

Willavale Park BESS Project Team

Exhibition Response

17 December 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: Willavale Park Battery Energy Storage System Submission (SUB-102346208)**

I write on behalf of Parkesbourne and Merrilla Uniting Church congregation.

I am the Treasurer and an Elder at the church. I represent the Executive Committee, with their full support.

**About Parkesbourne and Merrilla Uniting Church**

The church comprises two places of worship, one located at Parkesbourne, on Church Hall Rd (6km from the BESS) and the other at Merrilla, on Gurrundah Rd (9km from the BESS). In addition, there is a church hall opposite the Parkesbourne church building.

We write to Object to the Project, for two reasons:

1. Poor community engagement leading to insufficient social licence
2. Inadequate commitment to fire preparedness and response

**Poor Community Engagement**

Overall, the engagement by the Willavale consulting team to assess genuine community feedback is poor. We note from Appendix R Social Impact Assessment (SIA), there are less than 180 neighbours within 10 km of the BESS site. Communication was virtually non-existent, with limited flyers distributed and, as best we can tell, only one forum offered for Q+A.

It's hard to understand why communication is so inadequate given the small number of households in the affected area.

No correspondence was received by the Church.

Casual checking with neighbours in the immediate vicinity of the site revealed detailed engagement by the Project team was poor, with only a 50% hit rate to get direct feedback.

We understand the interviews were brusque and dismissive.

We have little confidence the engagement was genuine, to seek community feedback: rather, it consisted of well-presented brochures misdirecting any reader to understand the project was already approved.

This doesn't mean the project won't be supported; however, it is incorrect to conclude the community backs it.

### **Inadequate commitment to fire preparedness and response**

The SIA noted high concern by the community with Fire Safety associated with the BESS.

The responses provided in Appendix O Preliminary Hazard Analysis and Appendix P Bushfire Risk Assessment are wholly inadequate. In neither case are details of the likely plans for battery fire or bush fire provided. Indeed, both provide a notional commitment to preparing the same as the Project design progresses.

No wonder this remains a top concern for our congregation and broader landholders.

Many in the community are members of the RFS (Parkesbourne Brigade), who will be called on to deal with fires that may originate from the BESS, to potentially manage LIB fires that require specialist training and equipment. The only note by the Project to this end is a vague commitment to provide a plan, when it suits the project.

Similarly, many in the community are located within 10km to the north of the BESS. It is not unreasonable to expect southerly weather conditions during the year. In the event of a LIB fire, the gases emitted will be driven over the same community.

### **Conclusion**

Given the shortcomings in community engagement and a totally inadequate commitment to provide details supporting fire management, Parkesbourne and Merrilla Uniting Church object to the Willavale Park Battery Energy Storage System.

Kind Regards,

*Electronically Signed*

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Treasurer

Parkesbourne and Merrilla Uniting Church

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