

6 February 2025



EnergyAustralia

LIGHT THE WAY

Ross Gurney
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Dear Mr Gurney,

Re: Recent motions carried by the Lithgow City Council

As you are aware, when the business papers were circulated ahead of the Lithgow City Council meeting on 28 January 2025, EnergyAustralia sought a correction to the management comments within the papers and we provided a right of reply statement to you ahead of the meeting to be tabled or read in the Chamber. Whilst I appreciate your correspondence this week, in which you have indicated that you did not find my email in your inbox prior to the meeting, and that you have since circulated it to Councillors, it was disappointing that this matter was not dealt with, transparently during the public meeting.

As a result, I would request that this letter, by right of reply, be circulated to all Councillors and tabled in the next council meeting scheduled for 24 February 2025.

EnergyAustralia acknowledges the recent motions carried by the Lithgow City Council in meetings on 25 November 2024 and 28 January 2025 in opposition to the Lake Lyell Pumped Hydro Energy Storage project (the project).

Given our productive working relationship, our significant commitment to the Lithgow community, and our substantial contribution to the economy we are very disappointed by the opposition of the Lithgow City Council.

We are disappointed too that this position has been formed despite three years of engagement with Council, and prior to briefings with experts and the release of over 20 detailed studies which form the Environmental Impact Statement for the project.

We remain open to providing information and briefings to the Lithgow City Council in a formal way that may assist understanding of our contribution and activities.

We want to ensure Lithgow continues to light the way.

For more than 70 years, Lithgow has generated electricity to illuminate, warm, cool and power millions of homes across the state and the country.

We are proud of the contribution our assets and our workforce make to the economic prosperity of Lithgow.

Since 2015, our purpose has been to 'lead and accelerate the clean energy transformation for all'. This ambition is both a challenge and an opportunity for Lithgow.

This is why we were a constructive contributor to the development of the Lithgow Emerging Economies Plan (the Plan), and despite the Council's opposition, we are continuing our participation in the implementation of this long-term vision through our role on the Lithgow Jobs and Investment Committee.

As we prepare for the future of the Mount Piper Power Station, it is prudent that we explore how our existing assets can evolve as part of the energy transition and thereby ensure Lithgow continues with a workforce that delivers reliable clean electricity into the future.

We value and invest in Lithgow as the host community for our energy assets.

Our current operations and workforce inject more than \$40 million a year into the local economy along with our grant program benefiting schools, events and community organisations.

As we have advised Council previously, formal Shared Benefit Programs that operate over the long-life of energy assets can take the pressure off local councils to find sustained and substantial funding for critical community needs or worthy initiatives.

We have a deep understanding of the needs and ambitions of the Lithgow community that has matured over our 15 years of operations and interactions.

We are part of the Lithgow community too and we share the desire to address critical community needs and community led initiatives that can make a meaningful difference to the lives of Lithgow residents.

We are grateful to the Lithgow community for asking us how we can help, and we will continue to honour our enduring relationship with the community by delivering the Shared Benefit Program.

Many Shared Benefit Programs are already making an impact in communities across Australia by providing regular funding to community projects, local infrastructure upgrades, cultural heritage and addressing social challenges such as housing and health.

It is our intention to continue our existing Community Grants programs and enhance how benefits are shared with the community through a new multi-million-dollar Shared Benefit Program, developed with the community, for the community, and implemented by the community.

We look forward to continuing to contribute to the economic prosperity of Lithgow and to delivering the Shared Benefit Program which will form part of our new energy projects, and our final investment decisions.

We are committed to providing accessible and accurate information to the community.

To support these multi-billion-dollar activities in Lithgow, our communication and engagement approach is comprehensive and tailored to meet the needs of different participants.

As discussed prior to the 28 January 2025 council meeting, I assure you, our public information materials undergo a rigorous internal review and approval process prior to publication and circulation.

At a meeting with council officers earlier in January, EnergyAustralia indicated it was comfortable with the factual accuracy of the latest newsletter it had issued, however acknowledged the concerns raised and indicated it would consider specific language in future. It is disappointing that this was not corrected at the Council meeting on 28 January.

Additionally, should there be matters specific to our activities which the community are seeking to raise or clarify they can do so through the Energy Australia Lithgow Community Consultative Committee which is independently chaired with participation from the Lithgow City Council and community representatives.

We will continue to inform the community with accessible and accurate information online, in print and in person. You can find information about our activities or engage with us directly online, in person at local community events, at our Project HQ on Main St, through 1800 574 947 or via email community@energyaustralia.com.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole McKechnie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a circular flourish at the beginning.

Nicole McKechnie
Chief Corporate Affairs and Sustainability Officer

Cc: The Hon. Ron Hoeing MP, Minister for Local Government