

Akaysha Energy Orana BESS Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

1.0 Corporate Commitment

As the long-term owner and operator of its battery projects, Akaysha Energy (Akaysha) puts local interests at the heart of its projects, aiming to deliver long-term benefits for the communities in which we operate. We value and prioritise the development of trusting relationships early during the land leasing and permitting process and continuing throughout the installation and operation of the project.

As a responsible company that champions low-carbon growth, Akaysha also considers the environment where we work and live. It is a critical part of our culture to promote environmental initiatives wherever possible in our host communities. Adopting an “*avoid-minimise-mitigate*” approach to project development is absolutely fundamental to the way we do business.

2.0 Purpose

This Community Engagement and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy outlines the overarching stakeholder engagement principles for the development of the Orana Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). This strategy is designed to outline each key stakeholder group and the associated level of engagement to be undertaken to address any queries or concerns regarding the proposed Orana BESS in Wellington, NSW.

Engaging with interested and relevant stakeholders is a key strategic objective for the project, and this objective is achieved by using an accountable and transparent process. Akaysha’s values regarding community engagement are openness, inclusiveness, responsiveness and accountability. This strategy outlines the project’s commitment to accountable, responsible, and transparent stakeholder engagement.

This strategy will be revised at significant milestones, including when the project proceeds into construction and operations, to support the execution phase of the project. Revisions to this document will be based on outcomes of community and stakeholder meetings, social impact assessments and submissions following public exhibition.

3.0 Approach to the Engagement

This engagement strategy is designed to provide a foundation for how the project intends to consult, engage, and communicate with the community and stakeholders about the Orana BESS throughout project development.

The high-level objectives of this strategy are to:

- Identify stakeholders and possible stakeholder issues,
- Proactively inform and engage with the community and stakeholders regarding the project,
- Create a framework to seek and encourage input from stakeholders throughout the development of the project,
- Establish channels for the community to raise questions, issues, expectations, and concerns and to answer them,
- Identify and proactively communicate all the potential benefits and impacts of the project,

- Develop an active and visible profile within the community to create trust and constructive relationships,
- Demonstrate commitment to the communities’ sustainability and wellbeing,
- In order of precedence, avoid, minimise, or mitigate negative impacts from the project,
- Seek or respond to interest in opportunities for communities created by the construction process, and
- Reduce project risk and improve outcomes by incorporating best practice principles.

3.1 Engagement Principles

The project adopts the following foundational principles to guide the community and stakeholder engagement process.




Figure 1: Community engagement principles

3.2 Engagement Framework

This engagement plan has been designed by adhering to best practice principles and delivering on Akaysha’s commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility and is informed by *the Clean Energy Council’s Community Engagement Guidelines* and *the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) Core Values and Participation Spectrum*.

IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation is designed to assist in selecting the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process. The spectrum is used internationally and is found in public participation plans worldwide.



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Figure 2: IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation Framework¹

Specifically, Akaysha intends to adopt the “*Involve*” spectrum, as a minimum, in its engagement with stakeholders and the community.

3.3 Planning Approval Requirements

Additionally, this engagement strategy has also been designed to ensure compliance with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) guideline *Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects*, which recommends engagement is guided by the:

- IAP2 public participation spectrum; and
- The NSW DPE ‘community participation objectives’ which promotes that that is:
 - *open and inclusive*
 - *easy to access*
 - *relevant*
 - *timely, and*
 - *meaningful*

¹ IAP2 International Federation, 2018

4.0 Stakeholder Categories and Engagement Methodologies

Stakeholder Category	Engagement Methodology
<p>General ie. policies and principles that apply to all categories of stakeholder.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and regularly update a project website (www.oranabess.com.au). • Develop and regularly monitor a project email address (oranabess@akayshaenergy.com.au). • Maintain a suite of community-facing project documentation, including fact sheets, images, plans etc. • Maintain a “call log” of stakeholder engagement activities and outcomes throughout development.
<p>Near Neighbours ie. landholders directly adjacent to the project and those within a 2km radius of the project and/or with potential for direct line of sight.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focussed stakeholder mapping to identify near neighbours. • Letter of introduction and copies of above project documents. • Telephone calls and face-to-face meetings as appropriate. • Personalised invites (via mailbox drop) to community information events. • Responding to specific queries and concerns in a timely manner. • Implementing neighbour agreements as necessary to formalise mitigation measures.
<p>Local Community ie. Residents and other interested parties from Wellington and surrounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community information events at key project milestones, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project inception - Lodgement of Scoping Report - Lodgement of EIS / Public Exhibition - Response to Submissions / Assessment • Above events to be advertised in local media and on project website with sufficient notice. • Above project documents to be readily accessible at community events. • All queries responded to in a timely manner. • Formally engage representatives of the community during the social impact assessment. • Conduct a “jobs fair” for local labour, services and suppliers in conjunction with the EPC Contractor prior to commencement of construction.
<p>Aboriginal Community ie. local Elders, land councils, RAPs etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary engagement via the ACHA process and in direct response to issues raised in SEARs and Submissions. • Notwithstanding, issue invites to community information events and engage on an exceptions basis.
<p>NSW Department of Planning & Environment ie. consent authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage frequently with appointed representatives of Energy Assessment Team and the Priority Assessments Programme, particularly in advance of key milestones such as Lodgement, Exhibition, Submissions and Assessment. • Conduct soft lodgement of key deliverables to ensure adequacy.
<p>Dubbo Regional Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide letter of introduction and associated project documentation, with emphasis on Council’s executive leadership, planning team and local Wellington Ward Councillors. • Regular face-to-face meetings coincident with community events and key project milestones. • Telephone call and email status updates at other times. • Openly explore local issues and concerns, including local employment, housing, road safety and other social impacts. • Openly explore VPA and application of community benefits fund.
<p>Other Government Agencies and Representatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary engagement via direct response to issues raised in SEARs and Submissions, and/or on an exceptions basis as set-out below. • TfNSW – Early and open dialogue around preferred point and nature of access/egress at Goolma Road. • BCD – Informed discussion around selective vegetation removal and limited potential for SAIL. • DEECCW – Open dialogue on any MNES and EPBC matters. • NSW RFS – Informed discussion on layout (once available), in particular asset protection zones relating to fire safety. • Elected Officials – Occasional letter updates at key project milestones and invites to landmark events.
<p>Business Groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invites to jobs fair, in coordination with Local Chamber of Commerce, to maximise local content.
<p>Media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to information requests and contributing to articles in local newspapers, as well as proactively providing updates at key milestones. • As a conduit to informing the local community as to upcoming information events.

4.1 Stakeholder Analysis

Akaysha will conduct a focussed stakeholder analysis throughout the above engagement process to ensure the pertinent issues are adequately addressed. Based on experience of developing BESS projects in remote rural areas, Akaysha anticipates the likely issues and concerns will consist of:

- **Visual impact from neighbouring properties** – to be comprehensively examined via a Visual Impact Assessment with appropriate mitigation measures adopted such as changes to design/layout, vegetation screening etc.
- **Noise** – A detailed Noise Assessment based on preferred plant and equipment specifications will be conducted to assess both construction and operational noise impacts. Appropriate mitigation measures will be adopted including but not limited to site working hours, scheduling of noise emitting activities, equipment selection and layout/orientation of noise sources.
- **Traffic** – A thorough Traffic and Transport Assessment, including tube count sampling, will be undertaken to the satisfaction of TfNSW, Council and the local community to assess the impacts of increased traffic and road use, especially during construction. Mitigation measures will consider appropriate location and treatment of access roads in accordance with AustRoads Design Guidelines, scheduling of bulk equipment deliveries etc.
- **Local Housing** – To be assessed during the Social Impact Assessment and discussed with Council. However, Akaysha's intent to maximise local job and suppliers will greatly limit the number of FIFO workers requiring local accommodation.

5.0 Engagement Protocols

5.1 Stakeholder contact management

Akaysha will develop and maintain a stakeholder database utilised to record stakeholder and community contact details, including enquiries, meetings, events, and questions arising from community consultation.

The database will continue to be utilised to capture community members' contact details, the nature of the contact, how the contact was received, any concerns raised, any actions required, and project team responses, follow-up, and closeout.

The database can also be used to provide identification of issues and trends to inform mitigation strategies and provide comprehensive community interaction reporting data.

5.2 Enquiries

The timely and effective management of queries is a critical component of the successful delivery of the project. Verbal requests will be responded to within 24 hours; emails and letters within a week. All complaints will be categorised in a meaningful way to analyse any trends in complaint reporting.

5.3 Privacy

Akaysha will comply with the Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) requirements and the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) where applicable.

5.4 Review and updating

This approach to consultation will be regularly monitored and reviewed and updated at significant project milestones to ensure a culture of continuous improvement and make sure any lessons learned are incorporated.

Ongoing evaluation is part of the planning and management community engagement activities will be undertaken and will inform the evolution of this plan.

Monitoring and evaluation include:

- Feedback/evaluation forms for participants of stakeholder engagement activities, such as community information sessions and workshops,
- Regular review of complaints and enquires received to identify emerging issues and enquiry trends,
- Compliance conditions actioned in required response time,
- Media monitoring/metrics to maintain a current understanding of community concerns (enquires, publicity, reports), *social media monitoring (analytics and statistics)*
- Community surveys (issues/project development, interval, annual), and
- Wellbeing and sustainability metrics