

Media Release – Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

For Immediate Release

Council calls for stronger protections to stop BESS proposals on productive farmland

Council is urging the Victorian Government to strengthen planning controls to prevent large-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) from being built on high-value, highly productive farmland.

A series of speculative proposals across the region has raised significant concerns among local farmers, residents and Council, who strongly support renewable energy but say the current planning process is leaving communities exposed.

Mayor of Baw Baw Shire Councillor Kate Wilson said the rapid growth of BESS proposals is outpacing Victoria's planning framework.

"Council is not opposed to renewable energy – in fact, we welcome clean-energy investment," the Mayor said. "But we cannot support industrial-scale batteries being placed on our most fertile farmland when there are more suitable locations on lower-value land or already-disturbed sites."

Concerns raised by the community include potential impacts on agricultural production, fire risk, water contamination, noise, lighting, visual amenity, and the lack of transparent information from proponents.

"Our farmers feed Victoria, and our agricultural land is finite," the Mayor said. "Once we lose it, we don't get it back. We need a planning system that properly balances Victoria's renewable-energy needs with the protection of high-value farmland."

Council is calling on the Minister for Planning and Minister for Energy & Resources to:

Strengthen siting guidelines to prevent BESS developments on prime agricultural land.

Require proponents to consult early and transparently with affected communities.

Consider cumulative impacts from multiple proposals in the same region.

Provide clearer safety, fire-risk and environmental standards for large-scale batteries.

Council will continue advocating on behalf of the community to ensure BESS infrastructure is placed in appropriate locations that support both renewable-energy targets and sustainable agricultural production.