

Appendix 1

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Agricultural Assessment

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APRIL 2026

Hazelwood East Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Agricultural Assessment

Final Draft Report

Prepared for Voyager Renewables Pty Ltd

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Executive Summary

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OVERVIEW

Voyager Renewables Pty Ltd (Voyager) is proposing to develop, construct and operate an approximate 500 MW/ 2,000 MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), at 545 Tramway Road, Hazelwood North. The Hazelwood East BESS (the Project) would connect to Hazelwood Terminal Station on the adjacent site and would comprise a containerised BESS, underground cable connection to the Hazelwood Terminal Station, and key auxiliary infrastructure to support operations and maintenance.

The purpose of this report is to assess the potential agriculture impacts associated with the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the Project to inform the preparation of the planning permit required for the Project.

The Project is located on three properties, either side of Tramway Road. One property to the west is currently operating as a terminal station. Under the Latrobe City Council planning scheme, this property is zoned SUZ1 (Special Use Zone – Schedule 1). Grazing animals and crop raising are permitted in this zone, but the site is largely developed for the terminal station. Farming is not a current use of this property, nor is it considered feasible at any economic scale. As this property is not used for agriculture, it has not been assessed as part of this report.

This report assesses the impact to agriculture for the two properties on the east side of Tramway Rd, which are zoned FZ1 (Farming Zone – Schedule 1) and are currently operated as a farm.

EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

The study area comprises a single farm of approximately 97 ha, of which 93 ha is currently used for grazing cattle.

The study area is cleared and has predominantly flat topography. Climate is temperate with moderate, seasonally defined rainfall. Soils are moderate to low quality Chromosol and Sodosols, which are suitable for agriculture. There is an ephemeral creek (Bennetts Creek) traversing the south west section of the farm, two small farm dams, stock troughs and access to town water for stock watering, but no access to irrigation.

There is an existing house, shedding, stockyards and a disused dairy on the farm. High voltage transmission lines traverse north and south sectors of the farm.

In summary, the study areas has moderate quality soils; moderate rainfall; no access to irrigation; a relatively short growing season; little infrastructure investment that is currently operational; and a moderate integration with related industry. Based on these features, the study area has been assessed as not meeting criteria for 'high value' or 'strategically important' agricultural land.

While it is possible that up to 60ha of this land could be leased to an adjacent landholder during the operation of the Project, this assessment conservatively assumes the entire property would be removed from agriculture for the life of the Project.

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GUIDELINES AND POLICY CONTEXT

The relevant planning scheme, policy and guidelines for agricultural land have been considered, including:

- Latrobe Planning Scheme *Clause 14.01*
- *Live Work Latrobe: Rural Land Use Strategy (2019)*
- Victorian Planning Provisions amendment VC271 (Feb 2026)
- Victoria's *Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guideline (2022)*
- Queensland's *Planning guideline - State code 27: Battery storage facility development (Dec 2025)*

KEY FINDINGS & MITIGATIONS

The Project is located in close proximity to an existing terminal station, providing strategic compatibility between some of the surrounding land use and the proposed Project.

This report concludes that the study area does not meet the definition of high quality, productive agricultural land. However, climate and the soils are of moderate quality and are suitable to support agricultural activities such as grazing.

The loss of agricultural production and output of the site (valued at approximately \$120,000 per year) is considered insignificant at a regional (Latrobe LGA) and state level (0.2% and 0.0007% respectively). This is considered a negligible impact on statewide agricultural production.

If this change in land use is replicated on other farms, the cumulative impact on the local and regional agricultural output should be considered.

Key risks identified to agriculture from the Project are the potential for contamination and biosecurity breaches and these can be mitigated with appropriate environmental and biosecurity management measures throughout the life of the Project. With the effective implementation of these management measures, risks to agriculture are considered very low.

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Abbreviations and glossary of terms

ABBREVIATION OR TERM	DEFINITION
ABARES	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
DEECA	Victorian Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action
DELWP	Previous Victorian government department (essentially replaced by DEECA in 2023)
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
FZ	Farming Zone (in Latrobe planning scheme)
ha	Hectares
kV	Kilovolt (1,000 volts)
LGA	Local government area
LPA	Livestock Production Assurance program
m	Metres
Mg/L	Milligrams per litre
MW	Megawatts (10 ⁶ watts)
MWh	Megawatt hours
O&M	Operations and maintenance
QGIS	Open-source geographic information system
RMCG	RM Consulting Group (https://www.rmcb.com.au)
SALAD	Agriculture Victoria's <i>Strategic Agriculture Land and Development Report</i> (2020)
SILO	A publicly accessible database of Australian climate data from 1889 to the present
SRO	State Resource Overlay
SUZ	Special Use Zone (in Latrobe planning scheme)
VRO	Victorian Resources Online

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1 Introduction

1.1 THIS PROJECT

Voyager Renewables Pty Ltd (Voyager) is proposing to develop, construct and operate the Hazelwood East Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in response to significant changes in Australia's energy market and policy settings, including the rapid growth of variable renewable energy generation and the progressive retirement of coal-fired power stations. Large-scale battery storage presents an opportunity to enhance grid flexibility and reliability by enabling renewable energy to be stored and dispatched when it is most needed, supporting the ongoing transition of Victoria's energy system.

Hazelwood East is strategically located within the Latrobe Valley, a region with established electricity infrastructure and a long history of energy generation. The proposed Project would leverage existing transmission capacity associated with the former Hazelwood Power Station, reducing the need for new transmission lines. This development approach minimises potential environmental impacts and supports the continued evolution of the Latrobe Valley as a key energy precinct.

Voyager's objective for the Project is to provide large-scale energy storage that supports grid stability during periods of peak demand. The facility would store excess electricity generated from renewable sources, such as wind and solar, and dispatch this energy when demand exceeds supply or when generation is constrained. In doing so, the Project aims to contribute to the reliability of Victoria's energy grid and support the local economy through construction employment and supplier engagement.

The purpose of this report is to assess the potential agriculture impacts associated with the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the Project to inform the preparation of the planning permit required for the Project.

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2 Project Description

2.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Voyager Renewables Pty Ltd (Voyager) is proposing to develop, construct and operate a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of approximately 500 MW/ 2,000 MWh capacity, at 545 Tramway Road, Hazelwood North. The Hazelwood East BESS (the Project) would connect to Hazelwood Terminal Station on the adjacent site and would comprise a BESS to store excess energy from the grid during periods of low demand, releasing it back to the grid during high demand periods.

The project includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of a BESS with a 500 MW maximum power output capacity with 4-hour duration (i.e. 2,000 MWh) and associated infrastructure.

The BESS will consist of:

- Approximately 432 containerised battery units and approximately 144 inverters and two main power transformers to step up from 33 kV to 500kV
- 33kV underground cable connection from the battery units to the project collector substation
- A project collector substation comprising 33 kV switchgear, main power transformers, protection and control systems, control rooms and switchrooms, 500 kV high-voltage switchgear (including switchyard) and associated harmonic filtering equipment
- 500 kV underground cable connection from the electrical substation to the Hazelwood Terminal Station (Point of Connection), including underground cables crossing Tramway Road.
- Operations and maintenance (O&M) compound including O&M building, amenities, car parking sufficient for employees and contractors during operation
- Stormwater management infrastructure, firewater management devices including water tanks and hydrants, internal access tracks and acoustic barrier
- Upgrades to existing, and construction of new access track and crossover from Tramway Road
- Other ancillary infrastructure including boundary security fencing, lighting and landscaping.

2.2 SITE CONTEXT

The site is approximately 4.2 kilometres south of Morwell and 1.5 kilometres north of Churchill, within the City of Latrobe local government area (Latrobe LGA). The site is adjacent to the Hazelwood Terminal Station, Jeeralang Power Station and Wooreen BESS to the west and farmland with rural properties to the north, east and south.

Figure 2-1 shows the Project site boundary. This boundary encompasses 3 properties, two to the east and one to the west of Tramway Road.

The property to the west is zoned Special Use Zone (SUZ-1) in the Latrobe planning scheme and is currently occupied by the Hazelwood Terminal Station. This property is not included in this Agricultural Assessment report, as it is not currently zoned or used for agriculture.

The two properties on the east side of Tramway Road are zoned Farming Zone (FZ-1) and are currently used for grazing. These two FZ-zoned properties define the *Study Area* for this Agricultural Assessment report. Figure 2-2 shows the Project footprint within the study area.

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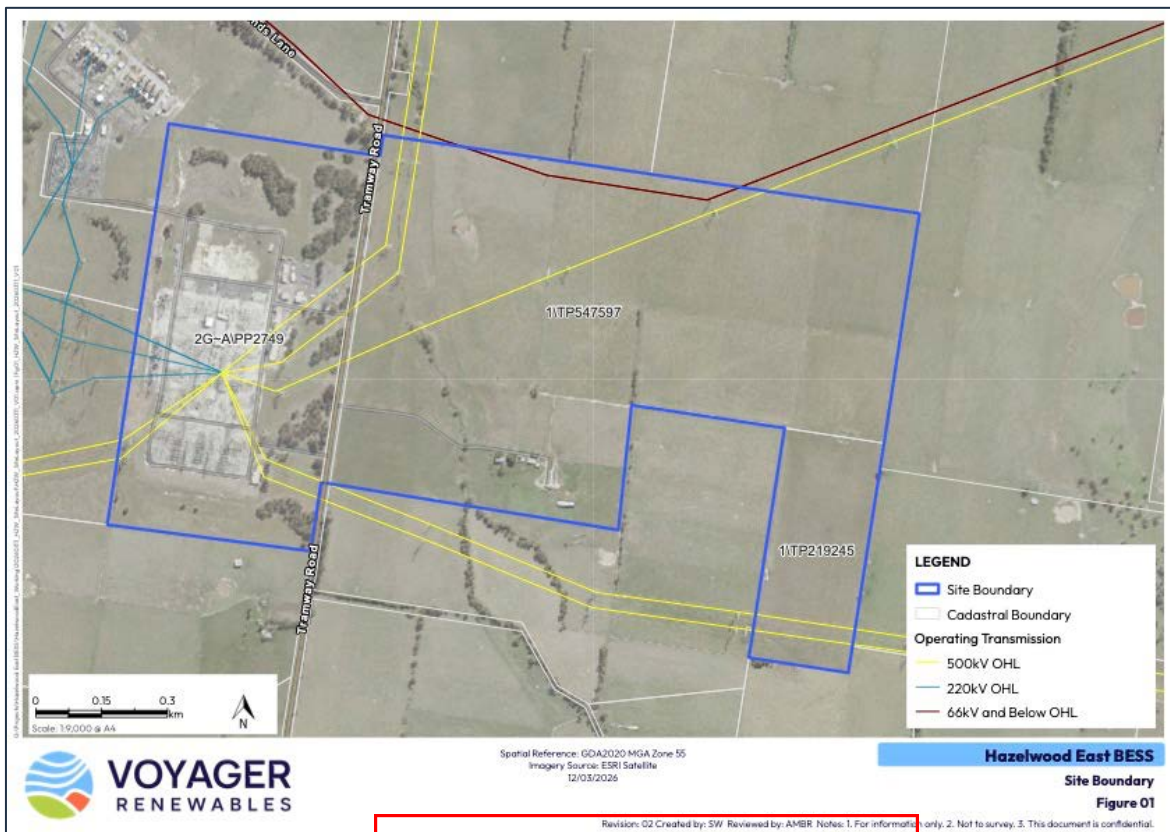


Figure 2-1: Site boundary

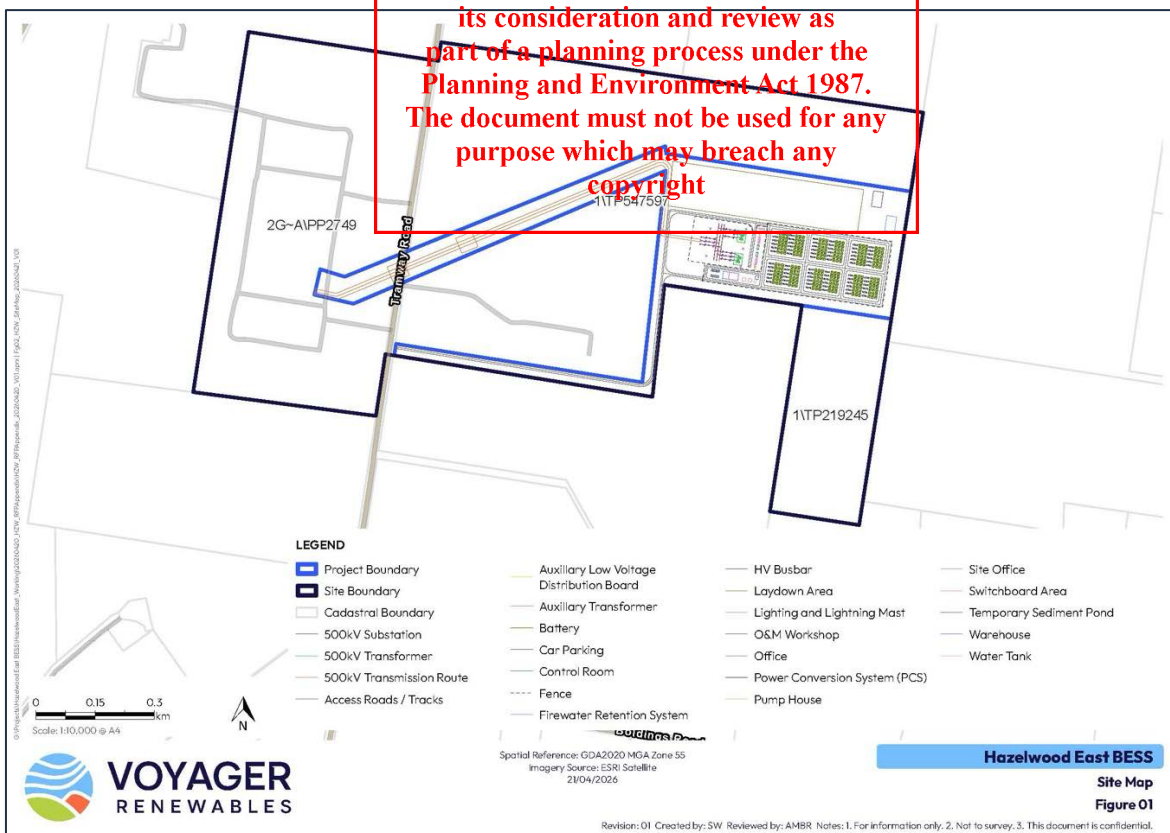


Figure 2-2: Project footprint

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2.3 PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

The Project would move through various phases during construction. Figure 2-3 outlines the main phases of development and the key activities within each phase. Agricultural production in the study area would cease, and farming infrastructure would be removed, during the enabling works in phase 1.

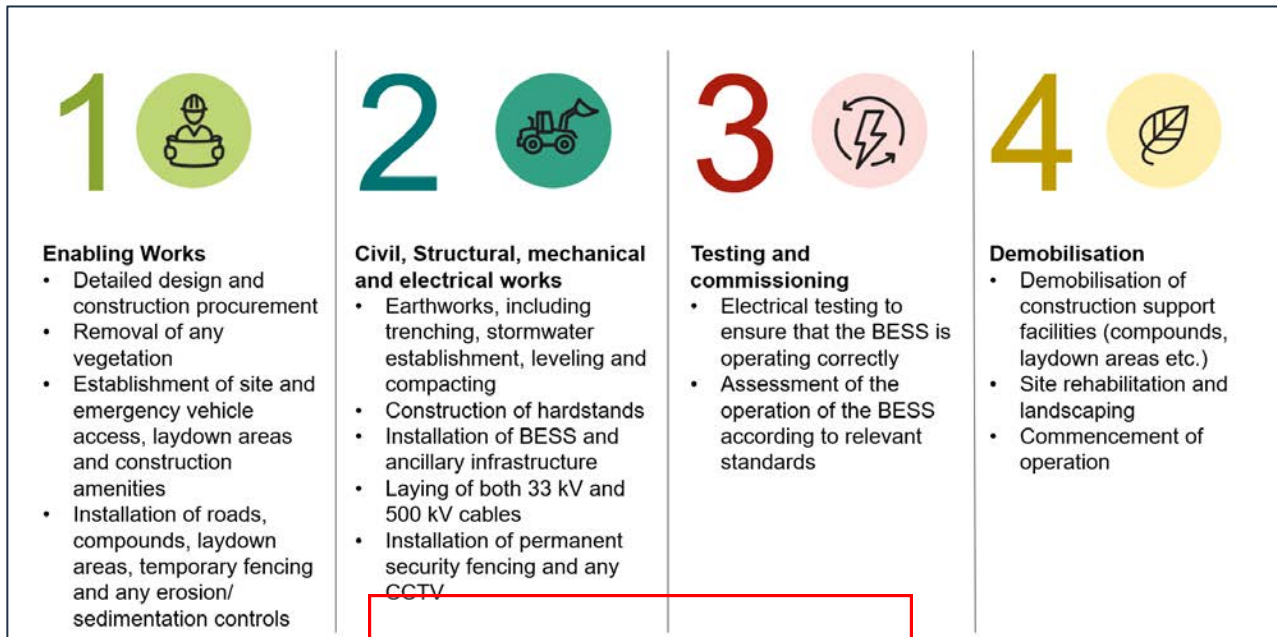


Figure 2-3: Phases of Project construction

The construction phase as outlined in Figure 2-3 is anticipated to be completed within 18 months, generally in accordance with the following schedule of construction.

Table 2-1: Indicative schedule of construction

CONSTRUCTION TASK	TIMING AND DURATION OF TASK
Enabling works	Q1 2028: 1-3 months
Civil, structural, mechanical and electrical works	Early 2028: 9-12 months
Commissioning	Mid 2028: 6 months
Demobilisation	Late 2028 to early 2029 1-3 months

2.4 OPERATION

The operational life of the BESS is indicatively estimated at 40 years, contingent on component replacement and ongoing asset management. The Project would operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week as an unmanned facility. The BESS would be managed remotely and staffed by up to two (2) full time equivalent staff as well as ad hoc contractors, as required during both planned and unplanned maintenance periods. It would be anticipated no more than 10 people would be on site at any time.

During operation, key activities would include:

- Environmental monitoring in accordance with the conditions of approvals and management plans
- Service and repair of any onsite infrastructure
- Maintenance of internal access tracks, drainage and culverts, fencing/gate and other civil works
- Maintenance of BESS, electrical reticulation system, substation and control systems.

2.5 DECOMMISSIONING

The operational life of the BESS is indicatively estimated at 40 years, after which time the project would commence decommissioning. During decommissioning above ground components would be removed and recycled where possible, and land rehabilitated. The battery units would either be disposed of, repurposed or recycled at a licensed disposal facility. The decommissioning timeframe is expected to be approximately 12 months post-operation phase.

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3 Method for agricultural assessment

This section outlines the context and method for the agricultural assessment.

3.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

The agricultural assessment for this Project has been conducted in consideration of requirements under the Latrobe Planning Scheme and the *Live Work Latrobe: Rural Land Use Strategy, 2019*. The Latrobe Planning Scheme *Clause 14.01 - 1s* identifies the key considerations for a proposal to use, subdivide or develop agricultural land, to be:

- Desirability and impacts of removing the land from primary production, given its agricultural productivity
- Impacts on the continuation of primary production on adjacent land, with particular regard to land values and the viability of infrastructure for such production
- Compatibility between the proposed or likely development and the existing use of the surrounding land
- The potential impacts of land use and development on the spread of plant and animal pests from areas of known infestation into agricultural areas
- Land capability.

There are currently no specific planning guidelines for assessing agricultural impact of developing BESS in Victoria. Two related renewable energy guidelines have been considered during this assessment. It is acknowledged that these guidelines provide an indication of standards and considerations, but are not directly applicable to this BESS Project

1. Queensland's *Planning Guideline – State code 270 Battery storage facility development (Dec 2025)*. All relevant information and considerations identified in the guideline have been provided and/or assessed
2. Victoria's *Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guidelines (Oct 2022)*. All relevant considerations in the guideline are met with the exception of the reduction in agricultural productivity.

It has also been acknowledged that the recent Victorian planning amendment VC271 (gazetted in February 2026) provides for all planning schemes in Victoria to allow an exemption from the minimum subdivision lot size in the Farming and Rural Activity Zones for utility installation to transmit, distribute or store electricity. This facilitates the development of infrastructure including BESS whilst aiming to reduce the fragmentation and permanent loss of agricultural land for production.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

A literature review and field visit were undertaken to identify relevant existing conditions and to inform the assessment of the Project's impact on agriculture. This work included:

- Desktop review of relevant literature and agricultural production data
- Field assessment of the agricultural capability of the property
- Discuss land management practices with the landowner.

DESKTOP REVIEW

A desktop review was undertaken through the following methodology:

- An imagery assessment using online tools Google Earth and Google Maps to gain an initial understanding of the site, it's location, site use, and surrounding area. These points were then confirmed through the field assessment

- Soil type, topography, and surface water were mapped (using publicly available data sets such as available through *VicData*)
- The soil description, soil map units, and suitable agricultural use were confirmed through publicly available soil information
- Publicly available data was used to confirm the underlying topography and landform.
- Vegetation across the study area was initially assessed using GIS data and imagery. The field assessment was then used to ground truth the data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of vegetation
- Climate was assessed using *Long Paddock* SILO data (<https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/silo/>). There was a *Long Paddock* data point slightly to the south of the proposed site at latitude -38.3 and longitude 146.45. Daily data was obtained for the period 1st January 1974 to 31st December 2025 for daily rainfall in mm, maximum and minimum temperature
- The relative value of agricultural production was assessed by comparing the economic analysis with ABARES 2021 data. ABARES and ABS have been updating their methodology for collecting this type of data, however there are gaps in the information at present, which means that the 2021 data is the most recent complete data set.

FIELD ASSESSMENT AND CONSULTATION

A field assessment of the agricultural capability of the land was conducted on 2nd March 2026. During that site visit, a discussion was held with the landowner, on past and current farm management practices and production activities.

3.3 LIMITATIONS, UNCERTAINTIES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The following limitations, uncertainties and assumptions apply to this assessment:

- It is assumed that all agricultural land on this property (97ha total with 93ha grazeable) will be removed from agricultural production during the construction stage
- It is also assumed that the remaining farmland outside the project footprint after construction (i.e., areas without infrastructure) will not be returned to agricultural production during the operation stage. It is possible that up to 60 hectares of land could be leased to an adjacent landholder, but on its own, it is not a viable farming enterprise due to the small size
- Latest ABARES and ABS data for assessing agricultural values is currently incomplete, meaning that the 2021 dataset is the most recent complete dataset. This dataset is now 5 years old but remains the most reliable source for this assessment.

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4 Existing Conditions

This section outlines the existing conditions of the property, specifically as they relate to agriculture and agricultural production.

As noted in Section 2.2, the Project site would extend across Tramway Road to connect to the existing Hazelwood Terminal Station. This agricultural impact assessment is confined to the study area as shown in Figure 2-2 and Figure 4-1, below.

4.1 PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The BESS facility is proposed to be constructed on a farm (comprised of 2 properties) to the east of Tramway Road, as illustrated in Figure 2-2 and Figure 4-1.

This farm is bordered by Tramway Road on the west and by other farming properties to the north, east and south. The property is zoned Farming Zone (FZ-1) in the Latrobe planning scheme. Bennetts Creek is an ephemeral (intermittent) waterway that runs through the south-west corner of property (Figure 4-12 & Figure 4-14). The property directly to the west, across Tramway Road, contains an existing terminal station on land zoned Special Use (SUZ-1).

There are existing high voltage transmission lines running through the property from north-east to west, and another through the most southerly area of the property.

A house currently exists near the southern boundary of the property. This house will be retained for use as a Project site office. All other structures, including sheds, cattle yards, and a disused dairy, will be removed in preparation for construction of the BESS.



Figure 4-1: Aerial imagery of study area

The following photographs were taken during the site assessment in March 2026. They show the landscape, and current pasture, livestock, structures and infrastructure across the property (Figure 4-2 to Figure 4-6).



Figure 4-2: Transmission lines and surrounding hills



Figure 4-3: View from driveway towards Tramway Road and the Hazelwood Terminal Station

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Figure 4-4: House, shedding and cattle yard

4.1.1 LAND USE

The study area is approximately 97ha, currently used by the landowners for beef production (growing-out steers). The property was previously used as a dairy farm, (milking approximately 140 cows) but has not been used for dairy production for nearly 5 years.

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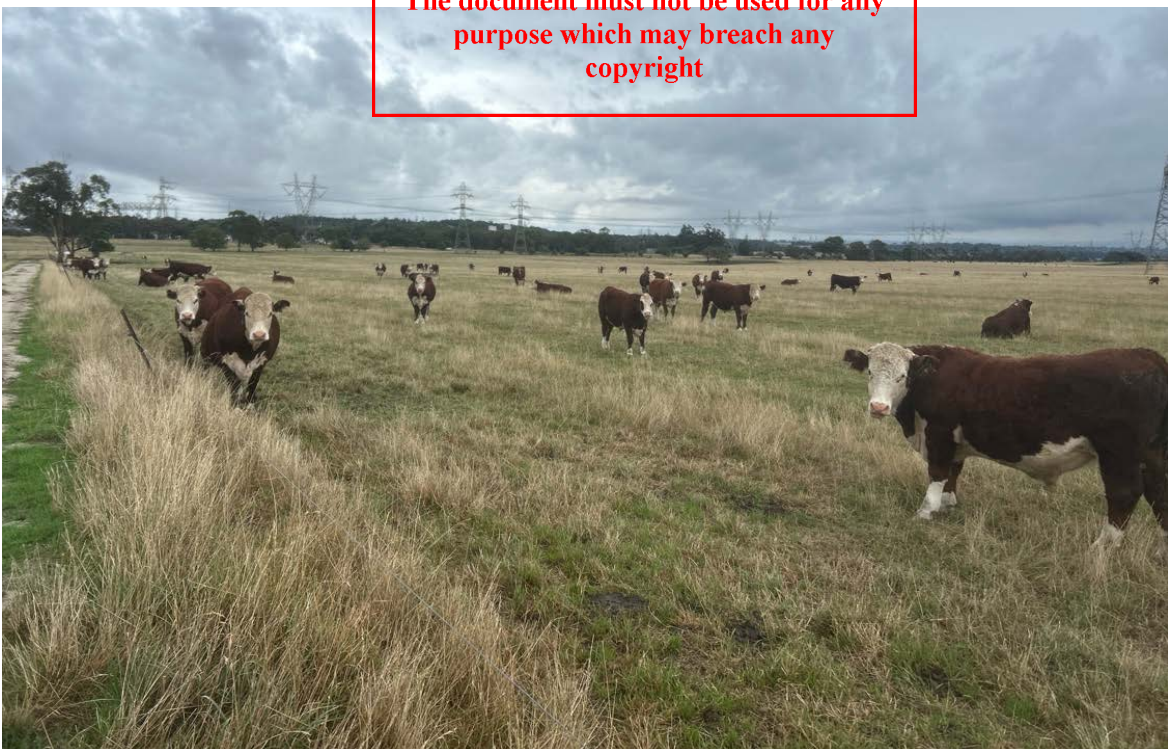


Figure 4-5: Cattle grazing on the property

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Figure 4-6: Disused dairy located near the existing house and sheds

4.1.2 SOIL TYPE

The soil map unit at the study area consists of both chromosol soils and sodosol soils.

Chromosol soils are part of the Yinnar soil map unit of West Gippsland found on slightly higher ground and broad plains. They have surface soils that are fine sandy loams to silty clay loams, often with a sporadically bleached sub-surface. There is a clear to abrupt change to the light to medium clay subsoils which is generally quite deep at 40-60cm. Pale coloured medium to heavy clays continue to at least 1m depth¹.

Chromosol soils are suitable, and are generally used, for intensive grazing, usually of dairy and beef cattle.

Sodosol soils are found in the Loy Yang soil map unit of West Gippsland. The soils are texture contrast soils, meaning that they have light textured surface soils abruptly overlying medium to heavy clays. The surface soils are often hard-setting sandy loams to sandy clay loams that are greyish brown. The underlying sub-surface soils is always bleached and often contain iron nodules. The clays occur abruptly underneath at 30-45cm and are brown or yellowish-brown mottled medium to heavy clays².

The Sodosol soils on the Loy Yang map unit are cleared and used for grazing. During wetter periods of the year, the surface soils may become saturated with restriction of downward water movement due to the clay subsoils which makes it challenging for agriculture.

The soils in the study area are moderate to low quality soils and are not niche to any particular crop or agricultural activity.

¹ VRO, <https://vro.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/wgregn.nsf/pages/wg_soil_maffra_yinnar>, viewed 19th March 2026

² VRO, <https://vro.agriculture.vic.gov.au/dpi/vro/wgregn.nsf/pages/wg_soil_maffra_loy_yang>, viewed 19th March 2026

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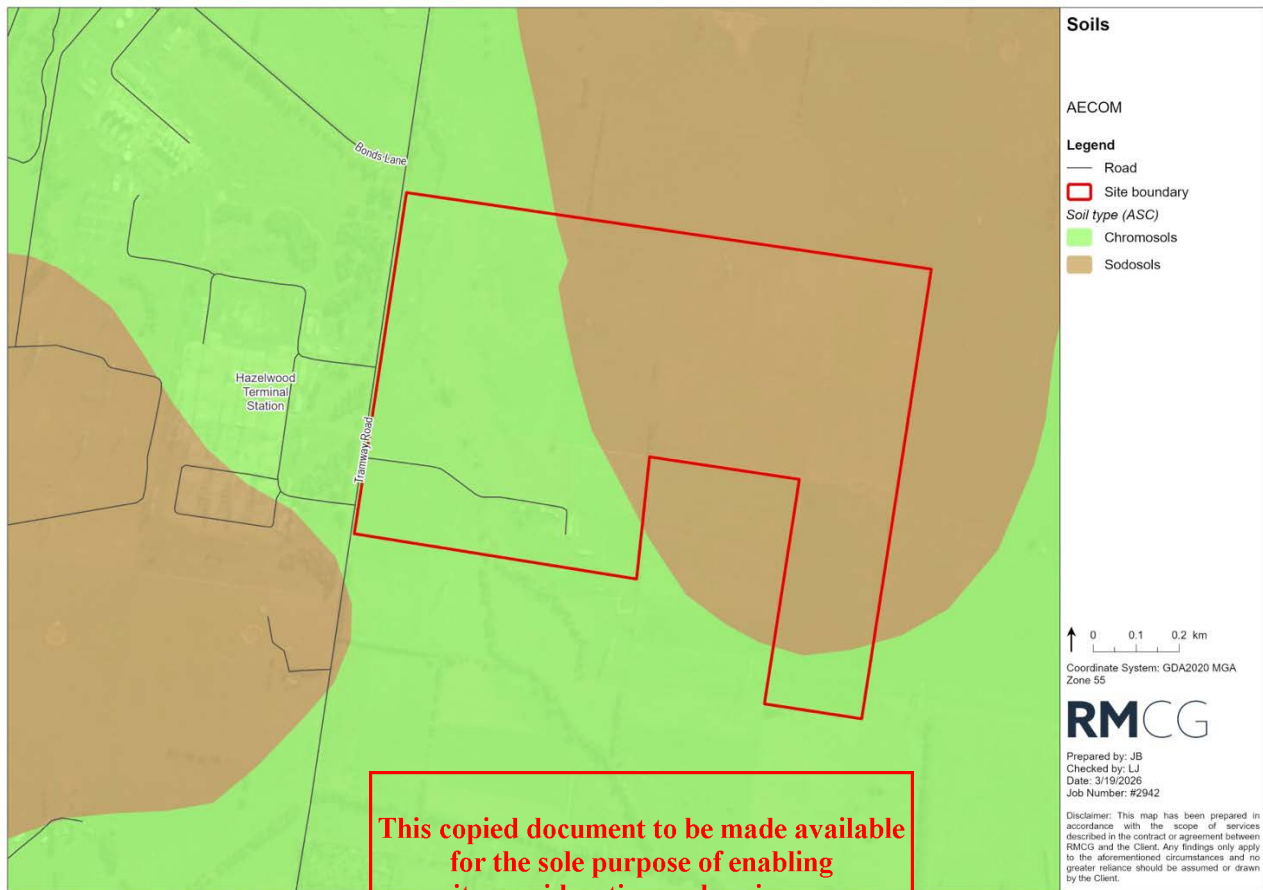


Figure 4-7: Soil map of the study area



Figure 4-8: View of soil in the study area

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4.1.3 TOPOGRAPHY

The study area is an old stagnant alluvial plain that is now defunct and has poorly defined streams, levees, floodplains, and back swamps. The topography map in Figure 4-9 shows that the study area is predominantly flat. This was confirmed during the site assessment.



Figure 4-9: Study area topography

4.1.4 VEGETATION

The study area has been cleared and levelled for agricultural production. Most of the property is growing improved ryegrass and clover pasture species (Italian ryegrass, sub-clover and some older perennial ryegrass). The species sown are indicative of a shorter growing season than experienced in Gippsland's higher rainfall areas, which are typically sown to perennial species.

There were no notable agricultural weed species observed during the site visit.

Native trees are scattered throughout the property, primarily along Bennetts Creek and fencelines, and are not fenced off from livestock. These trees provided some shade and shelter for livestock.

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Figure 4-10: Cleared agricultural land in the study area

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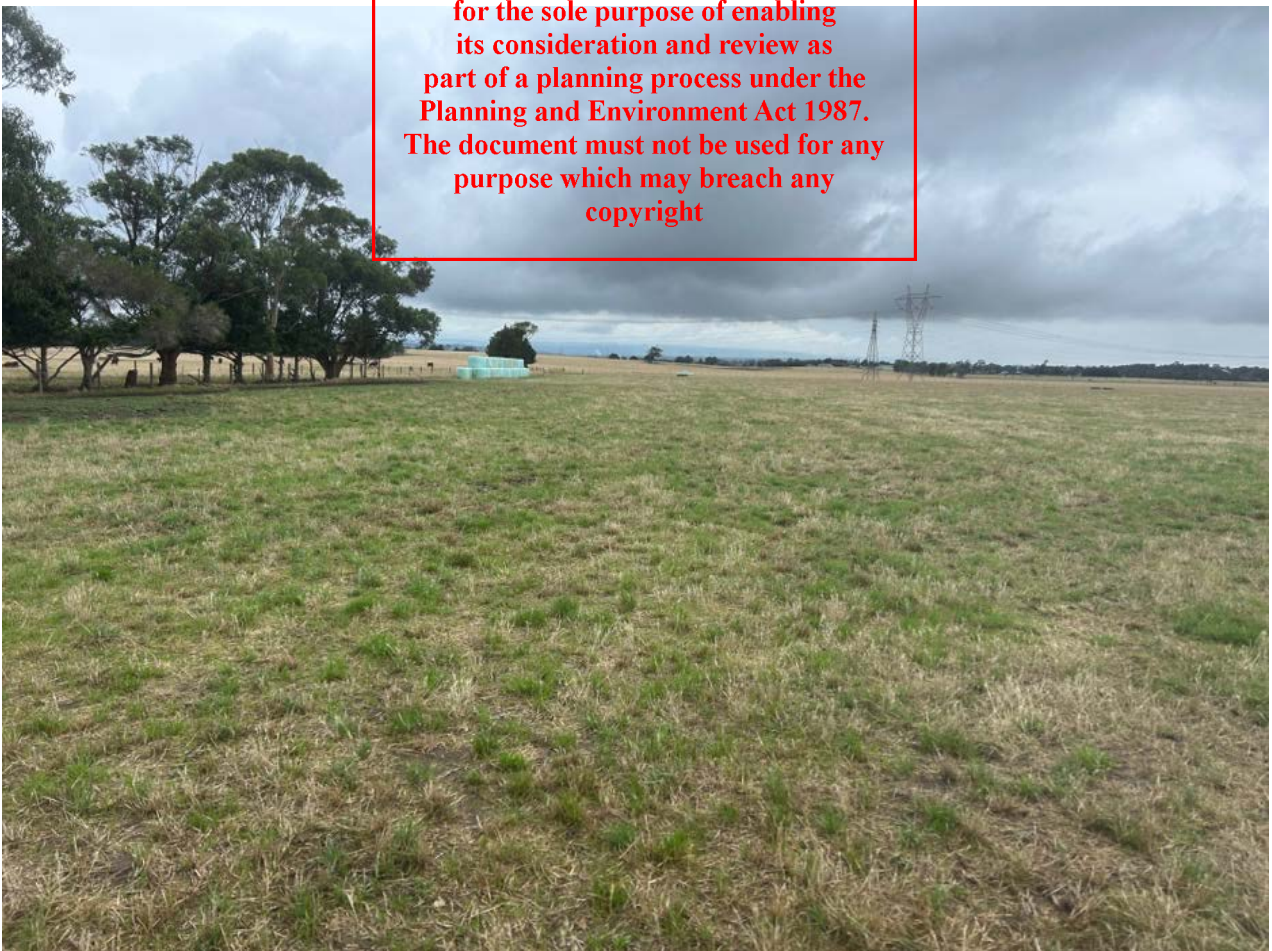


Figure 4-11: Native vegetation and silage bales along an internal fenceline

4.1.5 CLIMATE

Climate data was obtained from *Long Paddock* SILO site, which is located nearby in Hazelwood³. This climate site was chosen due to its close vicinity.

Climate and rainfall influence the agricultural potential of land.

Climatic patterns in the region are temperate. Table 2-1 shows that the average annual rainfall is 764.4mm with a distribution pattern of heavier rains during winter and spring. There is generally moderate rainfall during autumn and summer, although detailed summer data shows high variability from year to year.

Monthly maximum average temperatures throughout the year range from 17.4 degrees to 37.1 degrees celcius. During the winter months the area is subject to frosts with temperatures frequently falling below zero.

It is considered that the temperate climate could support a range of agricultural activities including grazing, pasture crops, dairying or some permanent horticulture.

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³ Long Paddock, <https://www.longpaddock.qld.gov.au/silo/point-data/#responseTab2>, viewed 19th March 2026

Table 4-1: Monthly Climate and Rainfall Statistics for SILO site*

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	ANN
Mean max temp (°C)	37.1	36.2	33.4	27.3	22.0	17.5	17.4	19.8	24.1	28.2	31.8	34.5	27.4
Mean min temp (°C)	6.8	7.0	5.8	3.6	1.5	0.0	-0.7	-0.1	1.1	2.4	4.1	5.6	3.1
Mean rainfall (mm)	51.5	34.7	46.7	58.8	62.6	70.8	74.1	79.2	82.1	73.8	67.9	62.2	764.4
Median rainfall (mm)	55.2	27.6	43.9	50.8	59.3	60.5	70.9	75.6	83.2	70.8	65.5	57.7	
Mean rain days >1mm	6.5	4.7	7.2	8.5	9.7	10.9	12.3	13.4	12.6	11.4	9.6	8.0	114.9

* SILO site is located at Latitude: -38.30, Longitude: 146.45. Data is collated for the period 1 Jan 1974 to 31 Dec 2025

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4.1.6 SURFACE WATER

Bennetts Creek, is an ephemeral waterway, running through the site from the northwest to the south. There are two small farm dams, both with limited capacity and catchments. The dams are used for livestock watering but are likely to be unreliable in drier periods. (The property also has access to the town's reticulated water supply for stock watering.)



Figure 4-12: Surface water in and around the study area

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Figure 4-13: Largest dam in the study area

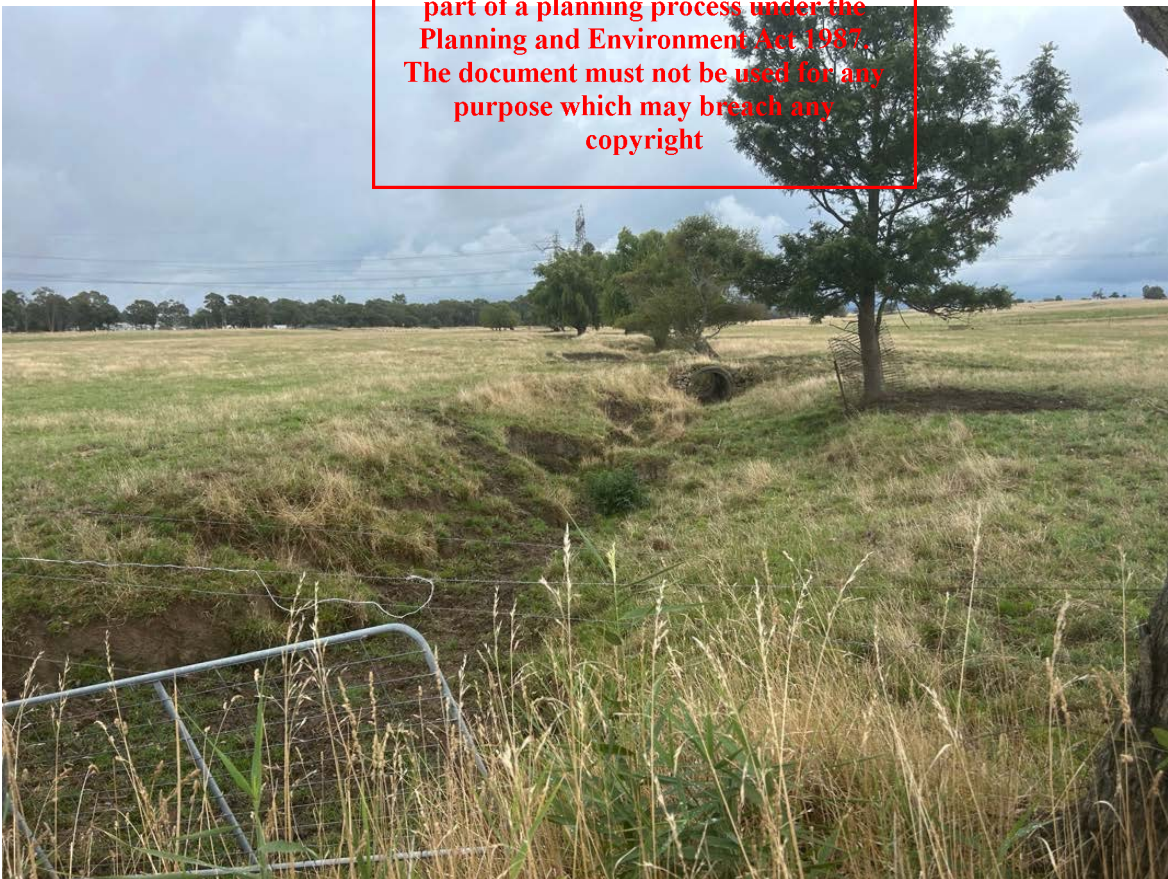


Figure 4-14: Bennetts Creek – an ephemeral (intermittent) waterway

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4.1.7 GROUNDWATER

The study area sits within the Central Gippsland groundwater catchment. Data provided in the Central Gippsland *Groundwater Resource Report* (DELWP, 2019), indicates that the depth to the water table is 10-20 m below the surface with a salinity of 501-1,000 mg/L⁴.

There is no access to bore water in the study area.

4.1.8 IRRIGATION & WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

There is no irrigation infrastructure or access to irrigation water in the study area.

Stock water is predominantly obtained from reticulated town water connected to troughs. There are some farm dams with a limited catchment which are not reticulated to troughs.

Bennetts Creek running through the study area is ephemeral and was dry at the time of the site assessment.



Figure 4-15: Stock trough, connected to reticulated town water

4.2 AGRICULTURAL VALUES

This section provides a summary of agricultural values for the study area. This assessment includes its relative value to strategic, high-quality land in Victoria; its estimated economic production; and the regional significance of that production.

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⁴ Groundwater Resource Report, DELWP 2019.
<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/Geocortex/Essentials/EXT/REST/TempFiles/groundwater_report_20260319_132214.pdf?guid=dac8c9b1-fbeb-4ead-a02e-aae6bfb3d649&contentType=application%2Fpdf>, viewed 19th March 2026

4.2.1 QUALITY OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

According to Victoria's *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline (DELWP, 2022)*, agricultural land may be considered high-value and strategically important due to a combination of features such as:

- High-quality soils
- Good rainfall
- Access to water
- Resilience to climate change
- Infrastructure investment
- Integration with industry.

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The study area has been assessed as low to moderate for each of these features. There are moderate quality soils; moderate rainfall; no access to irrigation; potential shortening of the growing season in the future with a warmer drier climate; little infrastructure investment that is currently operational; and a moderate integration with related industry. Hence, none of these key features have been assessed as high for the study area.

Agriculture Victoria's *Strategic Agriculture Land and Development (SALAD) Report (2020)* defines high quality productive agricultural land as:

Land which is used for animal husbandry or crop raising, and is capable of continuing to sustain agricultural production, and:

a) is of prime, or very good, agricultural quality, having regard to soil type, growing season, and availability of infrastructure, and is of sufficient extent to support agricultural activities on an economically viable scale; or

b) has been identified through a regional, sub-regional, or local study as being of particularly good quality and strategic significance for agriculture in the regional or local context.

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As outlined above, the study area does not meet this definition of high-quality productive land. However, the study area has features that provide moderate agricultural value, such as:

- The climate is suitable for agricultural activities
- The soils are of moderate quality and suitable for grazing
- There is access to stock water but no access or capability for irrigation.

4.2.2 ECONOMIC EVALUATION

Beef production is the most relevant land-use on which to base the economic evaluation. The farm had operated as a dairy farm until about five years ago. However, the relatively small land area, limitations on expansion, ageing dairy infrastructure and moderate rainfall mean that it is more likely to remain in beef production or as a dairy support area (e.g. provision of fodder or use for agistment).

Beef production on the property would be expected to generate income of approximately \$120,000 per year. The *Livestock Farm Monitor* project¹ identifies an average for Gippsland beef gross income of \$1,043 / ha in 2023/24 or a 5-year average of \$1,288 / ha.

Approximately 93 ha of the study area's 97 ha are considered productive, with the remaining 4 ha being in use for laneways, buildings, trees, dams, drains, etc. Based on these statistics, the 93 ha productive area would have generated a gross income of \$96,999 for 2023/24 or \$119,784 for the 5-year average. This property is

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unlikely to grow more pasture per ha than the average beef farm in Gippsland as the rainfall is not high. However, in some years this property may generate as much as three times the gross income (\$360,000 / year) of the average Gippsland beef farm given that it operates as a beef trading enterprise⁵.

Generally, RMCG estimates that a farm business with a single owner operator (that is, one full-time equivalent labour unit) needs in the order of \$500,000 gross income / year to be financially viable. This estimate assumes around 60% operating costs, 10% for equipment depreciation, 20% for owner's salary and 10% to fund borrowings or profit.

The economic value of the property at \$119,784 is determined as insufficient to fully support a single owner operator. A gross income of \$360,000 as a beef trading enterprise would still be insufficient to fully support a single owner operator. This property would need to be part of a larger landholding or farming enterprise to achieve viability as a profitable business.

After construction of the Project, sheep or cattle could possibly be grazed around the development area. This would require some infrastructure investment (such as water supply, fencing, yards) but this is unlikely to generate significant income.⁶

4.2.3 RELATIVE VALUE (REGION AND STATE)

To put the value of the site into a regional perspective, the relative value of production calculated in Section 4.2.2 can be compared to that of the local region. ABS data for 2020/21, shows the total agricultural value for the Latrobe local government area (LGA) as \$59,113,797. Therefore, the production from the study area of \$119,784 represents approximately 0.2% of the LGA's agricultural production.

Further ABS data shows that there is a total of 36,333 ha of agricultural land in the Latrobe LGA. The study area's 97 ha therefore represents 0.27% of the LGA's agriculturally productive land.

In a broader statewide context, the study area delivers approximately 0.0007%⁷ of the state's agricultural value of output.

In conclusion, the economic output from the site is economically insignificant at a regional and state level.⁷

4.2.4 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANT AGRICULTURAL LAND

There are currently no specific BESS guidelines for assessing agricultural impact in Victoria. However, some states are amending relevant legislation and regulation to ensure BESS developments are assessed at the same level as other renewable infrastructure.

Two related renewable energy guidelines have been considered during this assessment. It is acknowledged that these guidelines are helpful in determining the standards and likely considerations, but not directly applicable to this BESS Project:

1. Queensland's *Planning Guideline - State code 27: Battery storage facility development (Dec 2025)*. All relevant information and considerations identified in the guideline have been provided and/or assessed
2. Victoria's *Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guidelines (Oct 2022)*. All relevant considerations in the guideline are met with the exception of the reduction in agricultural productivity.

Considerations for agriculture and comments relative to this Project are outlined in Table 4-2.

⁵ These operations purchase more mature stock and hold them for a relatively short time, finishing them for processor markets.

⁶ Agriculture Victoria, Livestock Farm Monitor project 2023/24

⁷ ABS, Victoria agricultural output \$16,450,753,047

Table 4-2: Guideline Considerations

FACILITY DECISION GUIDELINES	RESPONSE RELEVANT TO THE STUDY AREA
The impact on the loss of the site if it has high –quality soils, particularly soils that are niche to a type of crop or other agricultural activity	The site is classified as having moderate quality soils. The soils are suitable for grazing. They are not considered to be niche or desirable for high value horticultural crops.
The potential loss of reliable, accessible water (such as irrigated areas) and its impact at a local or regional scale	Not applicable
The impact of fragmentation and a change of land use to non-agriculture activity on local and regional productivity and output	The change of land use is unlikely to cause significant additional fragmentation. The impact of the change in land use from this property will not have a significant impact on regional output.
The impact of a change of land use on recent and/or current efforts to modernise and reform agricultural activity in the area	There are no notable recent and/or current efforts to modernise and reform agricultural activity in the area
Whether the land has specifically been set aside or defined for agricultural use and development in a planning scheme or other strategic document	The Latrobe planning scheme identifies the site as being within the Farming Zone (FZ-1). It is also within the draft Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone The study area is covered by the State Resource Overlay (SRO) which extends across much of the LGA's land area that lies south of the Princes Highway.
Whether the change in land use is to the detriment of a government's previous or existing investment and support for the site or the area	The proposed change in land use does not appear to be to the detriment of a government's previous or existing investment and support for the site or area. It does support the government's objectives for renewable energy development in the (draft) Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone.
Whether the proposed facility can co-locate with other agricultural activity to help diversify farm income without reducing productivity.	Some land within the property (outside of the project footprint) could be re-fenced after construction and returned to agriculture. This could potentially include up to 60ha. However, the property would have limited access and agricultural infrastructure and would likely only be viable for adjacent farmers to lease. 60ha is not of a viable scale for a profitable farm business in this area.
The impact of the proposal on the protection of declared irrigation districts	Not applicable
Avoid impacts on high-quality agricultural land	The study area has not been assessed as high-quality agricultural land
Assess the scale of loss of agricultural land and production	Loss of agricultural production is negligible at LGA and state scales (0.27% and 0.0007% respectively).

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5 Agriculture Impact Assessment

This section describes the potential impacts on agriculture through the life of the Project, from Construction through to Operation and Decommissioning. Potential impacts include:

- Loss of land for agricultural production
- Risk of contamination or biosecurity breach on farming land.

The following sections provide assessment of potential impacts and recommended mitigations.

5.1 CONSTRUCTION PHASE

Agricultural production on the property will cease during construction.

There are two potential impacts on agriculture during construction:

1. Production and economic losses
2. Contamination or biosecurity risks.

PRODUCTION & ECONOMIC LOSSES

All agricultural production on the property will cease during construction and agricultural infrastructure (yards, fencing, troughs, etc.) will be removed, as required. This means a total loss of the agricultural production from the property. Current production is valued at \$119,784 per annum. This equates to 0.2% of the Latrobe LGA's agricultural production. This percentage may overstate the significance of the production loss since Latrobe LGA only contributes 0.4% of the State's agricultural production.

Overall, this impact on production is negligible at both a regional and State level.

CONTAMINATION & BIOSECURITY RISKS

Potential contamination and biosecurity breaches associated with the Project could impact on the study area and nearby agricultural land.

The movement of vehicles, equipment, soils, animals and people between properties can potentially transmit disease, weeds, pests and pathogens. These can be brought onto (or spread from) the property through vectors such as contaminated equipment, boots, water, soil, plants or vehicles.

Contamination from electrical equipment, particularly Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals, also poses a long-term risk to agricultural production for affected land and waters.

In general terms, contamination or biosecurity breaches can lead to a range of serious impacts for agriculture, including:

- Reduced production of meat, crops and fodder
- Loss of industry or market accreditation, such as the Livestock Production Assurance program (LPA)
- Reduced livestock health leading to increased management costs and time
- Restrictions on the movement or sale of livestock and crops
- Reduced prices for produce.

This Project has been assessed as having a low to moderate potential impact on agricultural production through biosecurity breaches or contamination, prior to mitigation. These potential impacts are posed to

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adjacent and downstream properties should weeds, pests, disease or contamination be transported offsite via wind, soil or water vectors.

MITIGATIONS & RESIDUAL IMPACTS

All agricultural production will cease in the study area during the construction stage. There are no mitigations recommended for the negligible production and economic losses from this property.

Contamination and biosecurity management is a recommended mitigation within the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the Project. Contamination and biosecurity management should be risk-based and may include:

- Hygiene procedures, including washdown for equipment and vehicles (both incoming and outgoing)
- Weed and pest monitoring and management (whole-of-property and for entire Project life)
- Livestock management (if any portion of the property is used for grazing during operation phase)
- Spill and contamination management and response.

These management measures should be documented in the EMP including detail of specific actions, inspection and compliance schedules, and reporting requirements.

There is a very low residual risk of impact from contamination or biosecurity breaches where a comprehensive, risk-based management program is enacted.

5.2 OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE PHASE

The loss of agricultural production and the risk of a contamination or biosecurity breach (as described for the Construction Phase) will persist for the life of the Project. Some land outside the Project footprint (up to 60ha) could potentially be returned to agriculture.

Biosecurity risks will reduce significantly with lower traffic and worker movements, but the need for property-wide biosecurity controls remains. Contamination is a persistent risk for the project that must be managed with strict management and controls and tailored response plans. Biosecurity breaches and contamination can impact adjacent and downstream properties as outlined in Section 5.1, above.

If effective management procedures for biosecurity and contamination are implemented, residual risk of impact is assessed as very low.

5.3 DECOMMISSIONING PHASE

The operational life of the BESS is indicatively estimated at 40 years, after which time the project would commence decommissioning.

Decommissioning of Project components will be managed in accordance with the relevant laws and policies at the time of decommissioning. During decommissioning, above ground components would be removed and recycled where possible, and land rehabilitated. The battery units would either be disposed of, repurposed or recycled at a licensed disposal facility. The decommissioning timeframe is expected to be approximately 12 months post operation phase.

Decommissioning will provide an opportunity for agricultural activity to resume on the property. However, the ability to graze livestock or raise crops will be determined by Project legacy issues. These could include:

- Abandoned infrastructure (above or below ground)
- Contamination (including pollutants, waste, or introduced weeds, pests, pathogens or diseases).

To enable agriculture to resume, above-ground infrastructure should be removed, and below-ground infrastructure should be removed to a minimum of 300 millimetres depth (preferably to one metre depth). Some infrastructure may be retained if agreed in consultation with the landowner (e.g. access roads).

Collapse or disintegration of underground infrastructure could potentially lead to subsidence of the ground surface, causing an impediment to farm activity or creating risk of livestock injuries. Mitigation efforts should be made during decommissioning to prevent future collapse and ground movement.

Any contamination (such as pollutants, waste) that has occurred during the life of the Project should be managed or remediated as required under existing regulations (e.g., the *Environment Protection Act, 2017*: 'General Environmental Duty').

Any project-introduced weeds, pests, pathogens or diseases that could not be controlled and eradicated during project life would become the ongoing management responsibility of the landholder.

In summary, due to the long project life and 'future unknowns', decommissioning impacts and mitigations are difficult to define. Nevertheless, if the mitigations (as outlined in this report) for construction and operation phases are effectively implemented, then the risk of legacy impacts at the decommissioning stage would be very low.

5.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

If changes in land use are replicated on other farms within the Latrobe LGA, the cumulative impact on the local and regional agricultural output should be considered.

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6 Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to assess the potential agriculture impacts and risks associated with Hazelwood East BESS to inform the preparation of the planning permit required for the Project.

The relevant planning scheme, policy and guidelines for agricultural land have been considered, including:

- Latrobe Planning Scheme *Clause 14.01 - 1s*
- *Live Work Latrobe: Rural Land Use Strategy (2019)*
- Victorian Planning Provisions amendment VC271 (Feb 2026)
- Victoria's *Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guideline (2022)*
- Queensland's *Planning guideline - State code 27: Battery storage facility development (Dec 2025)*.

The climate is suitable for agriculture, and the soils are of moderate quality, making the farm suitable for grazing livestock. However, this study area does not meet the definition of high-quality, productive agricultural land.

The loss of agricultural production of the study area (valued at approximately \$120,000 per year) is considered very low relative to both the regional (Latrobe LGA) and state levels. Therefore, this Project is expected to have a negligible impact on regional and state level agricultural production.

The risk of contamination and biosecurity breaches should be mitigated with appropriate risk-based environmental and biosecurity management measures throughout the life of the Project. With the implementation of these management measures, risks of impact to agriculture are considered very low.

It is noted that the study area is located in close proximity to an existing terminal station, providing strategic compatibility between the proposed Project and some of the surrounding land use.

If this (or other development) change in land use is replicated on other farms, the cumulative impact on the local and regional agricultural output should be considered.

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Document review and authorisation

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