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**Agricultural Assessment Report  
WINTON BESS**

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**Prepared: J Shovelton**

**28 April 2025**

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Meridian Agriculture Pty Limited  
ABN 69 093 095 875 ACN 093 095 875  
96 Harbours Rd Yendon VIC 5323

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Winton BESS. Agricultural Assessment

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## Agricultural Assessment Report Winton BESS

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### Executive Summary

This Agricultural Assessment Report examines the impact of the installation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) at 6 Bower's Road, Winton on a range of agricultural considerations.

The property allotment (Plan Number:1TP98336) covers approximately 33.6ha. The area proposed for the BESS will occupy approximately 3.5ha. The site is currently used for grazing. The soils in this location are classed as soils of moderate fertility with a tendency for waterlogging which limits their ability to be highly productive.

The proposed BESS at this site would have no long - term detrimental effects on the productive capacity of the soil, nor would it have a significant impact on the overall productivity of the region or State, nor impact on the ability of neighbouring businesses to operate.

The loss of agricultural productivity due to the construction of the BESS will have a negligible impact on the turnover of local service providers.

### Background

An agricultural assessment of the site for the Winton BESS has been requested by NGH Consulting Pty Ltd on behalf of Avenis Energy. The preparation of the report has been informed by the planning requirements of the *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline* Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, October 2022 which require the following considerations:

- To encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base.
- To encourage diversity in primary industry enterprises and systems appropriate for the area.
- To minimise the fragmentation and alienation of resource lands.
- To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones.

Further, the report also considered aspects including:

- 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 potential loss of reliable, accessible water (such as irrigated areas) and its impact at a local or regional scale.
- the impact of fragmentation and a change of land use to non-agriculture activity on local and regional productivity and output.
- the impact of a change of land use on recent and/or current efforts to modernise and reform agricultural activity in the area.

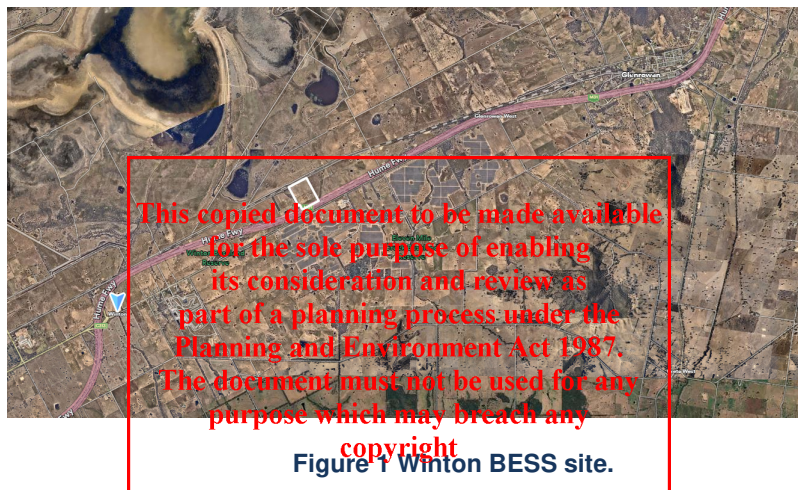
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- whether the land has specifically been set aside or defined for agricultural use and development in a planning scheme or other strategic document.
- whether the change in land use is to the detriment of a government's previous or existing investment and support for the site or the area.
- whether the proposed battery energy storage facility can co-locate with other agricultural activity, to help diversify farm income without reducing productivity.

The site is located in the Farming Zone and Transport Zone 2 of the Benalla Shire. The requirements for this zone, outlined in the Benalla Shire Planning Scheme, are covered by the Statewide guidelines.

## Site Location

The proposed site (shown in Figure 1) is located approximately 13.5 km northeast of the Benalla town centre and 9.5 km southwest of Glenrowan.



The site is bounded on the western side by Bower's Road, on the eastern side by the Hume Freeway and on the northern side by Lee Road. The location of the BESS site in relation to the allotment is shown in Figure 2.





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The soils on the site are derived from Shepparton Formation alluvial sediments (Qs). No detailed soil surveys have been undertaken in the Winton area, but generalised soil types are described in Atlas of Australian Soils<sup>2</sup>. The soils on the lower slopes of this landform are hard, yellow mottled soils. These soils tend to have a bleached A2 horizon indicating moderate to poor drainage. Poor drainage is also indicated by the presence of yellow mottling in the subsoil.

## Agricultural Use

The property was purchased by the current owner approximately 35 years ago. The property has been used for cattle and sheep grazing and recently, for agistment. The property has a low fertilizer history. Its small area limits its ability to be cropped commercially.

The site has no capacity to be irrigated and therefore its future agricultural use would be confined to dryland grazing.

## Agricultural Assessment

### Strategic importance of land

The site has no strategic importance. It is zoned FZ and TRZ2 and the area is not specifically mentioned in any planning scheme as being of high value agricultural land nor has the land been subject to government programs that would limit the ability of the facility to proceed.

### Agricultural Productivity

The BESS will only occupy approximately 3.5ha. The remaining area of approximately 30 ha can still be used for agricultural activities. The removal of 3.5ha of arable/grazing land will be insignificant in its impact on regional production. At a moderate stocking rate for the soil type and fertility, the 3.5 ha occupied by the BESS would carry around 2-3 breeding cows. The loss of this number of stock is insignificant in relation to the State herd of 2,852,000 head<sup>3</sup>.

Likewise, the loss of trade to service providers would have an unmeasurable impact on their turnover.

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### Agrovoltaic considerations

The paddock vegetation around the BESS will require management to reduce fire risk over summer. If grazing was to be considered, there is no limitation to the stock type that can be run. Neither is there any limitation to physically undertake cropping on the area surrounding the BESS, although this unlikely due to the small area of land available.

### Impact on agricultural use of land

At decommissioning of the BESS, there will be no residual detrimental impact on the productivity of the site. Native soils in the area were deficient in a number of key nutrients which have been somewhat addressed during agricultural development. Soil fertility will decline over time, but this decline can be corrected through the addition of suitable amendments as required.

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.csiro.au/collection/csiro:40340?tab=data>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/agriculture/australian-agriculture-livestock/latest-release#:~:text=Nationally%2C%20there%20were%20an%20estimated,by%205%25%20to%202.9%20million.>

## Cumulative impacts.

The BESS site is surrounded by large scale solar farms on the north-east, the south-east and on the north-west.

There are unlikely to be any cumulative effects on agriculture from the establishment of a BESS at this scale of infrastructure development.

## Conclusion

The proposed Winton BESS, 13.5 km northeast of the Benalla town centre and 9.5 km southwest of Glenrowan, will cover an area of 3.5ha of a 33.5 ha agricultural site.

The site has been used mainly for grazing.

The soils are of moderate quality, with low recent fertilizer history which limits their potential for high productivity.

The loss of production from the diversion of this land to a BESS will have an insignificant impact on the State's agricultural production and is unlikely to impact on the activities of surrounding farming properties.

J Shovelton  
Senior Consultant  
Meridian Agriculture

28 April 2025

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