

Macedon Battery Energy Storage System BESS

Consultation Summary Report

South Energy

2026-03-18

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Contents

1	Executive Summary	1
1.1	Project and Developer Overview	1
1.2	Purpose and structure of this report	1
1.3	Project location, proximity to REZ and transmission	1
1.4	Consultation and engagement snapshot.....	2
1.5	Overall key engagement insights	2
1.6	Project timeline	2
2	Consultation and Engagement Summary	4
2.1	Engagement approach	4
2.2	Stakeholder analysis and interests in the project	4
2.3	Summary of engagement activities to date	7
2.4	Collateral and information provided.....	9
2.5	Community drop in Q&A and attendance	9
3	Engagement Outcomes	9
3.1	About the community survey	10
3.2	Community survey outcomes	10
3.3	Community survey key insights	10
3.4	Overall Community feedback and project response	11
3.5	How engagement influenced design and concept layout.....	12
3.5.1	Fire and emergency planning incorporated early:	12
3.5.2	Visual impact mitigation strengthened:.....	13
3.6	How engagement influenced program approach	13
3.7	Next Steps for Engagement 2026	13
3.8	2026 Key Messages	15

Table of Figures

Table 1	Timeline of development milestones and engagement phases	2
Table 2	Key Stakeholders groups and their interest in the proposal.....	4
Table 3	Consultation activities April 2024 to October 2025 early engagement pre permit application	7
Table 4	Materials and information provided at the session.....	9
Table 5	List of Community Session Attendees Mount Macedon Jubilee Hall Thursday October 9, 2025	9
Table 6	Table of Community feedback and project response	11
Table 7	Area of focus, next steps for engagement, engagement purpose and outcomes	13
Table 8	Key Messages	15

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Project and Developer Overview

Aurecon Australasia Pty Ltd (Aurecon) has been engaged by Macedon BESS Development Pty Ltd (the Proponent), on behalf of South Energy Pty Ltd, to prepare a consultation summary report for the Macedon Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (the Project).

Once operational, the BESS will store excess energy from renewable sources such as solar and wind and release it back to the grid during periods of high demand, supporting grid stability and Victoria's renewable energy transition. The proposed facility will have a storage capacity of 501 MWh, enabling it to deliver four hours of continuous discharge power. The facility is expected to have an operational life of approximately 20 years, with potential for future upgrades or component replacement at the end of its lifecycle.

1.2 Purpose and structure of this report

This purpose of this document is to provide a summary of community and stakeholder consultation to support the Project permit and development application, anticipated in March 2026.

- **Section 1 Executive Summary** provides an overview of the project, a snapshot of engagement and consultation and overall sentiment to date, anticipated project timeline and planned engagement phases.
- **Section 2 Engagement and Consultation Summary** of the strategic approach taken by South Energy to ensure that all stakeholders were consulted proportionally to the project size and social impact.
- **Section 3 Engagement Outcomes** provides overview of the feedback received; details project response, how input shaped design and program approach and a summary of next steps engagement activities.

1.3 Project location, proximity to REZ and transmission

The project is proposed on private land being Lot 2, Black Forest Drive, Macedon Ranges Shire, approximately 59 kilometres (km) north-west from Melbourne's Central Business District (CBD) and 3.5 km from the Macedon township and approximately 2.3km to New Gisborne, to the south-east of the Site which is within the Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

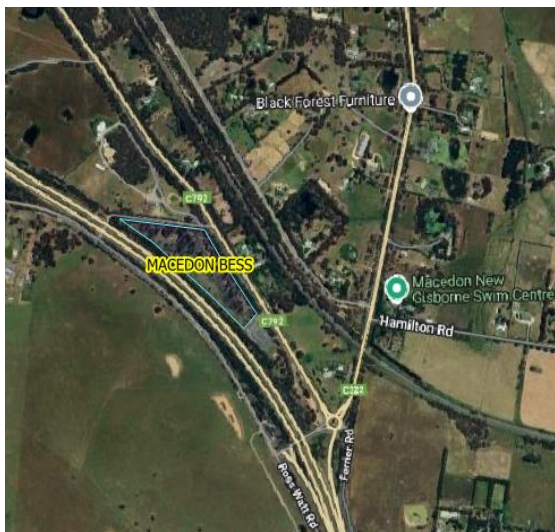


Figure 1 Project Location

See the Project's **Social and Economic Impact Assessment SEIA** for detailed social locality. In summary, the Site is situated on a private parcel, in a rural setting and away from established neighbourhoods. Low density rural residences are visible within the broader landscape to the north, with the nearest dwelling being opposite Macedon-Woodend Road at approximately 65 metres (m) to the east.

The site is bordered by Allison Lane to the north, the Calder Freeway to the southwest, and Macedon-Woodend Road to the southeast. It adjoins the Gisborne 66 kV Substation, providing a direct and efficient connection to the grid and does not require new transmission, and will use existing infrastructure.

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1.4 Consultation and engagement snapshot

Between April 2024 and October 2025, prior to submission to Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), South Energy implemented a structured engagement program for the Macedon Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) proposal, informed by the Social Impact Assessment and evidenced by consultation records provided.

- **Engagement activities focused on:** raising early awareness, seeking local feedback, and identification of engagement risks.
- **Key engagement activities and stakeholder outreach included:** letter notifications to 31 residents within 1 km and phone calls, email correspondence with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC), meetings with regulatory agencies, council representatives, MPs, local sustainability/community groups and technical stakeholders.
- **A drop-in community information session:** held on 9 October 2025 at Jubilee Hall Mount Macedon, attended by 8 people and advertised through direct mail, email, and a local newspaper notice.
- **Survey:** feedback collection conducted through consultation forms.

1.5 Overall key engagement insights

In summary, overall sentiment was mixed but constructive: many stakeholders expressed concern about fire risk, environmental impact, and local amenity, while others demonstrated neutral or supportive sentiment, seeking reassurance about safety risk, noise, design, and community benefit mechanisms.

- **Engagement reach:** Approx. 30+ direct stakeholders (letters, visits, meeting attendees, group contacts).
- **Primary concerns:** Bushfire risk and emergency preparedness and planning, visual impacts on nearby homes, biodiversity impact, potential effects on property values and community benefit expectations.
- **Sentiment:** Predominantly neutral to positive with the majority of stakeholders open to dialogue.
- **Objections:** All enquiries acknowledged and logged, with some noted objections to be addressed in design mitigations and no escalated objections recorded.

1.6 Project timeline

Table 1 Timeline of development milestones and engagement phases

Indicative timing	Development milestone	Engagement phase	Status
December 2024 to October 2025	Land acquisition	Social Impact Assessment	Complete
	Early design and environmental and planning studies	Execute Communications and Engagement plan and consultation summary (this report)	
March 2026	Development application submission	Stakeholder Updates	Upcoming
July 2026	Development approval	Continued community engagement and neighbour dialogue, early community benefits and local industry economic planning	Pending
September 2026	Grid connection	Technical Engagement	Ongoing

December 2026	Financial close	Industry Engagement	n/a
April 2027	Construction commences	Construction Engagement	n/a
April 2028	Operation	Community Benefits Delivery and Social Performance Reporting	n/a

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2 Consultation and Engagement Summary

2.1 Engagement approach

South Energy has engaged with the community stakeholders early to seek feedback on the project and influence design. The community engagement activities followed the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Community Engagement Spectrum and aligned with the Inform and Consult elements of the IAP2 Spectrum (see Figure 2).

Throughout the engagement activities, South Energy actively engaged community stakeholders to understand their views and concerns around the project while creating a forum to identify opportunities to enhance the project outcomes from a community perspective.

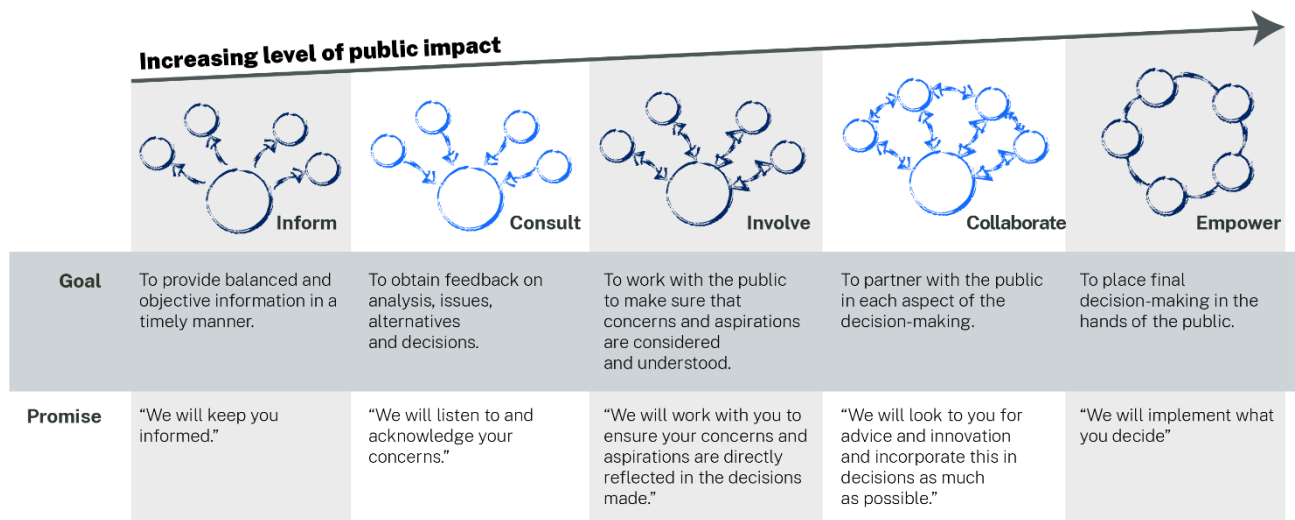


Figure 2 IAP2 Spectrum

2.2 Stakeholder analysis and interests in the project

Table 2 outlines key stakeholders' interests, concerns and level of influence regarding the project. South Energy will continue engaging these stakeholders throughout the project planning and approvals phase.

Table 2 Key Stakeholders groups and their interest in the proposal.

Key Stakeholders	Interest in the proposal	Level of Influence
Near Neighbours and Residents within 1 km or project site <i>No landholders as project site is private land.</i>	- Fire Risk Management and concerns for safety - Access, visual and noise impacts - Biodiversity and biosecurity concerns - Impact on property prices - Fair distribution of community benefits - Construction impacts, decommissioning plans.	Inform/Consult/Involve
Local Government and Elected Representatives	- Land use, noise and amenity impacts - Community social value and economic benefits	Inform/Consult/Involve

■ <i>Macedon Council, MPs and Councillors</i>	■ Consultation program and consideration of stakeholders' feedback to inform project decisions. ■ Construction impacts, decommissioning plans. ■ Jobs creation ■ Community concern for safety and physical risk	
■ Traditional Owners ■ <i>RAP Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC)</i>	■ Benefits for existing programs being implemented by the corporation	Involve/Collaborate
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■ Specialist Interest and Environmental Groups ■ <i>Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group, Macedon Neighbourhood House</i>	■ Community Benefits ■ Access to renewable energy, batteries and lower energy prices ■ Sustainability and energy literacy ■ Wildlife impacts mitigation	Inform/Consult/Involve
■ Industry and Local Business	■ Jobs, supplier opportunities ■ Tourism opportunities	Inform/Consult/Involve
■ Emergency Services and Response Agencies ■ <i>Including CFA Specialist and Fire Safety Engineering and Specialist Risk Unit</i>	■ Fire Safety Study, fire separation zones and access lanes ■ Local Emergency Management Plan and Planning Committee Readiness ■ Local capacity of CFA to effectively support emergency response	Involve/Collaborate
■ Regulators and Statutory Authorities ■ <i>Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Energy Safe Victoria (ESV)</i>	■ Environmental risk and management plans ■ Safety and fire risk controls and management ■ Compliance and evaluation	Involve/Collaborate
■ Government Agencies	■ Land use and planning permit process	Inform/Consult

■ <i>Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)</i> ■ <i>Department of Environment and Climate Action (DECCA), Melbourne Water</i>	■ Policy alignment and technical assessment ■ Water, biodiversity and catchment health ■ Inter-agency co-ordination	
■ Technical ■ <i>AEMO and TSNP Powercor, Optus</i>	■ Co-ordination and formal modelling alignment of connection approach ■ Underground cable relocation	Involve/Collaborate

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2.3 Summary of engagement activities to date

Table 4 outlines the communications and stakeholder engagement activities undertaken from April 2024 to October 2025, including to promote the October 9, 2025, community information drop-in session held at the local Jubilee Hall. This table is informed by the South Energy Stakeholder Engagement Log.

Table 3 Consultation activities April 2024 to October 2025 early engagement pre permit application

Activity	Metrics	IAP2 Spectrum		Description
		Inform	Consult	
■ Door Knocks	6	✓	✓	■ 6 door knocks to neighbours identified within 300 metres of project site.
■ Resident Notifications	31	✓	✓	■ 31 Letters were posted to neighbours identified in 1km of project site.
■ Stakeholder Briefings	3	✓	✓	■ Local Council and regulator meetings with DECCA, DTP.
■ Traditional Owners ■ WWWCHAC	1	✓	✓	■ Email correspondence providing introduction of the project.
■ Technical Correspondence	6	✓	✓	■ Emails and phone call with CFA to discuss site access preliminary advice, CFA Fire Risk Study and potential meeting to understand the risk of bushfire and how the local CFA preparedness. ■ Emails with Powercor and Optus to inform grid network capacity and switch station requirements.
■ Stakeholder Direct Outreach	7	✓	✓	■ Targeted emails and phone calls to increase project awareness and invite stakeholders to visit the in person local drop in session invitations.
■ Posters	4	✓		■ Posters put up a Macedon council, Library, Macedon café and local further education centre.
■ Newspaper ■ Advertising	2	✓		■ Community newspaper advert in the Midland Express for two weeks prior to community information session.
■ Press release	1	✓		■ Project press release published on the project website in advance of the community information sessions to share more information locally about the project.

Fact Sheets and Frequently Asked Questions	6	✓		- Project fact sheets with FAQs are available on the website and hard copies made available at the drop in session. - Detail provided in Section 2.6
Community drop in session.	1 session 8 attendees	✓	✓	- The community information session held locally on October 9, 2025 provided a forum for South Energy to inform the interested community and stakeholders about the project and for stakeholders to raise any questions or issues around the project. The community information sessions sought to: - Provide information on the project – its purpose, need, timeframes. - Gather stakeholder input on potential issues, sensitivities, and opportunities. - Ensure community views are captured in a timely way.
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Online survey	1	✓	✓	Microsoft survey to capture further feedback from community stakeholders and to enquire their opinion on the format and content presented during the information sessions.
Feedback Form	4	✓	✓	Feedback form at drop in session, 4 returned.
Close the Loop Community Drop in session Project Update	1	✓		Project update published to the Project Website to note feedback shared and issues raised.
Community Neighbourhood House What's App	1	✓		A link to the survey was shared in the community neighbourhood house what's app.
Project Update Responses to Concerns raised	1	✓		Published to project website 16th October 2025.
Media Interviews	2	✓		Article on Project produced by ABC in October 2025. Attended a site walk and Facebook post with Federal member Rob Mitchell MP.

2.4 Collateral and information provided

Table 4 Materials and information provided at the session

Material Provided	Description
■ Project Display Board	■ Project Location and Site
■ Project FAQs Factsheet	■ Overview of project purpose, design, and operation and common FAQs
■ Fire Risk Mitigation Factsheet	■ Details four-layer fire safety system and Risk Management Plan.
■ Visual Landscape & Sound Factsheet	■ Includes visuals, noise mitigation and landscaping details.
■ Project Benefits and Development Process Factsheet	■ Describes community, environmental, and economic benefits.
■ About South Energy Factsheet	■ Ownership, experience, and company values.
■ PowerPoint Presentation	■ Project Presentation that included Map, project timeline, comparable project size

2.5 Community drop in Q&A and attendance

- A total of eight community members attended the community information session on October 9, 2025. Table 5 lists South Energy and Aurecon attendees. South Energy's subject matter experts and the Aurecon team supported the conversations with community stakeholders during the drop-in session.
- Community members' questions were answered by project team members in an open forum during the drop-in session. Section 3.4 provides the project response to matters raised across all activities for a given theme and a table summarising the responses to specific points presented.

Table 5 List of Community Session Attendees Mount Macedon Jubilee Hall Thursday October 9, 2025

Name	Role	Agency
Linh Nguyen	Project Manager	South Energy
Johan Laban	Development Director	South Energy
Alva Juan	Project Developer	South Energy
Bez Hasenfratz	Environment and planning	Aurecon
Rachael Ralph	Engagement liaison	Aurecon
Penelope Gronset	Business Liaison Officer	Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Bruce Hall	Local resident	Community
James McKenzie	Neighbourhood House Secretary (and past chairman of the REAG Renewable Energy Action Group)	Community
Unidentified	Local farm owner	Community
Unidentified	Local Resident with CFA experience and partner	Community
Unidentified	Local Resident with solar, active in community battery project and partner	Community

3 Engagement Outcomes

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This section provides outcomes of the engagement, detailing feedback received, broken down by themes and details project response, how input shaped design and next steps of the engagement program.

3.1 About the community survey

A short online survey was undertaken to gather community views on the proposed Macedon Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). Seven local participants responded, providing a mix of quantitative and qualitative feedback on local values, awareness, perceived impacts, and preferred engagement approaches. The survey was open to anyone who lived within 5km of the project site and identified as a local resident.

3.2 Community survey outcomes

A total of 7 responses were received. Only 1 respondent lived within 1km of the project site, and remainder between 2km to 5km. Overall, community attitudes toward the Macedon BESS are cautiously balanced, participants recognise the project's role in advancing renewable energy but seek confidence in fire safety, amenity protection, and tangible local benefits.

3.3 Community survey key insights

Overall Sentiment	Theme	Key Insights
Neutral	Participant profile and engagement preferences	- Most of survey respondents live within 3km-5 km of the proposed site and identify as local residents. A small number work or volunteer locally, reflecting genuine community interest rather than external stakeholders. - Most prefer to seek info via website or project updates, while a nominal number requested direct contact.
Positive	Local values	- Residents value the area's rural character, natural bushland, recreational lifestyle and community ties. - Mt Macedon, Wombat State Forest and surrounding landscapes native flora and fauna were repeatedly cited as defining features. No mention of cultural heritage importance.
Mixed	Awareness of project and perceptions of renewable energy and BESS	- Awareness of the project and large-scale battery storage projects more broadly, ranged from low to moderate. - Supportive comments referenced the need for energy storage to stabilise the grid evidencing higher energy literacy. - Opposition centred on fire risk and vegetation loss.
Negative (to strongly opposed)	Key issues are amenity and fire risk and safety concerns	- Visual and noise impacts were the predominant amenity concern, with some concern raised over potential changes to land value. - Respondents emphasised the project's bushfire-prone location and sought assurance on mitigation measures and emergency coordination and preparedness.
Constructive	Social and economic considerations	- Respondents prioritised grid stability, climate-action benefits, and community investment opportunities over direct employment. - Ideas for investment included community grants, conservation funding, and CFA or local club support.

3.4 Overall Community feedback and project response

This table summarises feedback received through engagement activities to date as summarised in Section 2.3, including through the drop-in sessions, insights from the survey, and media post event.

Table 6 Table of Community feedback and project response

Theme	Community Feedback	Project Response and Key Message (Sources - Fact Sheet SFS as noted)
Community safety and fire risk management	Participants sought reassurance about how fire risk is managed and referenced Geelong/Anakie incidents.	“Any risk of fire and explosion can be fully mitigated by employing four levels of safety.” Fact Sheet continues to describe the conceptual 4 layers of safety (Source: <i>FAQ Fire Risk Mitigation – Q11</i>)
Engagement with CFA	ABC News article 23 October by Sarah Lawrence stated that CFA has not been consulted	“As part of our planning process, South Energy has completed a preliminary Bushfire Hazard Assessment to identify key ignition sources, containment design and suppression strategy. This has already influenced design improvements to ensure the design improvements to concept layout. “Early CFA Consultation has been undertaken with Senior Specialist Risk Advisor Jennifer Blyth, and Senior Manager Specialist Risk and Fire Safety Matt Allen. A pre-application meeting has also been requested ahead of permit and development application”
Emergency preparedness and environmental management	Concerns about gases, smoke, and emergency coordination during a fire event.	“A risk management plan will be developed in coordination with the fire Authority that outlines the controls for the management of onsite and offsite risks at the BESS facility. In the event of a fire, local fire firefighters will be notified to attend the site and utilize onsite fire management equipment and facilities.” (Source: <i>FAQ Fire Risk Mitigation Q12</i>) - Increasing community confidence in safety and fire risk and emergency preparedness will be a focus of engagement as the project progresses. - Refer engagement with CFA, above.
Local Benefits and Energy Costs	Questions about whether the project would lower local power costs or operate as a community battery	“BESS stores excess solar and wind power when demand is low and releases it during peaks... boosting renewable use.” (Source: <i>FAQ Project Benefits – Q3</i>) “BESS keeps the grid stable by storing and supplying power when needed... making electricity more reliable, affordable and steady.” (FAQ <i>Project Benefits – Q3</i>)
Project transparency and ownership	Attendees sought clarification on project ownership and funding.	“South Energy is an Australian-owned, Melbourne-based renewable energy company that specialises in the development of renewable energy projects.” (FAQ <i>About South Energy – Q13</i>)
Technology and design and visual amenity	Community asked about the size, layout, the noise levels and timing, and the	“The BESS are containerised and modular systems, which are compact and can be scaled to the desired capacity... surrounded and covered by native trees and vegetation which helps in minimising the visual impact.”

	appearance of the battery system.	■ “Like any equipment, there will be noise from the BESS components, mainly from the cooling systems such as fans and inverters. South Energy has engaged a reputable consultant with proven expertise in developing and designing battery and renewable energy projects to conduct noise assessments.” (Source: <i>FAQ Visual Landscape & Sound – Q8</i>)
Engagement Process and Information Accessibility	Participants requested additional visual aids to take with them (maps, photo montage, concept design likeness.)	■ Site concepts were on display at the community drop in in October 2025. The creation of visualisations and accessible printed materials will be included in further 2026 engagement as the project progresses.
Economic and Market Questions	Curiosity about whether South Energy profits from buying power cheaply and selling at higher prices.	■ “Macedon BESS will perform multiple functions in both the local and wider grid network, from increasing the generation of renewable energy by storing excess electricity and exporting when the demand is high, to stabilising the grid voltage & frequency. "As a private developer, South Energy will own and operate the BESS project to optimise the revenue from these key functions which will benefit the grid and indirectly contribute to lower electricity prices by providing supply at high demand times, and absorbing excess energy that will otherwise be wasted such as during mid-day on high solar output. This project will enhance the uptake of renewable energy and reduce grid constraints, to help achieve sustainable energy security for the region and the country.”
General Sentiment	Attendees encouraged transparency and community benefits, emphasising 'make it work – but make it safe'.	■ “South Energy believes that clean and sustainable energy is the best solution for mitigating the risk of climate change. Our mission is to work collaboratively with all stakeholders, including government and the community, to ensure a greener future for the next generation of Australians.” (Source: <i>FAQ About South Energy – Q15</i>)

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3.5 How engagement influenced design and concept layout

3.5.1 Fire and emergency planning incorporated early:

- South Energy has identified fire hazard risks early and will submit a design that achieves compliance with CFA and Victorian planning expectations.
- As part of the planning process, South Energy has completed a preliminary Bushfire Hazard Assessment to identify key ignition sources, containment design and suppression strategy. This has already influenced design improvements to ensure improvements to concept layout.
- These include:
 - Installation of a dedicated on-site water storage and hydrant system
 - Orientation of container exit doors and access routes to improve egress

- Addition of a perimeter fire access loop road and increased spacing between battery units
- Integration of 24-hour monitoring and automatic suppression systems.
- Early CFA Consultation has been undertaken and a pre-application meeting has been requested ahead of the permit and development application.

3.5.2 Visual impact mitigation strengthened:

- Local feedback about visual amenity led to prioritisation of retaining existing native vegetation screening where possible, and a commitment to maintain low-profile battery enclosures finished in neutral, non-reflective colours. In addition, the proposed noise wall will incorporate recessive materials and finishes to further reduce the level of landscape and visual impact of the project.

Site selection confirmed based on existing infrastructure proximity.

- Engagement reinforced the importance of minimising land disturbance and avoiding new transmission corridors, supporting the decision to locate the facility adjacent to the existing Gisborne substation.

3.6 How engagement influenced program approach

The following feedback will inform 2026 engagement activities.

- Community safety messaging enhanced:
 - Ongoing communication about emergency response preparedness and fire risk mitigation
- Information accessibility improved:
 - Questions raised about the difference between a community battery and the BESS Macedon battery, will ensure energy literacy is prioritised in communications collateral.
- Commitment to ongoing dialogue:
 - South Energy will continue to keep in touch with the local community through regular project updates on the project website, local annual event participations & meetings with the Local Council as well as other community groups in the region.

3.7 Next Steps for Engagement 2026

Table 7 Area of focus, next steps for engagement, engagement purpose and outcomes

Focus Area	Next Steps	Engagement Purpose	Outcome
Community safety, fire risk management, emergency response co-ordination and preparedness	■ Community Safety and Emergency Preparedness Engagement will be focus of engagement following development approval ADVERTISED PLAN	■ Demonstrate a proactive, structured approach to address community concerns about fire risk, emergency response coordination and local preparedness.	■ Build community confidence in safety and fire risk management.

Technical and Regulator Stakeholder Coordination Engagement	Continue to engage with technical stakeholders. AEMO, Powercor, and EPA Victoria to align on technical and policy expectations.	To ensure the projects technical design, safety systems and grid connection impacts have shaped technical decisions.	Ensured alignment with emergency policy and technical expectations
Traditional Owner Engagement	Continue to engage and support Traditional Owners to collaborate through workforce participation, business opportunities, and cultural support such as artwork display at the project site, and allocate a portion of the community benefit fund to support their ongoing activities.	Genuine efforts toward partnership and cultural due diligence	- Build social Licence - Healing Country
Community Information Continuity	- Utilise socials for project updates. - Return Q2 for community drop in.	Sustain trust by ensuring transparency about next milestones and how feedback is being used.	Build social licence
Visual Amenity and Landscape Screening	Share visualisation tools (photomontages, map overlays and site signage) to nearby neighbours for feedback as a priority,	Allows early feedback on landscape mitigation and supports smoother planning approvals.	Reduce social risk and misinformation
Community Benefits	Continue development of a local community benefit scheme or legacy initiative. Outline the sponsorships and donations process.	Support planning submission with Benefits Intent Statement.	Demonstrate responsiveness to local expectations for tangible social value.
Near-Neighbour Dialogue	Provide targeted follow-up contact phone calls and offer a dedicated	Reinforces direct responsiveness and supports acceptance	Reduce social risk and misinformation.

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	liaison contact phone number	among those most affected.	
Monitoring and Feedback Mechanism	Develop a Community Feedback and Issues Register to document future issues raised, actions taken, and responses provided across all engagement phases	- Timely retrieval of data of how engagement has helped shaped project design and engagement approach. - Clarity on escalated objections versus noted objections.	Enables traceability and demonstrates continuous improvement in line with VicGrid engagement principles.

3.8 2026 Key Messages

Table 8 Key Messages

Theme	Key Message
Community Safety, Fire Risk Management	Community safety is central to project design. South Energy will continue to work with emergency services and technical experts to ensure the facility meets or exceeds national and CFA safety standards.
Environmental Stewardship	Macedon BESS is being designed to complement the local landscape, minimise visual impact through vegetation screening, and protect native flora and fauna.
Community Collaboration	South Energy is committed to ongoing dialogue with locals and welcomes feedback to refine the project design as it progresses through planning.
Economic Benefits	The project will support 137 jobs through construction and result in 140 jobs over the operational phase. Early planning for Community benefits will begin in early 2026.
Grid and transmission Impacts	The Macedon Bess is strategically located near existing electricity infrastructure, removing the need for new transmission lines and reducing land disturbance. The project helps stabilise Victoria's electricity grid by storing renewable energy for use during high-demand periods.
Transparency and Process	We're still in the early planning and assessment phase, no final decisions have been made, and community input continues to inform next steps.

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