



Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation
Doonella House, Tewantin 4565

May 10th, 2024

Ref: Submission Concerning Proposed Energex Trial Tariff for Community Battery Storage

Dear Gavin Fox,

The Commonwealth and State governments have set responsible targets for reducing our emissions of greenhouse gases. To meet those targets, we need to expand rapidly, generation of electricity from the intermittent sources of wind and solar energy. The variability of those supply technologies means we need a corresponding increase in storage systems. Community batteries are a key piece of infrastructure that can assist providing this storage. They can also reduce the need to expand the power grid by increasing the capacity of supply technologies like rooftop solar to meet local demand. They also contribute to stabilising the grid.

Energex understands this need and has three different battery programs in Queensland. Network connected batteries of a large scale (4MW/8MWh) have been successfully installed in several locations, including Bundaberg and Hervey Bay, with firm plans for further connections in Raby Bay, Bribie Island and Morayfield. A trial of much smaller neighbourhood batteries (30kW/60kWh) is going ahead in Ipswich. Finally, Energex is partnering with Ergon, the regional network provider, to install community batteries of intermediate size (90kW/180kWh). Funded through the Australian government's Community Batteries for Household Solar program, these will be connected to the grid in 13 different communities across Queensland. The community battery to be located in Noosaville is the only one that will be owned by the community, with the other 12 being owned and operated by Energex/Ergon.

Community groups have shown interest in extending this program in the future by purchasing batteries and having them connected to the grid. While it is confidently expected that the prices of community batteries will continue to come down, at this stage the financial viability is marginal. Some power authorities have set the payment these community facilities must meet at a low level to encourage communities to step up. Powercorp, Citipower and United Energy have set a trial tariff of \$165 per year. It is not clear why there needs to be a charge at all since power distributors are themselves investing in battery storage because it is cost-effective. If there is a charge, it should be nominal, as are those cited.

We were alarmed to hear that Energex is proposing a charge of several thousand dollars for community batteries to be connected to the grid. This would make such projects financially unviable. That would cause cancellation of any future community battery projects that are now under consideration. To take advantage of the huge investment in rooftop solar energy that has happened in recent years, we urgently need to expand storage. The excellent work being done by Queensland power authorities needs to be



supplemented by community projects. It is imperative that the charging regime set up for 2025-30 encourages rapid expansion of community battery storage.

Kind regards,



Fiona Berkin, Noosa Biosphere Reserve Foundation – Chair

