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ARMIDALE EAST BESS FAQS

General

Q. What is proposed?

A. FRV is proposing to construct and operate an up to 400MW / 2400MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) located 16 km east of Armidale NSW. The purpose of the development is to assist the national electrical grid at times of peak demand and in times of emergency.

Q. Who is FRV?

A. FRV is the Project Developer for the Armidale East BESS. FRV is one of the world's leading renewable energy companies and was founded in Spain in 2008. With over 15 years of industry experience, FRV has over 50 renewable energy plants across four continents producing over 5GW of energy. FRV's current portfolio in Australia includes:

- Royalla Solar Farm – 24MW – Operational since 2015 (sold by FRV)
- Moree Solar Farm – 70 MW – Operational since 2016
- Clare Solar Farm – 125MW – Operational since 2017 (sold by FRV)
- Lilyvale Solar Farm – 125MW – Operational since 2019
- Goonumbla Solar Farm – 83.7MW – Operational since 2020
- Winton Solar Farm – 106MW – Operational since 2021
- Sebastopol Solar Farm – 90MW – Operational since 2022
- Metz Solar Farm - 115 MW – Operational since 2022
- Dalby Solar Farm and BESS – 5MW – Operational since 2023
- Walla Walla Solar Farm – 350MW – Operational since 2024
- Terang Battery Energy Storage - 100 MW/200MWh– Commissioning 2026
- Gnarwarre Battery Energy Storage - 250MW/500MWh – Under construction 2026
- Tieri Solar Farm -100MW - Development Approval Received
- Bluewater Solar Farm – 80MW – Development Approval Received
- Ravenswood Solar Farm – 63MW - Development Approval Received
- Fosterville Solar Farm and BESS - 100MW – Development Approval Received
- Axedale Solar Farm and BESS - 140MW - Development Approval Received



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Q. What is a BESS?

A. BESS is an energy storage system that uses a group of batteries to store electrical energy from a variety of sources, including solar. The system compensates for the intermittency of sources, providing backup power to address certain constraints such as weather conditions and lack of grid space. They are crucial to the increased adoption of de-centralised power infrastructure models and the renewable energy transition in Australia.

Q. Who approves the project?

A. As a state-significant development (SSD), the consent authority is the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI).

Q. What stage is the project at?

A. The project is currently in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) phase. In 2023, FRV began early studies and community engagement and prepared a Scoping Report, which is the first formal step toward submitting a development application. This report was provided to the DPHI in December 2023, with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued shortly after. The SEARs set out the studies and assessments that must be completed as part of the EIS.

Since then, the project has continued to progress a wide range of environmental, technical and design assessments, while also refining the project layout and capacity. Additional work has also been occurring behind the scenes, including commercial and delivery planning, which has contributed to an updated project timeline. The team is now finalising the remaining detailed studies required for the EIS, so the latest design is accurately reflected in the development application. The current target for EIS submission is March 2026.

At a Commonwealth level, the project was determined to be a "controlled action" on 17 March 2025 under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). This determination means the Commonwealth requires further environmental assessment, which is being coordinated with the NSW Government and incorporated into the EIS process. This allows for a single, integrated environmental review

In parallel, the project has recently secured a long-term energy service agreement (LTESA), which provides financial certainty and allows the project to confidently move toward delivery if approved. This milestone supports firm commitments to local procurement, employment and training opportunities over the life of the project. Discussions with Council regarding a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) are also underway, in line with NSW benefit-sharing guidelines, to help ensure the project delivers practical and lasting community benefits alongside the planning process.

Q. What is a "controlled action"?

A. A "controlled action" is a standard term used under Australian environmental law to indicate that a project requires assessment under the EPBC Act. It simply means that certain environmental matters identified at a national level need to be considered as part of the approval process. It does not imply that the Project will have significant impacts or predetermine the outcome of the assessment.

The assessment is being undertaken through the accredited NSW process, which is recognised by the Commonwealth. This allows the studies prepared for the EIS to address both State and Federal requirements within a single, coordinated framework, while maintaining appropriate environmental oversight



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Q. When will construction commence and how long will construction take?

A. The construction start date is dependent on a variety of factors, including DPHI approval, selecting a construction company and receiving grid connection approvals, negotiation of a Power Purchase Agreement and completion of the Financial Close process. Once construction contractors are appointed, works on site are to take approximately 24 months.

Q. How long will this project operate for? What will happen once the BESS reaches its end of life?

A. The operational life of the project is expected to be 30 years. After this time, the site will either be decommissioned and returned to its original purpose as freehold land or, depending on future energy requirements, the project may be reutilised and upgraded, subject to landowner agreements and existing approvals.

Q. Will FRV stay on as the project owner?

A. Our approach is to develop and acquire BESS and large-scale solar energy projects to own and operate for the long term. FRV has sold assets in the past, but our core business model is to retain assets as this provides us with a sustainable return on investment and ensures we manage the running of our assets directly. For us, it is important that our assets are operated responsibly and perform well over their lifetime.

Q. What will happen to the residual land?

A. The residual land will remain as currently used.

Design considerations

Q. What does a BESS look like?

A. BESS's are container-like modular systems that are configured based on site and capacity obligations and can be compared to shipping container-like objects. As technology improves, the systems are becoming increasingly efficient and more compact. An example of a BESS can be found in the image gallery section of the website, at www.armidaleeastbess.com.au.

Q. Why has this specific site been chosen?

A. A combination of conditions needs to be analysed when selecting a site appropriate for a BESS. These key conditions help narrow the search to specific geographical areas. The choice of this location was driven by a combination of:

- Setbacks that minimise the impact on nearby properties
- Ideal connection point into the national energy grid through an existing transmission line traversing the site to the north of the development
- Excellent access to local and major roads.

Most suitable sites present some degree of restrictions such as creek lines, vegetation to be retained, etc. FRV works to incorporate these restrictions so that they can co-exist alongside the project's footprint.



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Q. Will there be any visual impact?

A. The proposed BESS site is located in a remote area, well away from main roads and more than 3 km from any residential properties. The BESS containers are unlikely to generate glare or reflective impacts, as confirmed by the landscaping and visual assessment undertaken during the EIS phase. Potential screening measures, including vegetation and fencing, were also assessed as part of the EIS process.

Q. Will I be able to hear the BESS?

A. Like all large-scale developments, BESS facilities may generate noise, however, due to its location it is not expected to be heard by nearby residents. Studies have been completed to assess noise levels and to provide clear mitigation measures if needed.

Technical

Q. What type of BESS units will be used?

A. The design is still to be finalised; however, the latest technology will be used at the time of construction. BESS units also can be adapted to utilise updates in technology, and with FRV being a global leader in battery research and development, they are well placed to make these adaptations.

Q. How high will the units be?

A. BESS units will be installed on low-lying structures and are expected to not exceed 5.5m above the natural ground level. It is expected that the project area will be at the same height or lower than other existing features in the landscape.

Q. How will construction traffic and road impacts be managed?

A. Access is anticipated to be from a new access road that will be developed as part of the project. During the anticipated 24-month construction period, construction vehicles would range from light vehicles to 26 m B-Doubles. Light vehicles would arrive during AM/PM peaks with heavy vehicle deliveries to be spaced out during the day.

Q. How will power supply be affected in the local area? Will there be outages during construction?

A. There will be no outages expected during the construction phase. Once the BESS is built and operational, it will help to increase the grid stability.

Q. Are there known health risks associated with living near BESS technology?

A. There are no situations in which being in the proximity of a BESS can have adverse health effects. The operation of a BESS generates no emissions such as CO₂ or any other harmful gases.



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Environmental

Q. Will neighbouring livestock and crops be impacted by any 'heat island' effects?

A. BESS units do not directly contribute to the urban heat island effect, as they do not generate any heat on their own, however; they can indirectly affect the urban heat island effect depending on their location and only temporarily through their construction management. As the Armidale East BESS will be in a rural area and on, the surrounding environment is not known to be a direct contributor to the heat island effect given its low density of human-made urban structures. Therefore, the combination of the BESS location with the surrounding environment will not pose a risk of contributing to the 'heat island' effect.

Q. Do batteries increase fire risk?

A. The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) have Preliminary Hazard Analysis (PHA) guidelines for safety assurance of development applications. This process is applied as part of the EIS procedures under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

The objective of a hazard analysis is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the hazards and risks associated with an operation or facility and the adequacy of safeguards.

To mitigate potential fire risk from batteries the following steps are undertaken:

1. The substation and BESS have protection to avoid overcurrent or any electric faults to cause a fire
2. plant facility will have a Battery Management System or fire panel to detect smoke, fire, and action alarms
3. water tanks, water pipeline systems, and fire extinguishing tools will be installed on-site.

Q. Is the site affected by flooding?

A. Assessments completed to date indicate that the site is not flood-prone. In the unlikely event of stormwater flooding, where water may pool from heavy rainfall events, BESS infrastructure is expected to remain stable. An Evacuation and Response Management Plan will be prepared prior to the commencement of construction.

Social and Economic

Q. How many jobs will be created by the construction of the project?

A. Employment opportunities will range from skilled to manual labour, with jobs potentially reaching up to 130 during the peak of construction. Utilising qualified local content is always a key element for FRV when developing a project, and we intend to work with local service and product suppliers to stimulate the local economy. We strongly encourage local individuals to put forward their interest in employment either for labouring or as a supplier via our website at www.armidaleeastbess.com.au.



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Q. How many jobs will be available during the operations of the project?

A. Up to 5 permanent roles are likely to be required for the operation of the project. Maintenance contracts for panel cleaning, fence repair, road grading, etc. would also be required and would likely be met by local contractors.

Q. Apart from job creation, what other benefits will the community receive?

A. As the project will be operating for 30 years, we see ourselves as part of a community and are committed to delivering long term investment in the regions and the communities in which we operate.

An important recent milestone has been the project securing a long-term energy service agreement (LTESA), which provides financial certainty and allows us to move forward with confidence. In practical terms, this means the project is now firmly committed to delivery, including clear commitments to local procurement, training opportunities and ongoing employment during both construction and operation.

We are continuing to engage with Council and the wider community to ensure the project delivers meaningful local value. Conversations with Council regarding a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) are underway, in line with the NSW Government's benefit-sharing guidelines, with an agreement (in principle) now in place. This process helps identify priority areas for community investment and ensures benefits are directed toward projects and initiatives that matter most to local residents.

Beyond employment, benefits may also include upgrades to local roads and intersections to improve safety and access, increased demand for local goods and services such as accommodation and hospitality during construction, and long-term support for the electricity network through clean energy infrastructure. Community feedback will continue to inform how benefit programs are shaped over time, so they provide lasting and practical value for the region.

Q. What is a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA)?

A. A Voluntary Planning Agreement, or VPA, is a formal agreement between the project developer and the local council that sets out how the project will contribute financial benefits to the community. These benefits can include things like funding for local facilities or programs, road or intersection improvements, or other community priorities identified by Council and residents. It is called "voluntary" because it is negotiated rather than automatically required, but once agreed it becomes a legally binding commitment.

Overall, it is a transparent way to make sure the project delivers practical, lasting value to the local area, not just during construction but over the life of the project.

Q. Will there be always a contact onsite in case of emergency?

A. The BESS is fully maintained by FRV throughout the life of the project. There will be a 24/7 contact, and an Operations Manager and other staff members will be based near the project. The project will also be monitored 24/7 by remote CCTV.

Q. What is a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)?

A. A Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) is simply a contract to buy power at a specific price. The 'Seller' in this type of agreement is usually a utility-scale generator e.g. Solar, BESS and Wind Farms. The 'Purchaser' in this type of agreement will have significant electricity requirements which allow them to purchase all or some of the output of a project. Examples of buyers include utilities, governments, and major corporates. Examples of companies that have entered into PPAs across Australia include Telstra, Mars, Blue Scope Steel, Snowy Hydro, UNSW, and Coles, with many others considering this option.