



EcoNetwork – Port Stephens Inc.

All correspondence to: Secretary PO Box 97 Nelson Bay 2315 secretary@econetworkps.org

12 December 2023

Major Projects
NSW Dept of Planning & Environment

Tomago Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) – SSD-57107216

About EcoNetwork Port Stephens

EcoNetwork-Port Stephens is a grassroots community-based environmental and sustainability network comprising more than 25 community and environment groups and eco-businesses with a focus on sustainable planning. We are non party-political and do not donate to political parties.

Submission

EcoNetwork, and our affiliate Climate Action Port Stephens (CAPS) in particular, supports this project in principle, as it would make a major contribution to renewable energy infrastructure. However EcoNetwork, including our special interest group Koala Coalition (KKEPS) is concerned about the impact on the natural environment.

We attended the drop-in session at the Hunter Botanic Gardens (also an affiliate) on 2 December and have reviewed the EIS.

We are particularly pleased that AGL are seeking approval for this project as an **alternative** to their proposed Gas Fired Power Station approved for the same site. Several organisations with whom we work closely strongly objected to that project, and we understand that AGL no longer considers it commercially viable.

However, the BESS proposal with the associated transmission corridors has significant environmental impacts, principally the clearing of 14.1 hectares of native vegetation and the loss of 14 hollow bearing trees (EIS p94), along with some loss of connectivity for wildlife movement.

AGL should consider an alternative design and layout for the batteries and transmission lines which preferably avoid or at least reduce these environmental impacts. In particular, further undergrounding of cables, though costly, would be more socially and environmentally sensitive and also reduce both the cost of line maintenance and the risk of fire damage.

We hope that it will be possible to reduce the adverse environmental impacts.

However we also recognise there are environmental benefits of additional electricity storage capacity. While there are no guarantees that the electricity to be stored will not have been generated by fossil fuels, at least in the medium term, it is also clear that greater storage capacity will be an essential complement to increased generation from renewable sources.

We have no objection to this submission being published in full and unredacted.

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