

Bellambi Heights BESS

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Summary

The Bellambi Heights Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is a utility-scale energy storage Project located near Beryl, NSW, approximately 6.5 km north-west of Gulgong. Once constructed the Project will have a capacity of 408 MW and will support the reliability and security of the electricity grid. The Project was assessed as State Significant Development and received development consent on 2 May 2024. A modification was granted in October 2025 to refine the substation and switching yard layout. The following summary outlines key environmental and social considerations for the Project.

Human Rights

Australia has comprehensive labour and human rights laws, supported by national and state legislation, standards, and codes of practice. Australia is also committed to the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and promotes their adoption across business and government.

Vena Energy's Code of Conduct commits to adhering to internationally recognised human rights, including those set out in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) core conventions, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Biodiversity

The Projects development footprint has been largely cleared for agricultural use. Potential direct and indirect impacts to flora and fauna were assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Prior to construction commencing the Project retired 2 Ecosystem Credits in accordance with the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, to offset the clearing of 1.12 ha of native vegetation required for the development. An approved Biodiversity Management Plan is in place for the Project that outlines mitigation and monitoring measures during construction and operation.

Climate Change

Battery energy storage supports the transition to a more reliable and sustainable electricity grid. The Project will store electricity when generation is high and dispatch it during periods of high demand, helping to improve grid stability and reliability. By providing up to 408 MW of energy storage, the Project helps make better use of renewable generation and supports ongoing decarbonisation of the electricity grid. Physical climate risks, including localised flooding and grassfire exposure were considered in the EIS and in the Project design.

Cultural Heritage

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) was undertaken as part of the EIS in consultation with local Aboriginal Parties. The assessment included on-site investigations to identify tangible and intangible cultural heritage values within the development footprint. No artefacts or significant sites were identified within the development footprint during site surveys. An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan (ACHMP) is in place for the Project. It includes protocols for chance finds, stop-work procedures, and ongoing consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties during construction.

Stakeholder Engagement

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed for the Bellambi Heights BESS to guide engagement throughout the project lifecycle. The plan identifies key stakeholders, engagement methods, and establishes clear protocols for receiving, responding to, and evaluating stakeholder feedback.

The Plan is guided by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's *Undertaking Engagement Guide: Guidance for State Significant Projects* and aligned with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum. It emphasises transparent, proactive, and inclusive engagement, with a strong focus on local employment, procurement opportunities, and community benefit initiatives. This includes alignment with the Projects Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) with Mid Western Regional Council, which formalises community benefit outcomes and ensures they are locally relevant and responsive to council and community priorities.

To support accessible and ongoing engagement, Vena Energy has established project specific contact channels, including a dedicated email address and a toll free 1800 number, providing multiple avenues for community members to seek information, raise concerns, and provide feedback.

Decommissioning

The development consent requires the preparation of a Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan. The plan will provide for the removal of plant and equipment and the rehabilitation of disturbed land within defined timeframes following cessation of operations. The plan will also consider end-of-life strategies for batteries consistent with circular-economy and recycling pathways

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