

17 December 2025

Ms Kirsten Fishburn

Secretary, NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

**Via NSW Planning Portal**

Attention: Sarah Barclay, Environmental Assessment Officer. NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

**Re: SSD-6698-Mod-2 - Modification 2 Decentralised BESS - Yass Valley (Coppabella) Wind Farm**

Dear Ms Fishburn,

Yass Valley Council (YVC) would like to thank the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for the opportunity to make a submission on proposed Modification 2 to the approved Yass Valley (Coppabella) Wind Farm. Council wishes to formally object to the proposed development on several grounds, as detailed below.

### **1) Suitability of the works as a Modification Application**

As the Department is aware, this project was originally approved as electricity generating works. The proposed modification is for the addition of electricity storage works. This is clearly a departure from the existing approval; an assessment of a modification must compare the originally approved development with the proposed modification in its proper context with regard to the circumstances in which the original consent was granted. The original approval was for solely a Wind Farm and associated infrastructure only.

The addition of the 53 individual BESS units with an estimated value of \$200 million cannot be considered to be substantially the same development. It changes the development from being for just the production of energy to the additional usage of the storage of energy. This places a whole different range of environmental considerations on the development, which have not been assessed as part of the original development, therefore falling outside the scope of what can reasonably be considered substantially the same development.

It is the position of YVC that it is not appropriate to simply state that the development is “substantially the same” due to being located within a similar approved footprint.

This Modification proposes substantial departures from the scope of the original approval, with the additions of 53 BESS totalling an additional 26,500m<sup>2</sup> (2.65 hectares) of development (as described in Table A-2, Page 66), which was not considered as a part of the Original Consent nor Modification 1.

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This is in stark contrast to Modification 1, which amended the number and scale of the wind turbines, which were assessed and approved under the Original Consent. The Modification 1 (December 2018) approved a wind farm of up to 75 wind turbines with associated access tracks, 33kV internal electrical reticulation system, grid connection at 132 kV, permanent meteorological masts and temporary construction infrastructure. The Modification relates to a wind farm development, as energy generation, which is substantially the same as the original approval.

Modification 1 does not mention or include uses for energy storage in the form of BESS.

Modification 2 is addressed in the *Executive Summary* (Page 4 and 5) as:

*For the reasons given in this assessment report, it is considered that the Project remains essentially the same from the perspective of its purpose in supplying renewable energy from the local wind resource but is improved through:*

- *More efficient wind farm design to optimise generation from the site*
- *Its improved ability to align with NEM requirements*
- *No significant increase in environmental impacts arising due to co-location of wind turbine and BESS equipment.*

Additionally, in 7.0 *Justification for Modified Project* (Page 57):

*The proposed modification is consistent with the justification of the approved (Mod 1) project. The Mod 2 project will “deliver an efficient, constructible and commercially viable project” with the inclusion of BESS into the Project, while having essentially the same impacts as for the Mod 1 Project.*

*The BESS would be placed on previously cleared disturbance footprint at selected turbine sites and will be within the approved development footprint. The BESS would not require any additional infrastructure and will be connected to the wind turbines via short lengths of underground cabling. The impacts of this modification with the adoption of additional mitigation measures (**APPENDIX C: Updated Mitigation Measures**), are considered to have no more than minimal environmental impact.*

*The Mod 2 project will “deliver an efficient, constructible and commercially viable project” with the inclusion of BESS into the Project, while having essentially the same impacts as for the Mod 1 Project. (Page 57).*

The modification assessment prepared is inadequate in this regard. It merely states that the project is substantially the same. This is reiterated four times in the Application. However, this is never justified. The impacts of the inclusion of 53 BESS are not “substantially the same” as the original project, or Modification 1. This is further demonstrated in items 2-6 below.

A review has been undertaken of other NSW Major Projects. There are currently 16 total modifications for projects that are associated with a BESS. Not a single one of these modifications propose adding a BESS without it being considered a part of the original consent.

As detailed above, the Modification proposes a substantially new and additional development type, which has not been considered at all within the original approval documents. Therefore it cannot be considered as 'substantially the same' as either the original approval or Modification 1.

## 2) Location of the works

The Coppabella project is across both the YVC LGA and the Hilltops LGA. The project information page only lists Hilltops LGA as being the location of the project, removing YVC from the list of impacted LGAs.

In addition, there is no information within the Modification Application regarding where the BESS systems are to be located across the project area. This means that each individual council impacted by this development is essentially flying blind when trying to ascertain impacts on our residents. If the applicant is unable to pin-point which turbine is suitable for significant energy storage infrastructure, then it is clear that the application has been made prematurely. Impacts on the community cannot be assessed and considered when the applicant is unable, or unwilling, to specify where the development is actually going to be located.

How can the Department, as an assessing authority, properly consider the impacts of significant energy storage works, outside of an approval for energy generating works, when they haven't been told where the works are to occur? How can a local government consider Community Benefit Schemes when it isn't clear if development is located within their LGA. The modification application is deficient and does not provide the information needed to undertake a considered assessment.

The lack of detail regarding the location of works means that cumulative impacts cannot be properly considered. The applicant states in the Modification report that no cumulative impacts were identified as a part of **Table 6-2: Aspects considered and level of assessment in Modification Report** Page 38 simply stating that:

*Cumulative impacts were assessed as acceptable for the approved project. and no changes are proposed for construction and operation duration or methodology area proposed.*

*Environmental Risk Rating: Nil*

*Additional Assessment required: Nil*

This is insufficient, as the installation of significant energy storage works, the transport, and the additional risk and hazard created from bushfires interacting with the batteries needs to be properly considered and addressed, rather than just dismissed.

### 3) Additional bushfire risk

The bush fire assessment report prepared notes:

*"The specific location of each BESS has not been determined at this stage." (Bush Fire Assessment Report- Waratah Bushfire - Page 219 of Assessment Report)*

It is incredibly difficult to fully understand how a development can be considered as "substantially the same" when it involves the erection of up to 53 BESS, with no location plan, and no determined location, especially given the substantial additional risk posed by the BESS to fire intensity.

How can the impacts on bushfire risk be properly considered when such basic information is not included in the application? Without determined locations, the application is deficient in identifying, assessing and considering mitigating treatments for each individual BESS.

It is noted that the Emergency Response Plan, a critical part of mitigating risk to the community, is noted as pending.

The lack of consideration of the immense additional bushfire risk posed by this scale of batteries has simply not been adequately considered and needs to be properly addressed.

### 4) Consistency of information

The Modification report prepared does not adequately address the proposed modification in a clear and consistent way. There is a lack of consistency across the reports prepared, up to and including the total storage, total number, location and scale of the development. For example, the total number of BESS varies between 53 and 69 and is also expressed as a percentage (71%). This lack of consistency, coupled with the lack of any realistic information regarding the location of the BESS, raises significant concern as to the ability for any meaningful assessment to be undertaken regarding the impacts of the proposed Modification.

### 5) Contributions

No modifications have been proposed to the contributions in the condition of consent. There is no discussion of further development contributions in the Modification Report, or proposed amendment of the VPA to appropriately deal with the increase in project works, costs and additional development of the 53 BESS and associated infrastructure.

The BESS modification adds \$200M to project cost, yet there is no proposed adjustment to development contributions or Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA), which may be considered to be inequitable given the scale of change.

The lack of clarity around the location of the BESS, given the cross-LGA nature of this project, also means that both Hilltop and YVC are unable to properly consider an appropriate response to this.

## 6) Traffic Impacts

It is noted that the application does acknowledge that there will be additional traffic movements associated with the transportation of the BESS, stating:

*The traffic assessment provided an updated construction traffic volumes to include up to an additional 318 traffic movements to account for the transportation of each BESS unit for each of the 53 turbines.*

This indicated that the total additional traffic movements associated with the BESS is  $318 \times 53$ . This is a total of an additional 16,854 traffic movements. This further reiterates that the full impacts from the scale of the proposed changes moves it away from being 'substantially the same' as the approved development.

No real clarity has been provided regarding the size and width of the trucks that will be transporting this equipment.

If you have any questions, require further information or seek further clarity on this submission, please contact the undersigned

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Neil

**Director, Planning and Environment.**