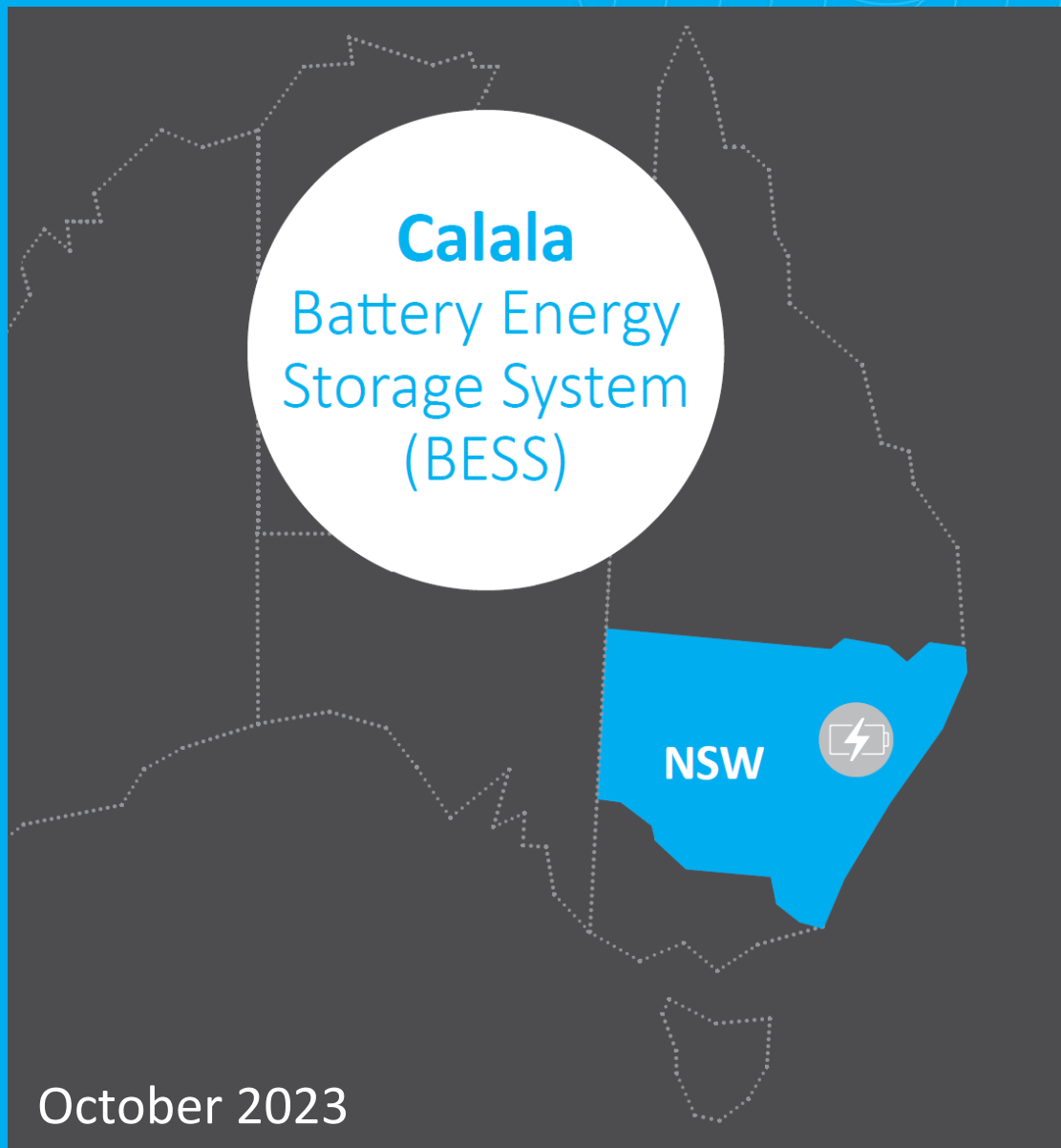




Phase 1 - 2 Engagement Summary



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1. Introduction

This report summarises the community, landholder and stakeholder engagement undertaken to inform the development of the Calala BESS in Calala, Tamworth NSW. The proposed site for the Calala BESS project is 474 Calala Lane, Calala, Lot 17 DP 629969, located within Tamworth Regional LGA, New South Wales (NSW). The total site area is approximately 36 hectares, however the footprint of the proposed facility will cover a total area of 8.9 hectares.

This report shares the outcomes of and concludes phase 1 and 2 of engagement. It also includes feedback from the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) conducted by Urbis and outlines how we have shared information and listened to and responded to feedback. The engagement undertaken was consistent with the 'Undertaking Engagement Guideline: Guidance for State Significant Projects (DPIE, 2022) to meet the requirement of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) – [Appendix F](#).

So far...

We have engaged with the Calala and wider Tamworth community and focused closely on neighbouring residents and landowners within one kilometre of the project locality.

Working with neighbouring landowners' businesses, community and stakeholders we sought their input to understand who may feel their social values (*figure 1*) may be impacted by the project, and how. We have identified (perceived or actual) impacts and continue to work with the community and technical experts to resolve them or agree on appropriate mitigation strategies.

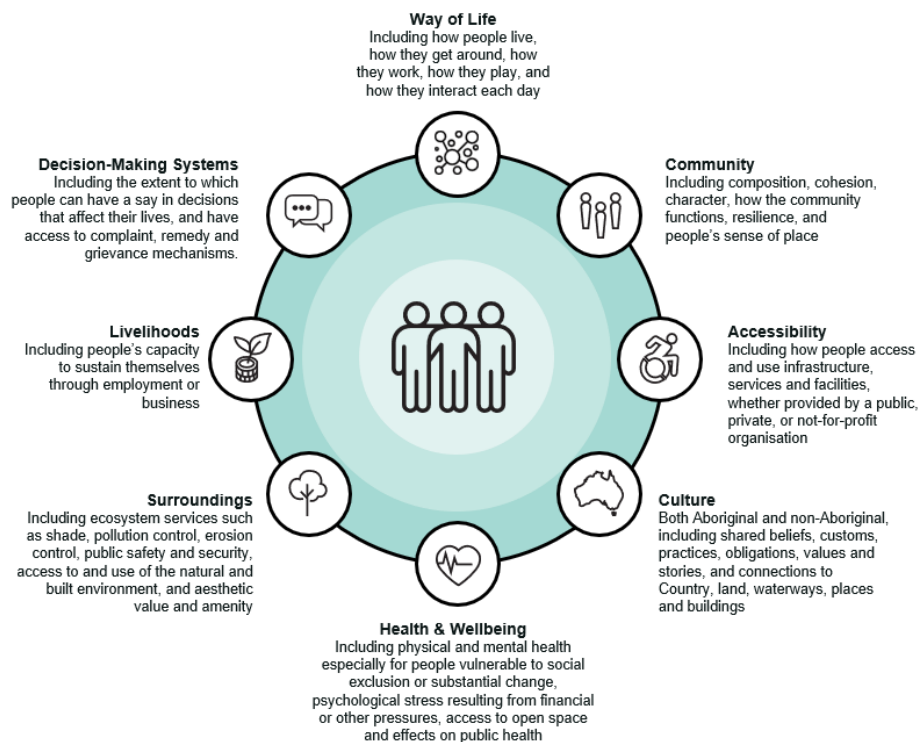


Figure 1: SIA Guideline (DPE 2023)

2. The framework we are working with

Our SIA process followed/ follows the framework below. Our responses are expanded further in the report.



Adapted from SIA Guideline DIPIE NSW

3. Phases 1-2 engagement overview

Phase 1 engagement took place from September – 10th December 2022, and phase 2 from the 11th of December 2022 until the 31st July 2023.

Our consultation website is the primary hub for project updates and engagement.

Purpose of engagement

The purpose of our engagement during phases 1-2 was to:

- Introduce Equis.
- Establish local conversations around our proposed BESS.
- Provide information around how BESS technologies play an integral role into the green energy transition.
- Deliver an inclusive, consistent, and robust communication and engagement process that informed, consulted and involved (as appropriate) our stakeholders throughout our project's stages.
- Build trust and develop constructive enduring relations with community.
- Gain local knowledge on community environmental factors so that our projects can better reflect on ground conditions.
- Tap into existing local knowledge to better understand what locals were concerned about and how they felt.
- Include community knowledge in the design and delivery of our projects where possible.
- Manage expectations about influence levels.
- Learn how locals wish to be engaged, and inform them when, why and how we will engage.
- Develop effective engagement processes, tools, and strategies with stakeholders and community.

How was our engagement received?

We developed relationships with targeted stakeholders early, raising project awareness with them, and gathered their feedback to garner support.

The feedback was continuously fed into our engagement. It raised some planning and development challenges along the way.

Stakeholders' feedback and input helped us develop an understanding of the day-to-day experience of people in their communities, while providing a mechanism for feedback and evaluation of planning decisions.

Our engagement helped us reduce some conflict within stakeholder groups, however consensus with all groups was not achieved.

Residents are not happy about significant renewable energy projects near their homes.

We were challenged to efficiently manage and resolve community and stakeholder enquiries about the project, as the information some residents sought, was not yet available.

This led to unrest for 2 residents.

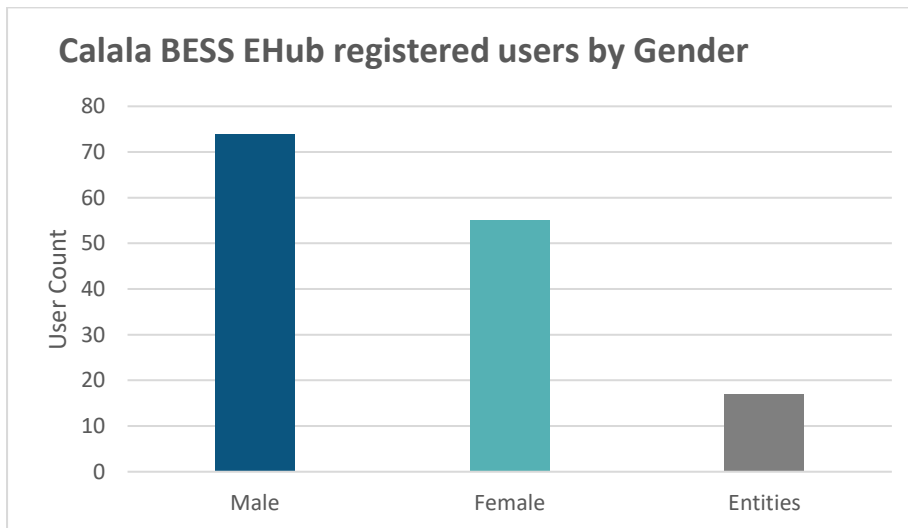
We worked with the local community to explore meaningful community projects and social procurement ideas.

[Appendix B](#) – Action plan by phases, expands the detail of activities during these phases.

4. Participants

This section outlines the demographic information gathered through our door knock site visits, the surveys, our online Engagement portal registrations and at our community information drop-in sessions.

Gender and age

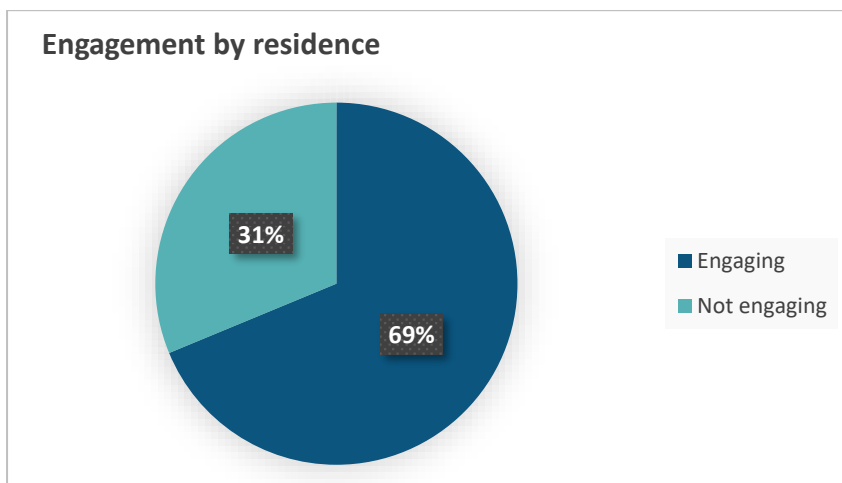


Locality

The registered participants (both online and at our information sessions) are all from the Calala and Tamworth region.

Engagement preferences

We asked respondents to tell us how they would like to be engaged. Most indicated that they wish to engage by email and to go online to gather the information they seek. Two of the nearby residence informed us that they do not wish to share their contact details. Another three have not responded to our original correspondence – all 5 opting not to engage.



5. Communication and promotion activities



Equis Website



511 page views and 146 registered users on our Calala BESS online engagement portal.



Online & Print FAQs
300 document downloads from our Ehub project page.



Project updates and promotions on LinkedIn social media page.
Promoted information sessions on community Face Book pages.



Approximately 73,000 people reached through radio ads promoting the drop-in sessions.
Rain on 2TM & 92.9FM



Northern Daily Leader Paper
Average reach of 18,866 print readers, & 98,999 digital.



Emails and AU Post



Phone calls



Online or in person meetings.

How people heard about the project

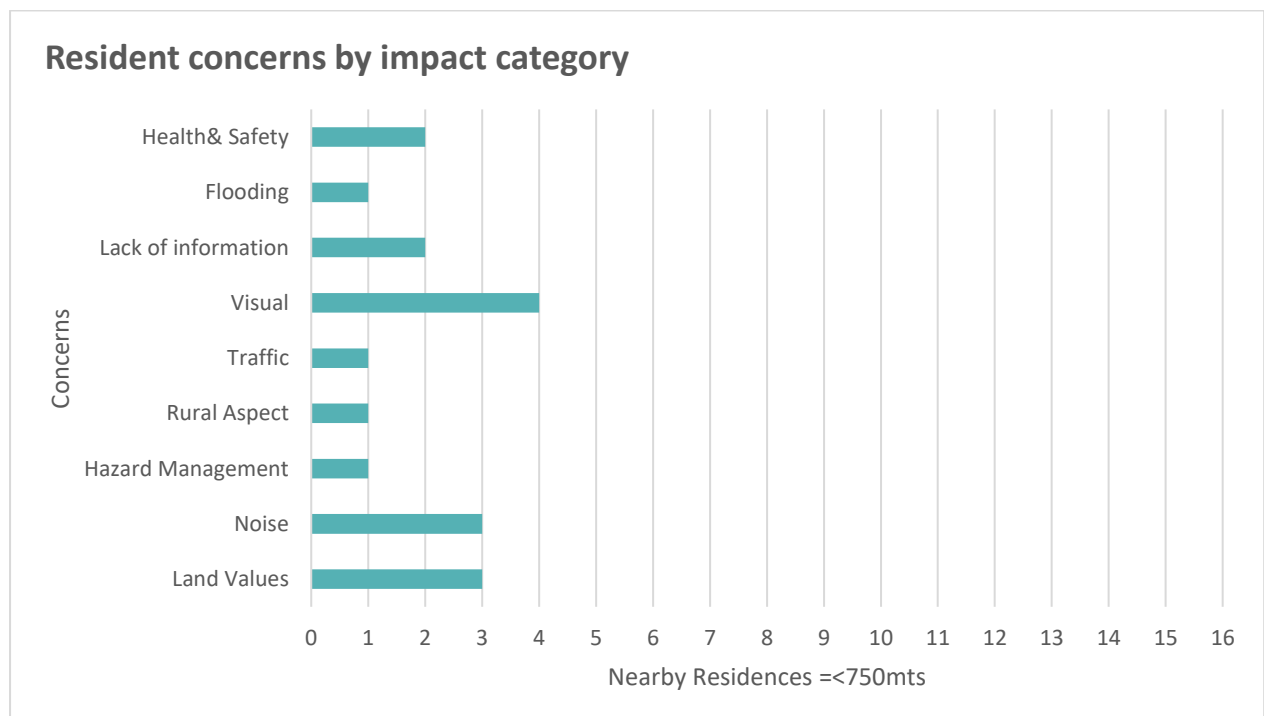
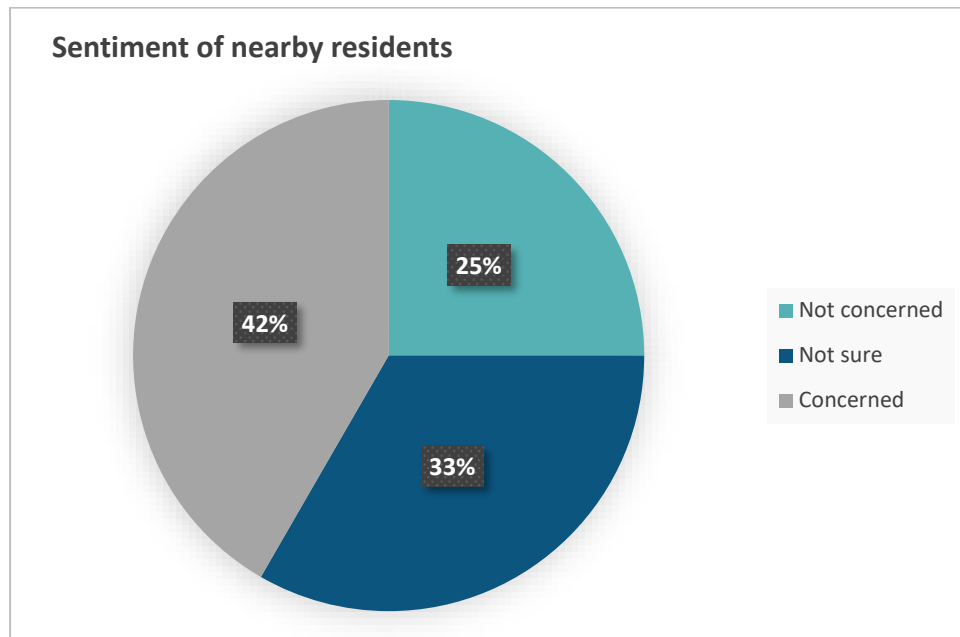
To make sure our reach was broad and accessible we engaged across a range of channels and platforms that can be viewed at [Appendix A Engagement tools used](#). Some of the tools we used were:

- Our Website at <https://www.equis.com.au/>
- The project's online engagement portal Ehub at <https://equis.engagementhub.com.au/calala-bess>
On this site users have a multilingual feature, can register for upcoming events, contact us and participate in a range of surveys. [Appendix C Ehub](#) explores Ehub's many features.
- Local radio 2TM & 92.9FM (listen to [radio add here](#))
- Northern Daily Leader Local Newspaper ([Appendix G: Local advertising](#))
- Tamworth Regional Council
- Tamworth Chamber of Commerce
- Local School Farrer Memorial Ag High School Face Book page
- Phone calls, phone text messages, emails, written hard copy letters, FAQ's

6. Engagement findings

This section presents the engagement findings gathered from site visits, feedback (in person, online and by phone) and the information session.

The nearest residents are quite concerned about having a BESS near their homes. They live in that area for the quiet rural aspect of the area. 42% of residents within that 500mt range have some concerns, whereas 33% will wait to learn more about the BESS technologies before they form an opinion.





Health and safety

We heard feedback about the impact to and concerns for health, including mental health and wellbeing of individuals directly and indirectly impacted by new BESS infrastructure. Residents felt that the impacts on their landscape, and visual and audible impacts as a direct result of the project, is affecting their mental and emotional health.

We also heard resident's concerns about the perception of additional risks that the BESS could cause to their health and safety in the event of a hazard of fire and other disasters, such as the increased possibility of pollution, chemical contamination, bushfires, and explosions caused by the BESS.

One resident was concerned about the BESS's potential health impacts to his horses.

Their concerns were exacerbated by the worry that the hazards and flooding happening at the same time will limit the access to emergency services to respond to the hazard.

“Calala is commonly known as ‘Calala Island’ during times of flooding due to its extremely limited access when flooded”.

Hazard Management

We heard their safety concerns regarding the construction and operation phases of the project, particularly regarding the type of battery which would be used and the risk of explosion.

We heard that communities and landholders wanted more technical information specific to them to inform their understanding of the project and its impacts.

“Why does this massive infrastructure need to be built in our backyard?”

Mitigation

We will mitigate fire, pollution, explosion and other hazards by:

- Adopting the recommendations for managing bushfire risk within the Bushfire Risk Assessment's (BRA) recommendations.
- Establishing an asset protection zone and maintaining an Inner Protection Area as detailed in the NSW Rural Fire Service's document 'Standards for Asset Protection Zones' and Appendix 4 of Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019.
- Implementing a range of Plans including: Management plans for: Risk, Emergency, Fire and Environment, and train all first responders that may use them.
- Using safe and proven technologies that allow our BESS to operate safely and quickly shut down to mitigate fire hazards, such as a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) and a Battery Management System (BMS). Together, these will monitor for faults in real-time, including smoke and system temperatures.
- Providing two 100,000 litre concrete water tanks in accordance with the guidelines.
- Partnering with the NSW Rural Fire Service (as per our community enhancement fund) to train landholders as fire responders and provide them with necessary resources. This could provide landholders with agency should an emergency situation occur and may reduce the anxiety surrounding the possibility of hazards.

Furthermore, we will maintain consistent communication with nearby landholders to provide them with relevant technical information about the risk of hazards, or let them know when that information may be available if it is not at the time they seek it.



Flooding

Accessibility of emergency services (should the BESS experience a hazard) during times of flooding was raised as both a safety and accessibility concern, as local road conditions may be worsened by additional traffic and/or increased risk of flooding.

In particular, residents raised specific concerns about Burgmann's Lane which is prone to flooding, as it sits in an area that has been tagged as being prone to flooding due to its proximity to the Peel River and Calala Creek.

Mitigation

The traffic impact assessment confirms we do not rely on Burgmann's Lane for access. The Water Management Report (WMR) notes that

the Peel River floodplain, the major determinant of flooding around Tamworth, lies north of the site. The WMR notes that the site sits outside of this floodplain, however the property that will house the Calala BESS site does overlap with the Calala Creek floodplain. According to the WMR, the Calala Creek flood extents for the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability and Probable Maximum Flood indicate that the project site will be unaffected by flooding. Further, the site will be raised by an earthworks pad, and hence is unlikely to be impacted by flooding, nor will this earthworks pad contribute to flood impact.

To provide some assurances around this concern, we will work with emergency services to determine the options of an aerial emergency response in the event of flooding.

Property values

We heard that there is a perceived potential impact on property values in the local area.

Residents expressed distress surrounding the potential loss of land value as a result of the Project's impacts to amenity during both construction and operation. This was a particular concern for residents who live within 500m of the site, as some felt that the full use of their property would become compromised for future use. This impact was also raised as significant given the age of many elderly residents, who expressed that they 'don't have the lifespan to recoup' if their property became devalued.

“The desirability to move to the area will be gone, hence ‘property values will plummet’.

Mitigation

Even though there is no direct evidence linking the presence of a BESS with devalued properties, we appreciate that this perceived potential impact on property values in the local area, can impact resident's mental and emotional health. Therefore, we will continue to work closely with landholders to support them through this challenge how we are best able to.



Lack of information

We heard that the engagement process should include regular sharing of information.

Residents wanted information about noise and distance of BESS in relation to resident' home.

There were instances when we could not provide this information as technical reports on background noise monitoring and noise impact assessments were not completed yet.

Not being able to provide this information, has made two residents feel that they are being ignored and feeling a perceived a lack of transparency from the project, resulting in feelings or worry, uncertainty, and mistrust towards it.

Mitigation

We will do our best to...

- Inform residents when the technical information they seek will be available.
- Minimise community unrest that may fester a sentiment of perceived lack of transparency and adequate communication, by maintaining consistent communication with nearby landholders about project changes and updates.

We will do this through a system of standardised updates when there are any new project updates.

Visual impact

Although existing energy infrastructure (such as the numerous transmission towers and Transgrid's existing large Tamworth substation), is already prominent in the area, residents still feel affronted by the perceived visual presence of the proposed BESS.

“Our rural outlook will be adversely affected ‘by looking at ugly batteries or cement walls”

Mitigation

To reduce the visual impact of the project we have adopted the mitigation measures (LCVIA Section 7.3) recommended in the Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment LCVIA as follows:

- The establishment of landscaping perimeter landscaping buffers (along the northern and western boundaries) comprised of native plants to help the facility integrate with its surroundings and minimise any visual impact to the nearest dwellings.
- Colour recommendations; and
- The implementation of lighting design principles.

In accordance with these measures, the LCVIA predicts that the project can avoid night sky impact, reduce the visibility and contrast of the project in the landscape, minimise the impact to the existing landscape character, retain the existing screening vegetation, and enhance the screening of the project.

Traffic impact

We heard that the existing conditions of local roads around Calala were identified as poor, leaving locals feeling vulnerable to daily accessibility hindered by traffic impacts.

The Traffic Impact Assessment Report confirms that "The additional traffic generated during the construction period will generally be relatively minor compared to the existing daily traffic volumes". The report concluded that "it is not anticipated that the construction traffic volumes will result in significant adverse impact on the safety or function of the road network".

Mitigation

Our mitigation strategies will include:

- Enforcing the Traffic Management Plan (TMP)
- Providing advance notice of any planned construction works to all impacted stakeholders as per our [communication plan](#).
- Consultation with the Government transport agencies and Councils.
- Maintaining working hours between 7am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday, and 8am to 1pm, Saturday, and no work on Sunday or public holidays.
- Secure work permits for any work required outside of these times
- Displaying road signage and reduced speed limits IF required.
- Delivering effective and timely engagement with stakeholder and road users.

Conflict with rural aspect - impact to local character

We heard that the proximity of the proposed infrastructure will likely impact on residents and communities' sense of place. Residents say that the rural lifestyle, quiet and tranquil atmosphere, and quality of life they experienced are core values to them.

They stress that the BESS should be placed away from current dwellings, so it does not conflict with the rural aspect of their properties and impact on the local character which they highly value.

We learned that their perception is that the industrial nature of the BESS facility will contrast with the rural aspect of Calala.

“it is an encroachment of industry on residential area, invasive to our lifestyle, and contrasting with the ‘quiet and rural’ character which we currently get ‘personal enjoyment’ from”.

Mitigation

To mitigate this, we have adopted the LC VIA's recommended mitigation measures (LC VIA Section 7.3) to reduce the visual impact of the project, that include:

- Perimeter landscaping (along the northern and western boundaries).
- Colour recommendations.
- The implementation of lighting design principles.

In accordance with these measures, the NCVIA predicts that the project can avoid night sky impact, reduce the visibility and contrast of the project in the landscape, minimise the impact to the existing landscape character, retain the existing screening vegetation, and enhance the screening of the project.

The establishment of landscaping buffers comprised of native plants will help the facility integrate with its surroundings and minimise any visual impact to the nearest dwellings.



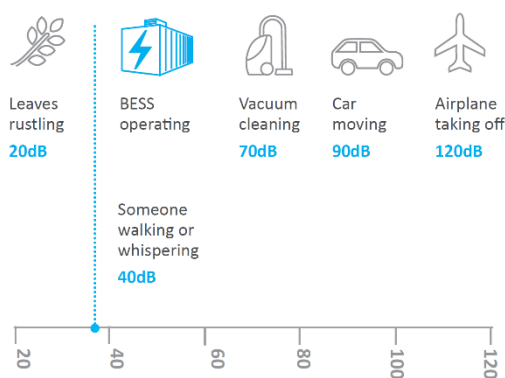
Noise

We heard that the noise disruption to resident’s amenity, resulting from both construction and operational noise was one of the primary concerns relating to the Project. Residents are anxious how this would impact resident’s daily life.

As a result of this impacted amenity, and their close proximity to the site, some landholders also felt that the project may have a resultant negative impact on their land values.

One resident believed that their ability to use and enjoy their 5-acre property would be compromised as a result to the noise emanating from the BESS, particularly regarding their future use if they ever wanted to build a second dwelling. This concern about noise was also fuelled by a lack of available technical information and/or awareness about the reality of the sounds caused by the BESS.

Noise levels for different elements



Mitigation

The noise assessment assumes continuous operation of all noise generating equipment across a 24-hr period with battery and inverter cooling systems running at 100% fan speed, which is the worst-case condition likely to occur during the operation of the Project.

The predicted noise levels have also been assessed against the more stringent evening and night period project noise trigger levels. Operational noise level predictions at all relevant noise sensitive receivers have been conducted and will achieve full compliance with the relevant criteria.

We will enforce the Site Noise Management Plan and ensure working hours, except where for practical reasons the construction activity is unavoidable (and thus communicated and approved by Council), are between: 7am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday, and 8am to 1pm, Saturday. An out-of-hours works permit will be required outside of these times.

In response to the Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment (NVIA) and local’s feedback, we have undertaken minor design development that introduces physical noise controls that demonstrate compliance with the evening and night project trigger levels NVIA Section 6.3.1). These design changes include perimeter noise barriers (in the form of a noise wall directly adjoining the BESS) to the north and west boundaries of the site and near-field barriers to the HV transformers. With the inclusion of suitable noise control measures, the NVIA concludes that the project achieves compliance with the evening and night project noise trigger level (NVIA Section 6.5).



Agriculture

We appreciate that this agricultural land use is a central value of the community, who value the rural aspect of their homes and have a strong sense of respect for country. Responsively, we aim to contribute to the agricultural community.

One couple raised concerns at the information session ***“that good quality agricultural land will be used for renewables”***.

This sentiment was also reiterated during the Urbis SIA consultation, where some residents expressed concerns that the BESS was not consistent with the agriculture typical of the surrounding area.

The residential use of rural land is called rural residential development; that is, people live on rural lots, but use the land primarily for residential rather than agricultural purposes. Although some engage in ‘hobby farming’, most derive the principal source of their income from pursuits not carried out on the land.

The total site area (currently used for agricultural and grazing purposes) is approximately 36 hectares. However, the footprint of the proposed facility will cover a total area of 8.9 hectares, being 24% of the land area.

The Site has a Land and Soil Capability classification of Class 4 (moderate to severe limitations) and Class 5 (Severe limitations), with the BESS footprint located entirely in Class 4 land.

A Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment in accordance with the Department of Industry’s

Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment Guide, has concluded that there is no land use conflict and that the site is considered suitable for the proposed BESS.

Mitigation

We are exploring how the balance of the land can be maximised for agricultural use through a potential partnership with Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School to enhance the school’s agricultural program.

Farrer, embraces academic, sporting, and agricultural pursuits delivered in first-rate learning and participation facilities including two productive farms.

Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School could farm the agricultural lands that surround the Calala BESS (circa 29 acres), where the students can run sheep and other livestock. This may benefit over 600 students.

“If selected, the school would be excited to utilise the land where the proposed battery storage would be situated. It is adjacent to the school farm and would make an ideal location to expand and enhance our agricultural programs”

Clint Gallagher, Principal.



Social, economic and environmental benefits

In line with the region’s emerging renewables industry, the Calala BESS has opportunities to strengthen industry connections with local businesses and organisations in the Tamworth LGA and the surrounding regions.

Jobs

We heard positive feedback about jobs creation and corresponding economic opportunities that renewable energy projects bring to a region.

Youth skill development and supporting regional jobs and existing industries, is important to locals, who recognise the benefits of the project to the state and the benefits that will flow to the region through the project’s construction.

When Urbis SIA asked:

How significant do you anticipate the provision of jobs related to the project will be to the local community?

The average answer was **39 out of 50**

One survey respondent wrote that

“the Project will ‘re-invest in the local community which will have tremendous positive impacts on the local community groups and members of the public’, and could bring ‘enormous benefits’ to the growing of the Calala community over the lifespan of the Project”.

We are committed to adopting a procurement process that includes a Local Jobs First Program, Social Procurement Framework and Social Impact Guidelines.

Our project will create up to 170 jobs through construction and 7 during operation.



Create up
to **177 JOBS**

To the extent possible, we aim to employ local people and use local businesses in the construction supply chain.

Services

The workforce visiting the area during the construction phase will generate a positive economic benefit for local accommodation and service sectors, who have said that they would welcome the extra business. Accommodation providers have indicated that they have ample capacity.

Training

We heard that the Farrer Agricultural High School and Carinya Primary School (two local Calala schools) would like to develop partnerships between the Calala BESS/ Equis and their local schools to deliver enhanced learning pathways. In collaboration with local schools, and other training providers and local

suppliers, the Calala BESS could offer a training platform to skill workers required for the transition to renewables.

This will help upskill local workers to transition into renewable energy industries.

For example, the Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School highlighted the opportunity to build infrastructure that supports the school's energy and environmental sustainability, such as dams, solar panels, and BESS facilities, and introduce science and technology curriculum around energy.

The community building initiatives explored with community are covered in more detail in [section 8](#) of this report.

Training support for the NSW RFS

The 2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires destroyed 186 homes and 27 business premises across southern NSW. The fire caused an estimated \$56 million dollars in damage. Without the relentless work of the local RFS, these losses would have been much higher. With climate change forecasted to create increasing adverse events, areas like the Tamworth and Northern Rivers region remain at risk to extremities such as drought, flood and fires.

Our Project's community enhancement fund will work closely with Browyn Waters – District Manager of the NSW Rural Fire Service to support initiatives that train locals as a firefighting resource.



Firefighters fought blazes that skirted the edges of Greater Sydney today. (ABC News: *Brendan Esposito*)

Other impacts

We did not hear any pressing concerns around:

- Energy security
- Emission reduction
- Biodiversity
- Cultural Heritage

7. Community enhancement fund

We are committed to long-term investment in the regions and the communities that host our projects and will continue to work with the community to design programs that foster economic and social resilience, provide value to the community, and deliver stronger, more equitable regional economies.

Our strategies are aimed at stimulating enterprise and building social capital and community capacity. To date, our engagement with peak community bodies, explored some community initiatives listed in the table below.

RESPONDING TO REGIONAL AND STATE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES		Build resilient & diverse communities	Support education & learning	Promote active healthy communities	Celebrate culture, heritage & diversity	Prosperity & Innovation	Protect agricultural lands & livelihoods	Work with, and protect the environment	Enhance tourism & visitor opportunities	Regional connectivity
Organisation	Initiative ideas raised by the community:									
Farrier Memorial Agricultural High School	A customised curriculum educational pathway programs providing learning opportunities for youth to train and develop skills in renewable energy technologies.		✓		✓	✓		✓		
	An Indigenous yarning circle for storytelling and connection – 12% of students		✓		✓					✓
	Build infrastructure that supports the school's energy and environmental sustainability, such as dams, solar panels and BESS.					✓		✓		
NSW Rural Fire Service	Collaborative fire and safety training programs with farming communities and landholders, so they become a valuable resource contributing to the region's firefighting efforts.	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓
	Girls on Fire program, to enlist more women as volunteers in the NSW Rural Fire Service. This includes forums and training opportunities, where women come together, share, learn and contribute.	✓	✓				✓	✓		
	Funding towards building toilet amenities so women feel more supported to participate and provide service to the NSW Rural Fire Service.	✓								
	Indigenous arts program with the Bumbira arts group, to host local arts programs and create artwork for the newly built local command centre.		✓		✓					✓
TAMBUG (Mountain Bike Users)	Development of physical barriers on the side of the roads that provide safe barriers/sections for bike riders to commute safely in designated areas.	✓		✓					✓	✓
Tamworth Regional Council	Tamworth Regional Heritage Festival - The festival features over 30 events including open days, tours and displays throughout the Tamworth region. Museums open their doors for special behind the scenes tours		✓		✓				✓	✓
	Fiesta La Peel – the region's biggest multicultural event, with over 30 nationalities represented through a mix of cultural food stalls, demonstrations, and performances.	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
	Annual Sporting Club grant	✓	✓	✓						✓
Discretionary	Other funding such as traineeships & job support programs or determined by community.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

8. Summary of engagement to date

Engagement has been ongoing from May 2022.

May 2022

The planning team met with Tamworth Regional Council officers to discuss the Project on 26/5/22. Council identified the following key issues to be addressed as the application progresses:

- noise impacts;
- visual impact—particularly in relation to the nearby residential dwellings;
- traffic, access and transport—particularly in relation to access during construction; and
- Cumulative impacts associated with nearby Tamworth BESS proposal at Burgmanns Lane

September – October 2022

A mail out was sent to all residents within 1.2 kilometers on the 29th September 2022. This was followed by face-to-face meetings with the nearby landholders within 750 meters of the BESS site between the 10-14th October.

December 2022

[Newspaper](#), [radio](#) and online advertising campaign 2-14th December 2022. [Advertising plan](#).

All neighboring residents within 500 meters of the BESS that had provided their contact details and expressed interest to be contacted, were invited personally by phone and follow up email that provided a link to the [EHub](#) engagement portal and our [Equis web](#) site.

We held an information session attended by 28 people (3 not registered) on the 14th December 22.

September 2022 – Online engagement platform ongoing

The engagement platform <https://equis.engagementhub.com.au/calala-bess> has been shared in the emails, FAQ's, media and all correspondence.

Meetings were also held with other grassroots community organisations to co-design social benefit strategies for Calala and the Tamworth region.

Some of the meetings and consultations to date include:

- Tamworth Regional Council
- Mr Clint Gallagher, principal of the Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School,
- Carinya Christian School, Andrew & Deborah McDonald
- Bronwyn Waters – District Manager of the NSW Rural Fire Service
- Mr Greg Johnstone – Tamworth Mountain Bike User Group (TAMBUG),
- Meetings with neighboring landholders within 750 meters,
- Mail out to all residents with 1.2km of the BESS site,
- Tamworth real estate agents (Tamworth Real Estate; Tamworth Property Co; First National),
- Mikayla Stevens – Events Coordinator Tamworth Council, Destination Tamworth, and
- Tamworth TAFE.
- NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (NSWICC)
- Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council / Bumbira Indigenous Art Group
- Tamworth Agricultural Institute Department of Primary Industries NSW
- Development Services-Renewables West, Transport for NSW

9. Information session

A community drop-in information session attended by 28 people, was held on the 14th December 2022 from 3-7pm, at 191 Goonoo Goonoo Road, Tamworth NSW.

Community feedback

- Carinya Christian School (600 students) and Farrer Memorial Ag High (600 students) expressed their interest for Equis engineers to participate/support in them with their development and delivery of Maths, physics, Science and Chemistry curriculum in their schools.
- Farrer High principal Clint Gallagher expressed keen interest to develop learning pathway opportunities that could arise from the Calala BESS facility. Furthermore, he expressed Farrer's interest to help manage the balance of the land to graze sheep, building more BESS on campus and other educational opportunities that may eventuate.
- Request for funding support for Westpac helicopter, Rotary and the local Social Clubs.
- The Regional Chamber of Commerce Chair invited Equis to work with them to ensure that locals are given jobs first.
- Recommended that Equis hold an industry information day inviting regional business to attend (Tim Coats, Regional Chamber of Commerce Chair).
- That Equis consider Carinya Christian School Hall as an alternative meeting venue given that many Calala locals have young children at that school.

Concerns raised/information sought:

- That the BESS will impact their land values
- Loss of agriculture
- Impact on housing, with locals fearing they will be priced out of the housing market that is already tight at a .5% vacancy rate.
- Visual impacts
- Noise
- Fire & hazard management.

How we estimated initial attendee sentiment, approximately:

- 16% were against
- 30% did not like renewables and were not excited about us being there
- 24% undecided yet not keen
- 30% supportive

Once they received more information, it felt that:

- 16% were against.
- 50% left with an open mind and somewhat supportive even though still unsure.
- 34% supportive

The honourable Mayor of Tamworth Mr Russell Webb and councillor Judy Coats were amongst the attendees.



10. Ongoing engagement – key stakeholders

Our engagement will continue working with the following key stakeholders if/as needed throughout ALL project stages.

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholder name	Contact
Local Council	Tamworth Regional Council (TRC)	[REDACTED]
	TRC Mayor Russell Web	[REDACTED]
	TRC Corporate Communications Team	[REDACTED]
State Minister/s	Hon. Kevin Anderson, MP	[REDACTED]
Federal Minister/s	Hon. Barnaby Joyce MP	[REDACTED]
Planning and environment	NSW Dept of Planning and Environment	[REDACTED]
	Planning Customer Support Team	[REDACTED]
EPA NSW	EPA NSW	[REDACTED]
		[REDACTED]
Transport for New South Wales	Development Services-Renewables West Regional and Outer Metropolitan Division TfNSW	[REDACTED]
Natural Resource Management Groups	NRM regions	[REDACTED]
Emergency Services	NSW SES	[REDACTED]
		[REDACTED]

RFS	Tamworth Fire Station NSW Rural Fire Service	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>
Traditional Owners	Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council (TLALC) Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES)	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>
Chamber of Commerce	Tamworth Chamber of Commerce	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>
Media	<p>Local newspapers (Editorial and print/digital advertising)</p> <p>Local radio stations</p>	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>
Schools, TAFEs, Universities & other training providers	Local university	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>

	Secondary Schools	[REDACTED]
Electricity Service Providers	Top energy providers for NSW	[REDACTED]
	Electricity distributors for NSW	[REDACTED]
Project Opponents	Neighbouring landholders Real estate agents	[REDACTED]
Advocacy Groups & NGOS		
Landowner - Host	Maurice Mondolo	
Landowners – Neighbours nearby		[REDACTED]
Local Community – Benefit Sharing		[REDACTED]
Local Community Groups	TFSS provide support to people in need to ensure thriving communities with endless possibilities, offering 21 funded programs, including Government funded programs.	[REDACTED]
Local Businesses	Local ATSI suppliers (E.g. Brycon Civil ; Gomerioi Dance Company)	[REDACTED]

EIS Engagement

Engagement will continue with consideration of Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects (DPIE, 2021) and as required by the Project SEARs.

We anticipate that further engagement will occur with:

- Tamworth Regional Council;
- affected landowners and the local community;
- registered Aboriginal parties (as part of preparation of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
- government bodies including DPE, TfNSW and Heritage NSW; and
- infrastructure and service providers, including Ausgrid and WaterNSW
- NSW RFS
- Local training provides and schools
- Suppliers
- Social and community enterprises

11. Engagement

Engagement approach


Our communication and engagement approach was guided by the Undertaking Engagement Guide: Guidance for State Significant Projects (DPIE, Oct 2022) and the standards established by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum for public participation.


The level of public participation in this engagement was mainly at the Inform and Consult level, and (where required) at the involve level on the IAP2 spectrum. This may change, as in any decision-making process, the level of engagement will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the project or decision and evolving community sentiment. The level of participation will be influenced by the impact and scope of the project, and the impact to the community.

We worked with stakeholders and the community to obtain feedback during various stages of project development and will provide feedback on how their input will considered and factored in our decision-making process and project outcomes, once all the technical reports are finalised.


We will continue to use a range of consultation and communication tools (*listed in [Appendix A](#)*) to inform and receive input from stakeholders and the community throughout the project.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
GOAL	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	Obtain public interest on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including developing alternatives and identifying preferred solutions.	Place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE COMMUNITY	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen and acknowledge concerns 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 direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.





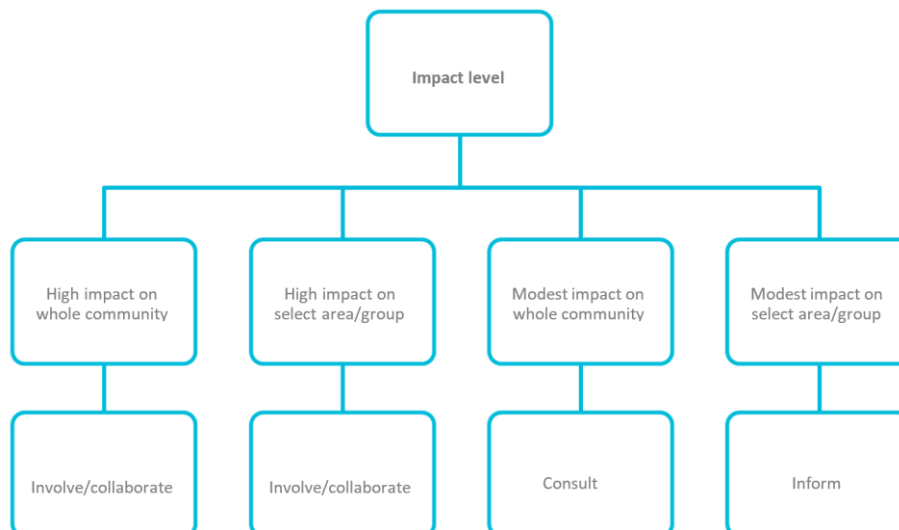
Engagement levels

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
GOAL 	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	Obtain public interest on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including developing alternatives and identifying preferred solutions.	Place final decision making in the hands of the public.

Increasing level public impact

Local Council					
State Minister/s					
Federal Minister/s					
Planning & Environment					
Landowner - Host					
Near Neighbours					
Traditional Owners					
Media					
Local Community					
Community Groups					
Local Businesses					
Emergency Services					
RFS					
Utility Providers					
Education & training providers					
Project Opponents					
Natural Resource Management Groups					
Advocacy Groups & NGOS					

Our levels of engagement have been between the inform and involve stages. Impact levels noted below and may change as the project evolves and/or community sentiment changes.



Stakeholder assessment criteria and categories




Details	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Project impacts on the stakeholder	High impact	Low impact	High impact	Low impact
Stakeholder levels of interest/influence on the project	High interest/ influence	High interest/ influence	Low/ medium interest/ influence	Low interest/ influence
Stakeholder Classification	Stakeholder Groups			
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal and state ministers Federal and State regulatory authorities State government elected representatives Tamworth Regional Council Directly affected landowners Electricity distributors for NSW (Ausgrid) Other nearby renewable energy proponents Directly impacted businesses 			
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State government departments and agencies Nearby landowners/businesses Federal Government elected representatives (may also be level 1) Local Aboriginal groups/people Media Utility service providers Local environmental groups Project Opponents 			
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreational groups Indirectly affected landholders Indirectly affected businesses Local agricultural groups Utility service providers Emergency services Community groups Education & training providers Natural Resource Management Groups 			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional community Advocacy Groups & NGOS (watch closely, may be level 3) 			

Engagement phases

We deliver our engagement over the five key phases outlined below. A detailed plan of activities to be carried out at every phase is expanded in [Appendix B](#)

Phase	Description	Tasks to be completed
Phase 1 ✓	Raise awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up project webpage & online engagement platform Conduct locality desktop assessment and stakeholder mapping Initial social impact scoping Establish communication hotlines Meet with council engagement teams and planners Engage with landowner hosts, neighbours and other grass roots organisations. Prepare print materials for phase 2 - FAQ's, letters, flyers, brochures, posters, core flutes, banners Prepare infographics and short videos Prepare media campaigns for phase 2 (radio, print, social)
Phase 2 ✓	<p>Capture community input</p> <p><i>Engage with the key approval stakeholders to promote the project and its benefits.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise any work on print and promotional material Continue work with grassroots community stakeholders to socially scope and develop draft ideas for a community benefit plan. Hold Federal and State MP briefings Consult with council Plan information sessions Launch media campaigns Deliver information sessions Meet with stakeholders as required Prepare online surveys
Phase 3 Next Phase	Respond to stakeholders during Public Notice period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare print and promotional materials for phase 3 Launch medial campaign for this stage Deliver additional information sessions as required Monitor media
Phase 4	Construction, then operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with directly affected stakeholders Send out construction notices, letters and advice notices Plan further information sessions if needed Deliver additional information sessions as required Prepare evaluation surveys
Phase 5	Finalise and evaluate feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email participants to thank them for their contribution Finalise a summary engagement report

Engagement activities summary

	Activity	Engagement summary
	Community information sessions	A community public information session was held on the 14 th December 2022 to provide information about the project. The sessions were advertised via a newsletter letterbox drop to the nearby neighbours, by local newspaper, radio, social media and industry networks. In total 28 people attended.
	Online Engagement Hub (Ehub)	We have a dedicated online engagement portal where stakeholders can view project information, download documents and FAQs, register for project updates, provide feedback and register their interest as a supplier. The Calala BESS page has over 511 page views and 146 registered users.
	Stakeholder briefings	The team has undertaken face-to-face briefings with government agencies, elected leaders and interested neighbours. These briefings were held to introduce the project, explain the planning process, and discuss potential project impacts. Equis provided regular updates to these stakeholders.
	Project website	A dedicated project website for the project was established: https://www.equis.com.au/calala This page is regularly updated to reflect latest project information and includes surveys and a feedback form.
	Traditional landowner consultation	The traditional owners of the area are the Gamilaroi/ Kamilaroi Aboriginal people. The consultation process initially identified 3 Aboriginal stakeholder organisations (being the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council; Bumbira Indigenous Art Group and the NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce) with interest in the project. We are working with Aboriginal leaders through the Aboriginal heritage stakeholder consultation process for the AHCA.
	Letterbox drops	A letterbox drop has taken place to introduce the Equis, the team and how to contact us. We provided information about the proposed project, FAQs and promoted our online portals and upcoming door knock. Letters were distributed to properties within 1.2 km of the project site on the 29 th September 2022. People were encouraged to contact the project team to provide feedback via a range of channels, including the 1800 number, website, and email. Hard copy letters are mailed to 5 of the 16 residences who have not shared contact details.
	Project email address	We have a dedicated project email address – AUProjects@equis.com – to receive queries from neighbours and stakeholders. The project email address has been promoted on all community notifications and advertising.
	Project Phone line	Stakeholders can call on any of our three numbers to speak to a member of the project team. Our three advertised phone number are: Equis hotline 1800 161 249, community engagement manager’s mobile 0439 917 804 and our office number +61 3 7020 3323.
	Door Knocking	Equis representatives door knocked from the 10 th – 14 th October 2022, visiting 13 of the 16 nearby residences. The BESS land host, and two others were not available to meet or did not provide property access. Sorry I missed you letters were left at each property with our company, project and contact information.
	Community newsletter	A community newsletter (electronic and hard copy) will be distributed periodically electronically to provide updates of our project and an overview as to the status of the EIS. It will also invite residents to engage with the project.
	Advertising	Radio: Approximately 73,000 people reached through our radio ads promoting the drop-in sessions on 2TM & 92.9FM. We also advertised through the local newspaper, the Northern Daily Leader Paper that has an average reach of 18,866 print readers, & 98,999 digital.

Engagement tools used

A comprehensive list of tools we used can be viewed at [Appendix A](#)

Activity	Detail	Level of participation				
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Print materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project overview FAQ & Q&A Introductory letter bulk mail out FAQ's 	✓				
Advertisements (e.g., print, TV, radio and digital)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local radio Local newspaper Online 	✓				
Media releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local newspaper 	✓				
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website to provide accessible, timely and clear information Website used for two-way information exchange and support other channels 	✓	✓	✓		
Email feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email AUProjects@equis.com Email is used with the EHub feedback system. 	✓	✓			
Information hotline	Community engagement mobile Hotline 1800 161 249 Shared online and print media.	✓				
Walk public in information sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held Wednesday 14th December 22 Pull up banners x 3; 1 for brand, and 2 project specific banners FAQ's Printed hard copy of surveys Participation register 	✓	✓			
Surveys and polls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback survey Supplier registration survey Community benefit registration survey SIA Urbus Survey Monkey survey Digital/ hard copy of survey available on the EHub 	✓	✓	✓		
One-on-one interviews and meetings (as required).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By phone, online and/or face to face Data gathered entered into the EHub CMS Information carefully analysed and reported to provide an accurate representation of public opinion 	✓	✓	✓		

Small group meetings	Face to face and online meetings with community, benefit providers, industry, suppliers and stakeholders	✓	✓	✓		
Engagement apps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement Hub captures client information, complaints, feedback, surveys, and provides project information • Upload FAQ's & other planning documents • Project timeline • Promotional video • Links to the website and other channels 	✓	✓	✓		
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LinkedIn • YouTube – promotional videos <p>Use social to post and sharing good news stories about BESS and build awareness and narrative.</p>	✓	✓			
Online survey tools	<p>EHub</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feedback survey - community benefit survey - suppliers survey & registration - End of engagement feedback 	✓	✓	✓		
Hard-copy surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be provided at public events - feedback survey - community benefit survey - suppliers survey & registration - End of engagement feedback 	✓	✓	✓		
Online polling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via EHub is an effective way to get a snapshot of community sentiment. 	✓	✓	✓		
3D modelling and artistic images of project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3D models that allow users to view what a planning scheme or local area might look like, will be made available at information sessions and online. 	✓				
Community radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use local community radio to provide information on our projects to reach a broader audience with community service announcements and local advertising. • Independent media with broad reach across. • Cater to a diverse audience including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Indigenous Australians – multicultural communities – religious communities – people with print disability. 	✓				
Research - Demographic - Industry - Regional issues - Social impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locality demographic scoping. 	✓	✓			

Our Community engagement snapshot by stage

DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCTION OPERATION

1

Site Selection



Desktop research to determine technical & social constraints
 Host landowner engagement
 Specialist technical reports
 Feasibility assessments
 Prepare FAQs
 Stakeholder register
 Identify and map key stakeholder information
 Site layout & concept design

2

Feasibility



Engage with neighbours, traditional owners, Council, MP's, business, industry, local agencies and community
 Explore local sentiment
 Map political sentiment
 Design Website and EHub
 Identify how public wish to be engaged & inform them
 Design benefit strategy
 Inform influence scope
 Refine FAQs & benefit options
 Assess social impacts
 Enquiries & feedback
 Stakeholder registrations

How

FAQ's, Letters & Newsletters
 Project website and online engagement platform EHub
 Print, radio & social media
 Drop-in information sessions
 Meetings and workshops
 Feedback surveys
 Signage & public displays
 Citizens advisory panel
 Social risk matrix

3

Planning & Approvals



Finalise community engagement plan, social risk matrix & benefit sharing plan
 Launch website & EHub
 Engage with community
 Inform public of project status and engagement processes.
 Respond to submission responses.
 Resolve influence expectations
 Refine benefit sharing
 Enquiries & feedback
 Stakeholder registrations

How

FAQ's, Letters & Newsletters
 Project website and online engagement platform EHub
 Print, radio & social media
 Doorknock
 Drop-in information sessions
 Meetings and workshops
 Feedback surveys
 Signage & public displays
 Citizens advisory panel

4

Post DA Lodgement



Engage with community
 Inform public of project status and engagement processes
 Enquiries & feedback
 Stakeholder registrations
 Host community sessions
 Develop Complaints register
 Job interest register (Ehub)
 Indigenous Participation Plan
 Establish 1800 number
 Email: AUPProjects@equis.com
 Liaise with regional development networks

How

FAQ's, Letters & Newsletters
 Project website and online engagement platform EHub
 Print, radio & social media
 Drop-in information sessions
 Meetings and workshops
 Feedback surveys
 Signage & public displays
 Citizens advisory panel

5

Pre-Construction



Engage with community
 Inform public of project status and engagement processes
 Enquiries & feedback
 Stakeholder registrations
 Job & supply registers
 Finalise benefit sharing
 Host local employer & networking sessions
 Indigenous Participation Plan
 Liaise with regional development networks
 Handover to construction manager

How

FAQ's, Letters & Newsletters
 Project website and online engagement platform EHub
 Print, radio & social media
 Meetings and workshops
 Feedback surveys
 Signage & public displays
 Citizens advisory panel

6

Construction



Engage with community
 Inform public of project status and engagement processes
 Enquiries & feedback
 Provide regular project, construction & traffic updates
 Manage complaints register
 Coordinate workplace training & apprenticeships
 Site tour information pack
 Handover to asset managers
 Monitor & report against planning KPIs

How

FAQ's, Letters & Newsletters
 Project website and online engagement platform EHub
 Print, radio & social media
 Doorknock
 Meetings and workshops
 Feedback surveys
 Signage & public displays
 Citizens advisory panel
 Site tours (if applicable)
 Event & sponsorships

7

Operation



Engage with community
 Inform public of project status and engagement processes
 Enquiries & feedback
 Manage complaints register
 Community open day celebrations
 Benefit sharing delivery
 Visitor information pack
 Monitor & report against planning KPIs
 Evaluate engagement

How

FAQ's, Letters & Newsletters
 Project website and online engagement platform EHub
 Print, radio & social media
 Meetings and workshops
 Feedback surveys
 Site tours (if applicable)
 Event & sponsorships
 Visitor information pack

8

Decommissioning



Engage with community, council and Landcare groups
 Inform public of project status and engagement processes
 Enquiries & feedback
 Monitor & report against planning KPIs

How

FAQ's, Letters & Newsletters
 Project website and online engagement platform EHub
 Print, radio & social media
 Meetings and workshops
 Feedback surveys
 End of project life information pack

12. Enquiries and complaints

Preserving our social standing and reputation and maintain a social licence to operate is imperative to our success. We are committed to working through any concerns or complaints promptly, fairly and efficiently. A Complaint Investigation and Response Plan (CIRP) that sets out the process for effective and consistent handling of any complaints received by external stakeholders, interested parties, and members of the public in relation to Equis' projects will be available for every project.

Our complaints process has been designed to ensure that:

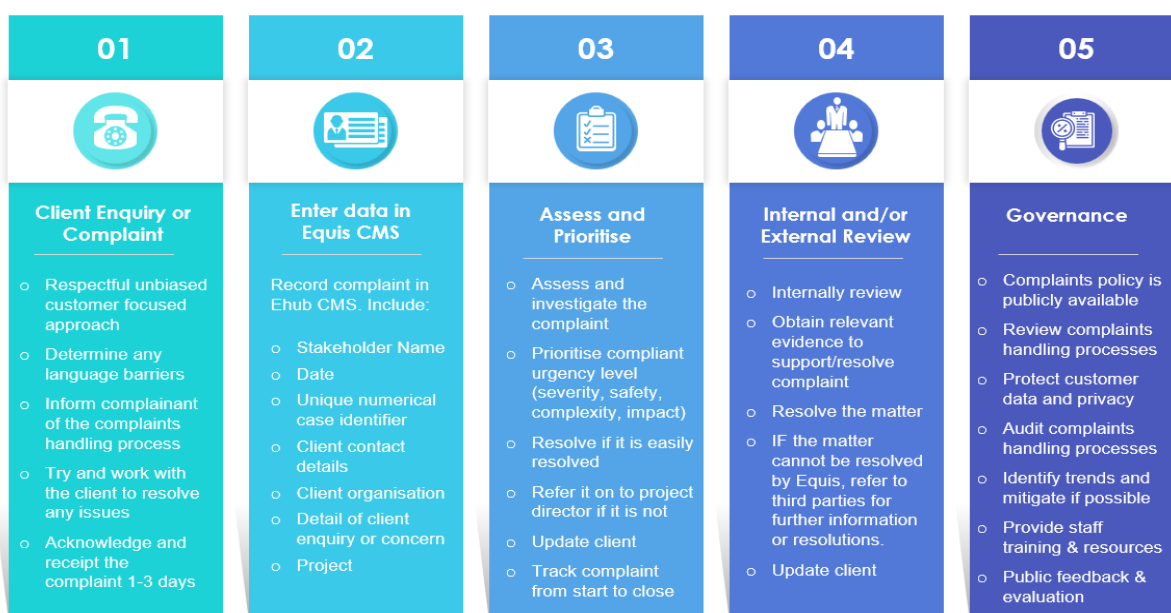
- Complainants' data is kept confidential and secure.
- Complaints are processed in a timely, objective and fair manner.
- No detriment is caused to a complainant as a result of a complaint being lodged.
- Our complaints systems will be accessible, visible, transparent and free.
- Complainants are advised of all their options throughout the complaints process.

To make sure that no complainants are disadvantaged, information will be provided in plain English, or preferred language, and in different formats so it is accessible to all. This information will include details on:

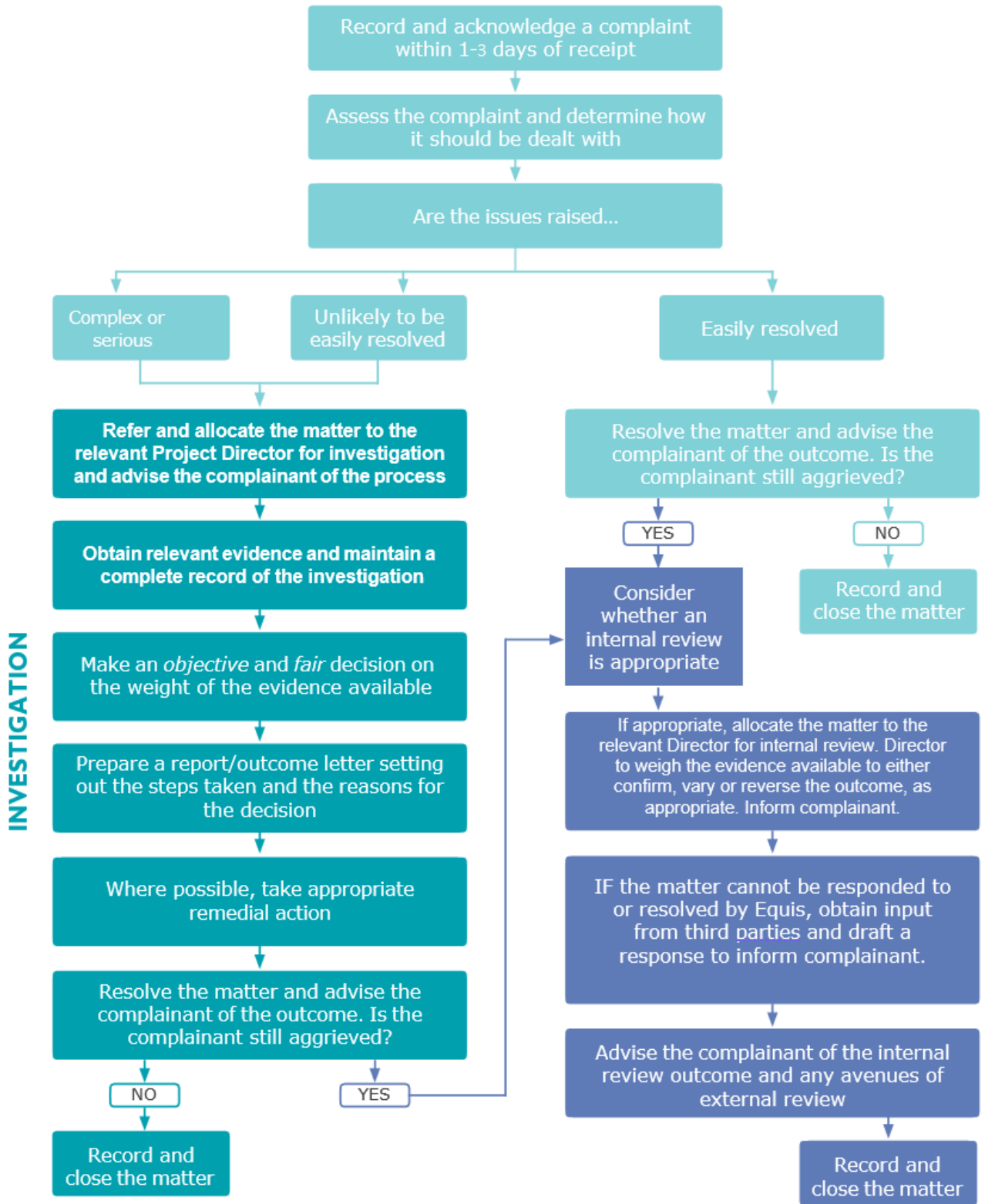
- How and where complaints can be made.
- The information to be provided by the complainant and how it will be used.
- The process for handling complaints.
- Time periods associated with various stages in the process
- The complainant's ability to propose alternative options.
- How the complainant can obtain feedback on the status of the complaint.

The complaints process we follow is outlined below.

Equis Complaints Management Framework



EQUIS COMPLAINT RESOLUTION FLOWCHART



Complainants should be informed of the complaints progress, processes and their rights to complain to the relevant external bodies.

All details of the complaint and action taken to resolve it must be entered onto Equis's customer management system.

13. How stakeholders contact us

Contact Us		
	In Person	Ground Floor, 36 Esplanade Brighton, Melbourne VIC 3186
	Hotline	Free-call number 1800 161 249
	Community Engagement	0439 917 804
	Office Number	+61 3 7020 3320 Monday to Friday from 8.45am – 5pm.
	Email	AUProjects@equis.com
	Register on our online engagement platform	equis.engagementhub.com.au/contact us https://equis.engagementhub.com.au/calala-bess
	Website	https://www.equis.com.au/contact
	Social media LinkedIn	www.linkedin.com/company/equisdev

14. Conclusion

The Calala BESS facility's substantial benefits, include jobs, local procurement, economic diversification and contribution to government's economic and renewable energy agendas. With the capacity store up the 300MW and generate up to 1,200MWhrs of energy to power up to 80,000 homes, Calala BESS will provide reliable, affordable energy helping to create a more sustainable and diverse economy through decarbonisation of existing energy networks.

Although many in the community expressed their support for the important social, economic, and environmental benefits that the Calala BESS may offer, it should also be noted that people react differently to sources of conflict. Just because one neighbour experiences an amenity loss from a particular land use, this does not mean that other neighbours will experience the same level off loss of amenity.

Nearby landholders expressed their concerns around visual impact of the project, which they felt would change the surrounding landscape. They perceive that the BESS conflicts with the rural aspect of their properties, and the local character which is highly valued by residents. Perceived impact on their land values, noise and flooding were also raised. We will continue to work closely with them, and remain focused on balancing the Project's likely benefits and opportunities against any potential impacts. The report has also outlined the broad and varied engagement methods and tools to engage with our host community.

The engagement undertaken was consistent with the 'Undertaking Engagement Guideline: Guidance for State Significant Projects (DPIE, 2022) to meet the requirement of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs).

End

Need more information



Call (+61) 3 7020 3323



Visit www.equis.com.au



Email AUProjects@equis.com



Connect www.linkedin.com/company/equisdev



Register equis.engagementhub.com.au