

29th September 2025

The Hon Sonya Kilkeny MP
Minister for Planning
By email: reception.kilkenny@transport.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Watta Wella Wind Farm and BESS – Development Facilitation Program

I am writing to raise concerns about the consideration of this project under the Development Facilitation Program, and request more time for public consultation for this project.

The Watta Wella project is in the Northern Grampians Shire, and consists of 45 turbines, a 400 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), approximately 15 hectares of native vegetation removal, and new overhead transmission lines to connect to the Bulgana Substation.

The Watta Wella project is being assessed under the Development Facilitation Program, and the proposed public consultation period is the minimum 28 days.

Northern Grampians Shire Council is a potential host for major proposed transmission projects including VNI West and the Western Renewables Link, and several energy generation and storage projects. We are committed to ensuring energy projects in our region are progressed through a transparent and robust planning process that carefully considers community impacts.

Public consultation is a critical part of the planning process. It provides the opportunity for councils, agencies, landowners and community members to review the detailed project documentation and provide submissions. The Development Facilitation Pathway decisions made by the Minister for Planning under the provisions cannot be appealed to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Council is concerned that a project of this size and scale is being considered under this pathway. Given the lack of appeal rights for projects that are assessed under the Development Facilitation Program, it is essential that adequate time is allowed to ensure community participation in the project's planning is genuine and informed.

Our community is experiencing a range of stressors including drought, cost of living, the introduction of the Emergency Services Levy and impacts of the 2024-2025 Summer bushfires. There is significant community opposition to the renewable energy transition that is causing community angst on top of these other compounding issues. Providing inadequate time to engage in the planning process will aggravate this situation further.

Agriculture is the backbone of our shire's economy, community, landscape and lifestyle. Right now, our farmers are extremely busy harvesting their crops and managing drought conditions. The time for submissions (28 days) for the Watta Wella Wind Farm and BESS is not enough for our farming community to respond meaningfully.

On top of the Watta Wella project, there is a range of other energy projects that are seeking public feedback, including the Western Renewables Link which is currently subject to an Inquiry and Advisory Committee process. A number of landowners are impacted by both these projects. The community needs more time to respond given the timing of the harvest and the pressure this will place on landowners.

CONTACT US

✉ ngshire@ngshire.vic.gov.au
🌐 www.ngshire.vic.gov.au
☎ (03) 5358 8700
✉ PO Box 580 Stawell VIC 3380

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We request an extension of time of one month for submissions to allow the Council to properly consult with our community, and to allow community members to make submissions.

If you wish to discuss the matters raised in this letter, please contact [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Yours faithfully



Brent McAlister
Chief Executive Officer
Northern Grampians Shire Council

