

Objection to the Proposed Gara Battery Energy Storage System (SSD-71680710)

Submitted by: Resident of R1

As the closest resident to the proposed Gara BESS (526 metres from the Switching Station), I wish to formally object to this development. My family and I have lived here for decades, engaging in agricultural activities and valuing the peace, quiet, rural lifestyle, and biodiversity that this area provides. The proposed BESS would irreversibly change that way of life and bring unacceptable risks to our home and community.

Noise and Amenity

Construction is forecast to last 14 months, with works scheduled 7:00 am–6:00 pm on weekdays and 8:00 am–1:00 pm on Saturdays. As the closest resident, I consider this level of disturbance extremely intrusive. The operation of the BESS will run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with continuous noise from transformers, inverters, and battery cooling fans. Prevailing winds from the west will carry and amplify both construction and operational noise toward R1 and R3. To minimise impacts, a full noise wall should be constructed around the entire site, not just a partial wall along the eastern side. Refer to ACEnnergys submission environmental impact statement figure 4. Which shows the very limited extent of the noise wall.

Visual Screening and Landscaping

The landscape concept plan indicates planting of native vegetation around the perimeter of the site and along the boundary with R1 and R3. If the project were to proceed, this planting must be undertaken immediately to provide screening from noise, dust, and the unsightly intrusion into the rural landscape of this proposed development. Without adequate noise and visual buffers residents will be directly exposed to the industrial scale of the facility.

Ace Energy initially committed to matching treelanes along the boundaries and constructing a full acoustic wall around the development. These commitments have since been abandoned. Instead, responsibility for visual screening and noise mitigation has been effectively transferred onto residents, with planting and ongoing management expected to occur on our land rather than on the proponent's. This represents not a breach of responsibility but also an unacceptable transfer of obligation from the developer to the affected community.

Furthermore, Ace Energy has misrepresented mitigation by claiming “indicative landscaping” where, in reality, the trees shown were planted by my family over 40 years ago. This misrepresentation undermines trust in the accuracy and honesty of the

proponent's submission. The buffer area indicated for additional landscaping on the common eastern boundary with R1 and R3 should be highlighted as definite mitigation planting for noise and visual screening.

Domestic Town Water Easement

A legally registered domestic water easement crosses beneath the project entrance and provides the only treated water supply for R1. The line is shallow, rural-grade poly pipe (20–30 cm below ground) and cannot withstand the strain of heavy traffic. The project anticipates up to 75 heavy vehicle movements per day. This poses a very real risk of rupture and loss of water supply at great expense to R1. The omission of this easement from Ace Energy's maps and reports is unacceptable and places potentially severe consequences for our health and amenity.

Bushfire and Hazard Risks

This is a bushfire-prone area. I am concerned about the potential for fires caused by welding and other construction activities, and about the risks of lithium-ion battery thermal runaway events. Such fires release toxic gases, and produce contaminated firewater runoff. The site drains directly into Burying Ground Creek, which flows into the Macleay River catchment and ultimately the Gondwana World Heritage Area. This creates an unacceptable risk for both residents and the wider environment.

Thermal Runaway and Fire Risks

In July 2021, the Victorian Big Battery in Geelong suffered a thermal runaway fire, destroying two Tesla Megapacks during commissioning. The fire was triggered by a coolant leak and electrical arcing, showing how quickly lithium-ion systems can escalate. Fire services in Victoria have since raised concerns about the ability of local brigades to manage such events, and AFAC has issued guidelines warning that BESS require specialised fire safety strategies. This proves that thermal runaway is a credible and documented risk in Australia, yet Ace Energy's proposal fails to demonstrate adequate modelling, containment, or emergency response planning.

Accuracy of Reports and Agricultural Land

The proponent's studies contain inaccuracies. For example, the Woodlands residence (R4) was recorded as having the highest acoustic decibel readings, yet it is the fourth furthest from the site, is unoccupied, and is currently being demolished. Meanwhile, closer residences such as R1 and R3 were not properly assessed. Similarly, the agricultural land classification has been downgraded in the proposal. In reality, the land has been productively grazed and cropped since 1958 and remains viable agricultural land. These inaccuracies undermine confidence in the entire submission.

Consultation Failures

Communication with Ace Energy has been minimal, and supposed surveys as stated in the proponent's submission were not conducted. Independent studies must be undertaken to address these shortcomings and provide honest, constructive outcomes to gauge accurate effects on all affected stakeholders to this development. The community deserves transparency and credible assessment, not selective or misleading information.

Conclusion

Ace Energy has attempted to shift the burden of mitigation back onto R1 and R3 by expecting us to undertake tree planting and long-term management on our own land. Screening and noise reduction should be delivered entirely on Ace Energy's land, not transferred to residents already bearing the brunt of the impacts. Furthermore, Ace Energy has given no consideration to any form of compensation that duly reflects the scale of disruption and the permanent loss of amenity this proposal will impose on affected households. The compensation offered to date is vastly inadequate, failing to account for the noise, dust, visual industrialisation, fire and safety risks, and the irreversible erosion of peace and rural lifestyle. Adequate compensation must recognise both property value and the profound, ongoing impacts on health, wellbeing, and community life.

I am totally opposed to the proposed Gara BESS being located so close to R1, R3, and other neighbouring dwellings. The project threatens peace, rural amenity, water security, fire safety, biodiversity, and agricultural land. Its reports contain inaccuracies, omit key issues such as the water easement, and fail to provide adequate mitigation. On this basis, I strongly urge the Department to refuse the Gara BESS application (SSD-71680710).