

Submission Against the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project

18th April 2026

To:

The Honourable Paul Scully
The Planning Secretary

The Honourable Penny Sharp

Introduction

I am writing as a member of the Lithgow community with a deep personal commitment to the protection of the Seven Valleys region, its people, and its natural environment.

There are many areas within this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that warrant serious concern. While others may address technical or economic matters, my focus is on what I see as fundamental and irreversible impacts on the landscape and community that I care deeply about.

In particular, I wish to raise two key issues:

1. The destruction of the western side of Mt Walker
2. The proposed Lakeside Workers Camp

1. Mt Walker – Misrepresentation of “Temporary” Impact

Reference: EIS Table 9.4, Page 172

The EIS repeatedly refers to the *temporary removal* of vegetation. This terminology is deeply misleading.

It is not credible to suggest that trees aged 20, 50, 100, or even 500 years can be “temporarily removed” and then replaced in any meaningful timeframe. What is being proposed is not temporary, it is permanent ecological destruction on a human timescale.

The works described blasting, clearing, and bulldozing and will fundamentally alter the landscape. There is nothing temporary about removing an established ecosystem.

The EIS itself outlines the scale of impact:

- Approximately **130 hectares cleared** on a site of nearly 200 hectares
- **11 hollow-bearing trees**
- **568 trees with hollows ≥ 7 cm**
- **294 trees with hollows ≥ 20 cm**

These are not just trees they are habitat. Hollow-bearing trees take decades, often centuries, to form. Their loss cannot simply be reversed through planting.

If “temporary” is intended to mean hundreds of years, then perhaps the term is technically accurate but it is clearly misleading in any practical or community sense.

There is also a critical unanswered question:

At the end of the project's life, how will the infrastructure be removed?

If tunnels are to be filled and structures dismantled, will this again require the clearing of the very trees that are proposed to be planted as part of mitigation?

Will this become yet another cycle of so-called "temporary removal"?

This raises serious concerns about the integrity of the mitigation claims and the long-term accountability of the proponent.

2. Lakeside Workers Camp – Visual and Permanent Impact

Reference: EIS Figure 3.11, Page 55

The proposed Lakeside workers' accommodation, accessed via Magpie Hollow Road, represents a highly visible and inappropriate development in a sensitive and valued landscape.

This location is not isolated; it is the most photographed and visited vantage points overlooking Lake Lyell.

The visual impact will be significant and unavoidable. The proposed structures, commonly referred to as "dongers", appear in the EIS as densely stacked, multi-level accommodation blocks. Regardless of screening measures, these will be visible over long distances and will permanently alter the visual character of the area.

The suggestion that these structures may be *repurposed* after construction raises further concern. Proposed future uses such as:

- Low-cost housing
- Holiday accommodation

indicate that this is not a temporary installation, but rather the introduction of a permanent built environment in a currently natural lakeside setting.

3. Impact on Lake Lyell and Recreation

The ongoing extraction of approximately **16% of Lake Lyell's water** will fundamentally change the nature of the lake.

With daily fluctuations, particularly low water levels during peak afternoon periods, the lake will no longer provide the stable and attractive recreational environment it currently offers.

Claims that the lake will remain fully open for recreation are not credible.

For comparison, Talbingo Dam associated with Snowy 2.0 is closed to public water access despite far smaller water level changes.

The assertion that Lake Lyell will remain unaffected is therefore unrealistic and misleading.

4. A Better Alternative Exists

There is a clear and practical alternative that avoids these impacts entirely.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) can be installed on already industrially zoned land at Mt Piper. These systems:

- Can be delivered at significantly lower cost
- Avoid large-scale environmental destruction
- Are modular and lower risk
- Can employ local workers without the need for a large external workforce
- Can match or exceed the storage capacity of the proposed project

This approach would allow Lithgow to remain an energy hub while protecting its natural assets and community character.

5. Community Impact and the Future of Lithgow

Lithgow has carried the burden of heavy industry for generations through coal mining and power generation.

Today, the town is beginning to transition - driven not by large industrial projects, but by its natural environment and growing tourism sector.

Lake Lyell is central to this transformation. Over the past two decades, it has become a major recreational and tourism asset - the “jewel” of the region.

This project risks undoing that progress.

Rather than supporting long-term, sustainable development, it introduces:

- Significant environmental degradation
- Limited long-term employment (post-construction)
- A decline in tourism appeal
- A reliance on short-term construction benefits

Lithgow does not need another project that extracts value and leaves lasting damage.

It needs investment that builds on its strengths.

Conclusion

This proposal, in its current form, represents a disproportionate and unjustified impact on the environment, the community, and the future of Lithgow.

The use of misleading terminology such as “temporary” undermines confidence in the EIS. The scale of environmental destruction, combined with highly visible and potentially permanent infrastructure, cannot be justified—particularly when viable, lower-impact alternatives exist.

Lithgow deserves better - It is time to support projects that enhance the region, not diminish it.