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Submission to Beryl BESS SSD-61460977

We object to this planned industrial BESS.

Adjacent to the Gulgong township a mere 6km away, this industrial complex will be clearly visible to residents.

Gulgong is a quiet rural town with a rich history and has become a popular tourist destination. Tourism will be negatively affected by yet another industrial project - why would visitors come to visit a historical rural town and landscape when all they will see is multiple arrays of solar panels, behemoth sized wind turbines, a spiderweb of transmission lines and industrial BESS complexes?

Residents did not agree to having their homes placed within a modern day power station. Yet for 28 residences that are within 2km of the site, that is exactly what they will be living in.

The area is already overwhelmed by wind/solar and threats of transmission projects, and yet another industrial project like this BESS - regardless of the government's desire to overwhelm the Central West Orana as a renewable energy zone - will have dire cumulative impacts on the residents of the district. With multiple renewable energy projects (over 50 at last count in the CWO REZ), the character and landscape are in no way going to resemble a peaceful rural atmosphere. This quantity of industrial projects is NOT limiting cumulative impacts to residents and the area!

And what will this massive BESS provide – merely “*a capacity of up to 100 megawatts (MW) with two hours of storage (100 MW/200 megawatt hours (MWh))*”! As a BESS is continuously operated, its annual output will decline as the battery efficiency lowers, so this “two hours” will steadily decline to negligible. This is not worth it.

The BESS will be using lithium technology. Batteries use lead, lithium and cobalt, all of which are hazardous materials. This is of much concern to residents and the community as ordinary fire suppression measures cannot extinguish a Lithium chemical reaction fire. A fire that occurred in the 350MW/450MWh BESS during testing on 30 July 2021 in Geelong, Victoria shows how dangerous it can be for nearby residents. When one of the 13 tonne battery packs caught fire, it burned for three days and resulted in the evacuation of residents because of the toxic fumes generated.

A fire in a BESS would threaten immediate residents and those residing in the nearby township of Gulgong.

What about end of life for the BESS? According to the CSIRO in 2021, only 10% of Australia's 3,300 tonnes of lithium-ion battery waste was recycled. Lithium battery waste is growing at 20% a year. Most of Australia's battery waste is shipped overseas, with the remaining waste going to landfill, leading to potential fires and environmental contamination. This is NOT ‘green’!

Decommissioning is simplified with “*Decommissioning would remove above-ground infrastructure*

and return the Project area to its original state, in consultation with the Associated Landowner.” This is hardly a detailed decommissioning and rehabilitation plan. Whilst RAC own the project at the moment, it is likely to be on sold and whoever owns the project at the time will become responsible. But who will hold them to that responsibility?

We urge DPE to listen to those most heavily impacted by this project and to consider the cumulative impact on the district by multiple developments. This project, by a foreign owned profit-making entity (VENA Energy is based in Thailand) should be rejected.

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