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To the Proponent and the Department

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed development in our area, particularly focusing on the issues highlighted in the recent assessment documents. As a resident deeply affected by these developments, I wish to outline several critical points that need urgent attention and comprehensive solutions.

Traffic Concerns:

1. **Width of Local Roads:** The width of the local roads is questionable. If vehicles need to cross the centreline (regardless of whether one exists), there needs to be a plan for controlling this, along with addressing the potential delays to traffic. This impacts our way of life, safety, and access.
2. **Load of Trucks and OSOM Vehicles:** The load of the trucks and OSOM (Oversize Overmass) vehicles on these local roads is concerning. These roads should be upgraded in terms of pavement type and width to avoid damage and potholing at the edges, especially given their narrowness. This issue is compounded by the presence of opposing traffic, such as cattle trucks, livestock, and horse floats, affecting our way of life, safety, and access.
3. **Dirt and Gravel Roads:** Dirt and gravel roads pose significant issues, including dust affecting health and visibility/safety and potholes, impacting health and safety.
4. **Assessment of Movements:** The assessment must consider all potential movements for construction traffic and OSOM movements (e.g., wind turbines) heading to the NE REZ, particularly the turn movements from the NEH, affecting cumulative impacts, way of life, and surroundings.
5. **Dust Suppression and Water Scarcity:** Section 4 of the traffic assessment highlights a critical concern: given the scarcity of water in the area, relying on local water for dust suppression on roads is unwise. Sealing the roads would be much more beneficial to both the environment and the community, impacting health and safety, resilience to rural communities, and water supply.

Social Concerns:

6. **Community Engagement and Representation:** The level of community engagement in summarising views and values is insufficient. In an SIA, it's crucial to ensure diverse and extensive consultation with affected communities to capture a comprehensive range of local perspectives. There is no evidence of broader community engagement using an 'opt-in' approach. For example, we live along Whitehouse Lane and have not been consulted at all, despite being identified as a property within 1-2km, affecting decision-making systems, engagement, and transparency.
7. **Focus on Quantitative Data:** The SIA focuses on quantitative data. While establishing a socio-economic baseline using open-source data via a desktop study is beneficial, it neglects the qualitative data that captures the lived experiences of the local population. There should be a balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches. The SIA hasn't used a proportionate mixed-methodology approach, impacting research, engagement, and inclusivity.

8. Detailed Mitigation Strategies: The provided context mentions "describing possible mitigation measures" but does not specify the detail or practicality of these measures. Effective mitigation strategies should be actionable, well-documented, and capable of addressing identified impacts thoroughly. There is no mention of a plan for ongoing monitoring and adaptive management of social impacts throughout the project's lifecycle. Continuous evaluation and ability to adapt strategies based on new data or emerging issues are essential for an effective social impact assessment. Without visibility of the proposed mitigation measures and how they will be tracked, reported on, and adapted, it is challenging to trust and have faith in this development, impacting engagement, transparency, and trust.
9. Cumulative Impacts: While cumulative impacts are identified as a priority issue, the context does not elaborate on how these are assessed in the social domain. Assessing cumulative social impacts in conjunction with other regional developments is important to understand broader, long-term effects on the community. With everything happening in the New England with the REZ and other proposed developments of quarries etc., the cumulative impacts seem to have been all but forgotten from a social sense, impacting the broader population and presenting an incomplete assessment.
10. Inadequate Social Risk Assessment: The risk assessment should not only consider the severity of the risk but also clearly consider who is expected to be affected and what is the consequence. For example, Table 6.40 completely disregards 'people' – the whole focus of social impact assessment. It fails to consistently address who will experience the impact and what will be the consequence on them. This is a critical oversight impacting inadequate risk assessment, people being at the centre of SIA, and the identification of vulnerable groups along the transport route.

Hazard Assessment Concerns:

11. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Fire Risk: There have been several incidents in Australia where Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) have caught fire. Some notable examples include the Victorian Big Battery Fire (2021) and the Bouldercombe Battery Fire (2023). These incidents highlight the potential risks associated with BESS and underscore the importance of robust safety measures and incident response plans to mitigate such risks. As a resident living near the Tamworth BESS project and having family in and around the area, I seek answers to these important questions: - What measures are in place to monitor the potential for thermal runaway events in the LFP cells? - Despite the UL9540A certification indicating no observed external flames during testing, what measures will be taken to mitigate the risk of internal fires in the BESS units? - How will the proponent ensure that the installation of the BESS units follows the UL9540A testing conditions and NFPA 855 standards to maintain safety? - What emergency response measures are in place to handle potential incidents at the BESS, and how will the local community be made aware of these measures? - What regular maintenance and monitoring procedures will be implemented to prevent the occurrence of failures or malfunctions in the BESS units? - What contingency plans are in place if local firefighters refuse to address fires at the BESS, and how will the proponent ensure the safety of the surrounding community in such a scenario? - Where is your engagement with the community about all of these risks?

Visual Concerns:

12. Visual Impact: Firstly, the visual impact assessment notes that the nearby residences could experience moderate to low visual impacts before any mitigation. Given the proximity of the property we own at 253 Whitehouse lane to the project, I am concerned that the proposed mitigation measures, such as strategic landscaping and vegetation screening, may not

sufficiently reduce the visual impacts to a satisfactory level. The current rural landscape, characterised by agricultural use and minimal industrial intrusion, is a major aspect of our community's character and quality of life. Introducing a large industrial structure like the BESS without adequate consultation or consideration of resident views is unacceptable. Moreover, while the project claims to align with local planning guidelines and aims to preserve the current landscape character, this does not address the potential day-to-day visual disturbance for residents like myself. The assessment only identifies 8 residences within 1 km as potentially impacted, minimising the broader concern of those slightly further afield who still face a significant change in their visual environment. It is disheartening that those of us with properties within 1-2 km of the site, who will undoubtedly notice and be affected by this change, were not even given the opportunity to voice our concerns or provide input. I request that the project proponents re-evaluate the visual impacts with proper consultation from all nearby residents, not just those within the immediate 1 km radius. Ensuring the implementation of more effective mitigation strategies and truly preserving the rural landscape character is crucial to maintaining the community's trust and quality of life.

In conclusion, I urge you to address these concerns comprehensively to ensure that the development proceeds in a manner that respects the local community's way of life, safety, health, and environment. Proper community engagement, detailed and practical mitigation strategies, and a balanced assessment approach are vital to achieving this.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. I look forward to your response and to seeing these issues addressed promptly.

Sincerely,

Diane Hazell