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Residents alarmed by plans for battery energy storage system at Kurnell



By [Murray Trembath](#)

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Residents Alex Milosevski (left) Lyn Atkin, Allison Casey and Rob Stanley-Jones next to Ampol fuel tanks. Picture by Murray Trembath

Kurnell residents are alarmed at the prospect of a huge battery energy storage system being built next to Australia's largest fuel storage terminal.

The Kurnell Progress, Precinct and Residents Association says there are significant fire, health, and environmental risks associated with

lithium-ion battery storage, particularly when located so close to volatile fuel infrastructure.

Ampol is proposing the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of up to 800 megawatts (MW) in capacity and up to 3800 megawatt-hour (MWh) in duration.



📷 Containerised stacked batteries. Picture supplied

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The facility, which would connect to the Ausgrid substation at Kurnell, would store electricity from the network and release it during periods of high demand.

Ampol says the BESS infrastructure is likely to consist of containerised or stacked batteries up to six metres high.

A spokesman said the proposed facility, which is being considered as a State Significant Development, was a key component of its vision for a Kurnell Energy and Industry Hub following the closure of the refinery in 2014.

How Battery Energy Storage Systems Work (BESS)



An Environmental Impact Statement "considers potential risks and impacts, and is thoroughly assessed, mitigated and reviewed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and other relevant regulatory agencies".

"It will be available for public exhibition and comment before the end of the year," he said.

"Ampol understands the Kurnell community's interest in the BESS and broader Hub, and we are committed to ongoing community consultation as this process evolves. We will also be attending the next Kurnell precinct resident meeting on June 11."

The residents group says the community has not been adequately consulted about the plan for about 280 shipping containers filled with

lithium-ion batteries.

Association president Rob Stanley-Jones said community anger intensified after Ampol representatives told residents the project would be one of the largest of its kind in the country and its co-location next to Australia's largest fuel storage facility would make the community 'Pioneers' ".

Mr Stanley-Jones said the association's research had revealed several examples of BESS fires.



 Ampol site at Kurnell. Picture supplied

"In January 2025, the Moss Landing BESS in California - cited as the closest operational equivalent to the proposed Kurnell system - caught fire, prompting the evacuation of 1500 residents," he said.

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"The blaze burned for several days and reignited more than a month later, with ongoing reports of respiratory illnesses in nearby communities and wildlife injuries in adjacent protected areas.

"Closer to home, Australia has faced similar incidents.

"In Bouldercombe, Queensland, a fire broke out at a Tesla Megapack BESS in September 2023, burning for over three days. Emergency services were unable to extinguish the flames using traditional methods, as lithium battery fires are notoriously difficult to contain and can self-ignite.

"In Victoria, the Big Battery fire in July 2021 saw two Tesla Megapacks ignite during initial testing. The fire burned for more than three days, and the incident led to months of investigation and millions in damage, even before the facility became fully operational.

Mr Stanley Jones said Ampol (previously Caltex) at Kurnell had been responsible for many oil refinery spills and incidents over the years, most recently a large oily wastewater spill caused by pump failure in 2022.

The Ampol website says the project is part of the company's future energy and decarbonisation strategies.

"We are exploring how we can better support our customers, employees, and the communities in which we operate through playing a role in Australia's energy transition," Ampol says.

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