



# Engagement Summary Report

## Heywood BESS

100 Golf Course Road, Heywood, Victoria

For Atmos Renewables

13 May 2025

**cogency**

Planning | Engagement | Strategy

# Document Details

## Heywood BESS

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## Document history

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We celebrate the physical and spiritual connections between Indigenous people and place expressed through the Birrarung Wilam (Common Ground) art Project on the banks of Melbourne's Yarra River.

## Acknowledgement of Country

Cogency acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet, work and write, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin nation, and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present.

Cogency also extends that respect and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Heywood, the Gunditjmara. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection with the land and waterways. We also recognise the resilience, strength, and pride of the Gunditjmara and First Nations communities and acknowledge that Sovereignty was never ceded.

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## Glossary

Abbreviation	Meaning
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
CEC	Clean Energy Council
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
EPBC	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation
GMT OAC	Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (the RAP)
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
LGA	Local Government Area
kV	kilovolt
MER	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
MW	Megawatt
NEM	National Energy Market (NEM)
O&M	Operations and Management
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
Plan	Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan



# 1. Introduction

Cogency Australia Pty Ltd (Cogency), on behalf of Atmos Renewables (Atmos), has prepared this Engagement Summary Report in relation to the proposed development of the Heywood BESS – a utility-scale battery energy storage system (BESS) in Heywood, Victoria, hereby referred to as the 'Project'.

Community and stakeholder engagement is fundamental to delivering positive and effective outcomes for both renewable energy Projects and the local community. Evidence from across Australia and internationally has shown that effective engagement increases the likelihood of establishing and maintaining renewable energy facilities that bring the most mutual benefit to all stakeholders. Proactive, meaningful, inclusive, and robust engagement practices can therefore be seen as an investment in two outcomes: the future success of the renewable energy industry and strong communities.

This Report aims to provide an overview of the stakeholder and community engagement that has occurred and will continue to occur in the planning and development of the Project. To date, Atmos with the support of Cogency, has sought to ensure that the community and stakeholders are proactively and meaningfully informed, consulted and involved throughout the Project's lifecycle.

## 1.1 Project overview

Heywood BESS is a proposed grid-scale BESS project to be developed approximately four kilometres south of the Heywood township. It will deliver a major increase in energy storage capacity in the region, strengthening energy and price stability for households in Victoria, and supporting the State's net-zero transition.

The Project has a nominal capacity of up to 300MW/1200MWh and will provide up to four hours of energy storage. The BESS area covers approximately five hectares of rural/agricultural land and includes battery units, grid connection, access roads, vegetation screening, security fencing, and associated infrastructure and works.

Once operational, the Heywood BESS will provide critical energy storage and stability for the National Electricity Market (NEM). By helping to store and manage energy generated from renewable energy sources, the proposed Project will support existing and proposed renewable energy Projects within Victoria's South West Renewable Energy Zone (SWREZ), while helping to strengthen energy supply and price stability for households across Victoria and support Victoria's energy transition.

The BESS Site is addressed 100 Golf Course Road, Heywood, located adjacent to Mount Clay State Forest in Western Victoria, within Glenelg Shire Local Government Area. The Site is surrounded by Golf Course Road to the north and Mount Clay State Forest to the south. The proposed transmission connection to Heywood Terminal Station is located within the existing cleared 500kV transmission corridor that passes through Mt Clay State Forest.

Heywood is located 27 km north of Portland and 357 km west of Melbourne. It sits at the intersection of the Princes and Henty Highways and is on the Portland railway line. Prior to European settlement, the region was occupied by the Gunditjmarra.

## 1.2 About Atmos

Atmos (the Proponent) is a developer, owner, and operator of utility scale renewable energy generators across the Australian NEM. Established in 2020, Atmos is currently the fifth largest owner of operational renewable generation assets in Australia, with over 1 GW of registered capacity. Atmos' mission centres around powering a sustainable future for Australia and building lasting relationships with local communities. The Proponent strives to collaborate with relevant agencies, councils, government departments and other key stakeholders alongside community and First Nations engagement.

## 2. Guiding commitments and objectives

Community and stakeholder engagement is fundamental to delivering positive and effective outcomes for both energy projects and the local community. Proactive, meaningful, inclusive and robust engagement proactive outcomes can be seen as a direct investment in both strong communities and the success of the renewable energy transition.

### 2.1 Atmos commitments

Atmos became a signatory to the [Clean Energy Council \(CEC\) Best Practice Charter](#) in 2022. The Charter outlines a voluntary set of commitments Atmos will uphold in the development of current and new clean energy projects. Signatories commit to engage respectfully with the communities in which they plan and operate projects, to be sensitive to environmental and cultural values and to make a positive contribution to the regions in which they operate. The principles from the Charter closely align with Atmos' company values of integrity, safety, courage and humility.

For development of the Project, the Proponent will uphold the following commitments:

- 1 We will engage respectfully with the local community, including Traditional Owners of the land, to seek their views and input before submitting a development application and finalising the design of the Project.
- 2 We will provide timely information and be accessible and responsive in addressing the local community's feedback and concerns throughout the life of the Project.
- 3 We will be sensitive to areas of high biodiversity, cultural and landscape value in the development and operation of the Project.
- 4 We will minimise the impacts on highly productive agricultural land to the extent possible.
- 5 We will consider the potential visual, noise, traffic and other impacts of the project and implement the appropriate mitigation measures.
- 6 We will support the local economy by providing local employment and procurement opportunities, where possible.
- 7 We will offer communities the opportunity to share in the benefits of the Project, and consult them on the options available, including relevant governance arrangements.
- 8 We commit to using the Project to support educational and tourism opportunities, where appropriate.
- 9 We will demonstrate responsible land stewardship over the life of the Project and welcome opportunities to enhance the ecological, cultural and/or agricultural value of the land.
- 10 During the life of the Project, we will recycle waste materials where feasible and commit to responsible decommissioning or refurbishment/repowering of the site at the end of the Project's life.

## 2.2 First nations engagement principles

Beyond the statutory requirements of the Project, the Proponent is committed to ensuring sensitive and respectful engagement with the First Nations communities.

The Proponent released their Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan in November 2024. The Plan focuses on ensuring Atmos is recognised as an inclusive, culturally competent and culturally safe organisation. Atmos seeks to build strong partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and organisations, in the areas in they are developing and operating projects, to progress their vision for greater involvement and shared benefits with First Nations Peoples. There are four reconciliation action plan levels that provide a structured approach for companies to advance reconciliation and Atmos is committed to continuing their reconciliation journey through their second plan.

The Proponent recognises that the transition of renewable energy presents an opportunity to collaborate with First Nations communities and establish partnerships that empower First Nations people to participate in the social, economic and environmental benefits of projects.

The Proponent is committed to:

- Consulting early to establish a foundation of trust and mutual understanding.
- Building relationships before seeking knowledge and information.
- Creating local contractor and supplier opportunities for First Nations peoples.
- Creating opportunities for First Nations businesses in the areas of procurement, training, employment, and tourism services.

In addition to their reconciliation action plan, the Proponent's approach to engagement with Traditional Owners adopts principles from the [First Nations Clean Energy Network's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Best Practices Principles for Clean Energy Projects \(2024\)](#) and the Clean Energy Council's Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Projects (2018). A First Nations Engagement Plan will also be established for the project.

The Project seeks to:

- Engage in a respectful and inclusive manner
- Prioritise clear, accessible, timely and accurate information about the Project
- Protect and preserve Country, cultural heritage and the environment
- Ensure economic and social benefits are shared
- Ensure and encourage cultural competency
- Implement feedback, monitor progress and report back.

## 2.3 Commitment to engagement

The Proponent is committed to an open and transparent community and stakeholder engagement process. This includes ensuring proactive and early engagement, developing a benefit sharing model tailored to the local community and site context, and seeking to create a positive long-term legacy in the region. Furthermore, the Proponent pledges to treat members of the local community and other stakeholders fairly, courteously and in a consistent and ethical manner.

The engagement approach for the Heywood BESS Project has been guided by the IAP2 Core Values and the Public Participation Spectrum. The spectrum is founded on the premise that different stakeholders will have varied levels of involvement in decision-making.

For the purposes of this Project, Atmos **commits to 'inform', 'consult' and 'involve'** the appropriate stakeholders through an effective engagement process based on the objectives and promises outlined in the spectrum in Figure 1.



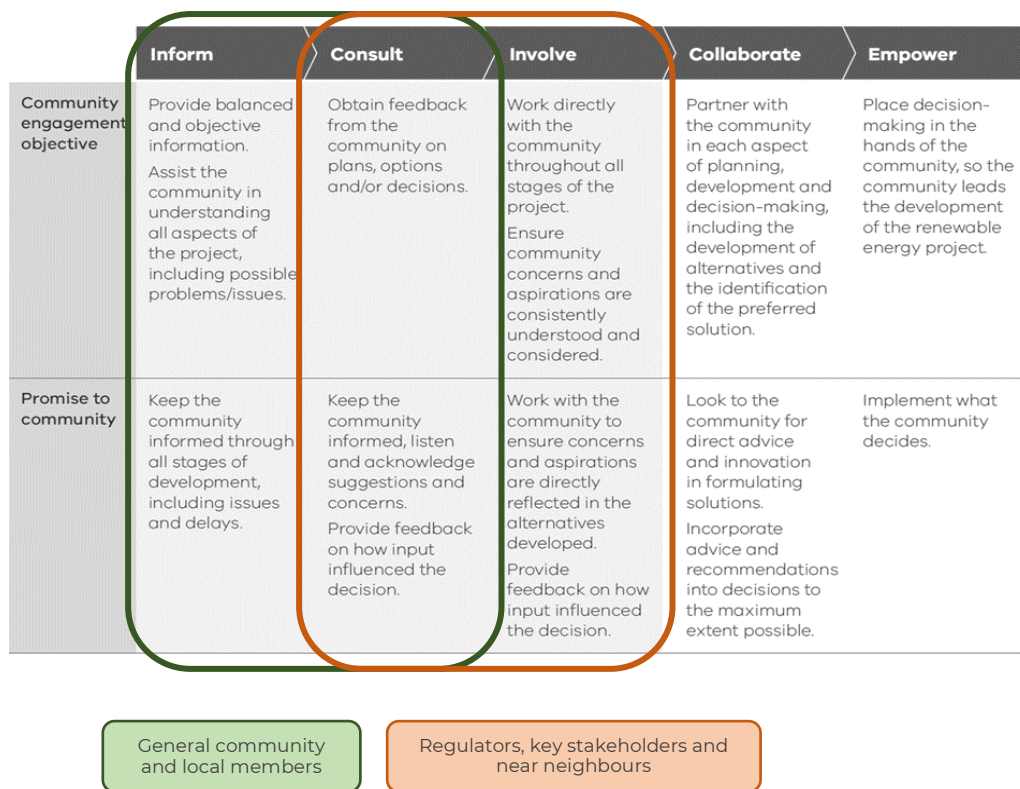


Figure 1 - Engagement commitment in relation to the IAP2 spectrum

## 2.4 Engagement objectives

Atmos acknowledges that active and early engagement with the community and other relevant stakeholders is a crucial part of the planning process. It helps to foster greater understanding of and support for the Project, and to improve the design and development outcomes through the exchange of knowledge and information.

The Proponent is committed to delivering best practice engagement, with the overarching objective of ensuring that the identified community and stakeholder groups are proactively and meaningfully informed, consulted and involved and that the benefits of the Project are genuinely felt by the local community.

The communication and stakeholder engagement objectives for the Heywood BESS are to:

- Build strong connections with the host landowner, neighbours, local industry and the wider Heywood community to gather support for the Project during the planning process.
- Promote the Project's benefits by establishing clear and consistent messaging to manage misinformation about the Project, and by ensuring people can access information, provide feedback, and stay informed.
- Develop a thorough understanding of the local aspirations and concerns which relate to the Project and work with them to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Deliver a robust engagement program that informs, consults, and involves stakeholders (as appropriate) throughout the Project's lifecycle, and sets clear expectations, to build trust in the processes and understanding of the technology.
- Keep an up-to-date record providing evidence of all engagement activities undertaken throughout the process and to establish a comprehensive database of stakeholders for the life of the Project.

The objectives above are being met through the implementation of the Heywood BESS Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Engagement Action Plan that was developed early in the Project feasibility and design stage.

## **3. Community profile**

### **3.1 Traditional Owners**

Prior to European Settlement, Heywood and the wider area was stewarded by the Gunditjmara. Their Country includes the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape which is the only Australian UNESCO World Heritage site listed exclusively for its Aboriginal cultural values. The Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) are the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the area, and therefore the key stakeholder group representing Traditional Owners in the region.

In Heywood, there are 122 people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, approximately 6.7% of the population (ABS 2021).

The Gunditjmara have cared for and protected this Country since the dreaming. Their connections to the land, animals, seas, and waterways were and continue to be a part of their being.

### **3.2 Regional context**

The Project is located within the Glenelg Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA). Located in the far southwest of Victoria, the Glenelg Shire covers a diverse landscape that includes coastal regions, rural farmland, and small towns. The shire spans approximately 6,212 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 20,000 people.

The largest town in the shire is Portland, a key regional hub with its deep-water port, significant industrial activity, and a strong maritime heritage. Other towns in the shire include Casterton, Heywood, and Dartmoor, each with their own unique character and community.

The economy of the Glenelg Shire is largely driven by agriculture, forestry, fishing, and manufacturing, with Portland Aluminium's smelter and the Port of Portland being major contributors. In addition to its industrial activities, Glenelg Shire is known for its natural beauty, including coastal landscapes, national parks, and the Glenelg River. Tourism plays a role in the local economy, with attractions such as the Great South West Walk and historic sites drawing visitors to the area.

### **3.3 Community context**

With a population of approximately 1,815 people, Heywood is a small community located 25km north of Portland. The community has a low socio-economic profile, ranked the lowest quintile of SEIFA, with a median weekly household income of \$1,077. Heywood has a higher than average indigenous population (6.7%) compared to Victoria (3.4%).

## 4. Key stakeholders

### 4.1 Identification and analysis

Prior to identifying key community and other stakeholders relevant to the Project, it is critical to define the community categories. For the benefit of the Project, the following groupings for the community have been devised:

- **Nearest neighbours** – neighbours within 1km of the Project's development area
- **Nearby neighbours** – neighbours within 1 – 2.5km
- **Further neighbours** – neighbours within 2.5 – 5km
- **Wider community** – Heywood and surrounds

To engage appropriately and effectively with the local community and other stakeholders, the project team developed a list of community and stakeholder groups who may be affected by and/or have interest in the Project, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 - Key stakeholders

Group	Sub-section	Description
<b>Neighbours</b>	Nearest (<1 km)	Landowners up to 1 km from the Project site. There are 7 dwellings within 1 km, including 3 dwellings within 180m.
	Medium (1 – 2.5km)	Properties within 2.5km of the Project site.
	Further (2.5 – 5 km)	Landowners between 2.5 km and 5 km from the site boundary.
	Mt Clay State Forest	Public land managers (DEECA / Parks Victoria)
	AusNet (Heywood Terminal Station)	Owner and operator of Heywood Terminal Station
<b>Local businesses</b>	Near (<2 km)	Business up to 2 km from the site boundary, including the Heywood Golf Course and Heywood Stockfeeds.
	Far (2-5 km)	Businesses between 2 km and 5 km from the site boundary.
<b>Traditional Owners</b>		The Traditional Owners of the Heywood BESS site are the Gunditjmarra People. The RAP for the area is the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC).
<b>Wider communities</b>	Nearby townships	Community within 10 kilometres include Heywood as the primary town, and smaller townships Heathmere and Tyrendarra.
	Council communities	Other communities in Glenelg Shire LGA.
<b>Print media</b>	Local	Local publications and newsletters, including the Portland Observer
	State	Victorian publications such as The Age and The Herald Sun.
	National	National publications such as The Australian Financial Review, and The Australian, Renew Economy
<b>Other media</b>	Local	Local TV and Radio, ABC South West Victoria, MIXX FM 93.7, 3RPC-FM
	State	State TV and Radio
	National	National TV and Radio
<b>Federal government</b>	Relevant Ministers	Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Hon Chris Bowen MP Minister for Environment and Water, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, The Hon. Catherine King MP
	Local	Lower House – Hon Dan Tehan MP (Liberal) – Member for Wannon
<b>State government</b>	Relevant Ministers	Minister for Planning – Hon. Sonya Kilkenny Minister for Climate Action, Energy and Resources, and the State Electricity Commission – Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio Minister for Environment – Hon. Steve Dimpoulos Premier – Hon. Jacinta Allen

	Local	Legislative Assembly (Lower House), Member for Great South Coast – Roma Britnell Legislative Council (Upper House) – All 5 Members of the Legislative Council (MLC) for Western Victoria: Jacinta Ermacora (Australian Labor Party), Bev McArthur (Liberal), Gayle Tierney (Australian Labor Party), Sarah Mansfield (Australian Greens), Joe McCracken (Liberal)
	State Agencies	Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), VicGrid, CFA
<b>Local government</b>	Relevant Councillors	Mayor – Karen Stephens, Deputy Mayor – Robyn McDonald and Councillors Duane Angelino, Michael Carr, Matt Jowett, Mike Noske, John Pepper.
	Local	CEO Glenelg Shire Council and Executive team
<b>Emergency services</b>		Heywood CFA & SES
<b>Water authority</b>		Wannon Water
<b>NGO and Local community organisations</b>		Heywood Secondary College, Heywood Consolidated School, Heywood Rural Health, Heywood Bowling Club, Heywood Football Netball Club, Drumborg-Heywood Cricket Club, Heywood Pioneer Wagon Shed and Museum
<b>Transport and road authorities</b>		Glenelg Shire Council Department of Transport Victoria (within DTP)
<b>Transmission line operator</b>		AusNet

# 5. Engagement phases and activities

As part of the Engagement Strategy, an Engagement Action Plan was developed to encompass the entire Project lifecycle. The action plan was specifically tailored to the local and regional context of Heywood, ensuring relevance and effectiveness. Each engagement phase was designed to ensure the Project team can deliver early, proactive, and meaningful engagement with neighbours, the local community, and other stakeholders. It was developed with the intention of allowing sufficient time for interested parties to be informed and involved, and for the Project team to address any concerns.

The three main phases of engagement throughout the lifecycle of the Project include:

- Phase 1:** Feasibility and early concept (Completed)
- Phase 2:** Planning application and assessment (Upcoming)
- Phase 3:** Post approval (Future).

The Phase 1 actions were structured to give ample time for interested parties to be consulted, informed, and provided a space to provide comments prior to the submission of the Planning Application. With this phase complete, the activities and summary is presented in Section 5.1. The anticipated activities for future Phases 2 & 3 are outlined in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

## 5.1 Phase 1: Pre-application early engagement

Phase 1 engagement activities were carried out from 2024 – March 2025, prior to the lodgement of the planning permit application. During this phase, Atmos and the project team engaged with neighbours and key process stakeholders to help inform preliminary investigations and to garner support for and input to the Project at local, regional and state levels.

This phase included broader engagement with the Heywood community, to introduce the Project and seek feedback, providing the opportunity for the community to ask questions and express their sentiment. A project information stall was hosted at the Wood, Wine and Roses Festival (February 22) – Heywood’s largest annual event.

During this phase, technical consultants have carried out detailed technical assessments and produced robust reports to inform the Project’s concept layout and support a planning permit application.

**Table 2 - Phase 1 Engagement Activities Summary**

Stakeholders engaged		Engagement activities	
Near neighbours		Phone call	
Neighbouring properties		Letter	
Heywood community		Factsheet	
DTP, DEECA		Face-to-face meetings	
CFA		Online meetings	
Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC)		Briefings/presentations	
Glenelg Shire Council		Information stall	
AusNet			
Phase 1 engagement			
Date	Stakeholder	Activity	Key details of engagement
Multiple	Nearest neighbours	Phone calls, letters, face-to-face meetings, information stall	Early engagement by the Proponent with near neighbours within 1km of the Project began in 2023. The Proponent was in regular contact to ensure all questions and concerns were addressed early in the process and could be incorporated into planning and design.
Multiple	Nearby neighbours	Letter, information stall	A letter was sent to nearby neighbours (within 1km – 2.5km) to introduce the Project and invite anyone to attend the information stall and speak to the project team.

Multiple	<b>DTP &amp; DEECA</b>	Online meeting	Multiple meetings have taken place since 2023 to discuss Project concept, potential constraints and risks, approval processes, CFA and neighbour engagement, Crown Land considerations and progress of technical investigations.
Multiple	<b>CFA</b>	Online meeting	The Proponent engaged with the CFA early to discuss the fire risks associated with Mount Clay State Forest and to determine an appropriate setback distance. Two members of the local CFA brigade visited the information stall hosted at a local festival.
Multiple	<b>GMTOAC</b>	Online meetings and site investigations	Inception meeting facilitated by Cultural Heritage consultant (GML Heritage), followed by on-site investigations.
Multiple	<b>Glenelg Shire Council</b>	Online meetings	Three meetings took place separately with Council's Executive team, Councillors and the Council's infrastructure team to introduce the Project and receive feedback.
Multiple	<b>AusNet</b>	Online meetings	Regular discussions between the Proponent and AusNet have taken place before and during Phase 1, primarily to discuss development within AusNet's transmission corridor.

More detailed summaries of meetings and communications is outlined below.

#### **Meeting with DTP and DEECA – 5 December 2024**

On 5 December 2024, discussions were held with DTP's renewables team and DEECA's energy team. The transmission connection route through Mount Clay State Forest was a focus, with other discussion points:

- Determine whether native vegetation removal is required
- Public land manager consent is required
- Seek to avoid triggers under the Environmental Significance Overlay – Schedule 3 (ESO3)
- Determine if there is a risk of a controlled action under the EPBC Act.

#### **Inception meeting with GMTOAC – 16 December 2024**

Early engagement with GMTOAC was prioritised through the planning and design phases of the Project. A CHMP inception meeting was held on 16 December 2024, led by GML, to introduce the Proponent and Project to the GMTOAC representative and begin the CHMP process.

#### **Meeting with Glenelg Shire Council – 6 January 2025**

On 6 January 2025, an online meeting was held with the Glenelg Shire Council planning team. Council was generally supportive of the Proposal and of hosting a stall at the Wood Wine Roses Festival for community engagement. Council expressed a preference for a regional approach to the community benefit sharing strategy and indicated the key socio-economic areas from improvement for the LGA were disadvantaged groups, childcare, and employment/workforce training. Council suggested presenting the Proposal to the Glenelg Shire Council Councillors because Heywood does not have experience with battery projects.

#### **Meeting with Glenelg Shire Council engineering team – 4 February 2025**

On 4 February 2025, an online meeting was held with the Glenelg Shire Council engineering team. The focus included asset management and Golf Course Road access and traffic considerations, as well as drainage and stormwater considerations.

#### **Nearest and nearby neighbours mail out – 4 February 2025**

A mail out was conducted on 4 February 2025 to neighbouring properties and nearby neighbours. The nearest neighbours had previously been contacted by Atmos and were aware of the Project, with additional face to face meetings offered. The mailout was the first introduction to other nearby neighbours, to inform



them of the Project and to invite them to the information stall on 22 February 2025 at the Wood, Wine and Roses Festival. The mailout included a letter of introduction and a Project factsheet (Appendix A).

### **Website and email launch – February 2025**

A project-specific [webpage](#) was activated within Atmos' website, as well as a dedicated email address. This was activated in advance of neighbour letters being received (and advertising for the festival stall), as an additional information source for neighbours and the broader public.

### **Glenelg Shire Councillor briefing – 18 February 2025**

On 18 February 2025, the Proposal was presented at a Glenelg Shire Councillor Workshop. Prior to the meeting a briefing pack containing the presentation slides from the Council pre-application meeting and proposal summary memo was sent to the Councillors. Councillor comments included:

- Questioned how a BESS lowers wholesale electricity prices.
- Number of jobs.
- Opportunities for local contractors and construction accommodation.
- Noise and fire risks of the Proposal.
- Compensation and community benefits.
- Decommissioning and recycling opportunities.

### **Face-to-face nearest neighbour meetings – 21 February 2025**

Three neighbour meetings were held the day prior to the festival information stall. All neighbours were highly engaged with the Project with varying sentiment, including some concerns and support. The key themes of questions from nearby neighbours were property value impacts, insurance premium impacts, noise and visual impacts, traffic impacts, and construction disruption.

### **Information stall at local 'Wood, Wine and Roses' festival – 22 February 2025**

Atmos provided sponsorship to the Heywood Wood, Wine and Roses Festival, Heywood's largest annual event, held on 22 February 2025. An information stall was hosted with three project team members present. The purpose of the information stall was to introduce the Project to the wider community, give the community and stakeholders an opportunity to meet the project team, learn more about the project and to ask questions in person. Information on display included factsheets, flyers, Concept Layout Plan and a Project Context Map.

The information stall was advertised in the local newspaper (Portland Observer) on 12 January and 19 January 2025. Letter invitations were sent to near neighbours and neighbouring properties. Additionally, email invitations (that included the project factsheet) were sent to the following stakeholders:

- Glenelg Shire Council: CEO, Directors Community Services and Infrastructure Services, and Councillors
- GMTOAC
- Local MPs
- Heywood Golf Club.

A poster advertising the information stall was put on the Heywood Community Noticeboard a week prior.

Approximately 34 people visited the stall including two members of the Heywood Fire Brigade, multiple Councillors and the Glenelg Shire Council CEO. Most visitors interacted for more than a cursory moment and lived in Heywood, close to town, or were nearby neighbours. The typical sentiment from visitors to the stall was positive and supportive of the Project. The key themes of topics raised and discussed with the project team were:

- Fire risk (considering proximity to the forest)
- Would this Project lead to additional renewable energy projects or transmission upgrades
- Timing of construction.

There was minimal feedback or ideas regarding the community benefit scheme, however some visitors did note and appreciate the opportunity that provides Heywood. There were some questions and concerns over the use of local contractors and employment as well as potential pressures upon local accommodation.

#### **Ongoing neighbour communications – March-May 2025**

Atmos have remained in contact with the nearest neighbours (via email and phone), seeking to respond to questions and arranging site visits.

Atmos also spoke with the Heywood Golf Club, who did not raise any concerns with the Project.

In early May, Atmos met with some of the neighbouring landowners in Heywood to discuss project updates and seek to answer some of the earlier queries. Most technical questions have been resolved, with some queries and concerns remaining from nearest neighbours around visual and amenity impacts, and property values. Atmos will continue engaging with neighbours throughout the planning process and beyond.

#### **Meeting with DTP and DEECA – 24 March 2025**

On 24 March 2025, discussions included the project team's approach to ecological assessments as part of the planning permit process, including NVR submission and fauna and flora surveys. DEECA expressed concerns with deferring all assessment to post-lodgement but were open to further discussion. A memo outlining the project team's proposed approach to ecological assessment was sent as a follow up for the DEECA team to review (subsequently, DEECA have provided support to the Proponent's proposed survey approach).

#### **Other**

A detailed engagement spreadsheet recording all community and stakeholder interactions has been developed to ensure comprehensive engagement that supports following up with enquiries.

Separately, a business register of interest has also been established, as well as the opportunity for anyone to sign up to project updates via email.

## **5.2 Phase 2: Planning application and assessment**

This phase of engagement commences once a planning permit application has been lodged with the Minister for Planning (upcoming). As the Project undergoes assessment for statutory approval, the Proponent and the project team will continue to engage the neighbours, stakeholders and the broader community.

This will likely include a community information session aligning with the period of public notice of the application. The project webpage will also continue to be updated.

## **5.3 Phase 3: Post approval**

The Proponent remains committed to proactive, and meaningful engagement with the local community and stakeholders, as demonstrated since the start of the preliminary concept design phase.

The construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Project will be supported by ongoing engagement.

## **6. Community benefit sharing**

### **6.1 Community Benefit Sharing Framework**

As part of Atmos commitment to responsible development and fostering positive relationships with local communities, a Community Benefit Sharing Framework has been established for the project. This framework ensures that tangible benefits are delivered directly to communities located near our operations.

Under this framework, Atmos have committed to a minimum of \$50,000 per year community fund during the projects operational phase. Contributions will be determined in consultation with community stakeholders and GMTOAC to ensure alignment with local needs and aspirations, and to promote long-term social and economic outcomes.

### **6.2 Other benefits to the Community**

The Project will provide significant dispatchable energy storage, supporting Victoria's energy storage targets, and local existing and future energy generation projects and energy-intensive users.

The Proposal will provide significant local and regional economic benefits, including:

- Creation of approximately 150 construction jobs and 2 ongoing operational jobs;
- Prioritisation of local employment opportunities to the extent possible for construction, operation and maintenance, as well as supporting training and development of an emerging energy industry in Victoria's South West REZ.

The Proposal will play an important role in growing the renewable energy generation and storage industry in Victoria. As the state's energy supply transitions to renewable energy, more demand for storage will be created.

The construction and maintenance of the Heywood BESS will include upskilling local workers and utilising local contractors and suppliers where possible. This will grow Victoria's ability to build and operate battery storage, securing the future competitiveness of other projects in the local energy sector.

## 7. Communication methods and tools

Given that there is a heightened level of community interest in new energy infrastructure and its relationship to renewable energy, the project team sought to undertake an engagement approach that was personal and focused on engagement with neighbours, referral authorities, surrounding businesses, landowners and the local community.

A wide range of communication tools ensured that neighbours, the broader Heywood community and other stakeholders were effectively informed, consulted and involved in the Project, to reduce to the extent possible:

- The risk of conflict between community, stakeholders, and Atmos.
- Any intrusion and disruption to land uses.
- Potential impacts of energy infrastructure development.

Communication materials for the Heywood BESS sought to be **objective, balanced** and **free from technical jargon**. The focus of communications has been to seek input from the community about the Project and to adequately respond to and address enquiries and concerns in a timely manner.

The communication tools that were used to implement the Engagement Action Plan are outlined in Table 3. To date, these tools and activities have been used to provide timely and informative progress updates on the Project, as well as opportunities for the community and stakeholders to participate in the planning and design process.

**Table 3** - Communication tools summary

Tool	Description and purpose	Stakeholders	Level of engagement
<b>Presentation and briefing pack</b>	To provide clear and concise information about the Project as it develops. To notify the stakeholders about key milestones in the Project and how to get involved. To avoid the spread of misinformation and to mitigate concerns where possible.	All stakeholders	Inform   Consult
<b>Face to face and online stakeholder meetings</b>	To establish rapport and ongoing relationships with primary stakeholders and key neighbours. To inform, consult or involve interested and concerned local community members and stakeholder groups. To identify potential risks and issues associated with the project's construction or operation. To mitigate negative issues or spreading of misinformation. To provide a direct feedback mechanism.	State and Local government Community groups Neighbouring landowners	Inform   Consult   Involve
<b>Contact phone and email address</b>	To establish a point of contact via email and phone to stakeholders wanting to learn more about the project, voice their concerns or raise matters of interest during all phases. To allow for initial introductions and quick responses to community members and stakeholders regarding the Project, leading to possible further engagement via the range of other tools/methods listed within this Strategy.	All stakeholders	Inform   Consult
<b>Project webpage</b>	To provide clear and user-friendly information about the Proponent, team, and the project itself. To be updated regularly as the project develops to address concerns and mitigate the spread of misinformation. To provide a central location for all technical documents relating to the project, regularly uploaded with up-to-date information.	All stakeholders	Inform   Consult
<b>Fact sheets and information posters</b>	To provide clear and concise information about the Project as it develops.	All stakeholders	Inform

	<p>To notify the community about key milestones in the Project and how to get involved.</p> <p>To avoid the spread of misinformation and to mitigate concerns where possible.</p>		
<b>Letter of introduction</b>	<p>Direct letters to households within a specified distance of the project, to introduce the project, details, upcoming events, participation opportunities, and project updates.</p> <p>To inform stakeholders of any upcoming construction activities that may be relevant to their property or business, to provide detailed information about the work and contact details.</p>	<p>Neighbouring landowners</p> <p>Local businesses</p>	Inform   Consult
<b>Local advertising</b>	To promote the community information session and Project information (newspaper ads).	Local media	Inform
<b>Pop-up stall at local festival</b>	To provide the Heywood community with information about the Project, BESS technology, project timeline and the benefits to the community.	Local community members	Inform
<b>Community drop in session (future)</b>	<p>To facilitate strong face to face interactions between the project team (including the Proponent and key technical consultants) and the community / stakeholders.</p> <p>To inform stakeholders about project details.</p> <p>To provide Project information through mixed visual media, to assist the community / stakeholders in better understanding the Project.</p> <p>To provide an opportunity for community members to clarify information, voice their ideas and concerns, encourage engagement in the planning process and to establish a point of contact for the Project.</p>	<p>Nearby landowners</p> <p>Local community members</p> <p>Wider Glenelg Shire Council community</p> <p>Local businesses</p> <p>Local politicians</p>	Inform   Consult
<b>Closing the loop email</b>	To provide a personal avenue for response to enquiries and ongoing communication, as desired by any given stakeholder.	All stakeholders	Inform   Consult   Involve

## 8. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Monitoring and evaluating the community engagement process and outcomes will be undertaken to help identify successes, areas for improvement or modification, and to learn from experiences. While Victorian planning guidelines do not specify monitoring, evaluation, and reporting requirements, Atmos commits to integrating the findings of key engagement activities into the evaluation of the Project, and to establishing sustainable community engagement methods for the operational life of the Project.

As part of the monitoring and evaluation, Atmos will refer to the below checklist (Figure 2) at each phase of the engagement process. This checklist has been adapted from the [\*Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Projects\*](#).

A Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) plan will be developed following planning approval.

- ☐ Has the development process and timeline been communicated to the local community through a range of engagement activities?
- ☐ Has the local community had the opportunity to understand the Project through information sessions or site visits to other facilities?
- ☐ Is clear information available about the efficiency of the proposed battery and its effects on electricity prices
- ☐ Is clear information available about the types of services and jobs required for the Project, and are there opportunities for locals?
- ☐ Are the Project details such as visual renders, clear mapping and Project timelines available on a website dedicated to the Project
- ☐ Is clear information about any technical or environmental risks associated with the facility, including risk assessments, planning documentation and mitigation plans, publicly available and easily accessible?
- ☐ Have potential impacts on cultural heritage, environmental, landscape or other values been proactively addressed and communicated?

**Figure 2** - Monitoring checklist



## 8.1 Record keeping and stakeholder database

A record of all community engagement activities will be maintained in the dedicated stakeholder engagement database. This will record and track details of all stakeholder and community interactions (including enquiries, complaints, meetings, events and questions) through the Project's planning, construction and operational phases. This will include an engagement register which will be updated by members of the Project team, recording all contact with stakeholders.

The database will also be used as a means of two-way communication, to provide feedback to stakeholders upon considerations made through the planning process based on their input.

Information that will be recorded in the database will include:

- Stakeholder contact details (if provided)
- Engagement record details including issues raised and activity details
- Summary of key discussion points, including any actions to be addressed.

## 8.2 Complaint and grievance management

The timely and effective management of enquiries and complaints is critical to the successful delivery of the project. The Proponent will maintain a project complaint register through the process. This will be informed through the activities and outcomes resulting from the implementation of the engagement strategy.

From inception to completion, stakeholders will be advised of the appropriate channels for enquiring about the project and how to get involved.

The dedicated point of contact will be the following:

- **Key contacts:** Kate Munro, Head of Development  
Aideen McGuigan, Development Manager
- **Email:** HeywoodBESS@atmosrenewables.com.au

## 9. Conclusion and next steps

The Heywood BESS presents an opportunity to increase energy storage in Victoria, supporting the State's energy storage targets and net-zero ambition.

From the outset of early planning and development, the Proponent, Atmos Renewables, has been dedicated to fostering and sustaining respectful relationships with the adjacent and nearby neighbours, the broader local community, businesses, all levels of government, Traditional Owners of the land, and other stakeholders.

Atmos has demonstrated via engagement activities to date, by being a signatory to the Clean Energy Council (CEC) Best Practice Charter, and publishing its Reconciliation Action Plan, that the company is committed to proactive and meaningful engagement at every stage of the Project.

This approach has enabled a deep level of stakeholder and community knowledge regarding the Project and greater awareness of the processes to which Atmos is committed to mitigate or manage potential impacts. Through this process, trust has been developed between the community and the project team.

Looking ahead, the Proponent remains committed to fostering strong relationships with neighbours, key stakeholders and the local community. The Proponent plans to maintain open lines of communication by actively engaging with local community members through future engagement activities and establishing the Benefit Sharing Framework and fund.

# Appendices

Appendix A	Communication materials
Appendix B	Wood, Wine and Roses Festival

# Appendix A Communication materials



04 February 2025

Heywood VIC 3304

Dear

**Re: Proposed Heywood battery energy storage system (BESS) – Letter of introduction**

I work with the renewable energy company Atmos Renewables (Atmos). I am writing to provide an introduction to a proposed large-scale BESS and associated infrastructure (the Project) at 100 Golf Course Road, near the Heywood Terminal Station.

As a nearby landowner, we want to offer a meeting with you, to provide information on the project and hear your views about the proposal.

Our team will be in Heywood and available to meet in the afternoon of **Friday 21 February** for one-on-one meetings, prior to hosting an information stall at the Wood, Wine & Roses festival on Saturday 22 February. If those days do not suit you to meet, we can also arrange a video or phone call at another time.

I encourage you to speak with our team by contacting us to organise a meeting or visiting our stall at the festival. If you wish to discuss the project or ask any questions please do not hesitate to contact us before then. We have attached some information over the page, as well as a webpage with more information: [www.atmosrenewables.com.au/project/heywood-bess](http://www.atmosrenewables.com.au/project/heywood-bess)

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

*Kate Munro*

Kate Munro

Head of Development

Atmos Renewables

T: 0431 703 035

E: [kate.munro@atmosrenewables.com.au](mailto:kate.munro@atmosrenewables.com.au)

Atmos Developments Pty Ltd

Level 9, 123 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
ABN 80 652 915 216  
[atmosrenewables.com.au](http://atmosrenewables.com.au)



## About the project

The proposal is located north of the Heywood Terminal Station on a small piece of rural agricultural land, adjacent to the north-west corner of Mount Clay State Forest. The capacity of the BESS is conceptually up to 300MW / 1200MWh, and would occupy approximately 18 hectares.

The project will connect to the national electricity grid at the Heywood Terminal Station and be able to store and release energy. This will help stabilise the electricity grid and reduce wholesale power prices, benefiting local residents, businesses and industry in Western Victoria.

We are in the early stages of concept development and preparation of a Planning Permit Application that must be lodged to the Victorian Minister for Planning (the decision maker).

## Community engagement

Our project team is hosting a stall at the upcoming Wood Wine and Roses festival on Saturday 22 February. We see this as an opportunity to meet with neighbours, the broader Heywood community and any interested groups to explain BESS technology and invite feedback on the proposal. This is the first step in our community engagement strategy, aiming to ensure that neighbours and interested locals are informed about the project, involved in key decision making, and have any questions answered and concerns responded to.

Atmos has hired Cogency to assist with our planning permit application and project engagement. If you have questions about the proposal, feel free to contact myself, or Billy Greenham, Associate Director at Cogency (Phone: 0452 593 4298, Email: [consultation@cocencyaustralia.com.au](mailto:consultation@cocencyaustralia.com.au)).

## What is a BESS?

Battery energy storage systems, commonly referred to as BESS, play a pivotal role in modern energy systems as they can store excess energy during periods of overproduction or low demand. When demand surges, these stored reserves can be discharged quickly to meet the higher electricity needs, mitigating supply-demand imbalances.

Typically, a BESS consists of battery units, inverters, and transformers in modular blocks. The layout of each BESS facility depends on the BESS technology, supplier, and the desired output.

The below images show an existing BESS example, the Victorian Big Battery near Geelong Moorabool Terminal Station (300 MW / 450 MWh), and the proposed Heywood BESS site.



1

were delighted and grateful to have received an award for their 35 years of service at Heywood Rural Health.

The two have been lending their time driving patients to appointments, striking up conversations with residents in aged care and delivering meals on wheels to the broader Heywood and district community.

Mrs Barrand started volunteering first through her membership of the Heywood Country Women's Association, and then Mr Barrand decided to join in too.

"I come up occasionally and do a presentation, usually on birds, to the residents here," Mr Barrand said.

Mr Barrand said the volunteering often made a significant difference to people's

people to stay in their own home a lot longer than they probably would otherwise.

"The town's been pretty good to us over the years, so we're in a position where we can give a bit back."

The two volunteer at the hospital for up to seven hours a week, they said.

They have also separately dedicated their time to working at the fire tower, which they plan to finish after 25 years.

Mrs Barrand said they meet a lot of different people volunteering.

"We used to do patient transfers - that was always good because you could have a chat with them along the way," she said.

"I started doing school breakfasts out at

and I know the kids.

"Kids still say hello, even though they go on off to high school or on to working."

"It's good to know that people recognise you and appreciate what you've done for them."

"Everyone needs volunteers. If it wasn't for the volunteers, a lot of organisations wouldn't be surviving."

Mr and Mrs Barrand were awarded with a trophy and pin each at the HNH Christmas dinner.

Volunteers Rhonda and Peter Barrand were awarded for their 35 years of service at Heywood Rural Health.



## Attending the Wood, Wine and Roses Festival?

### Come say hello!

Drop in to learn about the Heywood BESS, a battery energy storage system proposed by Atmos Renewables.

Come by our stall to see the proposal and ask any questions.

We look forward to meeting you!

Date: 22 February 2025

Time: 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Venue: Wood, Wine & Roses festival

Contact us: <https://atmosrenewables.com.au/project/heywood-bess/>  
or [info@atmosrenewables.com.au](mailto:info@atmosrenewables.com.au)

0344 800 65

12 PORTLAND OBSERVER | Friday, 7 February, 2025



## Slowly but surely



Work is progressing slowly at the site of the new service station on the northern outskirts of Heywood. The construction work has been taking place for many months with no finish date in sight yet.

- **Charlie Sawyer-Bassett**

PORTLANDOBSERVER.COM.AU





## Project overview

Atmos Renewables is proposing to develop the Heywood battery energy storage system (BESS), a large-scale battery north of the existing Heywood Terminal Station.

The project aims to provide additional storage for the electricity grid, strengthen the region's energy stability, lower wholesale energy prices and support the transition to net-zero.

The conceptual capacity of the BESS is up to 300MW /1,200MWh, providing 4 hours of energy storage. The battery and associated infrastructure has a footprint of approximately five hectares.

The project is in its early stages of concept design and planning and Atmos is seeking early feedback on the proposal.



300 MW /1,200 MWh storage capacity



100+ jobs created during peak construction



Additional dispatchable storage and stability for the National Electricity Market

## What is a BESS?

The proposed Heywood BESS will connect into the national electricity grid via an underground transmission cable, located within the existing 500kV cleared easement that runs between the Heywood Terminal Station.

The BESS will store electricity from the grid at times of excess energy production, then, at times of increased demand, it can discharge that stored energy back into the grid. This demand response can contribute to reducing wholesale electricity prices.

The project comprises modular BESS and inverter units, each similar in size to a 20-foot shipping container. The project requires associated infrastructure such as an on-site substation. The construction will include civil earthworks, fencing, landscape planting, drainage and fire-fighting infrastructure.

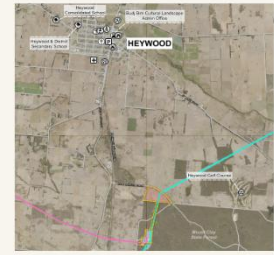
## Location

The selected site is strategically positioned close to the Heywood Terminal Station and on the existing overhead high-voltage transmission corridor.

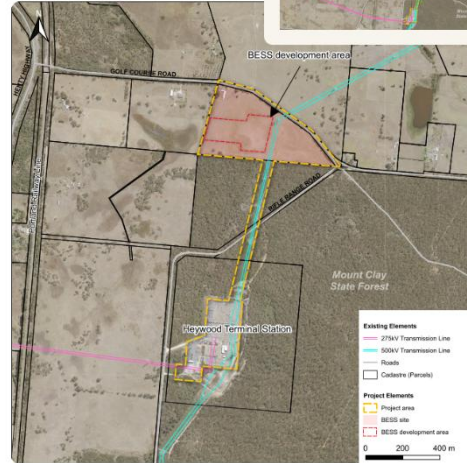
The site is approximately five kilometres south-east of Heywood on Golf Course Road, adjacent to agricultural land and Mt Clay State Forest.

This location is optimal as it provides access to existing electrical substation infrastructure and the Henty Highway.

## Community Context Plan



## Project area plan



## Project approvals

The Project is in the early design and planning phase, with technical assessments underway across a broad range of considerations. These investigations will inform the layout and to support a planning permit application, to be lodged later in 2025.

The Heywood BESS requires planning approval, via a planning permit application, from the Minister for Planning. The planning permit assessment determines the appropriateness of the proposed land use and development to its location.

The Project will require other approvals, including grid connection and a cultural heritage management plan. Atmos is committed to ensuring the Project considers, addresses and mitigates relevant considerations and risks.

## Proposed timeline



## Community engagement & benefits

Atmos is committed to an open and transparent engagement process and to ensure the project benefits the Heywood community. We are engaging with nearby landowners, businesses, the broader community, First Nations groups and other stakeholders to inform the design of the BESS. Please contact us to discuss your questions and feedback.

Atmos have met with Gunditj Murring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMOAC) and will continue to explore opportunities for support and collaboration, alongside undertaking a cultural heritage management plan.

## Key community benefits of the Project include:



Direct investment and local contracting opportunities, particularly in civil works and fabrication.



Contribution to a growing sector with other energy projects in the surrounding area, allowing critical mass in education, skills training and contracting opportunities.



A significant community benefit-sharing scheme, with opportunities for meaningful investment in Heywood organisations and projects, as well as the broader Glenelg Shire area.



Electricity grid benefits, with energy storage contributions able to lower wholesale electricity prices and improve grid stability.

## About Atmos Renewables

Atmos is a developer, owner, and operator of utility-scale renewable energy generators across the Australian National Electricity Market. It is Australia's fifth largest renewable energy generator and owns or holds an interest in seventeen operational Australian wind and solar farms.

Our mission is to be part of the solution to decarbonising Australia's electricity network by building and operating a portfolio of renewable energy generation and storage assets while achieving positive environmental outcomes and lasting relationships with local communities.



Reliable Expertise in Renewable Energy

Atmos is a trusted authority on renewable energy, with a consistent track record, proven technology and a committed development pipeline.



Nurturing Lasting Relationships

We're not just building projects, we're building relationships with landowners and local communities.



Transparency for Empowered Decision-Making

We support stakeholders and communities to understand the implications of renewable energy projects and actively engage in the decision-making process.



Shaping Australia's Clean Energy Future

We're working alongside Government, industry and community to power a sustainable future for Australia.

## How to get involved

We want to ensure the Heywood BESS benefits the local community and we value your input at this early stage.

To learn more about the Heywood BESS, please scan the QR code below or visit our website at:

[www.atmosrenewables.com.au/project/heywood-bess/](http://www.atmosrenewables.com.au/project/heywood-bess/)

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact us at:

[info@atmosrenewables.com.au](mailto:info@atmosrenewables.com.au)

Atmos is committed to open and transparent engagement with the community and all interested parties. We take your thoughts, questions and comments seriously.



[info@atmosrenewables.com.au](mailto:info@atmosrenewables.com.au)  
[www.atmosrenewables.com.au/project/heywood-bess/](http://www.atmosrenewables.com.au/project/heywood-bess/)





# Appendix B Wood, Wine and Roses Festival

