

## Steel River East BESS

# Understanding the environmental and social impacts



**Ausgrid is proposing a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in the Steel River Industrial Estate in Mayfield West to add energy storage to the local electricity network.**

**We're planning for the energy network of the future, now.**

We have submitted a Scoping Report to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to start the planning and assessment process for this project under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment (NSW) 1979 Act*.

Now we are focused on preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EIS considers the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of the BESS during its construction and operation. Our technical studies are under way. We are engaging during this early planning stage to understand our stakeholder and local community's concerns, priorities and interests so these can be considered as we shape the project.

This BESS will add energy storage to the local electricity network. It will store up to 400MWh of energy – that's enough to power over 27,000 Ausgrid households a day.

As we switch to renewable sources like solar and wind power, we need more energy storage to make sure we have power when the sun isn't shining, and the wind isn't blowing. This will mean we can provide our customers with more sustainable, more reliable and more affordable power. NSW needs six times more energy storage before 2030.



Steel River East BESS will be located next to the Ausgrid substation at 1 McIntosh Drive, Mayfield West. The site is located in the Steel River Industrial Estate, neighbouring commercial and industrial properties. The nearest residential property is approximately 400m to the south.

**This factsheet outlines the potential impacts of the project and how community and stakeholders will be consulted.**

## Understanding the likely impacts

### Noise

A BESS requires fans to keep the batteries cool. These fans create some noise depending on the weather and outside air temperature. These units operate within the accepted noise levels set by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

We are preparing a Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment. This will assess the amount of noise the proposed BESS may make, and how far it will travel during construction and operation. The assessment will also identify any appropriate noise barriers that may be needed to reduce how far the sound may travel.

### Traffic and transport

Located in the Steel River Industrial Estate, the site is not directly connected to any major public roads.

We know that managing transport access to the site will be important to reduce congestion. In particular, we know that there are businesses nearby that require use of the shared access road for heavy vehicles as part of their daily operations.

We are proactively working with our immediate neighbours to find an access way that minimises traffic impacts. A Traffic Management Plan (TMP) will be developed in consultation with Transport for NSW, the City of Newcastle Council and our neighbours to ensure that construction traffic is appropriately managed.

### Safety and hazards

At Ausgrid, we have high safety and reliability standards. If an idea or initiative doesn't meet these standards, it simply won't proceed. A fire from a BESS is rare. In the unlikely event of a fire, most are very small and affect only one unit of the battery. This is a result of design and testing, automated safety systems, as well as onsite and offsite firefighting equipment. Due to the BESS being placed next to an existing substation, Ausgrid already

has firefighting equipment on site. We do not expect these facilities to increase safety risks beyond what is already present.

As part of the project's design, we are working with the relevant fire and safety authorities to ensure that appropriate hazard management plans are in place before the BESS is switched on. These hazard management plans will be tailored specifically to any potential risks associated with a BESS at Steel River East, taking into account the sites proximity to active industrial sites in the rare event of a battery fire.

### Local environment

The potential impacts of BESS on the local environment and biodiversity will be assessed in detail as part of the project's EIS. As part of this assessment, Ausgrid is considering any legacy environmental issues by conducting geotechnical and soil assessments on site. The assessment also includes consideration for local bird and bat populations, stormwater and drainage.

As part of the planning process, Ausgrid is working with the relevant environmental and planning authorities to manage impacts on drainage and land contamination onsite. Ausgrid is conducting some tree and vegetation clearing onsite, the majority which has been identified as introduced flora and weeds. At this stage, we do not anticipate any significant impacts to local vegetation or wildlife.

## Our commitment to community

Ausgrid works to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to our customers. In proposing the addition of a BESS to our zone substation at Steel River East, we're committed to engaging with our neighbours, stakeholders and local community to shape this project. We want to understand any concerns or ideas our stakeholders and community may have so we can consider these during the early planning stage of the BESS Project. This helps us to better understand how a project may affect the environment and community and shape the project as we progress through its design.

## Engaging with the community

As part of the project's assessment and approval as a State Significant Development, Ausgrid is consulting with stakeholders, the local community and our neighbours to:

- Inform those impacted or interested in the project
- Receive feedback on the proposed BESS project
- Understand the potential social, economic or environmental risks of the project
- Work with the community to mitigate potential impacts.

**We want to hear from the local community and answer any questions you might have. The feedback we get from this early consultation will help shape the design of the project.**



**1800 574 044**

Monday to Friday 9am to 4:30pm



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If you need an interpreter, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** and ask them to call the project team on **1800 574 044**. The interpreter will then help you with translation.