

Date: 8th April 2026

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Australian Citizen: Yes

Position: Against the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro

Submission Against the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project By Steven Cronin

I am Steven Cronin, a resident of Lithgow, and I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro project. This project, in my view, is detrimental to the local environment, community, and economy.

Impact on Recreation and Tourism

As a local who frequents Lake Lyell for fishing, water skiing, and camping, I can confidently say that this project will destroy the very activities that make the lake a cherished destination for locals and visitors alike. Currently, 4 generations of my family and other families like mine, can camp by the lake, tie boats directly at the water's edge, and enjoy water sports throughout the day.

If the project goes ahead, the fluctuating water levels caused by the pumping system will create a 30–40-meter mudflat along the shoreline during low water levels. This will make it impossible to tie up boats or access them safely, turning what was once a vibrant recreational spot into a muddy, unsafe, and unappealing site. Children and the elderly will not be able to access boats in a safe manner, putting their wellbeing at risk.

The proposed mitigation measures, such as trucking in sand, are impractical and ineffective. Sand will inevitably wash away or sink into the mud, leaving the shoreline in an even worse condition.

Lake Lyell is a critical driver of tourism for Lithgow, drawing thousands of visitors annually. These tourists support local businesses, including accommodation providers, restaurants, and shops. The disruption to recreational activities will lead to a significant decline in tourism, affecting the livelihood of many local families who rely on this income.

Environmental Concerns

The environmental impact of this project is deeply concerning. Lake Lyell is home to a diverse range of wildlife, including platypuses, turtles, and other aquatic species. The disruption of water levels and increased human activity associated with the project could devastate these habitats.

Additionally, the construction and maintenance of the reservoir atop Mount Walker will result in the destruction of natural landscapes and ecosystems. The reservoir itself, projected to be larger than the Sydney Harbour Bridge in both height and length, will permanently scar the environment. Even after the project's 80-year lifespan, the reservoir structure will remain, an irreversible blight on the natural beauty of the area.

Economic Considerations

Proponents of the project argue that it will create jobs, but these claims fail to account for the broader economic consequences. While some construction jobs may be created, they will be temporary and likely filled by specialists from outside the region. Once operational, the facility will require minimal staff, contributing little to long-term local employment.

On the other hand, the project threatens the viability of businesses that depend on Lake Lyell's appeal. The Lake Lyell Recreation Park alone provides more jobs than the project will create. Businesses like Seclusions, Eagleview, hotels, motels, and retail stores will also suffer as visitor numbers decline.

Broader Implications

Beyond the immediate impacts on recreation, tourism, and the environment, the project raises broader questions about its long-term viability and value. An 80-year lifespan is short in the context of infrastructure, and there are no credible plans for decommissioning the facility. The concrete reservoir and associated structures will remain as permanent eyesores, with no way to restore the land to its original state.

The power generated by the facility does not justify the extensive damage it will cause. Renewable energy projects should complement, not compromise, local communities and ecosystems. This proposal fails to achieve that balance.

Personal Impact

For my family and countless others, Lake Lyell is more than just a recreational site—it is a place where memories are made. My children and grandchildren come here to camp, fish, and ski. The safety issues caused by fluctuating water levels, combined with the loss of access and appeal, will make it nearly impossible for us to continue these traditions.

Conclusion

The Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro project is not worth the extensive damage it will cause to the local community, environment, and economy. The minimal benefits it offers in terms of power generation and employment cannot outweigh the long-term harm. I urge decision-makers to reject this proposal and explore alternative renewable energy projects that do not come at such a high cost to the region.

Sincerely,
Steven Cronin