

Steel River East Battery Energy Storage System

Community update #3
April 2025



Ausgrid is planning for a battery in Steel River Industrial Estate to add energy storage to the local electricity network.

We have listened to the community and have finished our technical studies. Now, we're getting ready to submit an Environmental Impact Statement.

We are proposing a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to be next to the existing Ausgrid substation in the Steel River Industrial Estate, Mayfield West.

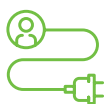
Last year, we spoke to community about our plans and started studies to understand potential impacts. This newsletter provides an update on what we heard from community and the next steps for the project.

Why a BESS?

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.



Store **400MWh**
of energy



Power **27,000**
households a day

This battery will store 400MWh of energy – that's enough to power over 27,000 Ausgrid households a day.

The benefits of BESS include:



Enabling more renewable energy



Reducing the need for new transmission lines



Local construction jobs



Improving grid stability and reliability



Enabling more affordable electricity

Engagement activities from August to December 2024



5 stakeholders consulted with government, community members, local groups and agencies



40 people attended our pop-up stands in the local community



13 people completed an online survey



608 unique visitors



239 project documents downloaded



9,546 newsletters distributed to households and businesses



106 properties door knocked



79 Sorry We Missed You cards distributed



29 letters sent to key stakeholder

Engaging with our local community: what we heard

In 2024, we engaged with stakeholders and local community to share our plans for a BESS and understand how the project may affect you. This included our neighbours in Steel River Industrial Estate, Newcastle City Council and the local community of Mayfield and Mayfield West.

Thank you to everyone who visited us at a pop-up information sessions or completed a survey to provide your feedback.

We heard there is strong support for the project, and this community:

- Is supportive of renewable energy and projects that help the transition
- Has concerns about potential environmental and safety impacts, like impacts on local wildlife and fire risk
- Appreciated hearing about the project early and being involved in the planning process
- Wants more detailed information about the projects site investigations.

What we know about potential impacts

We have finalised our technical studies to understand the environmental and community impacts of the project – in construction and operation. These are detailed in the Environmental Impact Statement that we will submit to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) in the coming months.

We're good neighbours and know the importance of working to reduce and carefully manage impacts on surrounding businesses and the local community.

We're cleaning up the site

Community feedback showed people are concerned about protecting tree canopy and habitat for local wildlife.

Our studies have assessed the plants and looked for wildlife on the site. We have found no protected wildlife, including koalas. Most of the plants on the site are introduced or weeds.

This site is very overgrown and has weeds listed under the *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*, like lantana and bitou bush. As we get the site ready, we will clear the site and remove weeds.

We plan to keep trees and some of the plants along the edge of the site, where possible.



Steel River East BESS will be located next to the Ausgrid substation at 1 McIntosh Drive, Mayfield West. The site is surrounded by commercial and light industrial properties, with the nearest residential property 400m to the south. The proposed site is overgrown with weeds and non-native plants and will need to be cleared.

You probably won't hear us

Our project's location is in an industrial area, next to some noisy businesses and a main road. Our current noise modeling shows that we're unlikely to make noise that you will notice, during operation.

During construction, there may be some noisier works at times to set up the site. We will work during normal construction hours and reduce the impact of noise on our immediate neighbours, where possible.

Temporary changes to traffic on local road in the industrial estate

Our traffic studies shows the roads leading to and within Steel River Industrial Estate are well-suited for the types of vehicles we will be using. During construction, our neighbours will notice more vehicles accessing the site and we will continue to work with our neighbours to manage access safely.

Carefully managing an old site

This site has a history of industrial uses. It was remediated when the Steel River Industrial Estate was formed. Our technical studies have found that it is suitable for use as a BESS site. We know there is contaminated soil from legacy waste and it must be carefully managed.

We will have safety measures and controls in place, in our Construction Environmental Management Plan, to carefully manage earthworks as we prepare the site.

We take safety seriously

At Ausgrid, we have high safety and reliability standards. If an idea or initiative doesn't meet these standards, it simply won't go ahead. We heard and understand community concerns about battery fires.

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.

We will be working with Fire and Rescue NSW to complete a fire safety assessment, during detail design phase. This phase is next, after we complete our planning approvals, through the submission of an Environmental Impact Statement.

Due to the BESS being placed next to an existing substation, Ausgrid already has firefighting equipment on site. We do not expect this site to increase safety risks beyond what is already present.

Being a good neighbour

We'd like to thank the local community and our neighbours in Steel River Industrial Estate for their support as we continue to work towards a BESS.

As our work progresses, we will continue to keep you informed.

Our next steps

This project will be assessed as a State Significant Development, under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (NSW) 1979*.

In late 2024, we engaged with community and stakeholders to help us better understand how this project may affect the environment and community. The outcomes of this engagement, and our technical studies, will be detailed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) will be placing the EIS on public exhibition, where anyone from the public will be able to view it and lodge formal feedback on the development application.

We are planning to submit an EIS soon and expect it will be on public exhibition in the coming months.

To find out more about the planning and approval process, explore our project website and access the linked factsheets by scanning the QR code.



ONGOING COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- 1 Late 2024**
 - Submit Scoping Report to NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Industry and request SEARS
 - Prepare Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)



- 2 Mid 2025**
 - Submit EIS to NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Industry
 - EIS Exhibition

- 3 Late 2025**
 - Project determination

- 4 Late 2025**
 - Start construction

What is a BESS?

A Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is a group of large rechargeable batteries, connected to form one very large battery. BESS collect energy, store it when there is a lot and then release it when there is high demand for electricity. These large batteries are critical to ensuring the reliability of electricity supply for households and businesses.

Who is Ausgrid?

Ausgrid is a distribution network service provider. We operate, maintain, repair and build the electricity network in Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter. We distribute electricity to your home or business, maintain existing infrastructure, and invest in new technologies to make the network more sustainable, reliable and affordable. We also need to make sure the network is ready for our customers' future needs.

Get involved and find out more

Community Reference Group

We are seeking ongoing community input to help guide BESS projects across the Ausgrid network area. A Community Reference Group will be an opportunity for community members to engage with us and share their insights through the construction and operation phases of BESS projects.

To register your interest, please email our team: batteries@ausgrid.com.au



yoursay.ausgrid.com.au/steelrivereastbess



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.