSW guidelines.

Potential Impacts

Given the lack of Aboriginal sites recorded within the study area there is a risk that land disturbed associated with the Project might have an impact on undiscovered or unregistered artefacts given the long history of settlement and connection to land by Aboriginal peoples.

Assessment Approach

To ensure the Project involves minimal disturbance to any on-site physical Aboriginal heritage and general Aboriginal Heritage values, an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) will be prepared in consultation with the Armidale LALC and Registered Aboriginal Parties.

This assessment and other associated investigations will be undertaken in accordance with the various assessment guidelines set out in *The Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW*, with a consideration of the potential cumulative impacts of the two nearby BESS projects.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to aboriginal cultural heritage considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects.

6.2.4.2 Historic Heritage

An Historical Heritage Scoping Assessment was completed by Baker Archaeology (March 2025).

Existing Environment

The Project Site has historically been used for agricultural grazing. A review of the Armidale Local Environment Plan 2012 indicates that the 'Site of Abattoir – Wongalea' (A032) (Wongalea Abattoir), an archaeological site of local significance, is present within the study area (see Figure 16161616Figure 1616).

Figure 16161616 - Wongalea Abattoir site location

A review of the State Heritage Inventory (SHI), National Heritage List and Commonwealth Heritage List indicated that there were no State and national historical heritage items located within the study area.

Potential Impacts

It is unlikely the Project will impact the Wongalea Abattoir because it is located outside the Development Area. Given the historic agricultural land use of the BESS Site, the potential for the discovery of unknown historic heritage items is expected to be low.

Assessment Approach

A detailed assessment will be undertaken in the form of a Statement of Heritage Impact (SOHI) to ensure the Project avoid any potential impacts to the heritage item. The SOHI will be prepared by a suitably qualified and experience heritage professional with expertise relevant to the heritage item.

A SOHI is an assessment report that assists the owner, custodian and/or manager of the Wongalea Abattoir understand the potential impacts of the Project and any proposed measures to conserve the significance of the heritage item.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to historic heritage considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects.

6.2.5 Traffic and Transport

A Preliminary Traffic and Route Assessment was completed by One Mile Grid (April 2025).

Existing Environment

Primary access to the Site is provided via Grafton Road (Waterfall Way) (B78), a State controlled arterial road running between the New England Highway in Armidale and Pacific Highway in Raleigh. It provides a single traffic land and a sealed shoulder in each direction adjacent to the site.

Other than the Armidale Substation and Armidale Waste Management Facility, the other properties connecting to Grafton Road (Waterfall Way) are agricultural and rural in nature.

Potential Impacts

There are number of anticipated traffic and transport impacts associated with the Project. These will include:

- An increase in heavy vehicle traffic movements on the local road network primarily during the construction phase and subsequently the impact these movements will have on the unsealed rural roads that provide access to the Project Site.
- Increased light vehicle traffic movements on the local road network during construction, operation and maintenance phases of the Project.

Assessment Approach

A detailed Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment (TIA) will be undertaken to accompany the EIS. The TIA will be undertaken following relevant NSW Government guidelines and assessment standards, including the Draft Guide to Transport Impact Assessment (TfNSW, 2024), Guide to Traffic Generating Developments (RTA, 2002), Road Design Guide, and relevant Austroads Standards and Austroads Guide to Traffic Management guidelines.

It is expected that the key elements of the TIA will include:

- A review of existing road conditions and future road network planning considerations
- A detailed assessment of traffic demands during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project
- A detailed assessment of intersection and access arrangements

- A detailed road safety assessment and road use management plan
- Concept Level Route Analysis required for High Risk OSOM; and
- Identification of necessary mitigation measures.

Other approvals may be required for the transport of infrastructure by Oversize Overmass (OSOM) vehicles, under National Heavy Vehicle Law. These requirements will be assessed via a route analysis study as part of the EIS.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to traffic and transport considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects

6.2.6 Agricultural land capability

Existing Environment

The Project is located on agricultural grazing land zoned RU4 – Primary Production Small Lots under the Armidale LEP. The site is currently used for agricultural grazing and to host transmission line infrastructure. The land within the site is mostly classified as 5 & 6, indicating moderate to severe agricultural use limitations. These classifications reflect limitations that make the land generally unsuitable for regular cultivation but capable of supporting grazing and occasional crop cultivation under appropriate management.

Potential Impacts

There are a number of potential impacts associated with the Project. These will include:

- Permanent removal of the project area from agricultural use.
- Limitations on the management of agricultural enterprises during the operation of the project.
- Productivity impacts on agricultural enterprises during the construction and operation phases.
- Biosecurity risks for agricultural operations during construction and operation.

Assessment Approach

A standard agricultural impact assessment will be undertaken and address the NSW Government guidelines including *Primefact: Infrastructure Proposals on Rural Land*, *Managing Biosecurity Risks in Land Use Planning and Development Guide*, and *Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment Guide*.

It is expected key elements of the agricultural impact assessment will include:

- A review of the existing environment including current land use, soil types and fertility, land capacity, enterprises and ownership.
- An assessment of the impacts of the project on loss of agricultural land, livestock production activities and biosecurity risks.
- Engagement with current landowners and key stakeholders including biosecurity officers.
- Address cumulative agricultural impacts
- Development of possible mitigation or management strategies to minimise resource loss, disruption, biosecurity risks and other impacts.
- Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (LUCRA)

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to agricultural considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects

6.2.7 Socio-economic Impacts

Existing Environment

With a population of 23,967 (ABS 2021), Armidale is a regional city located in the Armidale Regional Council LGA. Prior to European settlement, the areas around Armidale were occupied by the Anaiwan people whose land historically spans through the Northern Tablelands of NSW.

Agriculture and education are the key economic industries that drive the local economy. Agriculture directly accounts for approximately 15% of jobs in the LGA with agricultural land largely used for sheep and cattle grazing, supported by fruit growing and viticulture. There is a strong education sector based around the University of New England (UNE) and TAFE NSW in Armidale City. It services the surrounding urban centres and the greater New England North-West region.

Controlled environment horticulture, renewable energy and manufacturing are growth industries which build on the LGA's locational advantages that have the greatest potential to drive economic growth over the next 20 years.

The majority of future economic and population growth is expected to occur in Armidale City which currently accommodates 82% of homes in the LGA. Armidale differs from most inland regional centres because of its long-established university and has a wider range of jobs and business opportunities not usually found in the country. Education is the largest employment industry with primary, secondary and higher education making up 16.4%. of employment in Armidale City.

As of the 2021 Census, Armidale City had a median age of 36, the largest age group being 20-24-year-olds (8.8%). The largest employing sectors include higher education, primary and secondary education, as well as hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) and other social assistance services, which together employ approximately 24% of the population. This highlights the importance of the education sector and the lower median age, compared to NSW (39).

Potential Impacts

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet has been prepared to assist in the identification of potential socio-economic impacts and how they may be assessed in the EIS stage (Appendix A Scoping Summary Table). The identified potential socio-economic impacts include:

- Amenity impacts on the local community due to increased disturbances during construction and operation periods (noise, vibration, dust and air quality).
- Increased demand for local services, resources and accommodation of a non-resident workforce, including housing, during construction.
- Physical and safety impacts due to perceived health and risks from battery operation and storage.
- Impacts on local road conditions, such as road damage and increased congestion due to construction traffic.
- Local employment, procurement and training opportunities during construction.
- Potential impacts to natural values, cultural heritage and visual landscape as valued by the community.

If the Proponent seeks to enter into a Private Agreement with a neighbour (for instance a Neighbour Agreement), the Private Agreement Guideline (DPHI, 2024) will be used for guidance.

Assessment Approach

A detailed social impact assessment (SIA) and economic impact assessment will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the NSW Social Impact Assessment Guideline (DPIE, 2023), Technical

Supplement Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (DPIE, 2023) and Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines (DPIE, 2022).

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to socio-economic considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects

6.2.8 Hazards and Safety

6.2.8.1 Bushfire Risk

Existing Environment

A desktop assessment of the NSW Rural Fire Service Bushfire Prone Land database was undertaken during the development of this Scoping Report. The search results indicated that the Project Site is not located within bushfire prone land.

The closest bushfire prone land is located approximately 750m east of the Site, within a forested area along Middle Farm Road.

Potential Impacts

The Project could pose a risk to environmental and human safety by exacerbating bushfire potential during construction and operation.

Assessment Approach

While the Project Site is not located within bushfire prone land, the EIS will incorporate a detailed assessment of the bushfire risk associated with the Project and the Project's design iterations will consider the *Planning for Bushfire Protection* (November 2019) guidelines published by NSW Rural Fire Service.

While specific guidelines for BESS proposals are absent from the Planning for Bushfire Protection guidelines, Section 8.3.5 provides detailed guidelines for wind and solar farms which have been considered in tandem with BESS developments across other States and Territories. Under the current NSW RFS guidelines, a minimum 10m asset protection zone (APZ) for structures and associated infrastructure must be established and maintained for the operational life of the Project. A Bushfire Emergency Management and Operations Plan must also be established to identify all risks and mitigation measures associated with construction and operation including measures to prevent or mitigate fires igniting and details of availability of fire suppression equipment, access and water.

While adherence to these guidelines is not technically required for the Project, the Proponent has extensive experience in considering and planning for bushfire risk for BESS projects for construction and operational periods and has consistently adhered to similar guidelines for other similar developments. In addition, the Project will consider the Victorian Country Fire *Authority Design Guidelines and Model Requirements Renewable Energy Facilities v4* which were updated in August 2023 to include BESS specific considerations.

Furthermore, the Proponent intends to extensively engage with the NSW RFS, other local fire authorities and engage a bushfire risk technical specialist throughout the design and development phases of the Project.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to bushfire considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects

6.2.8.2 Dangerous Goods

Potential Impacts

The development and operational phases of the Project would require the transportation, use and storage of potentially hazardous materials which present a potential risk to the local environment and community. These include the transportation, storage and use of lithium batteries, transformer oils, fuels, aerosols and solvents.

Under the Australian Dangerous Goods Code, lithium-ion batteries are identified as a Class 9 Dangerous Good which encapsulates a range of miscellaneous dangerous substances and articles that present a hazard during transport, but do not fall into the specific categories of other dangerous goods classes. Lithium-ion batteries are listed under this Class due to their potential to catch fire.

Under state planning guidelines, specifically, the Hazardous and Offensive Development Application Guidelines – Applying SEPP 33, Class 9 goods (including lithium-ion batteries) are excluded from the risk screening process for potentially hazardous industry since they are considered to '…pose little threat to people or property'. Regardless, the guidelines determine that '…the consent authority should consider whether or not a potential for environmental harm exists'.

Assessment Approach

To assist the consent authority in determining the Project's risk potential, a Preliminary Hazard Analysis (PHA) will be undertaken and provided as part of the EIS. The PHA will inform the Fire Safety Study required by Fire and Rescue NSW as per the *large-scale external lithium-ion battery energy project systems – Fire safety study considerations* guideline.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to dangerous goods considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects

6.2.9 Hydrology

Existing Environment

There is a small hill in the centre of the Project Site resulting in a 15m fall across the site. Commissioners Waters runs along the north east boundary of the site and there are several minor drainage lines and farm dams scattered throughout.

A soil and land capability assessment scheme was developed in 2008 by DPHI (formerly known as the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources), which aimed to assist in assessing the environmental impact of clearing native vegetation under the Native Vegetation Act 2003. The land and soil capability classification identifies the capability of the land to sustain land use, ranging between Class 1 to Class 8. Class 1 is land capable of high soil impact and Class 8 represents land that is only capable of sustaining low impact. The capability classification is determined through:

> *the assessment of eight key soil and landscape limitations (water erosion, wind erosion, salinity, topsoil acidification, shallow soils/rockiness, soil structure decline, waterlogging and mass movement)* - DPE, 2021.

A review of the capability classifications identified that the Project Site is within Class 5 and 6. This classification has moderate limitations that must be managed to prevent soil and land degradation.

Potential Impacts

Impacts to surface water permeation are likely during the construction phase of the Project as necessary earthworks are undertaken. Localised disturbances to surface soils and impacts to groundwater runoff may impact Commissioners Waters, minor drainage lines and farm dams.

The laying of concrete to form the foundational slab for the BESS elements will increase the imperviousness of the Project Site and increase incidence of groundwater runoff of potentially hazardous materials.

Soil types and profiles present within the Project Site may provide some issues with respect to potential erosion and sediment control which would be expected to be managed via appropriate design and construction management.

It is unlikely that there will be impacts on groundwater supply as the project will not require groundwater for construction or operation.

Assessment Approach

A Water and Soil Resources Assessment will be undertaken as part of the Project EIS which will incorporate an assessment of potential surface and groundwater and flooding impacts and provide detailed mitigation measures to minimise environmental risks to onsite and nearby hydrological features and waterways during construction, operation and decommissioning phases.

It will incorporate an assessment of land capability and inform construction management measures to reduce potential erosion and sediment impacts.

A Social Impact Scoping Worksheet (Appendix B) and CSEP (Appendix I) has been prepared to provide guidance on engagement, including any engagement specific to water considerations. A Cumulative Impact Scoping Summary (Appendix C) considers the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to the nearby BESS projects

6.2.10 Other matters

The EIS will also address other issues relating to:

- Waste management - the EIS will describe the likely waste streams to be generated during construction and operation and describe measures to manage, reuse, recycle and dispose of this waste in accordance with relevant guidelines.
- Decommissioning and rehabilitation

Whilst these matters will be appropriately assessed in the EIS, detailed assessments are not proposed as the issues can be readily defined, assessed, and mitigated using well recognised approaches.

6.3 Matters Requiring No Further Assessment in the EIS

Table 14141414Table 1414 outlines the matters considered not required for further assessment during the Project's EIS phase, based on the range of assessment matters listed in the Departmental *Preparing a Scoping Report (SSD)* Guidelines. Comments are provided justifying why no further assessment is required.

Table 14141414 – Matter Requiring No Further Assessment in the EIS

Group	Specific Matter	Comment
Access	Port, rail and airport facilities	The Project Site is not located close to any port or airport. Armidale Airport is located 10 km west of the Project Site. While the airport has regular flights, it is sufficiently distant that it is unlikely that the Project will impact the airport.
	Rail Facilities	The Project does not propose to utilise any rail facilities.
Air	Atmospheric emissions, particulate matter and gases	By design, the operation of the Project does not emit any greenhouse or negative atmospheric emissions. Evaluating the emissions associated with the construction phase will be included in the EIS. Air quality impacts will be managed through mitigation measures outlined in a CEMP.
Amenity	Odor	Generally, BESS developments are not known to emit any significant odours that would impact nearby sensitive receivers during operation or construction.
Hazards and Risks	Biosecurity	The Project has low risk to biosecurity. Potential introduction of weeds to or from the Project Site would be limited to vehicle movements and can be mitigated through the implementation of standard management measures.
	Coastal hazards	The Project Site is not located within any coastal region.

Dams safety	There are no dams within proximity to the Project Site.
Land movement	The Project is not anticipated to result in any land movement. Due to the fall of the site, the Project may results in relatively minor excavation works only which will include cut and fill to level the BESS areas.

7. Conclusion

This Scoping Report, prepared by Cogency on behalf of Eku Energy, formally requests SEARs for the construction, operation, and eventual decommissioning of the proposed Wongalea BESS, which has a conceptual capacity of up to 300MW/1200MWh, ancillary infrastructure, and transmission connection to the existing Armidale Substation on surplus agricultural land in Armidale, NSW.

Following the *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* (DPIE, 2022), this report provides an overview of the Project and the Proponent, the Project Site context and the statutory context of such a proposal under current NSW planning policy and legislation, and community engagement. Additionally, it presents an overview of the potential impacts of the Project, which will assist in the assessment during the preparation of the EIS.

Early engagement has been undertaken with the local community and a range of state and local stakeholders including, DPHI, Council, TfNSW, Fire and Rescue NSW, and NSW RFS to inform the early design and scoping stage of the Project. Eku Energy is committed to ensuring the community and stakeholders are proactively and meaningfully informed, consulted and involved in the planning and development of the Project, and that the benefits are genuinely felt by local people and businesses.

The Project aims to help secure energy reliability and stability for nearby and surrounding communities as an increasing share of renewable energy is integrated into the NEM. It will provide grid supporting services, playing a crucial role in the transition to net-zero emissions by 2050.

The anticipated costs for the Project will exceed $30 million, meaning it is classified as State Significant Development under Clause 20, Schedule 1 of the Planning System SEPP. Accordingly, the Project is permissible with consent under Clause 2.36 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP.

Following the issuing of project-related SEARs, a comprehensive EIS will be prepared. This document will provide a detailed description of the Project, a technical assessment of potential direct and indirect impacts from construction, operation, and decommissioning, proposed measures to avoid, minimise, manage, mitigate, offset, and/or monitor potential impacts, and responses to issues raised by stakeholders and community members.

The technical assessment matters requiring further assessment in the EIS will be outlined in the SEARs, including visual amenity, noise, biodiversity, heritage, traffic and transport, socio-economic, hazards and safety, water and soil resources.

Cogency and Eku Energy look forward to receiving the SEARs from the DPHI to enable the preparation and submission of the EIS for assessment.

8. References

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment [DPIE], (2022). *New England North West Regional Plan 2041*. https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-for-your-area/regional-plans/new-england-north-west-regional-plan-2041

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Appendices

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Appendix A Scoping Summary Table

Level of assessment	Matter	CIA Required	Engagement	Relevant government plans, policies and guidelines	Scoping Report reference
Detailed	Amenity – Landscape and visual	Yes	Specific	▪ NSW DPE – Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline (DPHI, 2024). ▪ NSW DPE – Technical Supplement: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline (DPHI, 2024). ▪ Guidelines for landscape character and visual impact assessment (TfNSW, 2023). ▪ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment – Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (2013). ▪ NSW DPE – Wind Energy: Visual Assessment Bulletin for State significant wind energy development (2016).	Section 6.2.1
Detailed	Amenity – Noise and vibration	Yes	Specific	▪ Construction Noise Strategy (Transport for NSW, 2013) ▪ Draft Construction Noise Guideline (Environment Protection Authority, 2020) ▪ Noise Policy for Industry (Environment Protection Authority, 2017) ▪ Assessing vibration: a technical guideline (Department of Environment and Conservation, 2009) ▪ NSW Road Noise Policy (DECCW, 2011)	Section 6.2.2
Detailed	Biodiversity, BDAR	Yes	General	▪ Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) (Office of Environment and Heritage, 2020) ▪ Significant Impact Guidelines 1.1 – Matters of national environmental significance (DCCEEW, 2013)	Section 6.2.3
Detailed	Hazards and risks – Bushfire risk	Yes	Specific	▪ Planning for Bush Fire Protection (NSW Rural Fire Service, 2019)	Section 6.2.8.1
Standard	Hazards and risks – Dangerous goods	No	General	▪ Hazardous and Offensive Development Application Guidelines: Applying SEPP 33 (NSW Department of Planning, 2011) ▪ Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No 4 – Risk Criteria for Land Use Safety Planning ▪ Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No 6 – Hazard Analysis and Assessment Guideline –Multi-level Risk Assessment ▪ Australian Code for the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail (7th Edition) (National Transport Commission, 2007) ▪ Storage and Handling of Dangerous Goods Code of Practice (WorkCover, 2005) ▪ International Standard (ISO 31010) Risk Management – Risk Assessment Technique	Section 6.2.8.2
Standard	Hazards and risks – Groundwater contamination	No	General	▪ NSW Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems Policy (DLWC 2002)	Section 6.2.9

Level of assessment	Matter	CIA Required	Engagement	Relevant government plans, policies and guidelines	Scoping Report reference
Standard	Heritage – Aboriginal cultural heritage	No	Specific	▪ Aboriginal Consultation Requirements for Proponents (NSW DECCW, 2010) ▪ Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, 2011) ▪ Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigations for Aboriginal Objects in NSW (DECCW, 2010)	Section 6.2.4.1
Detailed	Heritage – Historic	No	General	▪ The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (ICOMOS, 2013)	Section 6.2.4.2
Standard	Agricultural land capability, soil stability and erosion risk	No	General	▪ NSW Large-Scale Solar Energy Guidelines (DPHI, 2024) ▪ The Land and Soil Capability Assessment Scheme (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, 2012) ▪ The Land and Soil Capability Assessment Scheme (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, 2012)	Section 6.2.6
Detailed	Social and economic – Social and economic impacts	Yes	Specific	▪ Social Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects (DPIE, 2021) ▪ Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects (DPIE, 2021) ▪ Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects (DPIE, 2022) ▪ Private Agreement Guideline (DPHI, 2024)	Section 6.2.7
Standard	Other – Development rights, Waste management and circular design, Decommissioning and rehabilitation	No	General	▪ NSW Large-Scale Solar Energy Guidelines (DPHI, 2024)	Section 6.2.10
Detailed	Traffic and Transport – Access, traffic, parking and road facilities	Yes	General	▪ Draft Guide to Transport Impact Assessment (TfNSW, 2024) ▪ Guide to Traffic Generating Developments (RTA, 2002) ▪ Guide to Traffic Management – Part 3 Traffic Studies and Analysis (Austroads, 2013) ▪ Road Design Guide and relevant Austroads Standards	Section 6.2.5
Standard	Hydrology – Flooding, supply, run-off and erosion, water quality	Yes	General	▪ Flood Impact and Risk Assessment – Flood Risk Management Guide LU01 (DPE, 2022) ▪ Guidelines for Controlled Activities on Waterfront Land (DPI, 2018) ▪ Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality (ANZECC / ARMCANZ, 2000) and Using the ANZECC Guidelines and Water Quality Objectives in NSW (DEC, 2006). ▪ Managing Urban Stormwater: Soils & Construction (Landcom, 2004) and Managing Urban Stormwater: Soils and construction – Volume 2A manual (Landcom, 2008)	Section 6.2.9

Appendix B Social Impact Worksheet

Appendix C Cumulative Impact Assessment Summary

Appendix D Preliminary Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment

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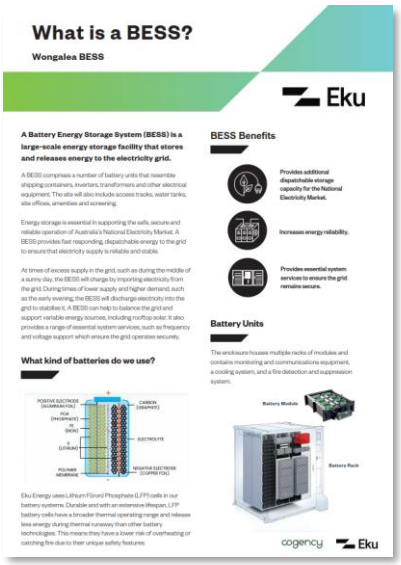
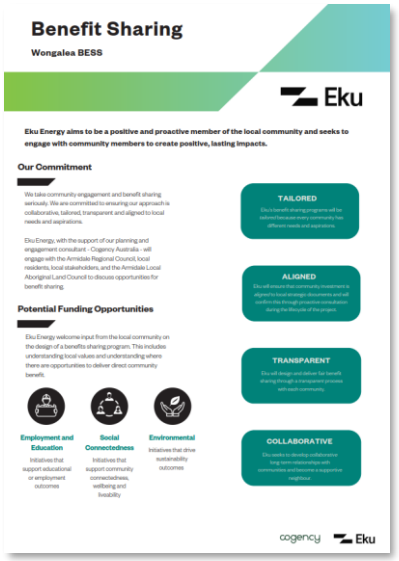
Appendix G Preliminary Transport and Route Impact Assessment

Appendix H Communication Material





11 March 2025

Dear Owner/Occupier,

RE: Wongalea BESS – Letter of introduction

On behalf of our client Eku Energy, we are writing to provide information on a proposal to develop the Wongalea BESS – a 300 megawatt battery energy storage system (BESS) to the north of the Armidale Substation. We also wish to notify you about upcoming door knocking activities and invite you to a community drop-in session hosted by our project team.

About the project

The proposed Wongalea BESS and associated infrastructure is located north of the Armidale Substation at 475 Grafton Road (Waterfall Way), approximately 5 kilometres east of Armidale. The project is being developed by Eku Energy, a specialist clean energy storage business, currently delivering over 16 gigawatt hours of battery energy storage across Australia.

Wongalea BESS will store and release electricity to complement household rooftop solar, help stabilise the electricity grid and reduce power prices. The project will benefit local residents, businesses and industry, including creating local job and procurement opportunities.

The BESS would occupy approximately 6 hectares of cleared farming land in Armidale. It has been selected due to its location near existing electrical infrastructure. It will be strategically located away from the Wongalea Abattoir and other sensitive receptors.

We are at the early stages of planning and design. Following engagement with local stakeholders, a Scoping Report and a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared and lodged with the Minister for Planning (Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure [DPHI]). The Minister will then assess the proposal and place the application on public notice, with comments invited.

Community consultation

The project team seeks to speak to any interested neighbours, residents and other groups to explain more about the proposal and receive feedback.

Door knocks

We will be conducting door knocks of properties within a 1.5km radius of the proposed BESS site, on Tuesday 25th & Wednesday 26th March. The purpose of these door knocks is to introduce ourselves in person and the details of the proposal.

If you are not home at the time of our visit, we will leave a calling card in your mailbox. Furthermore, if you would like to arrange a specific time for us to visit, please reach out via the contact details below.

Community Drop-In Session

We would also like to invite you to attend our upcoming community drop-in session, hosted as part of early consultation prior to lodging the Scoping Report to DPHI.

Wongalea BESS Community Drop-In Session	
Come by to learn about the proposal, the technology, benefit sharing and ask questions. No RSVP required – drop in any time. Light refreshments provided.	
Date	Tuesday 8th April 2025
Time	12-6pm
Location	Armidale Ex Services Memorial Club, 137 Dumaresq St, Armidale

Phone: 0452 593 428 **Email:** consultation@cogencyaustralia.com.au
Website: www.ekuenergy.com/wongalea

Next steps

Following the above door knock and drop-in session, the preparation of the Scoping Report will be finalised. Once lodged, DPHI will provide the project team with Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) to inform the preparation and lodgement of the EIS.

The EIS will go on public notice and there will be an opportunity for the public and other authorities to make submissions for consideration by DPHI.

We will provide the local community with a progress update during the EIS process and will inform you of the next round of community engagement activities.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the Wongalea BESS, please do not hesitate to contact us via the details provided below.

Warm regards,

Rebecca Wardle

Rebecca Wardle
Director and Co-Founder
Cogency Australia

Phone: 0452 593 428 **Email:** consultation@cogencyaustralia.com.au
Website: www.ekuenergy.com/wongalea

Appendix I Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan