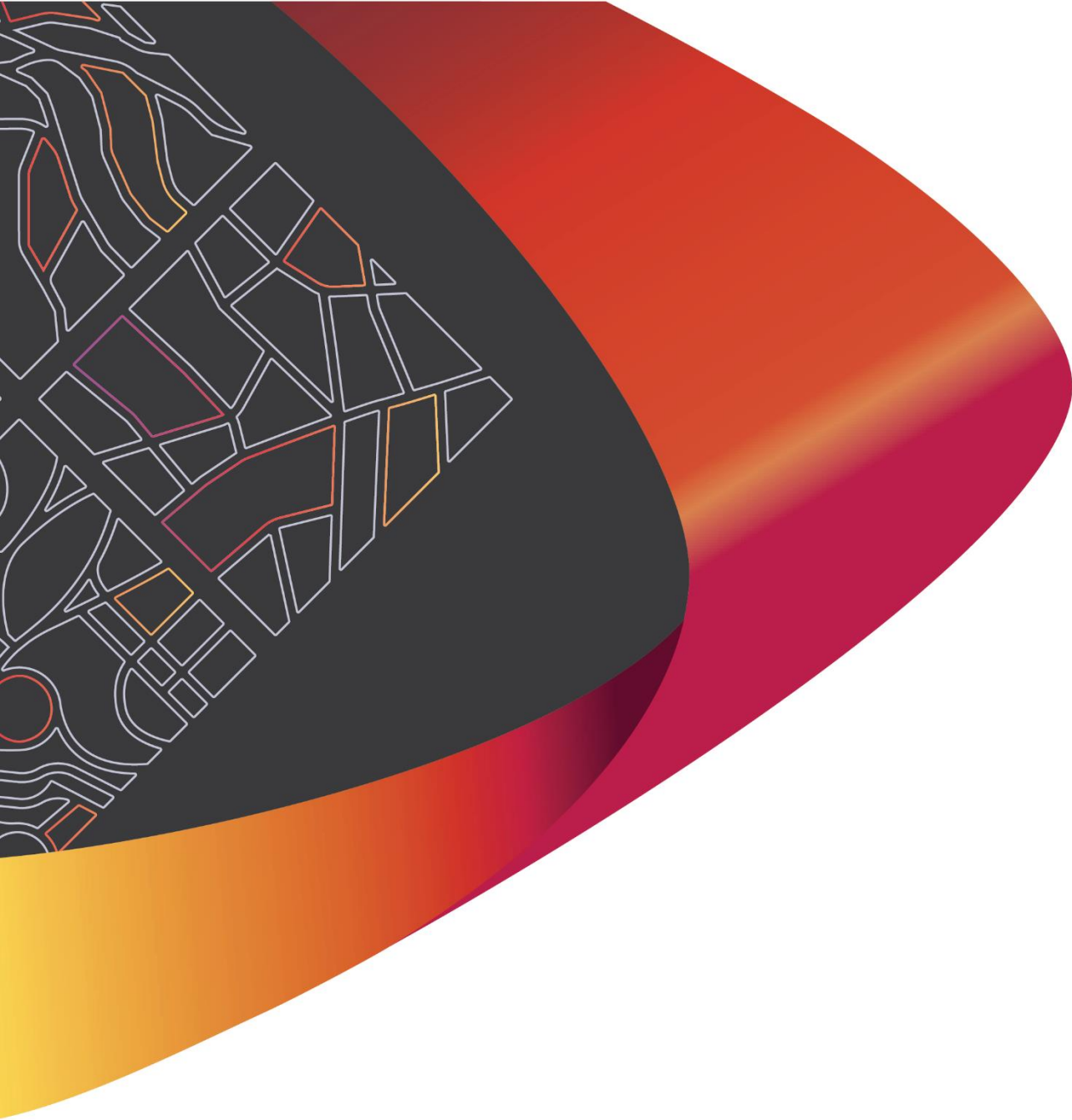




Gara Battery Energy Storage System Amendment report

ACEnergy Pty Ltd

P000974

Rev: B

21 November 2025



Premise

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Abbreviated term</i>
ACHAR	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report
AHIMS	Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System
ANL	Acceptable Noise Levels
ARC	Armidale Regional Council
BAR	Bushfire Assessment Report
BDAR	Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
BOM	Bureau of Meteorology
BSAL	Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CSEP	Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
CPHR	NSW DCCEEW Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation Group
DA	Development Application
DCP	Development Control Plan
DCCEEW	NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DPE	NSW Department of Planning and Environment
DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industries
DPHI	NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
DPIRD	NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
EEC	Endangered Ecological Community
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EL	Exploration Licence
EOR	Engagement Outcomes Report
EPA	NSW Environment Protection Authority
EP&A	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
FRGA	Flood Risk and Groundwater Assessment
FRNSW	Fire and Rescue New South Wales
ICNG	Interim Construction Noise Guideline (2009)
INP	Noise Policy for Industry 2017
IPP	Industry Participation Plan
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council

LEP	Local Environmental Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
LLS	Local Land Services
LPI	NSW Land and Property Information
LUCRA	Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment
NSED	National Strategy for Ecological Sustainable Development
NHVR	National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
NIA	Noise Impact Assessment
NSW DCCEW	NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
OEH	NSW Office Environment and Heritage
OSOM	Oversize overmass
PSI	Preliminary Site Investigation
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
RFS	NSW Rural Fire Service
RtS	Response to Submissions
SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SSD	State Significant Development
TfNSW	Transport for New South Wales
TIA	Traffic Impact Assessment
VIA	Visual Assessment Report
<i>Units of measure</i>	
°C	degrees Celsius
dB(A)	A-weighted decibel
ha	Hectare
kV	kilovolt
m	Metres
m/s	Metres per second
ML	Megalitre
MW	Megawatt
MW_{AC}	Megawatt Alternating Current
MWh	Megawatt hour

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

ACEnergy Pty Ltd seeks to develop an approximately 400 Megawatt_{AC} (MW_{AC})/1,760 Megawatt hours (MWh) Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on Lot 1 DP246878 and Lot 1 DP573787, also known as 86 Woodlands Road, Armidale, NSW within the Armidale Regional Local Government Area (LGA). The site is defined as all land parcels forming the subject of the development application, and have not changed since exhibition of the EIS, including:

- > Lot 1 DP246878;
- > Lot 1 DP573787;
- > Lots 144, 145 and 153 DP755826;
- > Unconstructed Crown road reserve between Lots 144 and 145 DP755826;
- > Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) road reserve;
- > Lot 7003 DP1060212 (Travelling Stock Reserve); and
- > Lot 7009 DP1060213 (Travelling Stock Reserve).

However, the development footprint, as originally exhibited in the EIS, had an area of approximately 35.24 hectares (ha), with a development footprint of 22.43 ha. Following exhibition, project design refinements and amendments have reduced the site area to approximately 32.97 ha, with a corresponding development footprint of 20.97 ha. These refinements reflect improved spatial efficiency.

The proposal represents State Significant Development (SSD) by reference to Section 20 of Schedule 1 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021* (Planning Systems SEPP) on the basis that the estimated development cost for the project will exceed \$30 million.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to support the Gara BESS development application (DA) was prepared by Premise to respond to the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) dated 19 July 2024, and the supplementary SEARs received on the 29 April 2025. The EIS was placed on exhibition between the 13 August 2025 and 10 September 2025.

As a consequence of project development, exhibition submission responses and agency advice, a number of amendments have been identified for the project, and are summarised as follows:

1. Subdivision to create a lot to host the switching station (to be dedicated to Transgrid);
2. Relocation of proposed screening from the far eastern boundary to the eastern boundary of BESS facility; deletion of the access track to the previous location of the landscape screening;
3. Grid connection facilities:
 - a. New 330 kV switching station and connection asset (including switchgear, metering, reactive power, filtering, auxiliary transformers, and enclosures);
 - b. Cut-in to existing 330 kV line via three new multipole tower structures (avoiding replacement of existing structure);
 - c. Loop-in, loop-out 330 kV overhead lines (~1 km) supported by two dual-circuit towers;
 - d. Construction stringing sites for brake and wrench placement;

- e. Diverse communications path via new optical ground wire (along 330 kV lines) and underground fibre cable (trench installation) ; and
 - f. New access track linking switching station and new tower structures.
4. Transgrid Network Upgrades:
- a. Extension and upgrade of the optical ground wire (OPGW) on Transmission Line 87 between Structures 15 and 17 (~1 km), extend beyond the Gara BESS project boundary to connect with the existing network joint box; and
5. Realignment of vehicular access to Waterfall Way, at the request of Council.

To support the grid connection of the Gara Battery Energy Storage System project (GBESS), broader network upgrades are required on Transgrid's 330kV network. These works would involve the extension of optical ground wire (OPGW) on Transgrid's Transmission Line 87 (Coffs Harbour to Armidale) from the cut-in point of the Gara BESS at Structure 17 to an existing OPGW joint box on Structure 15. The OPGW works are required to complete a communications link to enable the remote control, monitoring and protection of the project's grid connection. The OPGW works identified in **Figure 1** are located outside the development footprint for approximately 1 km.

In accordance with Section 4.38 (4A) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, ACEnergy Pty Ltd is seeking a determination from the Planning Secretary that the proposed OPGW upgrade works do not form part of this project and that Transgrid can enact its self-determination powers and seek approval for the transmission line upgrade works under Part 5, Division 5.1 of the EP&A Act. These works are therefore considered ancillary grid connection infrastructure, outside the scope of this Amendment Report.





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- Legend**

 - Site
 - Development Footprint
 - Cadastre
 - Road
 - Existing Easement
 - Indicative Security Fence
 - Indicative BESS Area
 - Indicative Switching Station
 - Indicative Basin
 - Indicative Transmission Lines
 - Indicative OPGW
- Indicative OPGW (Part 5 Application)
 - Indicative Drainage
 - Indicative Gates
 - Indicative Multi Pole Structures
 - Indicative Construction Stringing Site
 - Transmission Access Track and Clearance
 - Indicative Underground Optic Fibre Cable
 - Indicative Vegetation Screening
- Indicative Buildings**

 - Storage Shed
 - Auxiliary Services Building
 - Indicative Construction Stringing Site

**Premise**

ACENERGY PTY LTD

Gara BESS

Figure 1
Transgrid OPGW works

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Amendment Report, prepared in accordance with the *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Amendment Report* (DPIE, 2022), is to document and assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of design amendments made in response to submissions and advice raised during public exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The amendments proposed are to address comments raised in agency and community submissions and improve the overall design and environmental performance of the project.

1.1 Applicant

ACEnergy Pty Ltd (ACEnergy) was founded out of the growing demand for renewable energy developments across Australia. ACFEnergy's goal is to develop high quality utility-scale Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) projects which contribute toward a future of decarbonisation.

ACEnergy have experience and capabilities in development of land and site acquisition, project planning and management, grid connections, design and engineering, offtake agreements and financial services. ACFEnergy is based in Melbourne, Victoria, its head office is located at Level 3, 689 Burke Road, Camberwell, 3124, VIC and its ABN is 628 883 447.

1.2 Background

ACEnergy Pty Ltd seeks to develop an approximately 400 Megawatt_{AC} (MW_{AC})/1,760 Megawatt hours (MWh) Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on Lot 1 DP246878 and Lot 1 DP573787, also known as 86 Woodlands Road, Armidale, NSW within the Armidale Regional Local Government Area (LGA). The project is to be known as the Gara BESS. The site is the land the subject of the development application and relates to a number of land parcels. The site has an area of approximately 32.97 ha, while the development footprint has an area of approximately 20.97 ha, as amended by this report.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared to assess the potential environmental impacts of the project and to recommend mitigation measures to appropriately manage identified impacts. The EIS was prepared by Premise on behalf of the applicant, ACFEnergy Pty Ltd, in accordance with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) dated 19 July 2024, and the supplementary SEARs received on the 29 April 2025.

The EIS was publicly exhibited from 13 August 2025 and 10 September 2025, during the exhibition period, a number of submissions were received from members of the public and government agencies.

In response to public submissions and agency advice received during exhibition period, this Amendment Report has been prepared to document project amendments, including updates to the project layout and equipment specification that has altered the project design. It describes the amended project, provides updated technical assessments, and evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed amendments to confirm that the project continues to meet relevant statutory and policy requirements.

Further, a Submissions Report has been prepared separately to address all feedback received during the exhibition period and has been issued concurrently with this Amendment Report.



1.3 Project as described in the EIS

ACEnergy Pty Ltd seeks to develop an approximately 400 Megawatt_{AC} (MW_{AC})/1,760 Megawatt hours (MWh) Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on Lot 1 DP246878 and Lot 1 DP573787, also known as 86 Woodlands Road, Armidale, NSW within the Armidale Regional Local Government Area (LGA). The site has an area of approximately 35.24 ha, while the development footprint has an area of approximately 22.43 ha.

The Gara BESS project comprises a BESS with capacity of 400 MW/1,760 MWh and includes the following key infrastructure:

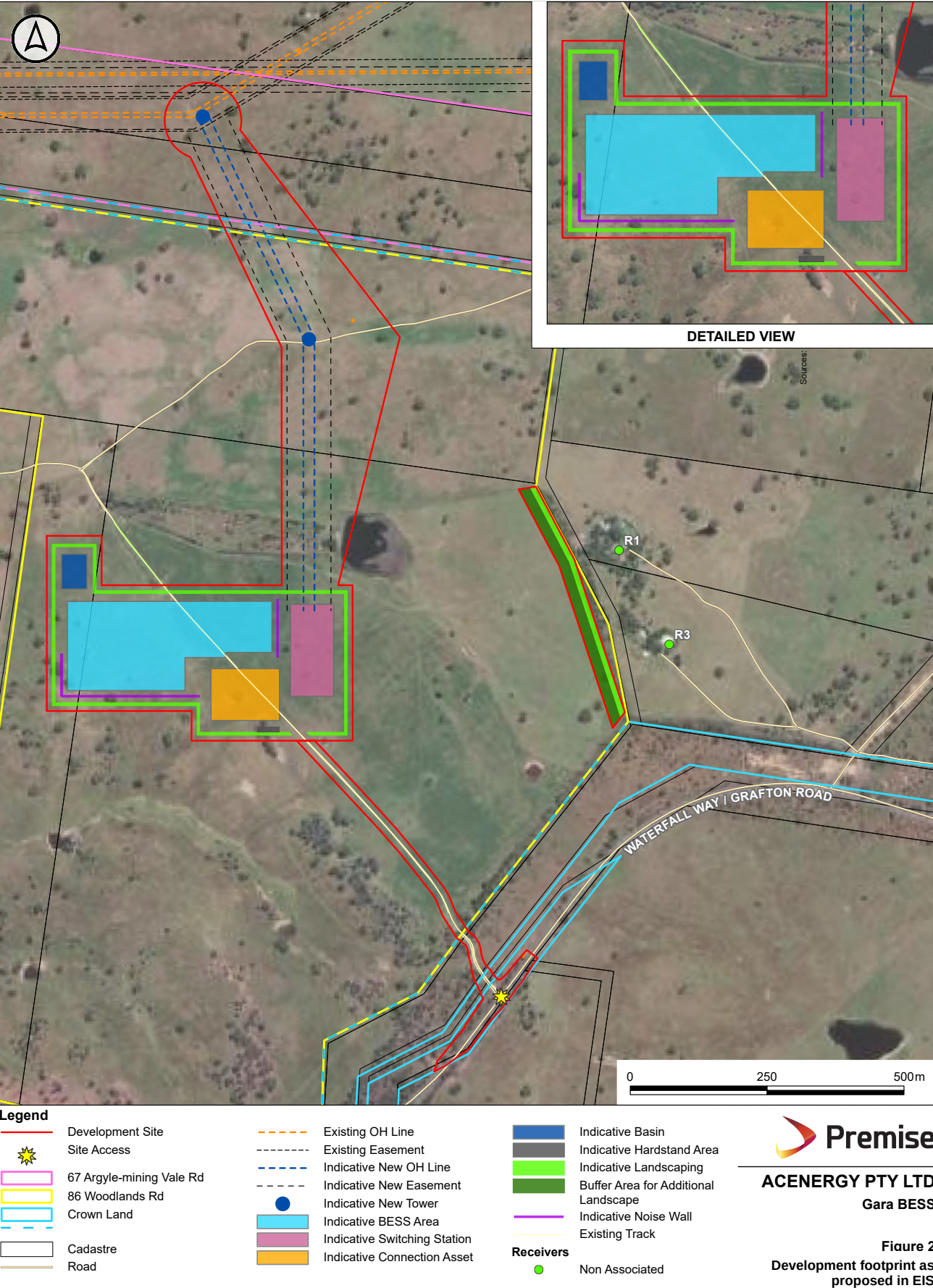
- > Enclosed lithium-ion batteries;
- > Power conversion systems including associated transformers;
- > Underground power and fibre optic cabling interconnecting the equipment;
- > Grid connection equipment including switchgear, protection and control equipment, metering, reactive power equipment, filtering equipment, transformers and enclosures/buildings for housing equipment;
- > An overhead transmission line of up to approximately one (1) kilometre long to connect the BESS to the nearby 330 kV power lines;
- > Earthing and lightning protection systems;
- > Storage area/enclosure, internal access tracks, on-site parking, security fencing, CCTV, and temporary construction laydown area;
- > Vegetation screening; and
- > Upgrade of the existing site access from Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) in the south-east.

The primary components associated with the installation of the BESS are as follows:

- > Site investigations, vegetation clearing, road upgrades, levelling, access way construction, drainage system installation and installation of foundations/supports to install equipment on;
- > Transport to site and installation of equipment;
- > Testing and commissioning of the equipment; and
- > Operation and maintenance.

Figure 2 identifies the site and development footprint as described in the EIS.





1.4 Summary of project amendments

As a result of detailed design refinements by the Applicant, identified through ongoing engagement with Transgrid, and feedback received from agencies and the public during the exhibition of the EIS, several amendments have been made to the project.

This Amendment Report outlines the proposed amendments, which have been developed to improve project design, address agency advice, and minimise potential environmental and amenity impacts. The amendments include:

- > Inclusion of subdivision to create a lot to host the switching station (to be dedicated to Transgrid);
- > Relocation of proposed screening from the eastern lot boundary to the eastern boundary of BESS facility; deletion of the access to the previous location of the landscape screening;
- > Refinements to the proposed upgrades to the existing site access from Waterfall Way to the south, in response to advice received from Council and TfNSW;
- > Refined grid connection facilities;
 - New 330 kV switching station and connection asset (including switchgear, protection and control equipment, metering, reactive power equipment, filtering equipment, auxiliary transformers, and enclosures/buildings for housing equipment);
 - Cut-in to existing 330 kV line via three new multipole tower structures (avoiding replacement of existing structure);
 - Loop-in, loop-out 330kV overhead lines connecting the line interface to the new switching station with approximately 1km length and supported by two dual-circuit tower structures;
 - Construction stringing sites for brake and wrench placement;
 - Diverse communications path via new optical ground wire (along 330 kV lines) and underground fibre cable (trench installation), and directional underboring when crossing waterways; and
 - New access track linking switching station and new tower structures for construction and operation.

The updated development footprint is shown in **Figure 3**.

1.5 Other activities

1.5.1 CONNECTION TO NETWORK

- > Transgrid Network Upgrades:
 - Extension and upgrade of the optical ground wire (OPGW) on Transmission Line 87 between Structures 15 and 17 (~1 km), extend beyond the Gara BESS project boundary to connect with the existing network joint box Extension of optical ground wire on Transmission Line 87 from Structure 17 (cut-in point) to existing joint box at Structure 15 (~1 km).

ACEnergy is seeking a determination from the Planning Secretary under section 4.38(4A) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the 'Act') that the Transgrid network upgrades are not part of this project and will instead be separately determined by Transgrid under Part 5, Division 5.1 of the Act.

1.5.2 RESTRICTIONS

A review of the land titles for the site confirms that the existing restrictions, easements, and covenants identified in Section 1.5 of the EIS remain unchanged.



In addition, a right of way will be created to provide legal and practical access to the land proposed to be subdivided and dedicated to Transgrid. The right of way will be registered on title as part of the subdivision plan in accordance with the *Conveyancing Act 1919*, ensuring secure tenure and ongoing maintenance access without affecting the operation of the adjoining BESS facility.

1.5.3 ROAD UPGRADES

The existing site access intersecting Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) will be upgraded in accordance with Austroads and agency advice from TfNSW and Council. The revised design aligns the access road at a 90-degree angle to Waterfall Way to maximise sight distance for both directions of travel and BAL and BAR treatments.

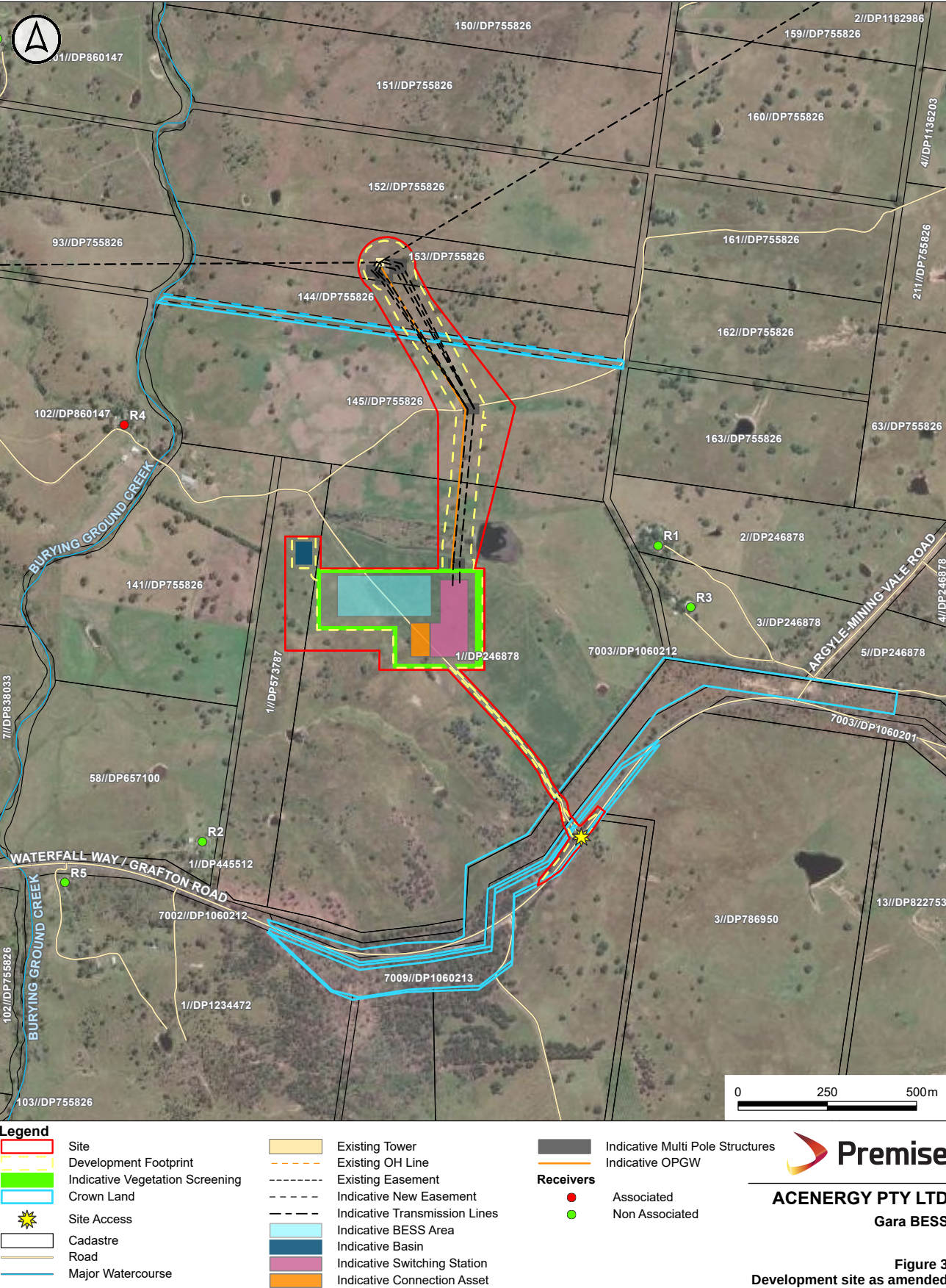
1.6 Justification amendment requirements

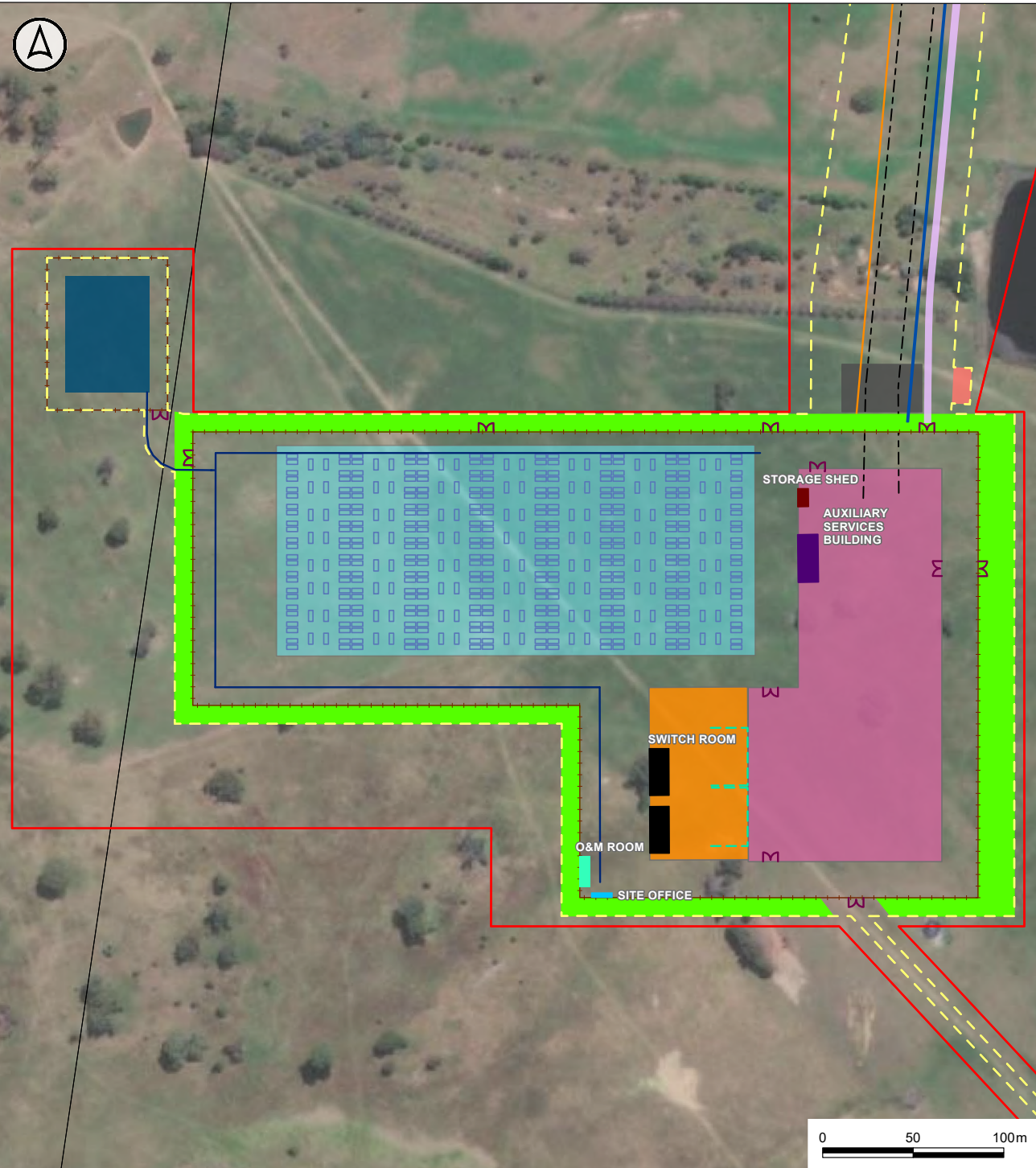
The proposed amendments have been developed in direct response to feedback received during public exhibition of the EIS and subsequent consultation with government agencies.

These refinements reflect a considered approach to address agency advice and respond to issues raised by the community. The amendments optimise the project layout and equipment selection to reduce potential impacts, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure ongoing alignment with relevant statutory requirements.

Detailed responses to agency advice and public submissions are outlined in **Section 4** and **Appendix D** of the Submissions Report.







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Legend

- Site
- Development Footprint
- Cadastral
- Road
- Indicative Security Fence
- Indicative BESS Area
- Indicative Connection Asset
- Indicative Switching Station
- Indicative Basin
- Indicative Transmission Lines
- Indicative OPGW

- Indicative Drainage
- Indicative Gates
- Indicative Acoustic Barriers
- Indicative Multi Pole Structures
- Indicative Construction Stringing Site
- Transmission Access Track and Clearance
- Indicative Underground Optic Fibre Cable
- Indicative Vegetation Screening
- Indicative BESS and MPVS

Indicative Buildings

- O&M Room
- Site Office
- Storage Shed
- Switch Room
- Auxiliary Services Building



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Gara BESS

Figure 4
Development footprint as amended



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ESRI 2024
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- Legend**

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 - Storage Shed
 - Auxiliary Services Building
 - Indicative Construction Stringing Site

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Gara BESS

Figure 5
Transgrid OPGW works

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Section 2 of the EIS provided a summary of the strategic context applying to the development of the Gara BESS. There has not been a substantive change with respect to strategic context in the period since the application was lodged, nor does any change to the strategic context occur as a consequence of the proposed amendments.

The Gara BESS is considered to remain aligned with federal, state, and local renewable energy policies (as discussed in **Section 2.1**) and has been, and continues to be, designed to minimise impacts to areas of sensitivity (as discussed in **Section 2.2**).

2.1 Relevant policy

The proposed Gara BESS remains consistent with the following federal, state and local policies and strategies as identified in Section 2.2 of the EIS:

- > NSW 2021 Plan (NSW Government, 2011) and Renewable Energy Action Plan (NSW Government, 2013);
- > NSW Electricity Strategy & Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (NSW Government, 2020);
- > Energy Security Safeguard (NSW Government, 2021)
- > Renewable Energy Policy Framework; (DPHI, 2024)
- > New England North West Regional Plan 2041 (DPHI, 2023–2024);
- > Advancing Our Region: Toward 50,000 Local Strategic Planning Statement (ARC, 2024);
- > Armidale Regional Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027 (ARC, 2017); And
- > Armidale Renewable Energy Community Benefit Framework 2024 (ARC,2024).

This consistency is an important justification for the project.

2.2 Design sensitivity

The design of the project has continued to be refined in response to consultation feedback and to ensure that the project remains sensitive to its environmental and landscape context.

The proposed amendments encompass amendments and refinements of the development layout and infrastructure placement to further avoid and minimise impacts on identified environmental constraints, including areas of biodiversity sensitivity, riparian land, and potential Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity. The following updated technical assessments are provided to assess the impact of amendments and refinements of the project:

- > Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment provided in **Appendix E**;
- > Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) provided in **Appendix F**;
- > Surface Water Assessment Report provided in **Appendix G**;
- > Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) including Oversize Overmass (OSOM) is provided in **Appendix H**;
- > Visual Impact Assessment (VIA), including updated landscape plan, is provided in **Appendix I**; and
- > Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) is provided in **Appendix J**.

The amended design continues to demonstrate a balanced outcome between agency advice, technical feasibility, environmental performance and visual integration within the surrounding landscape.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AMENDMENTS

ACEnergy has identified a number of necessary amendments to the project as compared to the description of the development outlined in the EIS (Premise, 2025). The amendments have been initiated from a number of perspectives including developing discussions with the electricity authority (Transgrid), refinement of the development layout design and ongoing engagement with agencies and nearby receivers.

The amendments to the project identified in **Section 1.4** are summarised below:

- > Subdivision to create a dedicated lot to host the switching station (to be dedicated to Transgrid);
- > Relocation of the far eastern vegetation screening and associated access track, in response to concerns raised by adjoining neighbours (R1 and R3) and widening of vegetation planting strip along the eastern boundary and relocation of the western/southern to the edge of BESS area;
- > Construction of a permanent internal access track and waterway crossings connecting the battery area with the transmission line connection, at the request of Transgrid;
- > Installation of an underground fibre optic cable to the north to connect the battery area with the transmission line connection, at the request of Transgrid; and
- > Inclusion of additional multipole transmission tower structures identified through detailed design development.

In addition, several minor refinements have been incorporated that do not materially alter the development or the conclusions of the original environmental assessment. These refinements are detailed in the accompanying Submissions Report and include updated equipment selection, layout optimisation, and vegetation screening adjustments to further minimise environmental and amenity impacts.

Table 1 provides a comparison between the lodged EIS and the proposed amendments.

Table 1 - Comparison of project amendments to submitted project

Project Element	EIS Summary of the Project	Amendment Report	Comparison of changes
Site	All land to which the application relates - 35.24 ha	All land to which the application relates – 32.97 ha	Reduced impact area as a result of removal of far eastern vegetation screening.
Development footprint	All land physical impacted by the construction of the project – 22.43 ha	All land physical impacted by the construction of the project – 20.97 ha	Reduced impact area as a result of removal of far eastern vegetation screening.
Site details	> 86 Woodlands Road, Armidale (part Lot 1 DP146878, part Lot 1 DP573787, and part Lot 145 DP755826) > Part Lot 7003 DP1060212 (travelling stock reserve) > Part Lot 7009 DP1062013 (travelling stock reserve) > The transmission easement would impact Lot 1 DP246878 and Lots 144, 145 and 153 DP755826. > Crown Road located between Lots 144 and 145 DP755826 > Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) road reserve	> 86 Woodlands Road, Armidale (part Lot 1 DP146878, part Lot 1 DP573787, and part Lot 145 DP755826) > Part Lot 7003 DP1060212 (travelling stock reserve) > Part Lot 7009 DP1062013 (travelling stock reserve) > The transmission easement would impact Lot 1 DP246878 and Lots 144, 145 and 153 DP755826. > Crown Road located between Lots 144 and 145 DP755826 > Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) road reserve	Unchanged.
Battery storage capacity	400 MW/1,760 MWh	400 MW/1,760 MWh	Unchanged.
BESS Lifespan	Up to 23 years, with the possibility of upgrades to extend the operational life	Up to 23 years, with the possibility of upgrades to extend the operational life	Unchanged.

Project Element	EIS Summary of the Project	Amendment Report	Comparison of changes
Subdivision	Not proposed.	Subdivision proposed to create a lot to host the switching station, plus a residue lot.	Subdivision is now an element of the application, as a result of consultation with Transgrid.
Infrastructure	> An approximately 400 MW/1,760 MWh BESS occupies the development footprint; > Underground cabling connecting BESS and MVPS; > A 33/330kV substation; > An overhead transmission line of up to approximately one (1) kilometre long connecting the BESS substation to the Transgrid 330 kV ETL (which is located within Lots 144 and 153 DP755826); > Temporary construction compound including material laydown areas, site offices, vehicle parking, and amenities; > Upgrade of the existing site access from Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) including vegetation clearing for sufficient sight distance; > Fauna friendly security fence up to 1.8 metres in height; and > Specific native vegetation screening from identified visual impact locations.	> An approximately 400 MW/1,760 MWh BESS occupies the development footprint; > Underground cabling connecting BESS and MVPS; > A 33/330kV substation; > Grid connection facilities; • New 330 kV switching station and connection asset (including switchgear, metering, reactive power, filtering, auxiliary transformers, and enclosures); • Cut-in to existing 330 kV line via three new multipole tower structures (avoiding replacement of existing structure); • Loop-in, loop-out 330 kV overhead lines (~1 km) supported by two dual-circuit towers; • Construction stringing sites for brake and wrench placement; • Diverse communications path via new optical ground wire (along 330 kV lines) and	Amendments identified in Section 1.4: > Grid connection facilities; • New 330 kV switching station and connection asset (including switchgear, metering, reactive power, filtering, auxiliary transformers, and enclosures); • Cut-in to existing 330 kV line via three new multipole tower structures (avoiding replacement of existing structure); • Loop-in, loop-out 330 kV overhead lines (~1 km) supported by two dual-circuit towers; • Construction stringing sites for brake and wrench placement; • Diverse communications path via new optical ground wire (along 330 kV lines) and underground fibre cable (trench installation); and

Project Element	EIS Summary of the Project	Amendment Report	Comparison of changes
		underground fibre cable (trench installation); and • New access track linking switching station and new tower structures. > Temporary construction compound including material laydown areas, site offices, vehicle parking, and amenities; > Upgrade of the existing site access from Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) including vegetation clearing for sufficient sight distance; > Fauna friendly security fence up to 1.8 metres in height; and > Specific native vegetation screening from identified visual impact locations.	• New access track linking switching station and new tower structures. > EIS temporary Internal vehicular access track proposed to remain as a permanent all-weather track for the life of the project, to connect the BESS area to the connection point in the north, to facilitate ongoing access for maintenance by the electricity authority (Transgrid). A permanent all-weather access track, including two water crossing of 1st order streams, is now proposed. > Change to native vegetation screening with relocation of far eastern vegetation screening, but widening of screening to the eastern vegetation screening immediately around the BESS area. Further, relocation of the western/southern vegetation screening to the security fencing surrounding the BESS area.
Site Access	Existing site access from Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) - subject to upgrades as per the strategic design provided in EIS Appendix H .	Existing site access from Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) - subject to upgrades as per the strategic design provided in Appendix H .	Strategic design has been updated to address agency advice received from TfNSW and Council.
Access route	Vehicles would access the site via New England Highway and Waterfall Way	Vehicles would access the site via New England Highway and Waterfall Way	Unchanged.

Project Element	EIS Summary of the Project	Amendment Report	Comparison of changes
	(Grafton Road), utilising the existing (upgraded) access location. It is anticipated that project infrastructure would be delivered from Port of Newcastle and transported to the site via roads approved for heavy vehicle use and then the existing (upgraded) access driveway (refer EIS Appendix H).	(Grafton Road), utilising the existing (upgraded) access location. It is anticipated that project infrastructure would be delivered from Port of Newcastle and transported to the site via roads approved for heavy vehicle use and then the existing (upgraded) access driveway (refer EIS Appendix H).	
Construction	Construction is expected to commence in mid to late 2026 and occur over a 14 months period, including a peak period of 4 months.	Construction is expected to commence in early 2027 and occur over a 14 months period, including a peak period of 4 months.	Updated timeline for commencement of construction.
Operations and maintenance	The project would be operated remotely with occasional maintenance activities generally be undertaken by up to five (5) personnel.	Project would be operated by on-site staff members, with operational and maintenance activities employing up to five (5) personnel. The site will also be remotely monitored 24/7 for operations, safety, and security.	Unchanged.
Decommissioning and rehabilitation	The site would be progressively rehabilitated during the decommissioning period, including removal of the temporary construction facilities. At the end of operational life, components above ground and below ground (with depth subject to agreement with landowner) would be removed and land rehabilitated to pre-development conditions.	The site would be progressively rehabilitated during the decommissioning period, including removal of the temporary construction facilities. At the end of operational life, components above ground and below ground (with depth subject to agreement with landowner) would be removed and land rehabilitated to pre-development conditions.	Unchanged.

Project Element	EIS Summary of the Project	Amendment Report	Comparison of changes
Workforce	Up to 80 construction jobs and 5 operational jobs	Up to 80 construction jobs and 5 operational jobs	Unchanged.
Hours of Operation	24 hours, 7 days a week	24 hours, 7 days a week	Unchanged.

4. STATUTORY CONTEXT

The statutory context of the Project remains consistent with that described in Chapter 4 of the EIS (Premise, 2025). There have been no changes to the following Acts and legislative instruments that affect this application:

- > *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act);*
- > *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993 (the Native Title Act);*
- > *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act);*
- > *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983;*
- > *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020;*
- > *Heritage Act 1977;*
- > *Local Land Services Act 2013;*
- > *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974;*
- > *Water Management Act 2000;*
- > *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (BC Act);*
- > *Contaminated Land Management Act 1997 (CLM Act);*
- > *Rural Fires Act 1997 (RF Act);*
- > *Roads Act 1993;*
- > *State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021 (B&C SEPP);*
- > *State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 (Planning Systems SEPP);*
- > *State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021 (R&H SEPP);*
- > *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 (T&I SEPP); and*
- > *Armidale Regional Local Environmental Plan 2012.*

The proposed amendments do not change the permissibility of the project or approvals are required as a result of the proposed amendments. An updated statutory compliance table for the amended Project is provided in **Appendix B**.

4.1 Armidale Regional Local Environmental Plan 2012

4.1.1 SUBDIVISION

The project as amended now includes subdivision of the existing lot to create a dedicated parcel for the proposed switching station forming part of the Gara BESS development, as identified in



Figure 6. The subdivision is proposed to:

- > Establish a distinct legal lot containing the substation and associated access track to be dedicated to Transgrid;
- > Enable tenure and operational management consistent as required by Transgrid; and
- > Facilitate future easement, vehicular access and maintenance arrangements without impeding the operation of the adjoining BESS facility.

The subdivision will not alter the approved development footprint, introduce additional built form, or result in any change to environmental impacts previously assessed.

Under the *Armidale Regional Local Environmental Plan 2012* (ARLEP), the development site is zoned RU1 - Primary Production. Subdivision of land within the RU1 zone is permitted with consent under Clause 2.6, subject to compliance with Clause 4.1 – Minimum Subdivision Lot Size, and the objectives of the RU1 zone.

The objectives of the RU1 zone include:

- > To encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base;
- > To encourage diversity in primary industry enterprises and systems appropriate for the area;
- > To minimise the fragmentation and alienation of resource lands;
- > To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones; and
- > To allow for non-agricultural land uses that will not restrict the use of other land in the locality for agricultural purposes.

The proposed subdivision is consistent with these objectives, as:

- > The proposed substation lot represents a minor, functional subdivision associated with electricity infrastructure and will not further fragment rural land;
- > The residual land outside the development site will remain available for agricultural purposes;
- > The proposed subdivision will not increase conflict between land uses within this zone; and
- > The subdivision facilitates long-term energy infrastructure that supports the rural economy and broader regional energy network through grid firming.

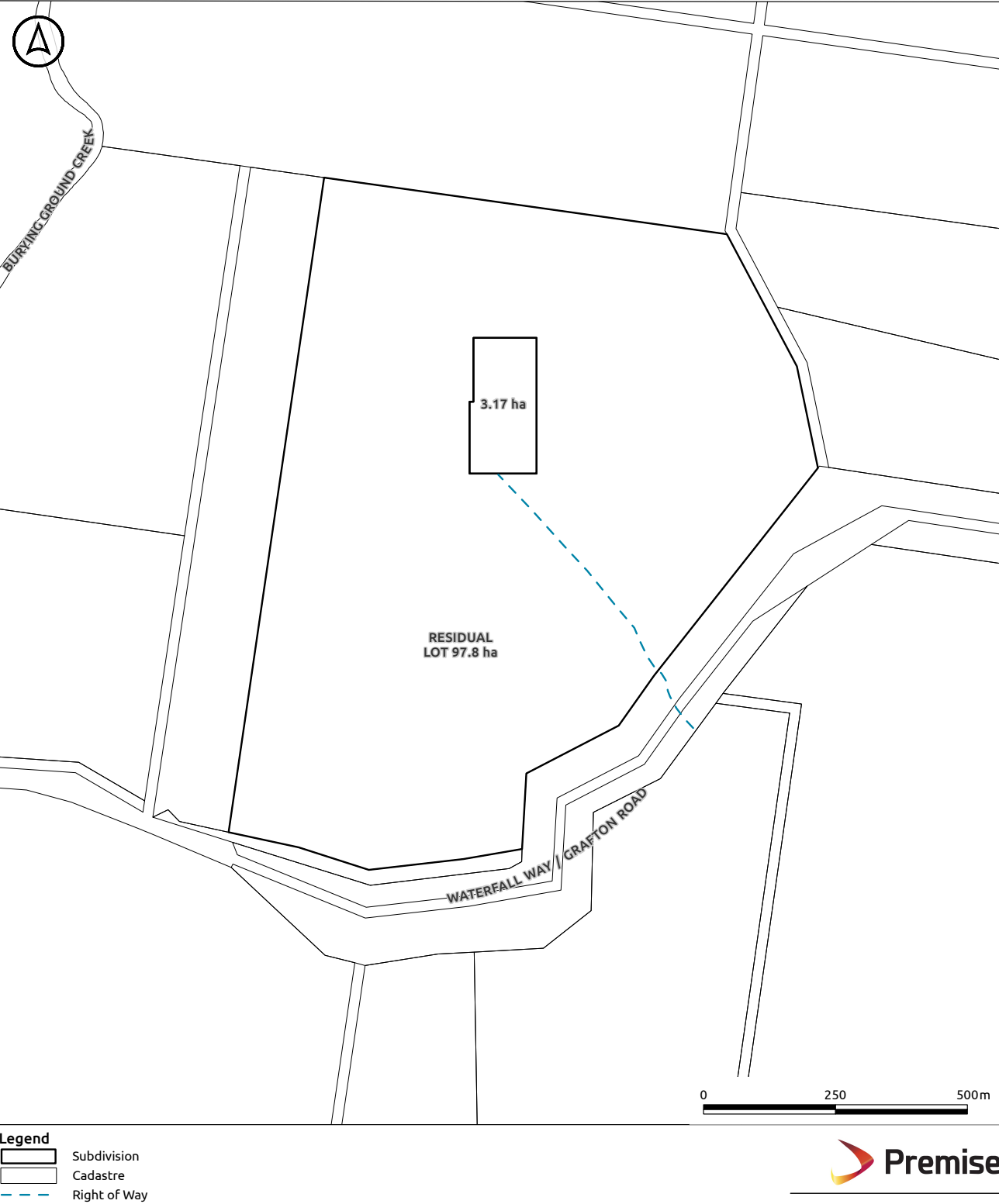
It is acknowledged that the proposed subdivision to create a lot of 3.17 ha, noting the lot size is to be finalised, subject to further discussions with Transgrid as part of the grid connection negotiations. It is acknowledged that the proposed lot of approximately 3.47 ha is not consistent with Clause 4.1 (Minimum Subdivision Lot Size) of the ARLEP, which requires a minimum lot size of 100 ha in the RU1 zone. However, as the subdivision forms part of this SSD project, it is assessed under Part 4, Division 4.7 of the EP&A Act.

In accordance with Sections 4.38(3) of the EP&A Act, the Minister (or delegate) may grant consent for a project despite the development being partly prohibited by an environmental planning instrument.

The amendment to include the subdivision of land is at the request of Transgrid to facilitate their tenure of the switching station area and operational arrangements for the grid connection infrastructure. The proposed subdivision will not result in additional environmental impacts or rural land fragmentation inconsistent with the objectives of the RU1 zone. The subdivision does not result in any additional opportunities for the development of dwellings and reflects the proposed built form of the facility. The creation of freehold lots for the purposes of hosting electrical infrastructure is common in projects of this nature.

The lot that will host the switching station infrastructure has an area of 3.17 ha, the residual lot is approximately 97.8 ha. The switching station will be access via a right of carriageway over the existing vehicular access track.





Sources: © State of NSW, Department of Customer Service, Spatial Services 2024; ACEnergy 2023
File: P000974_01_MASTER.aprx Prepared By: adam.davis Date: 19/11/2025

**Premise**

ACENERGY PTY LTD

Gara BESS

Figure 5
Subdivision

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Chapter 5 of the EIS provides an outline of the consultation and engagement activities carried out for the project prior to exhibition, identifying who was consulted, how the consultation was carried out, the feedback received and how the feedback has been addressed.

Following exhibition of the EIS, engagement activities have focused on clarifying issues raised in submissions and agency advice, confirming technical matters with agencies, and maintaining transparent communication with the community.

5.1 Summary of Community Engagement

Post EIS exhibition engagement has aimed to ensure that matters raised through public submissions were addressed. Ongoing measures have included correspondence with directly impacted submission makers, continued maintenance of the project website, social media channels and dedicated public phone number for public feedback.

Feedback received during exhibition demonstrated that while local interest remains, direct opposition to the project within the immediate vicinity of the site was limited, with most submissions originating from the broader community. This suggests broader public concern about renewable energy development within the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), rather than site-specific issues.

Consultation has also taken place with receivers R1 and R3 with respect to proposed amendments, including the relocation of the vegetation screening on far eastern boundary and the widening of screening at the BESS. Screening on the eastern boundary was offered to neighbours prior to completion of the visual assessment, which confirms negligible visual impacts to these receivers. Additional screening is proposed at the BESS to address any residual concerns but is not directly needed to address visual impacts.

To minimise the perceived visual impacts to R1 and R3, as raised in their submissions, the native vegetation screening around the eastern portion of the BESS facility has increased from 10 m in width as identified in **Figure 2** and to 20m in width as identified in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4** of this amendment report. An updated Visual Impact Assessment and supporting memo prepared by IRIS confirms that the relocation of the proposed eastern vegetation screening to the eastern boundary of the BESS facility will not reduce visual amenity for nearby dwellings R1 and R3 and are provided in **Section 6.6**.

A detailed account of all public submissions, issues raised, and Applicant responses is provided in **Table 8**, **Table 12** and **Appendix C** of the Submissions Report.

5.2 Summary of Agency Engagement

Agency consultation has been ongoing since exhibition, including meetings and correspondence with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), Transport for NSW (TfNSW), NSW DCCEEW (Water and Heritage), NSW DCCEEW Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation Group (CPHR) and Armidale Regional Council (ARC). These discussions have focused on refining technical assessments, clarifying regulatory expectations and incorporating feedback into the updated project design and associated mitigation measures.

A summary of post-exhibition agency engagement is presented in **Table 6** of the Submission Report, with detailed records of meeting outcomes and agency. Copies of correspondence are provided in **Appendix C** of the Submissions Report, and **Appendix D** of this report.

For convenience, the summary of post-exhibition agency engagement is presented in **Table 6** of the Submission Report is reproduced in **Table 2**.

Table 2 - Summary of post-exhibition agency engagement

Agency	Date	Engagement
Council	25/09/2025	ACEnergy email to Council to request a meeting to discussion Council submission.
	09/10/2025	Meeting with Council to discuss advice given.
DPHI (Hazards)	19/11/2025	ACEnergy has refined the Preliminary Hazard Analysis (PHA) by fully addressing the sole concern raised by the DPHI Hazards team. Specifically, Section 4.6.1 of the PHA has been updated to explicitly detail the area and spacing considerations originally highlighted in the RFI. The Hazards Officer has been formally notified of this comprehensive revision.
DCCEEW (Water)	31/10/2025	ACEnergy meeting with DCCEEW to discuss water supply agreement provided in Appendix D and updated Surface Water Assessment provided in Appendix G . DCCEEW Water was satisfied with ACFEnergy's response to their EIS Advice.
DCCEEW (Heritage)	24/09/2025	Premise request meeting with Heritage NSW.
	30/09/2025	Meeting with Heritage NSW to discuss the submission and response. Heritage NSW agreed that matters raised via their submission could be addressed via a memo and confidential attachment (in relation to Appendix C - consultation information). Further the ACHA has been revised to incorporate project refinements and amendments, currently under RAP consultation. The draft revised ACHA under consultation is appended to the concurrent Amendment Report at Appendix E, with the final to be provided to the Department upon completion of consultation.
Transgrid	12/09/2025	ACEnergy meeting with Transgrid to discuss project's environmental impacts and discuss required changes to the proposal, i.e. the addition and refinement of transmission infrastructure to the layout, and discussion about Transgrid's self-determining assessment under Part 5 of the Act, as discussed in Section 1.5.1 .
	19/09/2025	Transgrid provided design elements within transmission easement area to ACFEnergy
	19/09/2025	Transgrid provided instruction on proposed elements requiring approval under Part 5, Division 5.1 of the EP&A Act
Transport for NSW	24/09/2025	ACEnergy email to TfNSW to request meeting to discussion TfNSW submission.
	25/09/2025	ACEnergy provide TfNSW meeting request form.
	08/10/2025	ACEnergy provided TfNSW updated strategic access design and updated OSOM report.

Agency	Date	Engagement
	09/10/2025	Meeting with TfNSW to discuss updated TIA , strategic access design and updated OSOM report in response to agency and Council advice.
	10/10/2025	ACEnergy provided TfNSW with meeting minutes from 9/10/2025.
	13/10/2025	TfNSW request strategic design layout documentation to be integrated into both the OSOM route study and the project's scope of works in response to meeting minutes.
	14/10/2025	ACEnergy provided TfNSW standard design vehicle swept path designs for review.
	15/10/2025	TfNSW provided advice for standard design vehicle. Request for 19m semi turning paths requested. Updated turning paths are appended to the updated TIA in Appendix H .
	16/10/2025	ACEnergy request TfNSW clarification regarding modifications required for seven (7) pinch points identified in OSOM report.
	04/11/2025	TfNSW provided advice in response to ACEnergy's request on 16/10/2025.
CPHR	18/09/2025	ACEnergy email to CPHR to request meeting to discussion CPHR agency advice.
	13/10/2025	ACEnergy meeting with CPHR to discuss agency advice.
	15/10/2025	ACEnergy provided CPHR with meeting minutes from 13/10/2025.
	6/11/2025	ACEnergy email to CPHR to request feedback on updated BDAR.
	13/11/2025	CHPR provided a response letter acknowledging that the BDAR v16 successfully addressed their EIS Advice and notifying further advice on EPBC related matters to be provided during the review of RtS.
DPHI	07/10/2025	Meeting with the department to discuss Submission Report/Amendment Report approach expectations and sought clarification on Council advice.
	06/11/2025	Meeting with the department to discuss draft RtS and Amendment Report prior to submission.
Crown Lands	05/09/2025	ACEnergy is maintaining close coordination with Crown Lands regarding the necessary land tenure for the project. Following the email on 05 Sept 2025, ACEnergy has received the LoA from Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and have forwarded to Crown Lands. Crown Lands has indicated that proceedings are advancing smoothly. The agency is currently awaiting

Agency	Date	Engagement
		final project planning approvals and remains confident in securing land tenure for the required parcels.

Outcomes of consultation have resulted in amendments and design refinements identified by the Applicant through ongoing engagement with Transgrid, and feedback received during public exhibition period, this Amendment Report outlines the following proposed amendments to the project:

- > Inclusion of subdivision to create a lot to host the substation (to be dedicated to Transgrid);
- > Relocation of proposed screening from the eastern lot boundary to the eastern boundary of BESS facility; deletion of the access to the previous location of the landscape screening;
- > Refinements to the proposed upgrades to the existing site access from Waterfall Way to the south, in response to advice received from Council and TfNSW;
- > Grid connection facilities;
 - New 330 kV switching station and connection asset (including switchgear, metering, reactive power, filtering, auxiliary transformers, and enclosures);
 - Cut-in to existing 330 kV line via three new multipole tower structures (avoiding replacement of existing structure);
 - Loop-in, loop-out 330 kV overhead lines (~1 km) supported by two dual-circuit towers;
 - Construction stringing sites for brake and wrench placement;
 - Diverse communications path via new optical ground wire (along 330 kV lines) and underground fibre cable (trench installation); and
 - New access track linking switching station and new tower structures.
- > Transgrid Network Upgrades; and
- > Realignment of vehicular access to Waterfall Way, at the request of Council.

The updated development footprint is shown in **Figure 3**.

5.3 Summary of RAP consultation

Since exhibition of the EIS, all Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) were issued a project update on 29 September 2025, including project amendments and refinements.

The correspondence outlined that, following public exhibition of the EIS, the amendments identified in **Section 1.4** and associated design refinements have been incorporated to address feedback raised during public exhibition and are subsequently assessed through this Amendment Report.

It further explained that the refinements are limited to minor layout and equipment adjustments, including the relocation of an internal access track that will remain as an all-weather track for the life of the project. All changes remain within the existing development footprint that was previously surveyed; therefore, no additional field survey was required. The ACHA has been revised accordingly to reflect these updates.

A copy of this correspondence is provided in Appendix C of the revised ACHAR. The revised ACHAR is currently undergoing RAP consultation, and is provided in draft at **Appendix E**. The final report will be submitted to the department in full upon completion of the consultation process.

6. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

This section provides an assessment of the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed amendments within this report. The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether the project amendments introduce any new or increased impacts compared to those previously assessed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

In accordance with the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Amendment Report (DPHI, 2024), the assessment of impacts focuses on those environmental aspects where project amendments change the nature or extent of impacts. Where no change in impact is anticipated, it is confirmed that impacts remain consistent with those assessed in the EIS.

Table 3 provides a summary of the impacts considered as part of this Amendment Report, identifying where updated technical studies have been updated to support the proposed amendments.

Table 3 - Overview of amendment impacts

Impact	EIS	Amendment Report
Biodiversity	Section 6.1	Section 6.2
Aboriginal Heritage	Section 6.2	Section 6.1
Historic Heritage	Section 6.3	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS
Land	Section 6.4	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS
Visual	Section 6.5	Section 6.6
Noise	Section 6.6	Sections 6.7
Traffic transport and access	Section 6.7	Sections 6.4 and 6.5
Water	Section 6.8	Section 6.3
Hazards	Section 6.9	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS
Contamination	Section 6.10	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS
Bush Fire	Section 6.11	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS
Social	Section 6.12	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS
Economic	Section 6.13	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS
Cumulative	Section 6.14	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS
Waste	Section 6.15	No additional impact to that assessed in the EIS

Updated technical assessments have been prepared where required to assess the impacts of project amendments. A summary of findings from these updated impact assessments are provided in the following subsections, with updated technical reports appended to this Amendment Report.

6.1 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Through the EIS exhibition process, the project has been refined and minor amendments have been made to the project. Relevant changes that impact the ACHA include:

- > Construction of a permanent internal access track connecting the battery area with the transmission line connection, at the request of Transgrid;
- > Relocation of proposed screening, and associated access track, on the far eastern boundary;
- > Refinements to the proposed upgrades to the existing site access from Waterfall Way to the south; and
- > Inclusion of additional multipole transmission tower structures identified through detailed design development.

As a result of these amendments, the ACHAR that was on public exhibition with the EIS has been revised to reflect these and to address associated impacts. The revised ACHA is currently undergoing consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), with the final report to be provided in full upon completion of the consultation process.

The project has undergone changes including refinements to the development footprint, connection route of the transmission line and an amendment to the internal access track to be a permanent all-weather track.

The proposed amendments are still located within the original development footprint and within the original archaeological survey tracks. The revised ACHA defines the amendments to the project and includes updated figures and impact assessment to accurately reflect connection route of the transmission line the vehicular access track linking the switching station and new tower structures, changes to vegetation screening and access upgrades.

The revised ACHA is currently undergoing RAP consultation and is provided in draft at **Appendix E**, with the final report to be provided in full to the Department upon completion of the RAP consultation process.

Further, a technical memo addressing agency advice received from Heritage NSW is also appended to the Submission Report at **Appendix E** and addressed in detail in **Sections 3.4.1** and **4.2** of the Submission Report.

6.2 Biodiversity Development Assessment Report

An updated Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) (Habitat, 2025) is provided in **Appendix F** and has been prepared in response to agency advice received from the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water - Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation (CPHR) and Council received during public exhibition of the EIS.

The updated BDAR also accounts for minor project design refinements, including the permanent retention of the internal access track, the associated watercourse crossings, and improved definition of the development footprint.

Specifically, table A-5 of the BDAR responds to each item of agency advice received.

Key amendments relevant to biodiversity impacts include:

- > Reduction of the overall project site area from approximately 35.24 ha to 32.97 ha, and the development footprint from 22.43 ha to 20.97 ha, improving spatial efficiency and reducing ground disturbance.
- > Retention of the internal access track as a permanent all-weather road to support Transgrid's operational requirements.
- > Inclusion of two watercourse crossings — Crossing 1 (bed-level ford) and Crossing 2 (box culvert) — along the internal access route, both situated on first-order ephemeral drainage lines.
- > Removal of far eastern vegetation screening to R1 and R3 sensitive receivers;



- > Refinements to vegetation screening around the BESS area including increasing the depth of eastern vegetation from 10m to 20m; and
- > Updates to the BAM credit obligations given the assumed presence of the Eastern Pygmy-possum habitat.

Further the BDAR has been updated in the following ways:

- > Recalculation of ecosystem credit obligations under the current *Biodiversity Assessment Method 2020*, including re-assessment of temporary disturbance areas as full loss consistent with BAM guidelines.
- > Updated Serious and Irreversible Impact (SAII) assessment for the *White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland CEEC*.
- > Clarification of Koala habitat assessment, confirming absence of potential or core Koala habitat under the *SEPP (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021 – Chapter 3 Koala Habitat Protection 2020*,
- > Reassessment of all temporary disturbance areas as full loss consistent with BAM requirements;
- > Clarification of threatened species exclusions and validation of Koala survey methods consistent with Commonwealth Koala Survey Guidelines (2020).

The updated BDAR confirms that the amendments do not increase the extent of vegetation clearing assessed in the EIS (BDAR v13). Minor differences reflect recalculated mapping accuracy and standardisation under the updated BAM tool rather than physical expansion of the footprint.

The updated report demonstrates the following, relative to the original assessment:

- > Extent of clearing - The total area of native vegetation directly impacted has been refined to approximately 13.58 ha, compared with 13.71 ha in the EIS. The reduction primarily reflects design refinements of disturbance areas of the development footprint.
- > Vegetation communities - The revised assessment confirms three PCTs remain present — PCT 3352 *Armidale Quartz Hills Stringybark Forest*, PCT 3359 *New England Hills Stringybark–Box Woodland*, and PCT 3344 *New England Ribbon Gum Grassy Forest*. Updated condition mapping refined boundaries within PCT 3359, resulting in marginally decreased offset liability.
- > Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) - The BESS area, vehicular access and overhead transmission connection route have been redesigned to reduce the area of direct impact to native vegetation and threatened species habitat (by approximately 1.95 ha) to ensure the total retention of 9.96 ha and the partial retention of 5.81 ha (transmission line easement) of the EPBC Act and BC Act listed *CEEC White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely’s Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland*.
- > Ecosystem credit obligations - Updated credit calculations under BAM confirm 234 ecosystem credit requirements and 16 species credit requirements. These ecosystem credited are not inconsistent with the 223 identified in the EIS, however, species credits have been added from the inclusion of assumed presence of potential habitat for the Eastern Pygmy-possum.
- > Riparian and aquatic habitats - Crossings 1 and 2 occur on ephemeral flow paths. Design measures (bed-level crossing and culvert with scour protection) ensure no material increase in riparian or hydrological impacts.

Overall, the updated BDAR represents a refinement of the biodiversity assessment. The amendments further demonstrate that the project avoids higher-value vegetation where practicable and continues to comply with the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, the BAM and the Commonwealth–NSW Bilateral Agreement under the EPBC Act.

In addition to the measures outlined in the exhibited EIS, the updated BDAR recommends the following refinements to avoid and minimise impacts:

- > A VMP is to be prepared and implemented prior to construction of the project. The VMP is to be in accordance with TransGrid ISO 14001 certified EMS and is to specify clearing protocols and the management of weeds prior to clearing, particularly in the partially impacted areas containing CEEC Box Gum Grassy Woodland to ensure the ground strata VI is retained or improved;
- > Clearing of habitat trees must be follow the two staged approach, as described in the section above, and must be undertaken by a qualified arborist with an ecologist present;
- > Clearing and maintenance of the mid and upper strata vegetation within the easement should be undertaken by a slasher and the cutting height adjusted to ensure the protection of the retained ground stratum of the CEEC;
- > The maintenance regime is to be for a period of five years, with review and a process for certifying completion of works at critical stages of the process;
- > Monitoring by BAM plot/transect must be undertaken prior to clearing, after construction and annually for a period of five years to monitor the VI of the partially impacted CEEC; and
- > CEEC Box Gum Grassy Woodland is considered likely to naturally regenerate by reducing grazing pressure via fencing and allowing native grass to establish, controlling invasive weeds, managing pests, and reducing further clearing. These management actions foster native plant recruitment by improving habitat conditions, increasing seed dispersal, and restoring the health and structure of the ecological community over time.

Revised mapping and assessment demonstrate that the extent of native vegetation loss is slightly reduced or unchanged, and that the project continues to avoid and minimise impacts on threatened species, ecological communities and riparian habitats.

With implementation of the updated mitigation and offset measures outlined above, residual biodiversity impacts remain manageable, subject to the implementation of mitigation measures listed in **Appendix C**.

The amended project therefore continues to achieve acceptable environmental outcomes consistent with the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, EPBC Act, and the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

6.3 Surface Water Assessment

An updated Surface Water Assessment (Water Technology, 2025) is provided in **Appendix G** to this Amendment Report. The updated assessment was undertaken in response to agency advice from the DCCEEW Water Group (refer to Section 4.2 of the Submission Report) and to address Transgrid's request for the internal access track to remain in place for the life of the project to facilitate ongoing maintenance activities.

Key amendments relevant to surface water impacts include:

- > Retention of the internal access track as a permanent all-weather road; and
- > Inclusion of two watercourse crossings (Crossing 1 – bed-level; Crossing 2 – box culvert).

The internal access track and associated watercourse crossings have been reviewed against the *NSW Guidelines for Controlled Activities on Waterfront Land* (NRAR, 2018) and the *Controlled Activities – Guidelines for Watercourse Crossings on Waterfront Land* (DPE, 2022). Notwithstanding that no specific consent under the *Water Management Act 2000* is required for the project (due to the operation of Section 4.41(1)(g) of the EP&A Act), the applicant commits to ensuring that the works are completed generally in accordance with the requirements of the above listed guidelines. It is expected a condition of consent would be imposed to this effect.



The BESS area, including the switching station and grid connection infrastructure, are located outside the riparian buffer of mapped Strahler-order watercourses within the site. However, the internal access track connecting the BESS area to the northern transmission connection intersects two Strahler order 1 streams. The overhead transmission line will span the drainage channels and will not disturb the bed or banks. The underground fibre optic cable will be installed via directional underboring to avoid disturbance within both watercourses.

The access track, originally proposed as a temporary construction access, is now proposed to be retained as a permanent all-weather road to enable Transgrid's ongoing operational access. Two watercourse crossings are proposed along this route:

- > Crossing 1 – Located on the northern section of the transmission connection route. Aerial imagery indicates an ephemeral overland flow path with shallow, flat topography. Estimated peak flood depth for the 1% AEP event is approximately 0.3 m, with a peak flow of 3 m³/s and crossing width of 30 m. A bed-level (ford) crossing with rock scour protection on the downstream side is proposed. Estimated maximum flow velocities are 1.2 m/s (1% AEP) and 1.0 m/s (5% AEP).
- > Crossing 2 – Located immediately north of the BESS area, downstream of an existing farm dam. A box-culvert crossing is proposed in this location to maintain natural flow paths and minimise hydraulic disturbance. Flow velocities are 0.6 m/s (1% AEP) and 0.5 m/s (5% AEP). The detailed design phase will confirm culvert dimensions and ensure the crossing remains trafficable for large construction and maintenance vehicles.

The boring entry and exit points for the underground fibre optic cable will be located outside the 5% AEP flood extent, as illustrated in Figures 4-3 and 4-4 of the updated Surface Water Assessment (**Appendix G**).

The crossings and access track have been designed to minimise alteration of flow paths, preserve riparian function, and reduce sedimentation potential. Following construction, the permanent access track will be managed under the Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP), incorporating regular inspection and maintenance to ensure ongoing compliance with hydraulic, erosion, and sediment control requirements.

Updated mitigation measures for impacts to surface water include:

- > Provision of a bed-level crossing at Crossing 1 and box-culvert at Crossing 2 to minimise hydraulic and ecological impact; and
- > Ensuring underground fibre cable boring entry and exit points are located outside the 5% AEP flood extent.

With implementation of these measures and the requirements of the Water Management Act 2000, the retention of the internal access track as a permanent feature will not materially alter the level of environmental impact previously assessed.

Residual impacts to surface water, riparian vegetation, and downstream water quality remain minor and manageable, subject to the ongoing implementation of updated mitigation measures outlined in **Appendix C**.

6.4 Traffic Impact Assessment

An updated Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) (TTPP, 2025) is provided in **Appendix H** and forms part of this Amendment Report and is appended to the Submissions Report.

The assessment has been updated in response to advice from Transport for NSW (TfNSW) to explicitly include the pre-construction minor works phase and confirm that access design, vehicle movements and safety controls are consistent with TfNSW requirements.

Amendments to include pre-construction activities will occur over an estimated 18-week period, comprising of:

- > Stage 1 (Weeks 1–6): preparatory works including geotechnical investigations, fencing, tree removal, and road dilapidation surveys; and
- > Stage 2 (Weeks 7–18): construction of the upgraded site access on Waterfall Way (Grafton Road).

Traffic generation during Stage 1 is forecast to peak at 13 light vehicles and 19 heavy vehicles per day, reducing to six (6) light and 14 heavy vehicles per day during Stage 2. All pre-construction works will occur within standard construction hours.

Consistent with TfNSW advice, the updated TIA confirms that predicted vehicle volumes and composition reflect rural property traffic levels, that Safe Intersection Sight Distance (SISD) requirements are achieved, and that proposed intersection treatments remain suitable for expected construction demands. Peak hourly traffic associated with pre-construction will occur outside regional traffic peaks on Waterfall Way, ensuring no deterioration in existing network performance.

Traffic control will be implemented during Stage 1 under a Road Occupancy Licence (ROL) to ensure worker safety during short-term works within the road corridor.

The updated assessment also includes cumulative impact modelling for concurrent regional renewable projects. Given that traffic volumes during pre-construction are substantially lower than those modelled for peak construction, the findings of the TIA remain unchanged.

The project's overall traffic impacts are minor, temporary, and manageable, subject to continued implementation of the mitigation measures in **Appendix C**.

6.5 OSOM Route Study

An updated Oversize Overmass (OSOM) Route Study (ARES, 2025) has been prepared in response to agency advice from Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and Armidale Regional Council (Council). The updated OSOM report is provided in **Appendix H** and is appended to the Submissions Report.

The updated study assesses the preferred haulage route for delivery of BESS components, including major transformers and containerised battery units, from the Port of Newcastle to the project site, via existing approved heavy vehicle corridors through Muswellbrook and Tamworth.

Key amendments related to OSOM transport include:

- > Updated swept-path analysis confirming no impact to traffic signals at Pinch Point 2;
- > Clarification of OSOM delivery timing in relation to Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) road upgrades; and
- > Confirmation that all OSOM vehicle movements can occur within existing corridor constraints without the need for permanent infrastructure modification.

Updated turning path analyses have been completed for critical locations, including Pinch Point 2, confirming that OSOM vehicles can safely navigate the intersection without interference to traffic signal infrastructure.

Temporary works required along the route are limited to low-to-medium-risk modifications such as the temporary removal of signs or small traffic island adjustments.

Strategic design drawings by AT&L are appended to the updated TIA. The refined route maintains compliance with NHVR Route ID 1U9X0-5 v2, avoids sensitive intersections, and incorporates current TfNSW upgrade information.

Mitigation measures have been updated in **Appendix C** to include:

- > Pre-transport route inspection in coordination with TfNSW and Council;
- > Advance community notification for scheduled OSOM deliveries;
- > Conduct overhead power line survey closer to the date of transport to confirm that no lines need to be lifted or modified to accommodate the OSOM loads for the project; and
- > Traffic management measures, including escort vehicles, temporary signage, and communication protocols to maintain network safety.

With implementation of the updated mitigation measures in **Appendix C**, including pre-transport route inspection, community notification, and coordinated traffic management, the proposed amendments do not alter the level of impact previously assessed within the EIS. Residual impacts remain negligible and manageable, with no permanent changes to State or local road infrastructure.

6.6 Visual Impact Assessment

An updated Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) is provided in **Appendix I**. The updated VIA reassesses potential visual impacts associated with the project following refinements to the layout and equipment specification.

The key amendment relevant to visual impacts include:

- > Removal of the far eastern vegetation buffer adjoining sensitive receivers R1 and R3; and
- > Increase in depth of the vegetation screening along the eastern boundary of the development footprint, from approximately 10 m to 20 m to maximise visual relief for receivers R1 and R3.

Further to the above amendments, design refinements as a result of equipment selection have been proposed for the relocation of acoustic barriers (3.15 m high) to reflect updated equipment selection/configuration within the development footprint.

The proposed increased depth to 20 m for the eastern vegetation screening continues to utilise locally characteristic species, as detailed in the Landscape Concept Plan provided within the update VIA at **Appendix I**. The updated assessment provided by IRIS determines that this vegetation would provide additional screening of views from sensitive received R1 and R3 locations on the approach these dwellings and on surrounding fields.

The vegetation screening will reduce the visibility of project infrastructure, integrate the facility within its landscape setting, and maintain consistency with the existing rural character of the locality. No changes to the mitigation measures included within the EIS are proposed to change as a result of this amendments to the project.

6.7 Noise Impact Assessment

An updated Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) is provided in **Appendix J**. The updated NIA has been prepared to reassess potential construction and operational noise impacts associated for the project, following refinements to the project layout and equipment specification.

It reassesses potential construction and operational noise for the refined layout and equipment specification using the same approach adopted in the EIS, consistent with the *Noise Policy for Industry* (EPA, 2017), *NSW Assessing Vibration: a technical guideline* (DEC, 2006), *NSW Road Noise Policy* (DECCW, 2011) and the *Draft Construction Noise Guideline* (EPA, 2017).

Key refinements/amendments relevant to noise impacts include:

- > Transformer source level: HV transformers modelled at 96 dB(A) (conservative assumption for equipment of comparable capacity).
- > Mitigation strategy: Acoustic barriers recommended around HV transformers to achieve compliance at all identified receivers under worst-case operation. If lower-emission transformers are selected at detailed design, compliance can be achieved without barriers.
- > Receptor distances: The refined layout alters separation distances between noise sources and receptors. Resultant changes to predicted construction noise are minor (~1–2 dB(A)) and do not change impact classifications or recommended mitigation. The following tables have been updated to reflect distance changes:
 - Table 2 (infrastructure–receiver distances);
 - Table 6 and Table 7 (construction predictions); and
 - Tables 8–9 (cumulative construction assessment).

Construction noise was assessed for works occurring during standard hours only. Predicted levels remain compliant with the Interim Construction Noise Guideline (DECC, 2009) and are not expected to result in adverse amenity impacts where best-practice mitigation and staff training are implemented. Cumulative construction noise from nearby state significant and regional developments is predicted to be within 1–2 dB(A) or below the “noise-affected” criterion, indicating low potential for cumulative impact. As the highest predicted noise levels do not exceed the highly affected noise criteria of 75 dB(A) at any receptor, the implementation of additional mitigation measures, except those already identified in **Appendix C**, are not recommended.

Road traffic and vibration impacts were assessed for both construction and operation. Construction-phase emissions are expected to be short-term and compliant with applicable criteria. Operational impacts, including vibration and traffic-related noise, are considered negligible given the limited staff movements and low-emission design of the BESS.

Cumulative operational impacts from nearby projects are predicted to be negligible, with the project contribution resulting in less than a 1 dB(A) increase at any sensitive receiver.

Overall, the updated assessment confirms that noise and vibration impacts will comply with all relevant criteria across all project phases. The residual risk of adverse acoustic impact remains low, and the site is considered acoustically suitable for the proposed use, subject to the implementation of the mitigation and management measures detailed in **Appendix C** will ensure that construction and operational noise emissions are effectively controlled and that environmental performance objectives are maintained throughout the life of the project.



7. JUSTIFICATION OF AMENDMENT PROJECT

This section provides a justification and evaluation of the amended project, having regard to the economic, environmental and social impacts of the project and the principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD), consistent with the *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement* (DPIE, 2022).

7.1 Design and Amendments

The project as amended responds directly to agency advice and public submissions received during exhibition of the EIS. Project amendments and refinements, including access, improved equipment selection and refined vegetation screening have reduced the development footprint area, and represent a more spatially efficient layout without increasing environmental disturbance.

The project continues to provide essential grid stability and energy storage capacity, supporting the efficient operation of the NSW electricity network by charging during periods of low demand and discharging during periods of peak demand. These amendments and refinements improve operational performance and minimise environmental and amenity impacts.

7.2 Strategic Context and Policy Alignment

The project remains consistent with State and regional energy policy objectives, including the NSW Electricity Strategy, Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, and the *New England North West Regional Plan 2041*, by facilitating private investment in renewable energy infrastructure that enhances reliability, affordability, and sustainability.

The amendments do not alter the project's fundamental purpose or contribution to the New England REZ. The project will continue to provide firming capacity and support the transition to a low-carbon, resilient energy system consistent with national and NSW decarbonisation targets.

7.3 Environmental and Social Outcomes

Updated technical assessments confirm that the amendments do not materially increase any environmental or social impacts. Refinements to site layout and equipment have reduced the development footprint and potential for disturbance, while updated specialist reports (including noise, biodiversity, and visual impact assessments) demonstrate continued compliance with relevant policies and guidelines.

Social impacts identified during exhibition have been further addressed through ongoing engagement with Council, agencies, and the community, as detailed in the Submissions Report. Social impacts raised during the exhibition period—particularly regarding worker accommodation, community engagement, and cumulative regional effects—have been addressed through direct engagement with Council and service providers. The amended project continues to deliver positive regional outcomes by supporting employment, strengthening infrastructure resilience, and maintaining clear communication pathways with the local community.

7.4 Economic and Public Benefits

The project will continue to deliver net positive economic benefits through local employment during construction and operational phases, contributing to:

- > Direct and indirect employment opportunities during construction and operation;

- > Regional investment in infrastructure and supply chains; and
- > Increased reliability and flexibility of the NSW electricity network, supporting renewable integration and energy affordability.

The project's role in supporting renewable energy generation aligns with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development of intergenerational equity, particularly intergenerational equity and the precautionary principle by reducing reliance on fossil fuels, by reducing reliance on fossil fuels, supporting renewable energy transition, and mitigating long-term climate risks. The project therefore contributes to both regional economic resilience and State energy security, ensuring sustainable outcomes for present and future generations.

7.5 Conclusion

Overall, the Gara BESS project as amended represents a refined and improved outcome relative to the EIS design.

The amendments deliver a better-integrated layout, enhanced operational performance, reduced environmental and social impacts. The project remains consistent with the strategic, statutory, and sustainability objectives of the NSW planning framework, and continues to represent a balanced and sustainable development that advances economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being in accordance with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.



8. REFERENCES

- Premise, 2025. Gara Battery Energy Storage System: Environmental Impact Statement (Revision G)
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 2021. *State significant development guidelines – preparing an amendment report*
- Habitat, 2025. *Biodiversity Development Assessment Report* (v17)
- Premise, 2025. *Draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment* (Revision H)
- Assured Environmental, 2025. *Gara BESS: Noise & Vibration Impact Assessment* (Release: R8)
- ARES, 2025. Gara BESS OSOM Route Study. (Rev. 3)
- Water Technology, 2025. *Gara BESS Surface Water Assessment Report* (Version 09)
- bd infrastructure, 2025. *Social Impact Assessment Gara Battery Energy Storage System* (v2.13)
- The Transport Planning Partnership, 2025. *Gara Battery Energy Storage System Traffic Impact Assessment* (R02V08)
- Iris, 2025. *Gara Battery Energy Storage System Project Landscape character and visual impact assessment*



APPENDIX A

UPDATED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

UPDATED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Gara BESS project comprises a BESS with capacity of 400 MW/1,760 MWh and includes the following key infrastructure:

- > Enclosed lithium-ion batteries;
- > Power conversion systems including associated transformers;
- > Underground power and fibre optic cabling interconnecting the equipment;
- > Grid connection equipment including switchgear, protection and control equipment, metering, reactive power equipment, filtering equipment, transformers and enclosures/buildings for housing equipment;
- > An overhead transmission line of up to approximately one (1) kilometre long to connect the BESS to the nearby 330 kV power lines;
- > Earthing and lightning protection systems;
- > Storage area/enclosure, internal access tracks, on-site parking, security fencing, CCTV, and temporary construction laydown area;
- > Vegetation screening;
- > Subdivision to create a lot to host the switching station;
- > Grid connection facilities;
 - New 330 kV switching station and connection asset (including switchgear, metering, reactive power, filtering, auxiliary transformers, and enclosures);
 - Cut-in to existing 330 kV line via three new multipole tower structures (avoiding replacement of existing structure);
 - Loop-in, loop-out 330 kV overhead lines (~1 km) supported by two dual-circuit towers;
 - Construction stringing sites for brake and wrench placement;
 - Diverse communications path via new optical ground wire (along 330 kV lines) and underground fibre cable (trench installation); and
 - New access track linking switching station and new tower structures; and
- > Upgrade and realignment of the existing site access from Waterfall Way (Grafton Road) in the south-east.

The primary components associated with the installation of the BESS are as follows:

- > Site investigations, vegetation clearing, road upgrades, levelling, access way construction, drainage system installation and installation of foundations/supports to install equipment on;
- > Transport to site and installation of equipment;
- > Testing and commissioning of the equipment; and
- > Operation and maintenance.



APPENDIX B

UPDATED STATUTORY COMPLIANCE TABLE



Table 4 - Updated Commonwealth legislation

Statutory Reference	Pre-Condition	Relevance	Section in EIS	Amendment
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	Direct or indirect impacts to a Matter of National Environmental Significance (MNES)	The BDAR identified the presence of one CEEC identified as White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland. A referral to DCCEEW Cth determined that the Gara BESS is a controlled action under EPBC 2025/10102 on 1 April 2025. Therefore, approval under the EPBC Act is required. The Gara BESS will be assessed under the assessment bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and New South Wales.	Section 6.1	N/A
<i>Native Title Act 1993</i>	Objective of the Act is to recognise and protect Native Title.	No sites listed on the Native Title register are impacted by the project	N/A	N/A

Table 5 - Updated NSW Legislation

Statutory Reference	Section	Pre-Condition	Relevance	EIS Section addressed	Section in Amendment Report
<i>Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983</i>	Section 36	The NSW Aboriginal Land Council may make a claim for land on its own behalf or on behalf of one or more Local Aboriginal Land Council.	Access to the site will involve works on land subject to an undetermined Aboriginal Land Claim. Required licences and agreements would be sought as a post consent matter.	Section 6.2 and Appendix N	N/A
<i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i>	Section 7.9	Any SSD or SSI application is required to be accompanied by a BDAR unless the Planning and Environment Agency Heads determine that the proposed	The proposed development is SSD and has not been assessed by the Planning and Environment Agency Heads. A BDAR is required.	Section 6.1	Section 6.2

Statutory Reference	Section	Pre-Condition	Relevance	EIS Section addressed	Section in Amendment Report
		development is not likely to have any significant impact on biodiversity values.			
<i>Contaminated Land Management Act 1997</i>	Section 11	The EPA may declare any land it believes to significantly contaminated as significantly contaminated land.	A PSI has been completed which concluded that the site is suitable in its current state for the proposed purpose.	Section 6.9	N/A
<i>Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020</i>	Section 19	The Minister may declare a renewable energy zone (REZ) by reference to a specified geographical area of the State and a specified generation, storage or network infrastructure (including planned or existing infrastructure).	The site is within a REZ.	Section 2.2.2	N/A
<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>	Section 1.3	Objects of the Act	The proposed development is consistent with each of the Objects of the Act, with the exception of Object (d) which relates to the delivery and maintenance of affordable housing which is not relevant to this proposal.	Section 4.3.1	N/A
	Section 4.15(1)	Consideration of the relevant provisions of any environmental planning instruments	> <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021;</i> > <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021;</i>	Section 4	Section 4.1

Statutory Reference	Section	Pre-Condition	Relevance	EIS addressed	Section in Amendment Report
			> <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021;</i> > <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021; and</i> > <i>Armidale Regional Local Environmental Plan 2012.</i>		
		Consideration of the relevant provisions of any proposed environmental planning instruments	No draft environmental planning instruments apply.	N/A	N/A
		Consideration of the relevant provisions of any development control plans	Development control plans do not apply to SSD by way of clause 2.10 of the Planning Systems SEPP.	N/A	N/A
		Consideration of the relevant provisions of any planning agreements or draft planning agreements	No planning agreements or draft planning agreements apply.	N/A	N/A
		Consideration of the relevant provisions of the regulations	Refer next section of this table.	This table	
		Consideration of the likely impacts of the development		Section 6	Section 6
		Consideration of the suitability of the site for the development		Section 7.10	N/A

Statutory Reference	Section	Pre-Condition	Relevance	EIS addressed	Section in Amendment Report
		Consideration of any submissions made in accordance with this Act or the regulations	The proponent will be required to prepare a Submissions Report in accordance with Appendix C to the SSD Guidelines following the completion of the mandatory public exhibition period.	N/A	See Submissions Report
		Consideration of the public interest		Section 7.8	N/A
<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021</i>	Section 23	Requires the consent of all landowners to be obtained for the making of a Development Application.		Supplied via the major projects portal.	N/A
<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021</i>	Clause 192	(1) An environmental impact statement must contain the following—			
		(a) a summary of the environmental impact statement,		Executive Summary	N/A
		(b) a statement of the objectives of the development, activity or infrastructure,		Section 1	Section 1
		(c) an analysis of feasible alternatives to the carrying out of the development, activity or infrastructure, considering its objectives, including the consequences of not carrying out the development, activity or infrastructure,		Section 2.4	N/A

Statutory Reference	Section	Pre-Condition	Relevance	EIS addressed	Section in Amendment Report
		(d) an analysis of the development, activity or infrastructure, including—			
		(i) a full description of the development, activity or infrastructure, and		Section 3	Section 3
		(ii) a general description of the environment likely to be affected by the development, activity or infrastructure and a detailed description of the aspects of the environment that are likely to be significantly affected, and		Section 3	Section 6
		(iii) the likely impact on the environment of the development, activity or infrastructure, and		Section 6	Section 6
		(iv) a full description of the measures to mitigate adverse effects of the development, activity or infrastructure on the environment, and		Throughout Section 6 and Appendix E	Appendix C
		(v) a list of the approvals that must be obtained under another Act or law before the development, activity or infrastructure may lawfully be carried out,		This table	N/A
		(e) a compilation, in a single section of the environmental impact statement, of the measures referred to in paragraph (d)(iv),		Appendix E	Appendix C

Statutory Reference	Section	Pre-Condition	Relevance	EIS Section addressed	Section in Amendment Report
		(f) the reasons justifying the carrying out of the development, activity or infrastructure, considering biophysical, economic and social factors, including the principles of ecologically sustainable development set out in section 193.		Section 7	Section 7
<i>Heritage Act 1977</i>	Section 58	Approval in respect of the doing or carrying out of an act, matter or thing referred to in s 57(1)	No interim heritage order/s or listing/s apply to the site under the State Heritage Register. The proponent will develop a Chance Finds Protocol following receipt of development consent in consultation with Heritage NSW.	Sections 6.2 and 6.3	N/A
<i>Local Land Services Act 2013</i>			Two TSRs within the site will be impacted by the access upgrade. Clearing of native vegetation is dealt with within this application.	Section 6.4.3.3	N/A
<i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i>	Section 90	Grant of Aboriginal heritage impact permit	The results of the ACHAR indicate that impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage values are unlikely.	Section 6.2	Section 6.1
<i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i>	Sections 43(a), 43(b), 43(d), 47, 55 and 122	Various environmental protection licences	The proposed Gara BESS is not considered to comprise a scheduled activity under the POEO Act.	N/A	N/A
<i>Roads Act 1993</i>	Section 138	Various activities within road reserves	The project will upgrade the existing access from Waterfall Way	Section 6.7	N/A

Statutory Reference	Section	Pre-Condition	Relevance	EIS addressed	Section in Amendment Report
			(Grafton Road). Approval is required under the Roads Act.		
<i>Water Management Act 2000</i>	Sections 89, 90 and 91	Water use approval, water management work approval or activity approval under Part 3 of Chapter 3	Dewatering activities during construction of footings may be required. If works are necessary, approval under the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i> will be required.	Section 6.8	N/A

Table 6 - Updated EPBC Regulations 2000 Schedule 4

Statutory Requirement	Section in EIS	Section in Amendment Report
1 General information	Section 6.1	
1.01 The background of the action including:		
(a) the title of the action;	Gara BESS	
(b) the full name and postal address of the designated proponent;	Section 1.1	N/A
(c) a clear outline of the objective of the action;	The objective of the action is to construct a BESS that will provide grid flexibility services and will support the efficiency of the existing electrical network.	N/A
(d) the location of the action;	Site details are provided in Table 2 .	N/A
(e) the background to the development of the action;	Section 1.3.	Section 1.2
(f) how the action relates to any other actions (of which the proponent should reasonably be aware)	Consideration of other projects has been included in the cumulative assessment in Section 6.14	N/A

Statutory Requirement	Section in EIS	Section in Amendment Report
that have been, or are being, taken or that have been approved in the region affected by the action;		
(g) the current status of the action;	Under assessment by DPHI.	N/A
(h) the consequences of not proceeding with the action.	Feasible alternatives have been considered in Section 2.4 . Not proceeding would be inconsistent with the strategic context set by the State and local policy.	N/A
2 Description		
2.01 A description of the action, including:		
(a) all the components of the action;	Section 3	N/A
(b) the precise location of any works to be undertaken, structures to be built or elements of the action that may have relevant impacts;	Section 3	N/A
(c) how the works are to be undertaken and design parameters for those aspects of the structures or elements of the action that may have relevant impacts;	The Gara BESS has been designed with consideration of biodiversity impacts, with the intention to avoid impacts to biodiversity values where possible. Additionally, mitigation measures are outlined in Appendix E and Appendix J which further ensure that the development design parameters avoid direct and indirect impacts on MNES.	N/A
(d) relevant impacts of the action;	Section 6.1.3 identifies that the action will directly impact on the White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland CEEC, based on the assessment within Appendix J .	N/A
(e) proposed safeguards and mitigation measures to deal with relevant impacts of the action;	Appendix E and Appendix J	Appendix C

Statutory Requirement	Section in EIS	Section in Amendment Report
(f) any other requirements for approval or conditions that apply, or that the proponent reasonably believes are likely to apply, to the proposed action;	The Gara BESS will require approval under Section 138 of the <i>Roads Act 1993</i> due to site access upgrades and work proposed within the road corridor.	N/A
(g) to the extent reasonably practicable, any feasible alternatives to the action, including:	Section 2.4	N/A
(i) if relevant, the alternative of taking no action;	Section 2.4	N/A
(ii) a comparative description of the impacts of each alternative on the matters protected by the controlling provisions for the action;	Section 2.4	N/A
(iii) sufficient detail to make clear why any alternative is preferred to another;	Section 2.4	N/A
(h) any consultation about the action, including:	Section 5	See Submissions Report
(i) any consultation that has already taken place;	Section 5	See Submissions Report
(ii) proposed consultation about relevant impacts of the action;	Section 5	See Submissions Report
(iii) if there has been consultation about the proposed action—any documented response to, or result of, the consultation;	Section 5	See Submissions Report

Statutory Requirement	Section in EIS	Section in Amendment Report
(i) identification of affected parties, including a statement mentioning any communities that may be affected and describing their views	Section 5	See Submissions Report
3 Relevant impacts		
3.01 Information given under paragraph 2.01(d) must include:		
(a) a description of the relevant impacts of the action;	Section 6.1.3, and Section 7 of Appendix J	Section 6 and Appendix F
(b) a detailed assessment of the nature and extent of the likely short term and long term relevant impacts;	Section 6.1.3, and Section 7 of Appendix J	Section 6 and Appendix F
(c) a statement whether any relevant impacts are likely to be unknown, unpredictable or irreversible;	Section 6.1.3, and Section 7 of Appendix J	Section 6 and Appendix F
(d) analysis of the significance of the relevant impacts;	Appendix G of Appendix J	Appendix F and Appendix H
(e) any technical data and other information used or needed to make a detailed assessment of the relevant impacts.	Section 6.1.3, and Section 7 of Appendix J	Section 6 and Appendix F
4 Proposed safeguards and mitigation measures		
4.01 Information given under paragraph 2.01(e) must include:		
(a) a description, and an assessment of the expected or predicted effectiveness of, the mitigation measures;	Mitigation measures are outlined in Appendix E and Appendix J , which include the requirement of a Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) which would be prepared post consent. The effectiveness and cost of the VMP is dependent on the requirements of the consent. The BDAR also proposes	Appendix C
(b) any statutory or policy basis for the mitigation measures;		
(c) the cost of the mitigation measures;		

Statutory Requirement	Section in EIS	Section in Amendment Report
(d) an outline of an environmental management plan that sets out the framework for continuing management, mitigation and monitoring programs for the relevant impacts of the action, including any provisions for independent environmental auditing;	offsetting of the MNES impacts through retirement of ecosystem credits as detailed in Table 18 of Appendix J .	
(e) the name of the agency responsible for endorsing or approving each mitigation measure or monitoring program;		
(f) a consolidated list of mitigation measures proposed to be undertaken to prevent, minimise or compensate for the relevant impacts of the action, including mitigation measures proposed to be taken by State governments, local governments or the proponent.		
5 Other approvals and conditions		
5.01 Information given under paragraph 2.01(f) must include:		
(a) details of any local or State government planning scheme, or plan or policy under any local or State government planning system that deals with the proposed action, including:	The Gara BESS will require approval under Section 138 of the <i>Roads Act 1993</i> due to site access upgrades and work proposed within the road corridor.	N/A
(i) what environmental assessment of the proposed action has been, or is being, carried out under the scheme, plan or policy;		
(ii) how the scheme provides for the prevention, minimisation and management of any relevant impacts;		

Statutory Requirement	Section in EIS	Section in Amendment Report
(b) a description of any approval that has been obtained from a State, Territory or Commonwealth agency or authority (other than an approval under the Act), including any conditions that apply to the action;		
(c) a statement identifying any additional approval that is required;		
(d) a description of the monitoring, enforcement and review procedures that apply, or are proposed to apply, to the action.		
6 Environmental record of person proposing to take the action		
6.01 Details of any proceedings under a Commonwealth, State or Territory law for the protection of the environment or the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources against:	Section 1.1.1	N/A
(a) the person proposing to take the action; and		
(b) for an action for which a person has applied for a permit, the person making the application.		
6.02 If the person proposing to take the action is a corporation—details of the corporation's environmental policy and planning framework.		
7 Information sources		
7.01 For information given in a draft public environment report or environmental impact statement, the draft must state:	Section 8	Section 8
(a) the source of the information; and		
(b) how recent the information is; and		

Statutory Requirement	Section in EIS	Section in Amendment Report
(c) how the reliability of the information was tested; and		
(d) what uncertainties (if any) are in the information.		

APPENDIX C

UPDATED MITIGATION MEASURES TABLE



Table 7 provides an updated summary of project mitigation measures, reflecting amendments and refinements arising from agency submissions, community feedback, and updates to technical assessments. For ease of interpretation:

- > New mitigation measures are shown in **green**;
- > Measures no longer relevant are shown with **red** strikethrough; and
- > Unchanged mitigation measures remain in black.

Table 7 - Updated mitigation measures

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
Biodiversity	Construction	> Avoid and minimise clearing impacts to native vegetation where possible. > Clearly delineate the boundaries of the project footprint to prevent any unnecessary clearing beyond its extent. This includes the installation of appropriate fencing along the eastern extent of the Subject Land. Fencing should prohibit entry into the retained vegetation area and minimise indirect impacts during construction such as the movement of dust and rubbish into the forest and wetland. > Ensure vehicle and equipment parking areas and stockpile areas are identified and positioned to avoid areas containing ecological value. Stockpiling must not occur within, or in proximity (5m) to, areas of native vegetation retained under the proposed development. > Appropriate signage such as 'no go zone' or 'environmental protection area' should be installed surrounding the area of retained native vegetation and wetlands. > Clearly identify and communicate the location of any 'no go zones' in site inductions. > Tree protection measures will be implemented to protect retained trees surrounding the Subject Land. Tree protection measures should consider allowances for Tree Protection Zones in accordance with AS4970 (Standards Australia, 2009). > Limit removal of trees to that required within the Subject Land where possible. > Pre-clearance surveys will be undertaken to determine if any inhabiting fauna, or habitat features (i.e. nests or hollows) are present 24 hours prior to clearing. > A staged habitat removal process is required for removal of habitat (hollow-bearing trees and nests) to minimise direct impacts on fauna by providing them with an opportunity to vacate hollows and relocate naturally. > If possible, avoid clearing during breeding seasons for hollow-dependent fauna and nonhollow dependent fauna, specifically nesting birds. > Contact vets and wildlife carers before construction activities commence.

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> Ensure a licensed wildlife carer and/or ecologist is present during vegetation clearing/habitat removal. > Adopt a two staged habitat removal strategy, for example clearing non-habitat trees first (shrubs, regrowth, ground cover) followed by habitat trees. Allow at least 24 hours for fauna to vacate habitat before removing habitat trees. > Fell habitat trees carefully using equipment that allows habitat trees to be lowered to the ground with minimal impact (claw extension). Do not fell trees towards exclusion zones. > Ensure a wildlife carer and/or ecologist inspects trees before and after felling. Capture and relocate non-injured fauna that are found in any felled trees to pre-determined habitat identified for fauna release to be undertaken by a licensed ecologist or wildlife carer. > A Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) is to be prepared and implemented prior to construction of the project. The VMP is to specify: • Management of weeds • Monitoring of the retained and partially impacted CEEC Box Gum Grassy Woodland to ensure that the condition is not reduced • The maintenance regime for a period of five years • The process for certifying completion of works at critical stages of the process. > A VMP is to be prepared and implemented prior to construction of the project. The VMP is to be in accordance with TransGrid ISO 14001 certified EMS and is to specify clearing protocols and the management of weeds prior to clearing, particularly in the partially impacted areas containing CEEC Box Gum Grassy Woodland to ensure the ground strata VI is retained or improved > Clearing of habitat trees must follow the two staged approach, as described in the section above, and must be undertaken by a qualified arborist with an ecologist present > Clearing and maintenance of the mid and upper strata vegetation within the easement should be undertaken by a slasher and the cutting height adjusted to ensure the protection of the retained ground stratum of the CEEC > The maintenance regime is to be for a period of five years, with review and a process for certifying completion of works at critical stages of the process > Monitoring by BAM plot/transect must be undertaken prior to clearing, after construction and annually for a period of five years to monitor the VI of the partially impacted CEEC > CEEC Box Gum Grassy Woodland is considered likely to naturally regenerate by reducing grazing pressure via fencing and allowing native grass to establish, controlling invasive weeds, managing pests, and reducing further clearing. These management actions

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		foster native plant recruitment by improving habitat conditions, increasing seed dispersal, and restoring the health and structure of the ecological community over time. > The implementation of compensatory measures prior to construction activities including: • Koala friendly fencing and signage around the BESS infrastructure • Replacement of hollows at a ratio of 2:1 in the retained land > Source controls such as sediment fences, mulching and jute matting will be utilized where appropriate, especially along the eastern boundary of the proposed development area that runs adjacent to a first-order stream. > Site-based vehicles will carry spill kits. > Erosion and sediment control will be required for the development in accordance with Managing Urban Stormwater: Soils and Construction (Landcom, 2004) prior to commencement of construction. > Limit the use of pesticides in the project footprint where possible to avoid contamination of nearby watercourses/wetland areas. > Speed limits within the Subject Land should be limited to 40 km/hr. > This limit should be clearly signed at all entry points to site. > The Subject Land should be separated from vegetated areas throughout the construction and operational phases of the development. This separation should be achieved through physical barriers including fencing and appropriate signage. > The fungal pathogens <i>Phytophthora cinnamomi</i> and Myrtle Rust (<i>Puccinia psidii</i>) are known to occur along the entire east coast of NSW, however, it is unknown if they occur within the Subject Land. These pathogens can have devastating impacts on native plant communities and inhabiting fauna if not properly managed. > Appropriate washdown facilities will be available to clean vehicles and equipment prior to arrival on-site and prior to departure. > Ensure soil and seed material is not transferred > Increased human activity (from workers and traffic levels) directly adjacent to sensitive habitat areas may cause disturbance to flora and fauna species in adjoining habitat. > Impacts from construction and operational activities, such as disturbance to an animal's normal behaviour patterns due to noise, vibration, lighting or dust may cause areas of previously suitable habitat to become sub-optimal and may cause fauna species to vacate areas of previously suitable habitat. > Measures to mitigate impacts on flora and fauna from noise, vibration, waste, light and air pollution such as:

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		• Enforce 'carry-out' policy regarding rubbish and waste materials generated onsite during construction to avoid waste materials entering adjacent vegetation. • Restriction of public access and associated impacts from domestic pets, waste dumping and damage to adjoining vegetation must be enforced pre, during and post construction. • Fence sensitive areas to delineate 'no go' zones. • Levels of lighting associated with the proposed development (during construction and operation) will be reduced to a minimal level and directed away from retained vegetation areas to reduce any adverse effects upon the essential behavioural patterns of light-sensitive fauna. Lighting design and utilization during construction and operational phases of the development should be based on principles detailed in Appendix A of the National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife (DEE 2020). This includes consideration of adaptive controls, and measures to reduce light intensity and inappropriate light spill into retained vegetation and fauna habitat. • Lighting should also comply with Australian Standard AS4282 (INT) 1997 AS/NZS 4282:2023 – Control of Obtrusive Effects of Outdoor Lighting. • Noise minimisation practices in accordance with DPIE recommendations. • Dust control measures such as covering loads where required; amending operations under excessive wind conditions including ceasing operations if required; use of water tankers as required, to control dust; rehabilitation through vegetation of surfaces to be left unsealed; and truck wheel washes or other dust removal measures. Included in the Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP), a Biosecurity Management Plan (BMP) will be prepared address risks of pest, weed and disease introduction or spread, and will include measures such as: > Inspection and wash-down protocols for plant and machinery entering or moving between infested areas; > Decontamination procedures for vehicles, equipment and plant, particularly where contact with food, organic or animal waste may have occurred; and > Ongoing site management strategies to prevent incursion of pest animals, weeds, or plant pests onto adjoining agricultural land.
Aboriginal heritage	Construction	> An unexpected finds/chance finds protocol should be developed as part of the Gara BESS CEMP. > If unanticipated Aboriginal objects are uncovered during works, all work in the vicinity should cease immediately. A qualified

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		archaeologist should be contacted to assess the find and Heritage NSW and Armidale and District LALC and a RAP must be notified. > All impacts must remain within the assessed study area or further archaeological investigation may be required. > Ongoing consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties where required.
Land	Construction	> Minimise soil disturbance and excavation where possible > Minimise mixing of soil layers where practical > Retain and stockpile all disturbed or excavated soil > Ameliorate any excavated and/or stockpiled soils in accordance with advice obtained from the NSW Soil Conservation Service > Consider soil amelioration with gypsum prior to reinstatement and/or as part of decommissioning > Return stockpiled soil to its original location (where possible) as soon as reasonably practicable > Ensure topsoil and subsoils are stockpiled separately and returned in order > Minimise overworking of the surface soils (in-situ, in excavation, stockpiling and reinstatement) > Reinststate topsoil where possible where excavation occurs > Minimise vehicular traffic induced compaction where practical > Minimise stock compaction by excluding livestock during construction, minimising stocking rates and/or minimising the risk of stock coinciding with wet topsoil conditions > Minimise infrastructure induced compaction where possible (spread loads etc) > Maintain and maximise vegetative cover where possible to help protect surface soils > Employ practices which maintain/increase soil organic matter levels such as maintaining grass cover where practical, minimising soil disturbance and the retention/incorporation of any cleared vegetation or organic matter as soon as reasonably practicable > Avoid bare (fallow) soil surface where practical > Whilst good weed control should be implemented, retention of less detrimental weeds may help maintain vegetal of cover and/or increase soil organic matter levels > Minimise the exposure of subsoil layers particularly to rainfall/surface water run-off impacts > Implement excess surface water controls to minimise collection/concentration of mobile surface water > Implement practices to minimise sediment mobilisation and/or sediment capture > Minimise site activities and soil disturbance during wet weather conditions where possible

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> Regularly monitor soils for potential adverse impacts and if and when identified, implement appropriate mitigation or remediation actions. > Implement construction and/or site rehabilitation and revegetation in accordance with an appropriate landscape, revegetation or rehabilitation plan prepared by a suitably qualified professional. > Ensure rehabilitation is undertaken progressively to minimise the total disturbance area at any one time
	Decommissioning	> Prepare an appropriate decommissioning management plan which aims to minimise adverse soil impacts and aims to return the site to preconstruction land and soil capability (or better). > The decommissioning management plan should determine soil conditions prior to decommissioning to ensure any existing soil conditions and/or adverse impacts, which may have changed/developed throughout the life of the development, are catered for. > Removing all infrastructure to a depth of 500mm at the end of the Project's life, with components recycled or fully disposed pursuant to the decommissioning management plan.
Visual	Construction and operation	> Lighting during construction and operation would be designed and operated in accordance with AS4282-2019 Control of the obtrusive effects of outdoor lighting. > Minimise the removal of mature native vegetation in the vicinity of the construction footprint, including at the track intersection with Waterfall Way / Grafton Road, where possible. > Finishing of BESS containers in a low-reflective and colour to blend with surrounding landscape. > Installation of landscaping.
Noise	Construction	> Implement community consultation or notification measures; > Train workers and contractors on the best practice use of equipment and work methods in order to minimise noise; > Ensure workers and contractors are aware of noise management requirements in approvals consents or licenses, site inductions and "toolbox talks" providing a summary of relevant to the Project requirements for reference; > Include appropriate clauses and conditions within tenders, employment contracts, sub contractor agreements and work method statements that require all workers and contractors to observe (noise management) directions from their site manager; > Inform all vehicles and mobile plant equipment of designated vehicle routes, parking locations and acceptable delivery hours or other relevant practices, such as minimising use of engine brakes and avoiding engine idling;

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> Periodically check the site, nearby residences and other sensitive land uses to proactively identify noise issues and feasible and reasonable mitigation (verification); > Limiting the type and scale of concurrent activities undertaken close to sensitive receptors where possible; > Using broad band reversing alarms on all mobile plant and equipment if practical; > Examine different types of machines that perform the same function and compare the noise level data to select the least noisy machine; > Operating plant in a quiet and efficient manner; > Reduce throttle setting and turn off equipment when not being used; > Regularly inspect and maintain equipment to ensure it is in good working order including checking the condition of mufflers; > Validation of noise levels during construction at nearest sensitive receptor; and > A full, detailed and specific Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan (CNVMP) must be prepared prior to commencing works on site, once a developer is appointed and detailed construction methodology is known. The following additional mitigation measures would be included in the CNVMP as required: > Notification (letterbox drop or equivalent) - Advanced warning of works and potential disruptions can assist in reducing the impact on the community. The notification may consist of a letterbox drop (or equivalent) detailing work activity, time periods over which these will occur, impacts and mitigation measures. Notification should be a minimum of 5 working days prior to the start of works. The approval conditions for projects may also specify requirements for notification to the community about works that may impact on them. > Specific notifications - Specific notifications are letterbox dropped (or equivalent) to identified stakeholders no later than seven calendar days ahead of construction activities that are likely to exceed the noise objectives. The specific notification provides additional information when relevant and informative to more highly affected receivers than covered in general letterbox drops. > Phone calls - Phone calls detailing relevant information made to identified/affected stakeholders within seven calendar days of proposed work. Phone calls provide affected stakeholders with personalised contact and tailored advice, with the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed work and specific needs. Where the resident cannot be telephoned then an alternative form of engagement should be used. > Individual briefings - Individual briefings are used to inform stakeholders about the impacts of high noise activities and

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		mitigation measures that will be implemented. Project representatives would visit identified stakeholders at least 48 hours ahead of potentially disturbing construction activities. Individual briefings provide affected stakeholders with personalised contact and tailored advice, with the opportunity to comment on the project. Where the resident cannot be met with individually then an alternative form of engagement should be used. > Respite offers - Respite Offers should be considered made where there are high noise and vibration generating activities near receivers. As a guide work should be carried out in continuous blocks that do not exceed 3 hours each, with a minimum respite period of one hour between each block. The actual duration of each block of work and respite should be flexible to accommodate the usage of and amenity at nearby receivers. The purpose of such an offer is to provide residents with respite from an ongoing impact. This measure is evaluated on a project-by-project basis and may not be applicable to all projects. > Respite period 1 - Out of hours construction noise in out of hours period 1 shall be limited to no more than three consecutive evenings per week except where there is a Duration Respite. For night work these periods of work should be separated by not less than one week and no more than 6 evenings per month. > Duration respite - Respite offers and respite periods 1 and 2 may be counterproductive in reducing the impact on the community for longer duration projects. In this instance and where it can be strongly justified it may be beneficial to increase the work duration, number of evenings or nights worked through Duration Respite so that the project can be completed more quickly. > Alternative accommodations - Alternative accommodation options may be offered to residents living in close proximity to construction works that are likely to experience highly intrusive noise levels. The specifics of the offer will be identified on a project-by-project basis. Additional aspects for consideration shall include whether the highly intrusive activities occur throughout the night or before midnight. > Verification - Please see Appendix F of the Construction Noise and Vibration Guideline (2016) for more details about verification of Noise and Vibration levels as part of routine checks of noise levels or following reasonable complaints. This verification should include measurement of the background noise level and construction noise. Note this is not required for projects less than three weeks unless to assist in managing complaints.
	Operation	> An acoustic barrier is proposed as shown in Figure 4.3 of the NIA. In order to be effective the acoustic barrier would need to be free of gaps and be constructed of material with a mass density greater than or equal to 12kg/m² excluding structural components.

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> The acoustic barrier is to be constructed such that there is a 10 m space between the acoustic barriers and BESS equipment to allow for fire safety. > The acoustic barrier is in the eastern segment of the BESS area and is to be constructed with a height of 3.15 3.5 m. The barrier should have a length of approximately 110 70 metres when constructed in its entirety. The barrier has been modelled to include a 150 mm gap between the ground and the base of the barrier (to allow for flood design). > Placement of the MVPS equipment as discussed with ACEnergy, MVPS front face of all units to be facing north to help with directionality of loudest side away from sensitive receptors. > Similarly, placement of BESS equipment as discussed with ACEnergy, BESS front side (chiller facade/loudest facade) facing towards the north for all BESS units to help with noise directionality away from sensitive receptors to the east and west.
Traffic	Pre-construction and Construction	The TIA proposes that to actively manage vehicle trips during construction, the following measures may be implemented: > Requiring contractors to provide forecasts of their total vehicle numbers inclusive of workforce travel, heavy vehicle deliveries and OSOM vehicles on week by week basis; > Sharing of the vehicle forecasts with all site managers; > Nominating limits on total and directional vehicle numbers, with site management coordinating the total vehicle activity levels to remain within the nominated limits; > Monitoring and recording daily vehicle activity, including the direction of travel, by site management; > Identifying exceedances of the nominated limits, with consequences of non-compliances to be identified and enforced. These may include: • Placing restrictions on non-essential vehicle movements until compliance is restored; • Fining contractors (e.g. via specified donation amount to charity of their choice) for repeated breaches; and/or • Revising scheduling to balance traffic loads. The TIA proposes the following measures to mitigate impacts on safety and efficiency of the road network: > The intersection of Waterfall Way with the Project site access road would be upgraded with BAL and BAR treatments on Waterfall Way (refer to Appendix C) in accordance with Austroads guidelines; > Specific trees would be trimmed/removed (subject to ecology assessment) on the western side of Waterfall Way to the south of the Project site access to maximum sight distance between approaching drivers and the access intersection;

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> Required permits would be obtained for OSOM vehicle movements, and modifications to accommodate the largest OSOM vehicle movement would be implemented, the details of which would be confirmed as the size and load requirements are refined (desktop review by ARES [2024 2025] has identified possible changes to roadside signage, traffic signals at one location and vegetation clearing); > Conduct overhead power line survey closer to the date of transport to confirm that no lines need to be lifted or modified to accommodate the OSOM loads for the project; and > A WAD would be obtained for the upgrading works at the intersection of Waterfall Way with the Project site access, including preparation of a CTMP and work to be undertaken in accordance with relevant traffic control requirements. > Obtain required permits for OSOM vehicle movements, and implement the modifications needed to accommodate the largest OSOM vehicle movement. Note that the modifications subject to verification of existing road structures against suitable standards, post-consent detailed road surveys, final approvals, and the size and load requirements; > Obtain a WAD for the upgrading works at the intersection of Waterfall Way with the Project site access, including preparation of a CTMP and undertake all work in accordance with relevant traffic control requirements; > Actively manage the number and distribution of vehicle trips generated throughout the Project construction activities as part of contractual arrangements with the construction workforce and contractors; > Develop and implement a TMP and Driver Code of Conduct in consultation with Council and/or TfNSW, to govern traffic movements during the Project construction stage; > Implement a community engagement program to inform the community and stakeholders about changed traffic conditions expected during the Project's activities. It is recommended that a TMP and Driver Code of Conduct be developed and implemented to govern traffic movements during the Project construction stage. These would form part of the contractual arrangements with suppliers to the Project, and would be prepared in consultation with Council and/or TfNSW prior to commencement of construction of the Project, to address such matters as: > compliance with access routes and travel restrictions that may be applicable; > compliance with road rules, laws and regulations, including those relating to OSOM vehicles and dangerous goods transport; > maintaining safe following distances between vehicles, and increasing separation in poor visibility (e.g. fog or rain); > reporting of any unsafe driving practices or incidents;

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> driver behavioural expectations within the site (e.g. radio communication, speed limits, and use of flashing lights on moving vehicles); and > driver behaviour expectations at any specific locations or conditions, including at the Dangar Street bridge in Armidale, when warning signs advise that stock are present on or near the road, and in the vicinity of any school bus during bus operating hours. To mitigate the risk associated with the reduced SISK available for eastbound drivers on Waterfall Way during the pre-construction stage, and considering the short-term nature of the pre-construction activities, it is recommended that temporary traffic management measures be implemented. Such measures would be developed in consultation with TfNSW, and with reference to Traffic Control at Work Sites Technical Manual (TfNSW, 2022). These may include the use of advance warning signs located upstream of the access to reduce the reaction time of approaching drivers and/or a temporary speed limit reduction to reduce the speed of approaching vehicles. The temporary signs would be located to ensure that they do not further obstruct sight distance for drivers. It is recommended that the community be informed of the expected changes in traffic conditions expected with the Project activities. ACEnergy has developed a community engagement program for the pre-construction stage, which is outlined below: > 1. Identify impacted stakeholders We will assess the impact of the works on neighbours, road users, and businesses, as well as identify any stakeholders who may not be directly impacted but should be informed of the upcoming works. > 2. Develop clear and timely messaging We will develop concise collateral, which will provide the following: • Purpose of the works: why this is happening in the context of the broader project; • Timing and duration of the works, including any night or weekend works; • Impacts that may be experienced (road closures or detours, traffic delays, noise and/or dust, and other impacts, as applicable); • Mitigation measures we will implement to minimise disruptions (e.g. traffic control, signage); and • Dedicated point of contact throughout the works period. > 3. Notify via appropriate communication channels Notifications will be tailored to the stakeholder group and the degree of impact they may experience. Notifications will be issued at least 1-2 weeks before works begin and may include:

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		• Direct notification (phone calls to immediate neighbours, letters, emails, or SMS to residents, businesses and key stakeholders in the area); • Public signage near affected roads and work sites, as applicable; and • Updates to the project webpage. > 5. Monitor ACEnergy will proactively monitor and respond to all enquiries, feedback and complaints. Any input will be carefully considered in the planning and delivery of the early works, and addressed where appropriate. Any changes or delays will be communicated as soon as they arise. > OSOM pre-transport route inspection in coordination with TfNSW and Council. > Advanced community notification for scheduled OSOM deliveries. Any changes or delays will be communicated as soon as they arise.
Groundwater	Construction and operation	A Soil and Water Management sub-plan should also be prepared for the project and should include, but not be limited to, the following: > appropriate design of self-bunded battery and fuel and oil storage areas; > use nominated and bunded fuel and chemical storage areas; > provision of spill kits for cleaning up chemical, oil and fuel spillages; > training for personnel and regular maintenance and inspection of bunded fuel, oil, and battery storage areas to ensure integrity; > procedure for managing any intercepted shallow groundwater; and > procedures for soil storage (including any potential contaminated soil) and erosion control with well-designed site drainage and sedimentation basins at key locations to manage site runoff effectively. Groundwater monitoring and testing is also recommended during geotechnical investigations, including: > Installation of groundwater monitoring bores to detect any changes in water quality; > Regular water sampling and testing for contaminants during and post-construction, especially in the vicinity of storage areas; and > Ongoing monitoring as part of the environmental management plan to ensure that groundwater remains unaffected over the long term.
Surface water	Construction	> Any sensitive infrastructure such as inverters and battery storage etc, should be located on raised concrete footings to 300mm elevation above finished ground level at the site. It is common for this type of infrastructure to be housed within shipping containers or small sheds with relatively small footprints. Given the shallow

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		depths across the site, raising these small concrete footings is highly unlikely to result in any adverse impacts offsite. > The footings should be designed to withstand the flood velocities described in this report, which are mostly low in the Development Footprint. > Extension of existing 300 mm diameter pipe under the existing access tract at the intersection with Waterfall Way (Grafton Road). > Incorporate drainage channels in a north to south direction within the BESS area to control surface runoff within the proposed facility. > A bed level crossing at crossing 1 and box culvert arrangement at crossing 2 to minimise impact on the waterway. • CEMP to include regular inspection and maintenance of crossings to ensure compliance with hydraulic, erosion and sediment control objectives. > Underground fibre cable's, boring entry and exit points are recommended to be outside the 5% AEP extent, as shown on the cross sections of the waterway crossings. > The location of the proposed electricity poles/towers within the development extent should be outside any mapped flood depth in all modelled events, if practical. > It is recommended that the best practice principles to stormwater and sediment control be incorporated into the design, construction and operation phases of the BESS site. > It is anticipated that vehicles can safely access and egress from the Site via Waterfall Way (Grafton Road).
Water	Construction	> Preparation of the Construction Environmental Management Plan will include measures to protect services and easements, including engineering treatments if required. Protection of legally registered easements is a condition of consent and must be addressed in detailed design and construction management. > The Applicant commits to notifying WaterNSW if future works could affect their assets
Hazards	Construction	> End-to-end spacing (short side) of BESS containerised units shall be a minimum of 3 m. > Back-to-back spacing (long side) of BESS containerised units shall be no less than 0.2 0.9 m for the CATL BESS units selected for this study. > Front to front spacing is to be no less than 3 m the CATL BESS units selected for this study. > BESS separation and spacing are to be specific to BESS the selected. > The BESS containerised units shall be provided with the fire protection system specified by the BESS manufacturer.

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> The active ventilation vents shall not be located above battery packs within the BESS container. > The vent covers of the BESS shall be constructed of non-combustible material. > Prior to commissioning, the UL test data for the selected battery units shall be made available to the DPHI. > Fire Safety Study (FSS) in accordance with Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper (HIPAP) No. 2 and the FRNSW Fire Safety Guideline Technical Information – Large scale external lithium-ion battery energy storage systems – Fire safety study considerations. > Prepare an Emergency Plan (EP) in accordance with HIPAP No. 1 and an Emergency Services Information Package (ESIP) consistent with FRNSW guidelines, both prior to occupation or commissioning. > The Applicant will continue to engage directly with FRNSW through the designated submission channels to ensure all requirements are addressed to FRNSW's satisfaction. Preparation of an emergency plan including: > Be prepared in consultation with Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW), the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), and the local emergency management committee; > Be provided to the Armidale Fire Control Centre and the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC); > Be prepared in accordance with Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No. 1 (Emergency Planning) and the outcomes of the final Fire Safety Study (FSS); > Address general emergency management and response procedures including: > Safe isolation procedures for the battery storage systems and subsystems during an emergency; > Identification of all fire risks and hazards, including preventive controls to reduce ignition sources; > Location, availability, and maintenance of fire suppression systems, firefighting water supply, and emergency access routes; > Incorporate bushfire emergency management elements consistent with A Guide to Developing a Bush Fire Emergency Management and Evacuation Plan (RFS 2014) and Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019, including: • Details of Asset Protection Zone (APZ) location, maintenance, and management responsibilities; • Works prohibited during Total Fire Ban periods; • Notification procedures and communication protocols for FRNSW/RFS in the event of: > A fire on or near the site;

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> Activities with potential to ignite surrounding vegetation; or > Any proposed works within the bushfire danger period; > Include evacuation procedures, identification of emergency egress routes, and confirmation of access agreements (rights of carriageway) with relevant landholders; and > Contain an Emergency Services Information Package and Tactical Fire Plan consistent with <i>FRNSW (2019)</i> requirements. > Two printed copies of the approved EMEP and the Emergency Services Information Package will be kept on-site at prominent entry points and made available to emergency personnel at all times.
Contamination	Construction	> The construction phase of the Gara BESS is to include construction of shallow earthen surface water drains designed to capture and remove excess surface water from the study site.
Bushfire	Construction and operation	> Buildings should be designed and constructed to withstand the potential impacts of a bushfire by adhering to recommendations outlined in the BAR; > A 10 m APZ shall be established for the life of the project (including the construction stage) to provide sufficient space and maintain a reduced fuel loads to ensure radiant heat levels at the buildings are below critical limits and prevent direct flame contact; > Water, electricity and as shall comply with Table 7.4a of the PBP (where relevant); > The proposed development is to have a non-combustible 100,000 dedicated water tank with Storz fitting, and other fire fighting equipment in compliance with the Australian Standards; > Internal roads should have a minimum 4 m vertical clearance to any overhanging obstructions and be a minimum 4 m width with 1 m traversable shoulders, unsealed/sealed all weather traversable road with suitable load bearing capacity. drainage structures and feature crossing. Road grade should be at least 10°, short steep sections are acceptable if sealed <15° and then suitable cross fall of the road surface provided. Two way traffic flow (with capacity for passing and turning areas) which enables safe access & egress for emergency services and allow crews to work with equipment about the vehicle is to be provided by the proposed road system & APZs. > Landscaping to the Asset Protection Zones is to comply with the principles of APZ standards - Appendix 4 of PBP, 2019; > A Bushfire Emergency Management and Operational Plan should be developed and include the following: • APZ and associated firebreak will be maintained wholly within the site boundaries for the entire project lifetime; • detailed measures to prevent or mitigate fires igniting;

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		• work that should not be carried out during total fire bans; • availability of fire-suppression equipment, access and water; • storage and maintenance of fuels and other flammable materials; • notification of the local NSW RFS Fire Control Centre for any works that have the potential to ignite surrounding vegetation, proposed to be carried out during a bush-fire fire danger period to ensure weather conditions are appropriate; and • appropriate bush fire emergency management planning. Other mitigation measures outlined in the BAR to help provide bushfire safety include: > Noise wall shall be of non-combustible exterior. It may assist in protecting the BESS from potential grassland fire, and conversely also prevent any fire within the BESS from spreading outwards into Grassland. It is noted that the noise wall is only located in some areas and is up to 4 m high. > Informing Local Fire & Rescue Brigade of the proposal once approved regarding its operation, water supplies, and layout. > The interior of any Office buildings will have all necessary fire safety provisions (sprinklers, fire extinguishers, etc) as required by the relevant Australian Standards and legislation. > Windows and doors of site buildings should be shut in a fire event, and ember proofing is recommended for the Office. > It is anticipated relevant exterior fire fighting equipment will be provided including a protective clothing/PPE clothing/equipment, CO2 fire extinguishers, etc. > 100 000l water tank, with Storz fitting (to be installed at the Office /carpark during construction accessible at all times to NSW RFS fire tankers/others. > Training for all on-site personnel regarding bushfire response procedures. > Fire fighting training for operational workers.
Social	Construction and operation	Create awareness within the community about the economic opportunities of a REZ > Partner with local organisations such as Council, Armidale Chamber of Commerce, and UNE to inform prospective workers about participation in the project. > Continue updating project-specific website with information and advertising for procurement. > Collaborate with local employment, apprenticeship, and training providers to enhance local hiring potential. > Implementation of the ACF Energy's existing Workforce Accommodation and Employment Strategy which sets formal targets for local employment and participation and establishes

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		regular dashboards for tracking local participation and procurement. > Regular updates to residents throughout construction to ensure transparency. Notify when undertaking work for improvements to the road. Local economy and working with the contractor > Engagement with Armidale Regional Council, local businesses, and the local Chamber of Commerce to understand procurement limitations and aspirations. > Target local economic impact through procurement of local goods and services. > Engage regularly with local businesses about construction periods and potential increases in trade. > Encourage project workforce to support local businesses through local spending initiatives (e.g., vouchers). > Support local education pathways and collaboration with UNE and local institutions. > Subject to the award of LTESA to Gara BESS, develop and implement an Industry Participation Plan addressing: • Opportunities for supply of goods and services, employment, training (including Aboriginal participation), and sustainable procurement. • Funded internships and scholarships for Aboriginal and female candidates. • ACEnergy will implement formal targets for local employment, Aboriginal participation, and procurement if a LTESA is secured, Associated benefits would be enhanced by monitoring and reporting on these commitments on a quarterly basis. Collaborate Pursue the following collaborative initiatives with local employment, apprenticeship, and training providers to enhance local hiring potential: > Subject to the award of LTESA to Gara BESS, formal training partnerships with University of New England > Support the Smart Region Incubator for student placements > Establish a site visit program for local students to foster renewable energy awareness. Collaborate with stakeholders and the community > Identify community funding opportunities. > Engage in community initiatives, potentially in partnership with nearby renewable energy SSD proponents. > Co-design programs with Armidale LALC and Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place. > Provide cultural awareness and safety training for all staff and contractors.

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> Set formal Aboriginal participation targets if a Long-Term Energy Service Agreement with EnergyCo is secured. Traffic - implement the recommendations from the TIA (TTPP, 2025), included in this table. Noise - implement the recommendations from the NIA (AE, 2025), included in this table. Community engagement > Develop a consultation plan to promote feedback mechanisms in relation to amenity impacts, including: • enquiries and complaints handling process • regular updates to residents throughout construction to ensure transparency • notifications when undertaking work that produces impulsive, intermittent, or low-frequency noise. Community > Maintain regular communication with local residents to ensure transparency. For works involving impulsive, intermittent, or low-frequency noise, conduct regular consultations with sensitive receptors. It recommended that ACEnergy implement the following measures: > Continue Consistent with Council's preferences, securing a workforce accommodation supply arrangement with the University of New England (UNE) as a priority and continuing discussions with other accommodation providers, ensuring proactive planning to secure accommodation if required. > Avoid tourist and private rental accommodation. > Implement worker code of conduct, welfare policy, organized transport, and on-site catering/recreation. > Maintain regular liaison with Council and participate in regional working groups to develop shared accommodation or service solutions. > Cumulative - Maintain ongoing dialogue with the other proposals identified in Section 6.14 of the EIS and accommodation suppliers to address potential cumulative impacts and ensure coordination and if possible, sequencing of workforce. > Procurement – seek out opportunities to engage local people and local businesses through the construction phase. Cumulative construction As would be the case for most major projects, it is recommended that ACEnergy implement on-site medical and first-aid facilities, supported by trained health and safety personnel, to manage minor injuries and reduce unnecessary hospital presentations. In addition, to further offset potential negative cumulative project impacts, the project should also

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> Where possible establish formal agreements with non-local telehealth providers to deliver routine and non-urgent care for construction workers > Where possible, coordinate workforce scheduling to stagger peak construction periods across regional projects, minimising cumulative strain on Armidale Hospital's emergency and clinical services. > Develop a comprehensive emergency response plan in coordination with NSW Ambulance, Fire and Rescue NSW, and Armidale Regional Council. > Provide comprehensive worker insurance coverage, including workers' compensation and public liability insurance, in compliance with NSW WHS regulations. Cultural heritage - implement the recommendations from the ACHA (Premise, 2025), included in this table. Hazards - implement the recommendations from the PHA (Riskcon, 2025), included in this table. Fire - implement the recommendations from the Bushfire Risk Assessment (Peak Land Management, 2024), included in this table. Biodiversity - implement the recommendations from the BDAR (Habitat, 2025), included in this table. Visual - implement the recommendations from the VIA (Iris, 2025), included in this table. > Cumulative - Maintain ongoing dialogue with the other projects identified in Section 6.14 of the EIS and accommodation suppliers to address potential cumulative impacts and ensure coordination and if possible, sequencing of workforce. > Procurement – seek out opportunities to engage local people and local businesses through the construction phase. > Implement on-site first-aid capability, including trained personnel and emergency response protocols, to manage minor injuries and reduce unnecessary hospital visits; and > Maintain ongoing consultation with local health providers to monitor workforce-related demand and adjust mitigation measures if required.
Economic	Construction	> Liaison with local tourism industry representatives to manage potential timing conflicts with local events. ACEnergy will deliver the following commitments if Gara BESS has secured a LTESA: > Prepare IPP incorporating ongoing liaison with local industry representatives to ensure the maximisation of the use of local contractors, manufacturing facilities, materials. > Liaison with local representatives regarding accommodation options for staff, to minimise adverse impacts on local services. > Liaison with local tourism industry representatives to manage potential timing conflicts with local events.

Impact	Phase	Mitigation measure
		> ACEnergy or the developer will consult with local employment agencies and training organisations and, where practicable, will consider supporting training and apprenticeships. > Establish funded positions across civil, electrical, and project administration disciplines through local Group Training Organisations.
Cumulative	Construction	> Maintain ongoing dialogue with surrounding renewable developers and accommodation suppliers to address potential cumulative impacts and ensure coordination and if possible sequencing of workforce.
Waste	Throughout	> A Waste Management Plan for all phases of the project would be prepared and implemented prior to the commencement of any works on the site. A Construction and Operational Waste Management Plan (WMP) will be prepared in accordance with the <i>EPA Waste Classification Guidelines</i> (2014) and the <i>DCCEEW Environmental Guidelines – Management of Construction and Demolition Waste</i> (2011). The WMP will be prepared and submitted to Council satisfaction prior to the commencement of construction. The WMP will: > Exclude the Armidale Regional Landfill as a disposal location, except for certified Virgin Excavated Natural Material (VENM), paper, cardboard, and comingled recyclables; > Nominate licensed regional facilities with capacity to receive renewable energy project waste; and > Establish contractor obligations for waste segregation, recycling, and reporting.
Engagement	Throughout	> Ongoing community engagement and complaints management processes. > Actively monitor the MinView portal to identify and respond to any future changes in mining titles relevant to the project area. > Consult with TSR managers and Registered Aboriginal Parties where required. > The Applicant commits to finalising the easement process in consultation with Crown Lands, with the interim licence maintained for the duration of the project as required. > Ongoing communication with the TfNSW intersection upgrade project team regarding New England Highway and Scott Road at South Tamworth scheduled for design in My 2026, particularly prior to transport permit applications.

APPENDIX D

CONSULTATION

APPENDIX E

DRAFT REVISED ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT



APPENDIX F

UPDATED BIODIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT REPORT

APPENDIX G

UPDATED SURFACE WATER ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX H

UPDATED TRAFFIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX I

UPDATED VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX J

UPDATED NOISE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

