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EnergyAustralia

LIGHT THE WAY

Lauren Stephens

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Dear Lauren,

Re: Response to Public Objection - MODDA013/23- Geotechnical Investigation Works- Lake Lyell Magpie Hollow Road South Bowenfels

Thank you for providing an opportunity to respond to a public objection Lithgow City Council has received in relation to EnergyAustralia's application to modify a development permit for geotechnical investigation works - *MODDA013/23- Geotechnical Investigation Works- Lake Lyell Magpie Hollow Road South Bowenfels*.

We provide the following information in response to issues outlined in this objection for the interest of Council and its elected representatives. We are also happy for Council to provide this information to the author of the public objection if this is considered to be appropriate.

Intent of studies and release of study information

EnergyAustralia is seeking to extend its geotechnical investigation works to allow additional bore holes to be drilled for the purpose of establishing a groundwater monitoring network and to assess the technical and environmental feasibility of the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Project. Accurate geological and hydrogeological data is critical to understanding specifically how pumped hydro energy storage may be built within our intended project site.

Some data collected via this investigation may relate to areas of our privately owned land that are later excluded from the project's design footprint. As such, data that is collected as part of this investigation needs to remain confidential and will not be made public. An interpretation of how the geotechnical and hydrogeological data has been relied on to inform the project's eventual design footprint will, however, be included in the Project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which will be shared as part of our project Public Exhibition.

Our firm view is that good engagement should provide clear and concise information about the project and its impacts, and the community is given the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way. In line with this, we wish to point specifically to information provided to our Community Consultative Committee, and readily available on our website – please see the presentation to CCC members, April 2023 (Slides 42-45). We also note that the drop in sessions, as mentioned in the Complainant's letter, were provided as an appropriate, targeted and accessible opportunity for community members to learn more about the proposed geotechnical and hydrogeological program.

Purported drilling discharge to Farmers Creek

We have previously responded fully to Council on the reported pollution event observed in Farmers Creek in February this year. We reject that this issue has been 'sidestepped' in communications with concerned members of the community. The Complainant was unable to provide evidence of pollution (photos, samples) and follow up investigations by our onsite environmental management team and program contractors, GHD did not identify any specific issue for concern or establish a connection between this alleged pollution and our onsite drilling program. Regardless, outcomes of this investigation were provided to Council, to inform if further action, if any, was required. No further action has been warranted. EnergyAustralia will continue to monitor water quality in Lake Lyell as per its usual routine monitoring program.

Lack of transparency

EnergyAustralia does not support the view that it has acted without adequate transparency during implementation of its onsite geotechnical program. In addition to extensive documentation and briefings provided to Council as part of this Modification Development Application, we have also provided:

- Correspondence direct to concerned residents
- Publicly issued E- bulletins
- Website content
- Detailed briefings to the Community Consultative Committee
- Social media posts.
- Hosting a visit by Council members and staff to the drilling locations during the drilling period and after.

We remain available to answer questions and concerns as required and continue to provide general information on the rationale and approach to the development of the Lake Lyell PHES to the broader community.

Parallels with Snowy Hydro 2.0

EnergyAustralia considers comments comparing Lake Lyell PHES to Snowy Hydro 2.0 that are contained in the public objection to be subjective, and not based on fact. Therefore, we have no comment on this matter.

Lithgow City Council Planning Approvals process

EnergyAustralia maintains strong confidence in the Council's planning assessment and approvals process. We note that, via applying for our initial geotechnical program Development Approval, considerable time was given to considering the views of the community and elected members. We also note – and appreciate – that we as the Proponent, were also provided with the opportunity to outline the purpose of our Development Application and respond to questions from Council.

We understand Council follows a strategic framework to ensure orderly and sustainable development in the region, and has performed a detailed assessment of this Modification application based on the merits of this project. This includes an assessment to ascertain whether the development of the project will have no unacceptable adverse impacts on the environment (including the quality of local water systems) and whether the application adequately satisfies provisions and objectives of the Lithgow Local Environmental Plan.

Yours sincerely,


Mike de Vink
Project Director, Lake Lyell PHES project