

Kurnell Deserves Better Than a Box-Ticking Exercise

Our community deserves clear and honest answers before a decision of this magnitude and potential impact is made.

Oh, no — that’s right. Apparently, the decision has already been made.

Certain locals who are supposedly “in the know” have stated that Ausgrid has no intention, and no legal obligation, to genuinely consult with the community; that the decision is theirs alone and that the consultation process is little more than an exercise in box-ticking.

As a long-term Kurnell resident, I can certainly understand why people would believe this. It is, unfortunately, consistent with the way the Kurnell community has too often felt treated.

The proposed location should raise very serious questions.

Kurnell has **one road in and one road out**. It is surrounded by **sensitive wetlands and waterways**. There are residents living within approximately **150 metres of the proposed BESS site**, and a **fuel storage facility within approximately 200 metres**.

Surely these factors alone warrant very careful consideration of whether this is an appropriate location for a large Battery Energy Storage System.

If this were a proposal that benefited Kurnell residents, or something the community genuinely wanted, one can only imagine how readily these very same factors might be raised as reasons why the proposal should not proceed.

It is almost like a bad joke:

Question: Where would be the best place to locate an Ausgrid BESS facility?

Answer: How about 150 metres from people’s homes, in a community with a single access road, close to sensitive wetlands and waterways and approximately 200 metres from a fuel storage facility?

Yes — exactly. Kurnell.

But this isn’t a joke to the people who live here.

The ongoing stress placed on the Kurnell community is enormous. People have become exhausted. Many have simply lost the will to continue complaining or responding because they feel there is little point — that damaging or potentially dangerous projects will ultimately be approved regardless of what the community says.

The desalination plant is a prime example of the long history of major projects being imposed upon Kurnell.

The community is not asking for special treatment. We are asking for proper planning, transparency, evidence and a genuine opportunity to have our concerns heard.

As *Save Kurnell* has stated:

“In Kurnell our community has lodged hundreds of submissions, signed petitions, attended meetings and advocated for a planning outcome that protect our historic coastal village. We aren’t asking for special treatment. We’re asking for planning this is transparent, evidence based and genuinely community led.”

And perhaps most importantly:

“Consultation should never be treated as a procedural hurdle to clear. It should be the foundation of good planning.”

That is precisely the point.

If communities repeatedly lose confidence in the planning process, perhaps councils and proponents need to stop asking “**Did we consult?**” and start asking “**Did we genuinely listen?**”

Because communities don’t lose trust overnight. They lose it when they feel decisions have already been made before consultation has even begun.

It is interesting to note the situation involving Waverley Council, where a senior barrister has reportedly alleged that residents were denied natural justice during the Bondi Junction Masterplan process and called for consultation to be reopened.

Kurnell residents should not have to fight to have the same basic principles of transparency, fairness and genuine consultation applied to them.

This should not simply be about what is most convenient or profitable for a large corporation.

The community should be asking a very simple question:

Is this genuinely the most appropriate location for this facility — or is it simply the most convenient location for Ausgrid?

Rather than allowing the almighty dollar, convenience or corporate priorities to drive the decision at the expense of the people who live here, it would be a welcome and remarkable change of attitude to see the proposal reconsidered and the BESS located somewhere more suitable.

Kurnell deserves better than a box-ticking exercise.

It deserves to be heard — and, more importantly, it deserves to be genuinely listened to.