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Scoping Report

Wanganella Wind Farm

By Cogency Australia Pty Ltd
For Equis Wind Australia Pty Ltd

21 November 2024

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Wanganella Wind Farm

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Cogency Australia Pty Ltd
cogencyaustralia.com.au
office@cogencyaustralia.com.au

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1	13/11/2024	Scoping Report	Gabrielle Coddington	Adam Terrill and Rebecca Wardle	Elizabeth Zorondo
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Glossary and Terms

Item	Definition
ACHAR	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
AHIMS	Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System
AWA	Australian Wind Alliance
BAM	Biodiversity Assessment Method
BC Act	Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016
BDAR	Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
CIV	Capital Investment Value
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Commonwealth)
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW)
DPE	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (now DCCEEW and DPHI)
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
DPIE	Department of Planning and Environment (now DCCEEW and DPHI)
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EnergyCo	Energy Corporation of NSW
EPA	NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
EP&A Act	*Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
EP&A Regulation	*Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*
EPBC Act	*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
EPIs	Environmental Planning Instruments
EPL	Environmental Protection License
GW	Gigawatts
GWh	Gigawatt hour
ha	Hectares
ISP	Integrated System Plan
km	Kilometres
kV	Kilovolt
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LEPs	Local Environmental Plans
LGA	Local Government Area
LGCs	Large-scale Generation Certificates
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
MGB	Murray Geological Basin
MNES	Matters of National Environmental Significance
MREH	Melbourne Renewable Energy Hub

Item	Definition
MW	Megawatts
MWh	Megawatt hour
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEM	National Electricity Market
NSW	New South Wales
NVIA	Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
OSOM	Oversize and Overmass
PCTs	Plant Community Types
PVIA	Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment
RET	Renewable Energy Target
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
RFS	NSW Rural Fire Service
SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SEPPs	State Environmental Planning Policies
Biodiversity and Conservation SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021
Planning Systems SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021
Resilience and Hazards SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021
Transport and Infrastructure SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SSD	State Significant Development
TECs	Threatened Ecological Communities
TfNSW	Transport for NSW
TTIA	Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment
WTGs	Wind turbine generators
WWF	Wanganella Wind Farm (the Project)

1. Introduction

1.1 Project and Report Overview

This Scoping Report has been prepared by Cogency Australia on behalf of Equis Wind Australia Pty Ltd (the Proponent) to accompany an application for a State Significant Development (SSD) for the Wanganella Wind Farm (WWF) (the Project). The Project would involve the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of 105 wind turbine generators (WTGs) with a capacity of 840MW, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), on-site substation and other associated works and infrastructure.

The Project would be located on the east side of Cobb Highway, to the north of the town of Wanganella, New South Wales and within the Edward River Local Government Area (the Site). Figure 1 provides a regional context plan of the Site.

The Site contains a small number of privately owned properties over approximately 30,737 hectares. The actual disturbance area is estimated to be approximately 5%, or 1,537 hectares of the Site area. The Site also includes Crown Land. Table 1 sets out the lot details of the Site.

Table 1 — Lot & DP Index

Lot	DP
5	113947
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 91, 97, 101	756247
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42	756252
5, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 40A, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75,	756286
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 79, 80,	756295
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 78, 101	756336
1	1061869
1	1083367
1	1135232
1	1142626
1	1151654

The Project is located in the southern extent of the South-West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). It will connect to the National Electricity Market (NEM) and the wider electrical grid through a future on-site substation connection to the proposed Victoria New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) transmission project, intended for completion in 2031.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) with information regarding the Project in order to obtain project-specific Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs). It has been prepared with consideration to the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and other Local, State and Federal Government Guidelines, along with the current Wind Energy Guidelines for State significant wind energy development (DPE 2016), Wind Energy: Visual Assessment Bulletin For State

significant wind energy development (DPE 2016), Wind Energy: Wind Noise Assessment Bulletin For State significant wind energy development (DPE 2016), and NSW Draft Energy Policy Framework (2023) and the Draft Wind Energy Guidelines (2023). This report has also been guided by the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a scoping report (2022).

A range of preliminary assessments have been undertaken to support the preparation of this Scoping Report and to provide a basis for further technical impact assessments that will form part of the Project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This includes:

- Preliminary Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Moir, 2024) (Appendix B).
- Preliminary Noise Impact Assessment (Sonus, 2024) (Appendix C).
- Preliminary Biodiversity Assessment (ECHP, 2024) (Appendix D).
- Preliminary Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (Biosis, 2024) (Appendix E).
- Preliminary Social Impact Assessment (ATX, 2024). (Appendix F).

The results of these preliminary assessments have informed the Project's design and engagement approach, and will continue to influence the EIS. They have been summarised and included in this Scoping Report to help determine the scope of work to be set under the project specific SEARs.

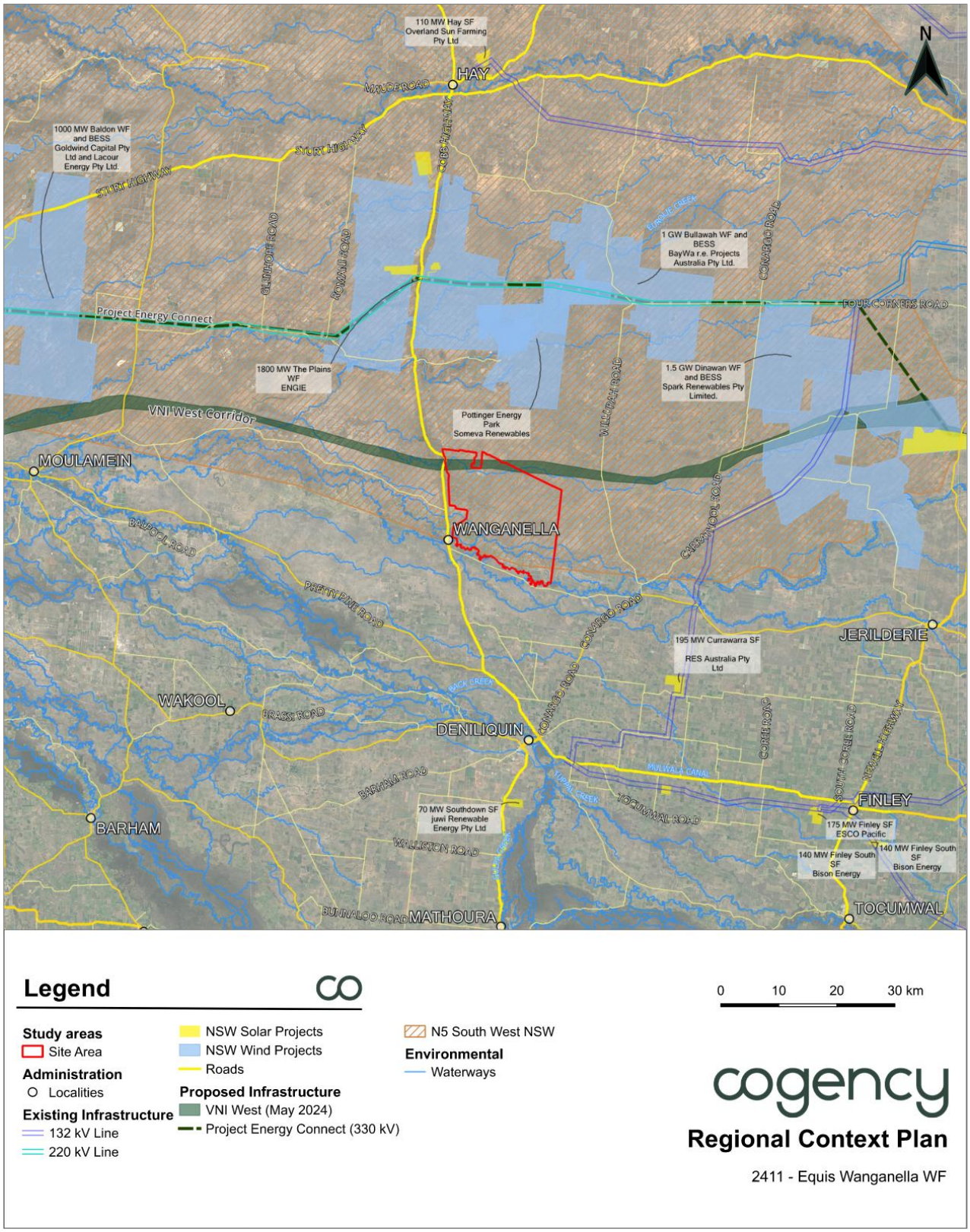

Figure 1 — Regional Context Plan

1.2 Project Proponent

The Proponent is part of the Equis group (Equis), a leading and experienced renewable energy developer with a goal to help Australia transition to a green future. With a strong track record of delivering renewable energy projects with lasting benefits, Equis has developed over 250 renewables projects across the Asia Pacific since its inception in 2010. Equis is currently focused on and has offices in Australia, Japan, and Korea, and is headquartered in Singapore.

With over 200 staff internationally and more than 50 in Australia, and offices in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and regional Australia, Equis is well positioned to contribute to New South Wales' and Australia's renewable energy goals. The local team are experienced, professionally qualified, and well suited for the development of the Project with in-house expertise in wind farm and BESS development and delivery, community and stakeholder engagement, investment, financing, grid connection, legal and planning and approvals. Equis' experience in renewable energy, storage and contestable transmission infrastructure has translated into a growing portfolio of projects across Australia. This experience includes:

- Australian Onshore Wind: Equis is developing 10 onshore wind projects including early-stage opportunities, totalling 4.8 Gigawatt (GW) of capacity.
- Australian BESS: Equis is developing one of Australia's largest BESS portfolios, comprising 16 assets and totalling 4.5 GW of storage capacity, including the 1.2GW Melbourne Renewable Energy Hub (MREH) which is currently under construction. MREH is being delivered by Equis' in house management team, having secured the largest grid-scale battery financing to date, with AUD 400m in debt commitments from Export Development Canada, Societe Generale, Standard Chartered and Westpac.
- Australian Solar: In 2018, Equis successfully developed Phase 1 of the 127MW Tailem Bend Solar Farm (Tailem Bend 1) and associated substation infrastructure in South Australia. Tailem Bend 1 secured a 22-year power purchase agreement with Snowy Hydro.
- Transmission and Distribution: Equis' development pipeline involves substation and transmission line upgrades. Across Asia Pacific, Equis has delivered over 574km of transmission lines, including recent experience developing 500kV underground cables in Australia for MREH.

Key Details of the Proponent are provided in Table 2.

Table 2 — Proponent Details

Requirement	Details
Full Name/s	Equis Wind Australia Pty Ltd
Postal Address	36 Esplanade, Brighton VIC 3186
ABN	52 675 837 377

1.3 Project Background

Development of the Project has been informed by the increasing need for renewable energy sources to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with electricity production, and to reinforce the NSW energy system, as older coal fired power plants exit the grid. Central to these needs has been the development of REZs across NSW, as established in the NSW Government's Electricity Strategy and Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, that outline the delivery of the state's first five REZs in the Central-West Orana, New England, South-West, Hunter-Central Coast and Illawarra regions (refer to Figure 2).

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo NSW) is progressing a REZ in the South West region of the state, running from Buronga through to Darlington Point. This area was chosen primarily due to its strong renewable energy resource potential, proximity to existing electricity network and consideration of potential

interactions with existing land uses, including agricultural land and biodiversity conservation. The South-West REZ as currently proposed is expected to receive up to $2.8 billion in private investment by 2030 and support over 2,000 construction jobs in the region. The intended network capacity of the South-West REZ will be supported by the eastern section of Project EnergyConnect, HumeLink and the NSW-side of the VNI West and additional minor infrastructure upgrades. The South West REZ was formally declared by the Minister of Energy under section 19(1) of the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 and gazetted in November 2022.

The Project described in this Scoping Report has been developed in the context of the emergence of a significant number of renewable energy generating projects across the REZ, particularly grid-scale wind and solar farms, and the anticipated construction of new transmission lines across the state. The development of Project EnergyConnect and VNI West are providing surety that new renewable projects across the South-West REZ will be able to deliver clean energy to the NEM, in turn contributing to Federal and State commitments to electricity sector decarbonisation. While planning for VNI West is still ongoing, proximity to Project EnergyConnect and connection of both transmission lines to the proposed Dinawan Terminal Station will result in a growing pipeline of renewable energy projects along South-West REZ. Unlike most other projects in the REZ which will connect to Project EnergyConnect, the Project is proposed to connect to the NEM via a future connection to VNI West corridor that intersects the Site.

The key objective of the Project is to enhance the security and reliability of electricity networks in NSW and Victoria via the production, storage and distribution of power directly into VNI West.

The Project has been sited to avoid potential environmental impacts and incompatible land use as far as practicable. Assessments have been and will continue to be undertaken to inform the micro-siting of the turbines and associated infrastructure to avoid impacts as far as practicable. It is also expected that through the EIS process, mitigation measures will be developed, including the preparation of management plans where impacts cannot be avoided.

Figure 2 — NSW Renewable Energy Zones

1.4 Purpose of This Report

This Scoping Report has been prepared to support a request to DPHI for project-specific SEARs. The Project is declared as a State Significant Development (SSD), pursuant to section 2.6 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 (see also clause 20 of Schedule 1, as further detailed in section 4.1 below).

This Scoping Report has been prepared in accordance with the DPIE guidelines '*State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report*' (2022).

It aims to:

- Describe the Project in simple terms,
- Include an analysis of feasible alternatives considered having regard to the objectives of the development, and identify the alternatives that will be investigated further in the EIS;
- Demonstrate Landholder acceptance to establishment, operation maintenance and decommissioning of the Project on their land;
- Give an early indication of stakeholder views of the Project and provide an overview of the community engagement that will be carried out during the preparation of the EIS; and
- Identify they key matters requiring further assessment in the EIS and the proposed approach to addressing each of these matters, having regard to any relevant Government legislation, plans, policies or guidelines.

This Scoping Report also aims to provide a description of the Project to key regulatory agencies and to identify the key environmental, social, and economic matters of relevance to the Project to inform the preparation of the project-specific SEARs. Under the provisions of Clause 4.12(8) of the EP&A Act, an EIS is required (and will be prepared) to accompany the SSD application for the Project, to be lodged with the NSW DPHI on behalf of the Planning Secretary. The SEARs will identify specific assessment considerations relevant to the Project that must be addressed in the EIS.

2. Strategic Context

This Chapter provides a high-level identification of the key strategic elements that provide a preliminary justification for the development of the Project in the context of local, regional, state and national strategic planning and policy commitments.

2.1 Strategic Policy Context

The Project aligns with and is supported by a number of strategies and policies from International, Federal, State, Regional, and Local jurisdictions. These policies are summarised in the following table.

Table 3 — Strategic Policy Context

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
National and International Context		
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP21) – The Paris Agreement	The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 in December 2015, is an international treaty aiming to combat climate change. Its primary goal is to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, with efforts to keep it below 1.5°C. To achieve this, the Agreement requires countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient economies. Each country sets its own targets, known as nationally determined contributions, which are reviewed and updated every five years to reflect increasing ambition and progress. The Agreement also emphasises the importance of financial and technical support for developing countries to help them mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts.	The Project will directly contribute to the goals of the Paris Agreement by increasing the share of renewable energy in the electricity grid, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement aims to limit global temperature rise to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels which the Project will contribute to by generating clean, renewable energy. The Project aligns with the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that Australia has committed to under the Paris Agreement. These NDCs include targets for reducing emissions and increasing the use of renewable energy sources. The project supports these targets by providing a sustainable and reliable source of electricity, thereby helping Australia meet its emission reduction commitments.

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
Integrated System Plan 2024 (Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO))	AEMO's Integrated System Plan (ISP) is a roadmap for the transition of the NEM power system, with a clear plan for essential infrastructure that will meet future energy needs. The ISP's optimal development path sets out the needed generation, storage and network investments to transition to net zero by 2050 through current policy settings and deliver significant net market benefits for consumers.	The Project aligns with the 2024 ISP in several key ways: • **Roadmap for Transition**: The ISP serves as a comprehensive roadmap for the NEM transition from coal-fired power to renewable energy sources. The Project directly aligns with the ISP's roadmap for more renewable electricity generation. • **Investment in Infrastructure:** The ISP emphasises the urgent need for investments in new generation, storage, and transmission infrastructure. This includes 20 GW of generation, of which the Project will directly contribute to, in addition to storage. • **Renewable Energy Zones:** The ISP highlights the development of REZs to efficiently connect renewable energy sources to the grid. These zones are essential for optimising the use of wind, solar, and other renewable resources. The Project will generate electricity that will feed into the transmission network planned for the South-West REZ.
Net Zero Plan	The Net Zero Plan will guide the Australian Government in transition to the legislated target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Plan will determine a 2035 emissions reduction target which is due by the end of February 2025. The Plan will set out government priorities, establish policies and measures to drive down emissions and support ongoing and new investment in low emissions and renewable activities.	The Project will support the transition towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and the 2035 emissions reduction target.
State Context		
Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023	The *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* legislates NSW's ambitious approach to addressing climate change,	The Project will support the transition towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and the interim targets of 50% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 and 70% reduction on 2005 levels by 2035.

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
	enshrining a whole-of-government climate action to deliver net zero by 2050.	
Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030	The *Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020–2030 Plan* sets out how the NSW Government will deliver on net zero objectives over the next decade with the goal of net zero emissions by 2050. Stage 1 of the Plan is focused on the next decade because rapid changes in technology make identifying the lowest cost path to net zero difficult. It further states the importance of local government, businesses, and communities in their involvement in reaching net zero. The Plan sets out four priorities in which the NSW State Government can action to help achieve the net zero goal.	The Project supports Priority 1 (Electricity and Power Generation) by proposing renewable energy development within the South-West REZ.
NSW Electricity Strategy	The NSW Electricity Strategy is the NSW Government's plan for a reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity future that supports a growing economy. The Strategy sets out three major goals. The first includes ensuring investment in generation technologies. The second guarantees an Energy Security Target if a level of capacity is not met by the market. The third is to ensure the NSW Government has the	The Project aligns with the *NSW Electricity Plan*, in particular Part 2 (Change in the Electricity System) by contributing to the replacement of ageing generation equipment (i.e. coal-fired power stations) with lower emission generating sources (i.e. wind). The Project is also responsive to Part 5 (The NSW Government's Electricity Strategy) through location within the South-West REZ.

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
	powers to handle electricity emergencies. The Electricity Plan details the generation, transmission, distribution, and retail elements that combine to provide the State's electricity network. While the Plan states that the NSW Government has a neutral approach to electricity generation technology, it details that both NSW and Commonwealth laws prohibit the development of nuclear power stations. Furthermore, the Plan explains that the State's aging coal-fired power stations are reaching the end of their technical lives.	
NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy	The *NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy* is a comprehensive plan by the NSW Government aimed at transforming the state's energy infrastructure. This plan seeks to support the development of REZ's in the Central-West, New England, and South-West regions, projected to generate significant private investment, regional economic growth, and job opportunities.	The Project has direct alignment with the Strategy due to its contribution to lowering household electricity costs in tandem with generating zero emission electricity. **Part 2: Unlocking cheap energy resources and regional development in NSW Energy Zones** The Strategy outlines its prioritisation of REZ's in the state due to their high energy generation potential along planned transmission corridors. The Strategy expects $23 billion dollars of investment adding an additional 2,000 construction jobs each year for regional NSW. The Project directly aligns with these forecasts by providing investment, construction opportunities, ongoing jobs, and low emission electricity generation.
NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap	The NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap is the State's comprehensive plan to transition to renewable energy. It aims to ensure reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy for the future. Key components include the	The Project will significantly contribute to the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap by enhancing the state's renewable energy capacity. By generating clean, sustainable electricity, the project supports the development of the South-West REZ, a core element of the Roadmap. The Project aligns with the Roadmap's goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
	development of REZ's, supporting new transmission infrastructure, encouraging investment in renewable generation and storage, and creating jobs.	lowering electricity costs for consumers. The Project will create construction and ongoing jobs and stimulate economic growth in the region, further supporting the state's broader economic and environmental objectives outlined in the Roadmap.
Regional Context		
Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041	The *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041* is a 20-year land use plan that applies to multiple LGAs including Edward River. The regional plan focuses on several land use planning approaches, including unlocking sustainable growth opportunities that come from the region's proximity to Victoria and Canberra and its existing endowments. The vision for the region to 2041 is implemented through objectives, strategies and actions for the three sections of the plan: the environment, communities and places, and the economy.	Elements of Project directly apply to the following strategic objectives listed in the plan: • **Objective 11: Plan for integrated and resilient utility infrastructure.** By providing a greater share of renewable energy, the Project will support and maintain the integrity of utility infrastructure across the Riverina region, particularly as existing fossil fuel based power stations are removed from the grid. • **Objective 13: Support the transition to net zero by 2050.** The Project will support the region's transition to net zero by 2050 by providing for a significant amount of emissions free electricity for local communities and the broader region.
Local Context		
Community Strategic Plan 2022-2050 (Edward River Shire)	The Edward River Shire's Community Strategic Plan 2022-2050 aims to identify the local community's priorities and aspirations into the future. The strategy is founded on community consultation conducted in 2021 and reflects the present goals of the community. The issues most highlighted by the community and that are	The Strategic Plan's Delivery Program provides five categories through which Edward River can action the desired change. Relevant to the Project are: **Outcome 1.1: Pristine Natural Environment** 1.1.3 Responsibly address Council's carbon footprint and support renewable energy initiatives. **Outcome 3.2: Economic Development** 3.2.1 Develop and implement a (technology aware) economic development and growth strategy for the Edward River region.

Strategy, Policy, or Plan	Description	Project Alignment
	reflected in the strategy are in relation to health, education, and employment. The strategy provides a Delivery Program as the mechanism to realise the council and community's goals.	3.2.2 Collaborate with stakeholders and entrepreneurs to drive diverse, innovative and competitiveness in new markets. These strategic outcomes correlate with the development of renewable electricity generation which will provide ongoing employment and technological capability through interaction with a diverse range of stakeholders.

2.2 Site and Locality

2.2.1 Regional Context

The Project is located in the Edward River LGA, and approximately 550 kms west of Sydney and 270 kms north of Melbourne. The region is known as the Riverina, occupying a key part of South West NSW, bordered to the south by the Murray River and the state of Victoria. The Edward River LGA contains of a population of 8,430 residents across approximately 888,000 ha of land.

Land use in the region is predominantly agricultural. This has historically focussed on animal husbandry in reference to the Long Paddock stock route that runs parallel to the Cobb Highway. More recently the region has begun producing high-quality short and medium grain rice on irrigated land. Agricultural land occupies 859,344 ha of the LGA's total 888,344 ha of land, making approximately 97% of land within the LGA agricultural. Major agricultural stakeholders in the region include SunRice, Murray Irrigation Limited and Agriculture and Natural Solutions Acquisition Corporation. Dryland and irrigated broadacre crops are also common in the region with the largest produce being wheat and barley.

Access to the region is provided by the historically famous Cobb Highway which connects Deniliquin to the south and Hay to the north. Deniliquin, known locally as 'Deni', is 40 kms to the Site's south via Cobb Highway and is the largest town in the Edward River LGA with a population of 6,431 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021)). Deniliquin is known for its Deni Ute Muster which draws approximately 3,000 visitors to the town annually.

The town of Hay is 73 kms to the north of the Project with a population of 2,208 (ABS, 2021). Within the region there are three interspersed villages each with less than 100 residents along the Cobb Highway: Wanganella, Booroorban, and Pretty Pine.

The region is largely within the South-West REZ, a NSW Government designated area spanning from Buronga in the east through to Darlington Point in the west. The REZ is intended to highlight regions suitable for new major renewable energy generation supported by existing and proposed transmission. The South-West REZ area was selected after careful consideration by the NSW Government due to high potential for wind and solar electricity generation, "proximity to existing electricity networks, and interactions with existing land uses such as agriculture and conservation"[1]. Consultation for the REZ location was undertaken and included the participation of regional stakeholders, representatives of local councils, Aboriginal land councils, and state government agencies.

[1] EnergyCo. 2024. South West Renewable Energy Zone. Sourced from https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/sw-rez#:~:text=The%20South%20West%20REZ%20was%20chosen%20due%20to%20an%20abundance,strong%20pipeline%20of%20proposed%20projects.

Coinciding with the planning of the South West REZ has been the planning and development of new transmission to connect significant amount of new generation to the NEM. The most significant of these in the region are the VNI West and Project EnergyConnect.

VNI West represents a significant infrastructure initiative aimed at enhancing the electricity transmission capacity between Victoria and New South Wales and to address the growing need to support the increasing integration of new renewable energy projects across regions and states. As network congestion is increasing in areas of NSW and Victoria, interconnections between regions to maximise transmission potential will be increasingly necessary. As of August 2024, VNI West is currently in the planning and consultation phases, with a 1km corridor for a preferred route option endorsed by the DPHI in July 2024. As that corridor runs through the Site, when completed, the Project is proposed to connect to VNI West through a future on-site substation.

Project EnergyConnect is Australia's largest energy transmission project that will construct 900km of transmission line between Robertstown and Wagga Wagga, transversing the center of the South West REZ and allowing for wider distribution of renewable energy across the South Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria. Construction of the transmission line began in 2022 and is expected to be completed in 2026.

2.2.2 Regional Projects

Given the development of the South-West REZ, and the planning and ongoing construction of VNI West and Project EnergyConnect, a number of grid-scale renewable energy projects have been proposed in the same region as the Project. Of these, the closest project is likely to be Pottinger Wind Farm to the North West, which is approximately 12km away (WTG to WTG).

It is noted that the majority of these projects are associated with Project EnergyConnect and therefore are located to the north west, north or north east. The Project is located to the south of the agglomeration of projects along Project EnergyConnect, which has few major projects to the south or west. Any cumulative impacts associated with these projects will be assessed in greater detail in the EIS preparation.

Table 4 — Regional Renewable Projects

Project	Developer / Operator	Energy	Indicative Size	Status	Distance to Project (approx.)
Pottinger Wind Farm	Someva	Wind	900 MW	Planning	9km
Booroorban (Saltbush) Wind Farm	Octopus Investments	Wind	400 MW	Planning	17km
Romani Solar Farm	Samsung C&T Renewable Energy	Solar	250 MW	Planning	28km
The Plains Solar Farm	ENGIE	Solar	400 MW	Planning	30km
The Plains Wind Farm	ENGIE	Wind	1800MW	Planning	17km
Currawarra Solar Farm	RES	Solar	195 MW	Planning	25.5km
Bullawah Wind Farm	BayWa r.e.	Wind	1,000 MW	Planning	27km
Tarleigh Park Solar Farm	RES	Solar	90 MW	Planning	39.5km
Tchelery Wind Farm	Neoen	Wind	800 MW	Planning	44km
Lang's Crossing Solar Farm	TEC-C	Solar	10 MW	Construction	63km

Project	Developer / Operator	Energy	Indicative Size	Status	Distance to Project (approx.)
Baldon Wind Farm	Goldwind	Wind	1,000 MW	Planning	62km
Yanco Delta Wind Farm	ViRYA Energy	Wind	1,500 MW	Planning	35.5km
Argoon Wind Farm	RES	Wind	901 MW	Planning	75km
Hay Solar Farm	Island Green Power	Solar	152 MW	Operational	64km
Finley Solar Farm	John Laing	Solar	175 MW	Operational	59km
Keri Keri Wind Farm	Acciona	Wind	884 MW	Planning	84km
Keri Keri Solar Farm	Acciona	Solar	400 MW	Proposed	85km
Dinawan Wind Farm	Spark Renewables	Wind	1,200 MW	Planning	35km
Dinawan Solar Farm	Spark Renewables	Solar	800 MW	Planning	59km
Wilan Wind Farm	Kilara	Wind	800 MW	Planning	86km

2.2.3 Local Context

The Project is located near the village of Wanganella, which is a small town with population of 61 residents across approximately 30 dwellings. Located on the banks of Billabong Creek near the Cobb Highway bridge, it contains a community hall, post office/general store, and has an economy primarily focused on servicing the surrounding agricultural production.

The local geography is overwhelmingly flat, with the surrounding area containing few structural landmarks other than waterways of which Billabong Creek is the preeminent feature. Part of the Hay Plains, the area is well known for its flatness and straight, uninterrupted roads.

Billabong Creek, one of the longest creeks in the world, forms the Site's southern boundary, whilst Delta Creek passes through to the north of the Project. Other waterways, mostly ephemeral, flow generally to the west and forming part of the Murray Darling Basin. The area dominated by flat alluvial plains, with vegetation generally limited to grass, except in near waterways or dwellings.

Current land use within the local area is stud sheep, merino wool production and other animal grazing, and some broadacre crop production using irrigation provided by Billabong Creek. The local area is characterized by its hot, dry climate, which influences the agricultural practices and water management strategies employed by local landholders. Access to reliable water sources such as Billabong Creek is crucial for sustaining both crop and livestock production.

The local area is sparsely populated with very large properties and few dwellings. Excluding the built-up residential areas of Wanganella itself, there are approximately 11 dwellings within an 8 km radius of the Project, of which seven (7) are involved dwellings and the remaining four (4) are non-involved. The majority of nearby dwellings (approximately 30) are those within the village of Wanganella to the Project's immediate south-west. Table 5 provides a break down of the residences in proximity to the Site.

Table 5 — Residence Proximity Count

Associated / Not Associated	3.6km from WTG	Between 3.6km and 5.3km from WTG	Between 5.3km and 8km from WTG
Associated	4	2	1
Not Associated	2 (within Wanganella)	28 (within Wanganella)	4

2.2.4 The Project Site

The Site contains a small number of privately owned properties over approximately 30,737 hectares. The actual disturbance area is estimated to be approximately 5%, or 1,537 hectares of the Site area. Crown land is also present within the Site due to numerous 'paper roads' that exist on plan but don't contain a passable road (see Figure 4). A large area of crown land exists just to the west of the Site as part of a wide stock route associated with Cobb Highway. The Site's southern boundary is bordered by Billabong Creek, to the west by Cobb Highway, and to the north and east by private property.

There are six dwellings within the Site (see Figure 3) all within ownership of the involved landowners, it is noted that one of the dwellings is unoccupied and is understood to be used for storage.

Like much of the land within the Hay Plains, the Site is very sparsely populated and is predominately flat and open grazing land. The elevation across the Site is extremely uniform ranging from 87m to 88m above sea level. Consistent with the broader landscape, the Site primarily comprises a mix of disturbed and intact shrublands, improved pasture and small to medium intact and remnant patches of grasslands and woodlands, the Site is mostly used for sheep grazing.

A large number of creeks and natural drainage lines occur on the Site. In addition to Billabong Creek on the Site's southern boundary, Wanganella Creek, Sheepwash Creek and Browns Creek all traverse through the southern portion of the Site, while Forest Creek and Eight Mile Creek are located just outside the Site's southern boundary (see Figure 25). Carroonboon and Two Mile Creek both pass through the Site's western extent and Delta Creek runs through the Site's northern extent. A number of smaller unnamed creeks, drainage lines, wetlands and dams are present across the Site (see site photos across Figure 7). A key feature of the hydrology of the Site is that the majority of the waterways are shallow, ephemeral, and indistinguishable from surrounding terrain with no defined bed and bank. The Site is entirely zoned Primary Production (RU1) as per the Conargo Local Environment Plan 2013 and the Deniliquin Local Environment Plan 2013 (see Figure 5).

Much like the broader area, the site is relatively flat, ranging from approximately 84m – 92m Australian Height Datum (AHD) (See Figure 6).

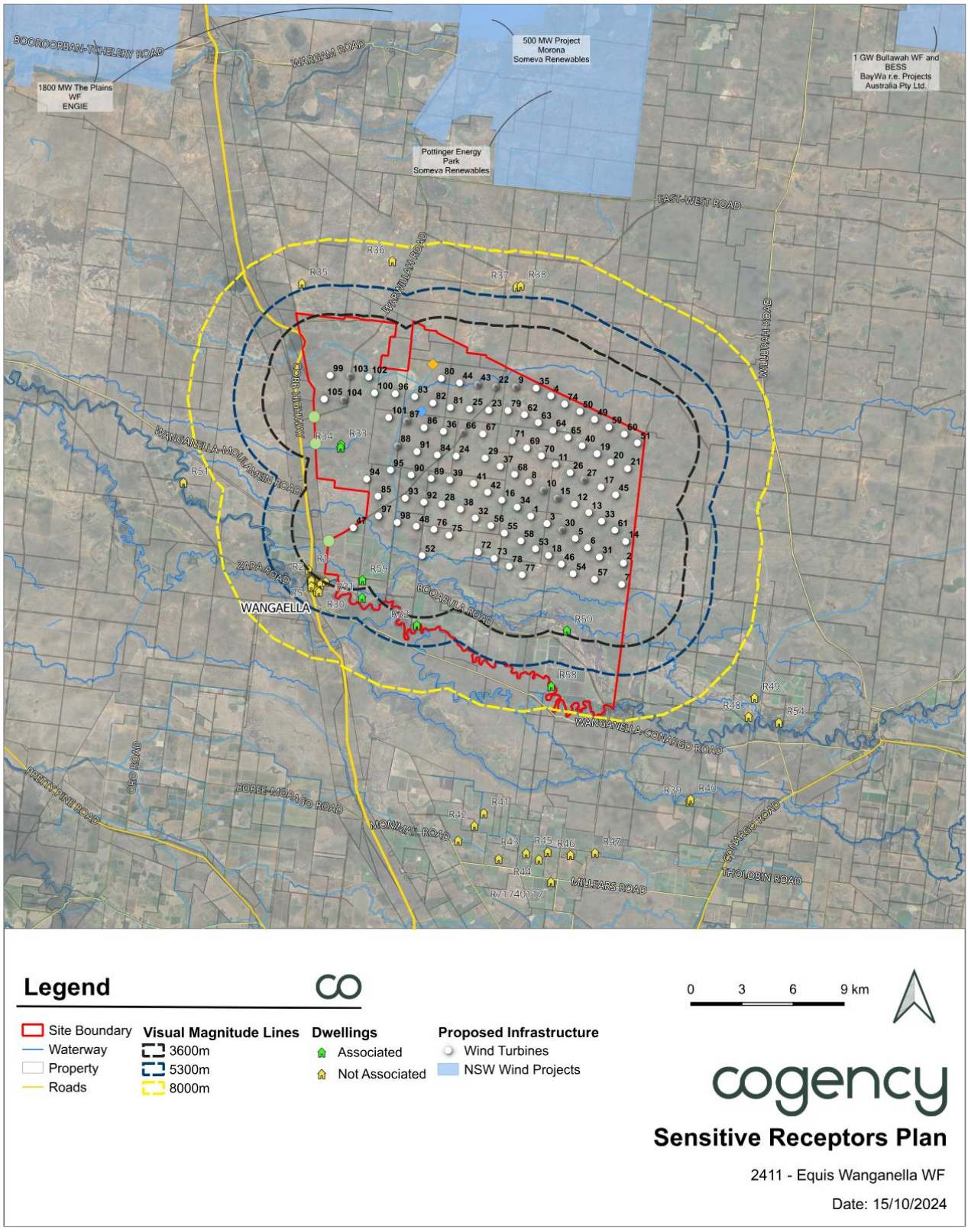

Figure 3 — Sensitive Receptors Plan

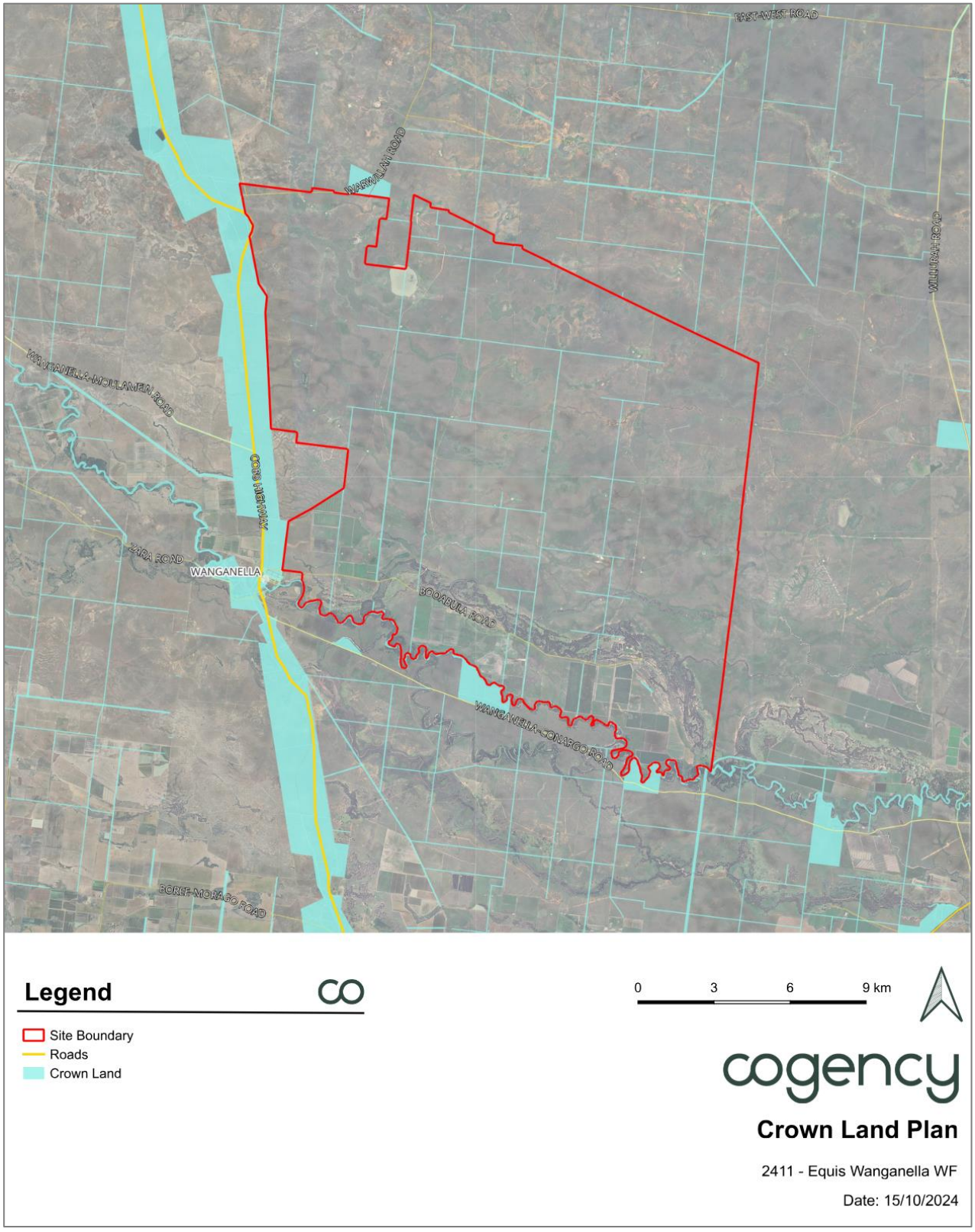

Figure 4 — Crown Land Plan

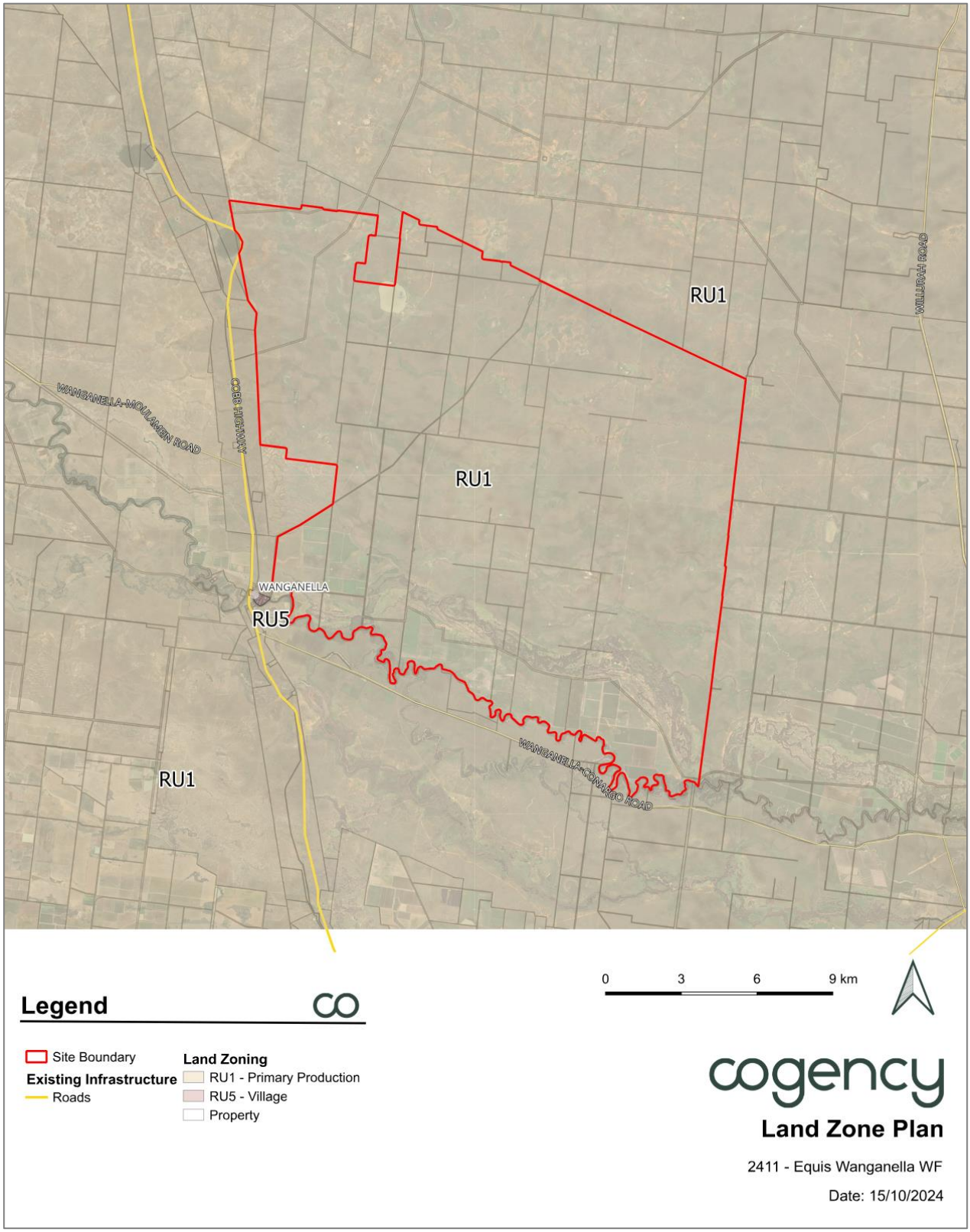

Figure 5 — Zoning Plan

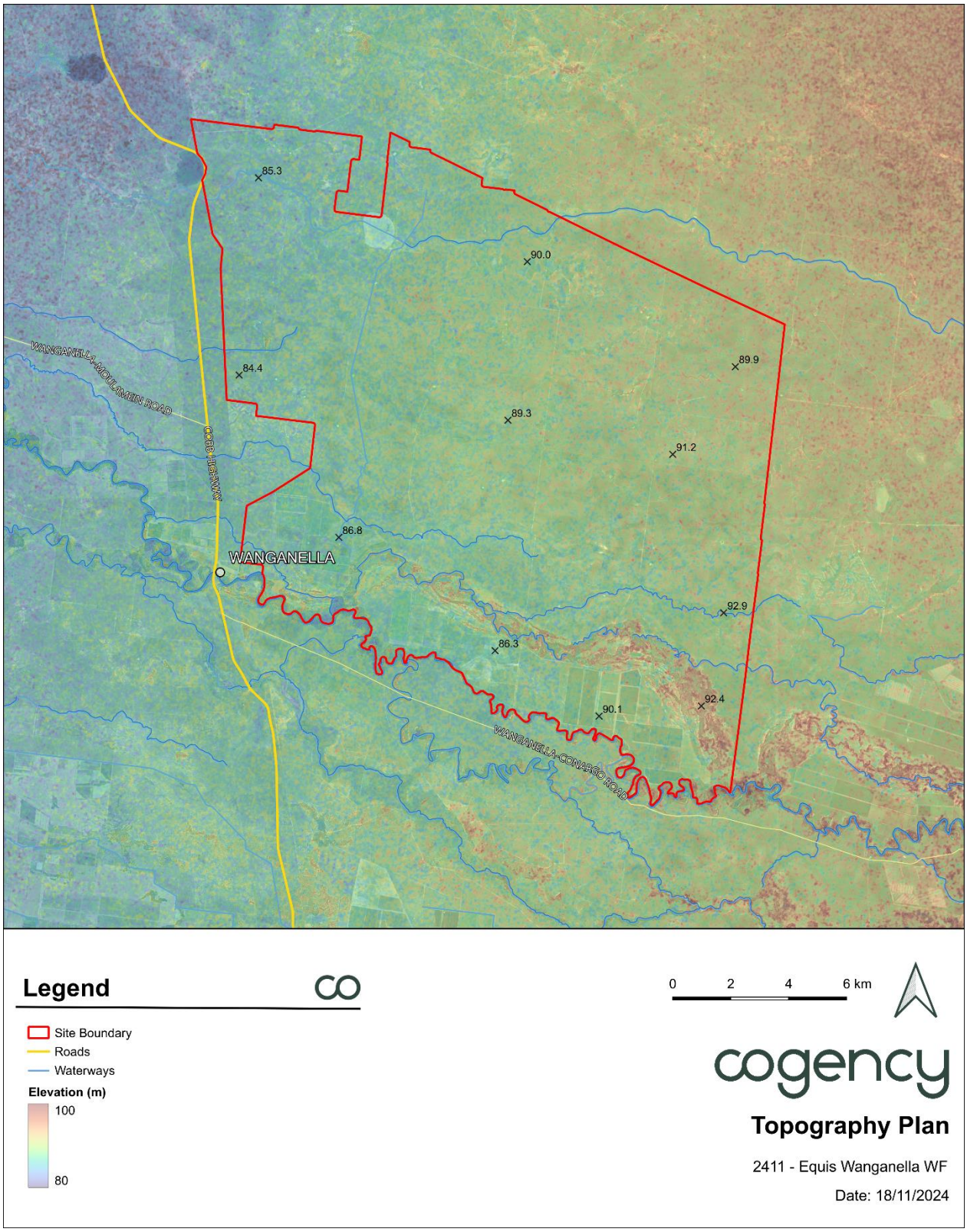

Figure 6 — Topography Plan

Figure 7 — Site Photos

2.3 Site Suitability

The Site is considered suitable for the Project due to the following reasons:

A sparsely populated district
The Site is located in an area with very low population density, with very large farms and few dwellings other than the village of Wanganella. This means that the number of dwellings and people potentially impacted by the Project is very low compared to other wind farms in NSW.

Location within the South-West REZ
Locating with the South-West REZ, affords the Project additional strategic justification in an area recognised for its high renewable energy potential and transmission potential. The South-West REZ was chosen due to an abundance of high-quality wind and solar resources, proximity to existing and planned high voltage transmission projects.

Direct access to VNI West Transmission Line
The Project will benefit from the current route corridor of the VNI West located through the Site's northern extent. This will ensure a connection point for the Project to the NEM without constraining existing transmission capacity, or requiring the construction of additional transmission lines outside of the Site.

A landscape without significant features
The landscape surrounding the Site is very flat, and whilst this is valued by some, the area does not contain a large number of significant landscape features, such as lookouts, National parks, or major peaks.

Proximity to other proposed or existing renewable energy projects
The project is planned to be located south of Project EnergyConnect and adjacent to the VNI West project. Its proximity to the VNI West 500kV double circuit line will enable a direct connection through a switching station. As a hybrid wind and BESS project, Wanganella will be equipped to participate in most Frequency Control Ancillary Services (FCAS) markets and potentially serve as a black-start provider for AEMO's System Restart Ancillary Services (SRAS). AEMO's website states that South-West REZ currently hosts 1,000 MW of operational or committed solar generation. The addition of a hybrid wind farm and BESS in the South-West REZ region will diversify renewable generation sources and enhance network stability, with the BESS acting as a load during periods of high congestion.

Easily accessible from the Cobb Highway, a major rural route
The Cobb Highway is a major rural arterial road, connecting northern Victoria and Central West New South Wales. Site access and materials transportation will primarily occur through the Cobb Highway. The Site will be easily accessible from other rural areas in New South Wales and Victoria, including Victorian and South Australian Ports, expanding access for materials and labour procurement.

Contribute to diversifying the local economy and diversifying land uses, from primary production and rural agriculture to renewable energy generation
The Project will make a significant contribution to the ongoing renewable energy transition occurring across rural parts of Australia and New South Wales by supporting new local jobs (primarily through direct construction, and maintenance opportunities) and help service the wider energy needs of regional industries under increasing pressure to decarbonise their activities. Furthermore, while the Site includes State Significant Agricultural land (refer to Figure 8), no turbines are to be proposed within this land. The land within the Site is also classified as Class 4, 5 and 6 which has moderate to severe limitations towards use as agricultural land (refer to Figure 9).

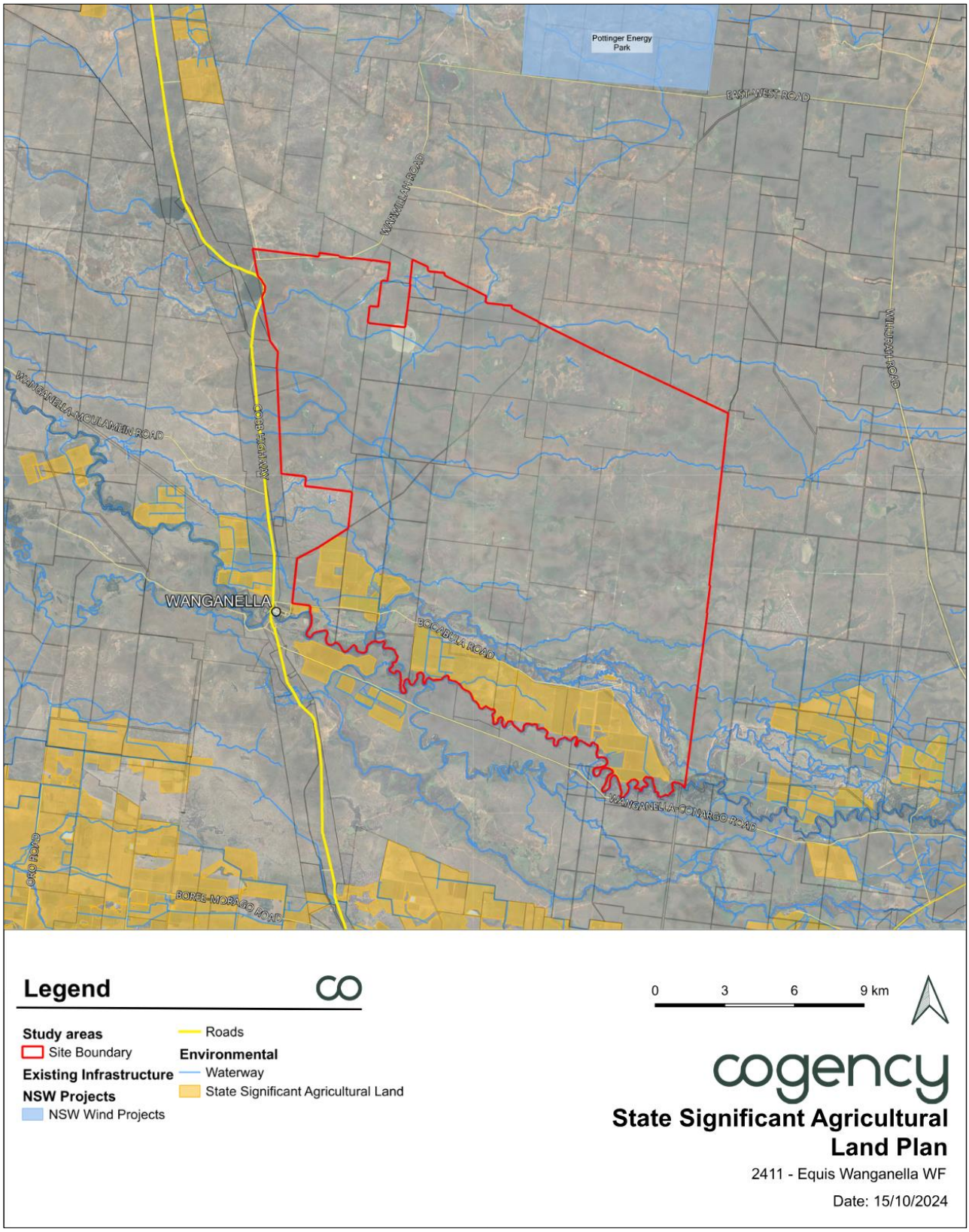

Figure 8 — State Significant Agricultural Land Plan

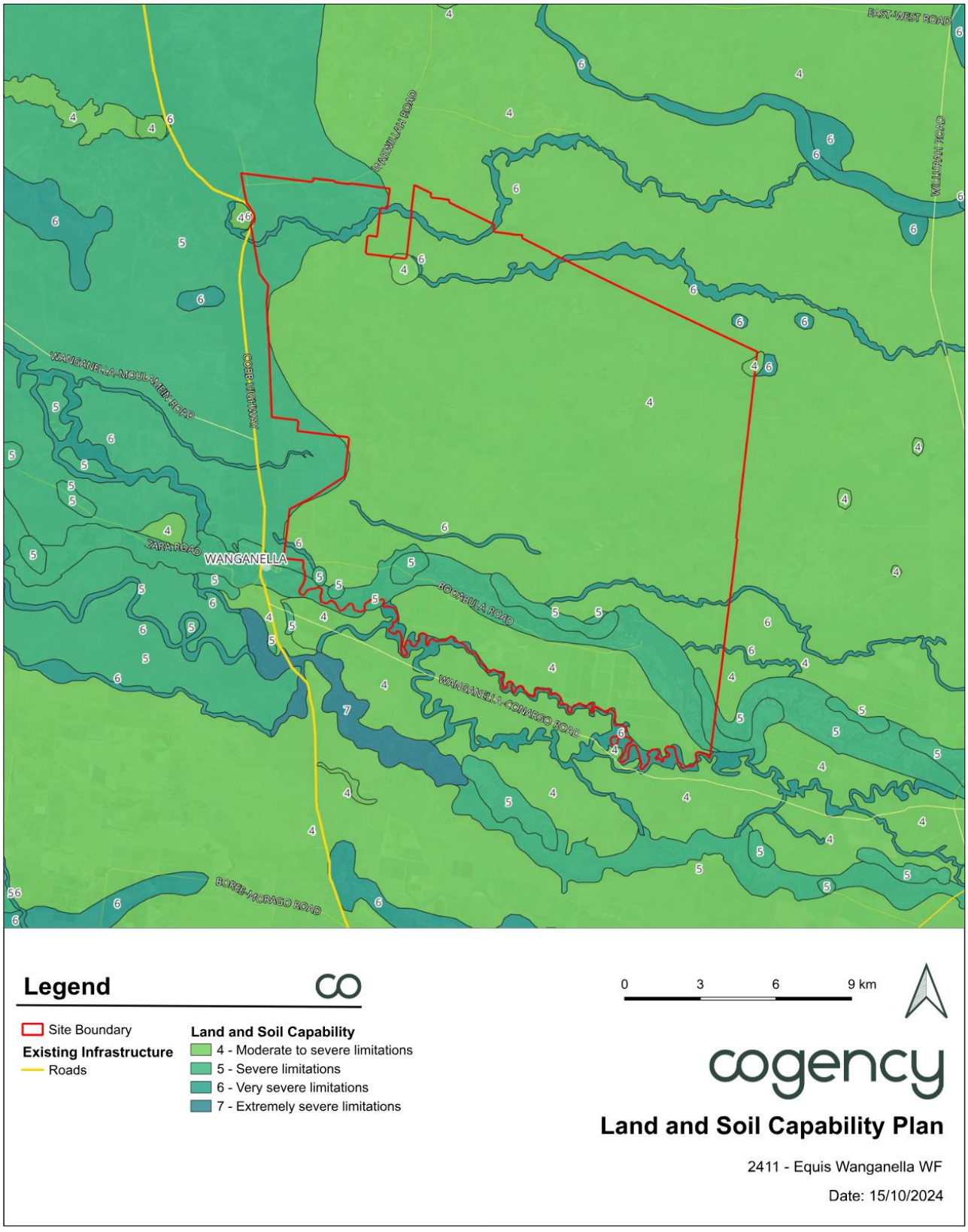

Figure 9 — Land and Soil Capability Plan

2.4 Project Justification

The Project aligns with Commonwealth, State, Regional and Local commitments to increase and or support additional renewable energy generation and reduce carbon emissions. Existing coal fired power stations across NSW have begun to be decommissioned, exiting the grid and strengthening the need for a continued roll out of new renewable energy infrastructure. Planned future closures for other power plants will only increase this need and the risk of electricity insecurity if new generating assets cannot make up for the predicted shortfall. With this mind, the NSW Government has indicated that the REZs will play a critical role in delivering affordable and reliable energy generation to help the state prepare for the expected retirement of existing coal fired power plants in the coming decades.

The following section describes the Project's broader benefits and justification.

2.4.1 National Electricity Market Benefits

The National Electricity Market

The NEM is a wholesale market in which generators and retailers trade electricity throughout Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT. The participating states generate approximately 80% of all electricity that is consumed in Australia. The Northern Territory and Western Australia utilise their own electricity systems and separate regulatory arrangements and as such do not connect or contribute to the NEM.

Incorporating renewable energy, such as that proposed by the Project, into the NEM provides several technical benefits that enhance its overall performance. Firstly, renewable energy sources like wind and solar contribute to grid stability by reducing reliance on traditional fossil fuel-based generators, which are slower to respond to fluctuations in supply and demand. The use of BESS further improves grid reliability by offering fast frequency response and load balancing, helping to manage variability in renewable generation. Furthermore, increased renewable generation reduces the need for ancillary services, as advanced technologies allow for better integration and management of renewable power, supporting a more resilient and cost-effective electricity market.

The Project will contribute to strengthening grid stability of the NEM, particularly in the face of ongoing closures of fossil fuel plants, and increase the share of low cost renewable energy.

Electricity Generation Trends in NSW

Approximately 5 GW of the current 21 GW coal-fired generation capacity has been announced to be withdrawn from the grid and decommissioned by 2030 (see Figure 10. AEMO's ISP states that this number may be closer to 13 GW. Based on these estimates, between 23% and 58% of the current coal-fired capacity will be withdrawn from the electricity market by 2030. In addition to the approximate 8.3 GW of dispatchable generation that is planned to exit the market, any remaining coal generation may have a higher likelihood of reduced availability as they reach the end of their technical lifespans.

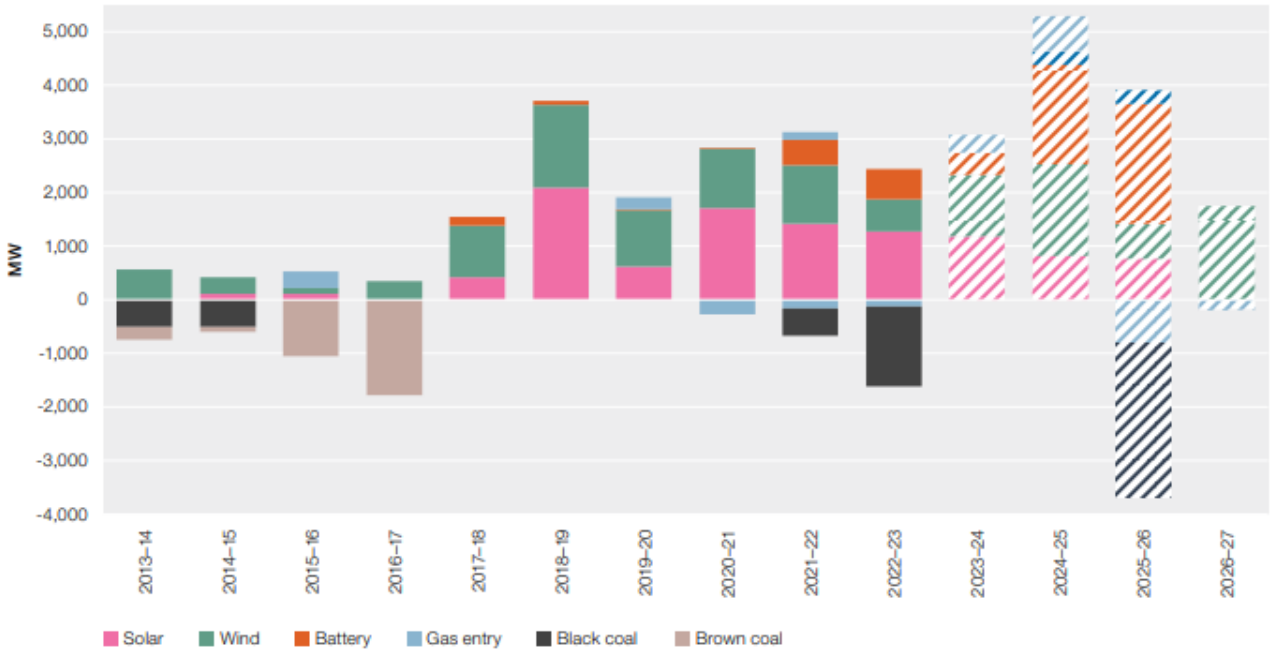

Figure 10 — New Generation Investment and Plant Withdrawal

Source: Australian Energy Regulator, 2023

The decommissioning of Liddell power station is an example of how new renewable generation can offset losses and maintain reliability. The impact of Liddell's decommissioning was offset by approximately 2.5 GW of renewable electricity generation which includes 1.2 GW of solar and 600 MW each of wind and batteries. Ongoing renewable generation developments have led to an increase in renewable capacity and the setting of new wind and solar output records throughout 2022 and 2023.

The Project, by contributing additional renewable energy generation in the face of potential electrical spot price volatility and the exit of coal-fired power plants, will provide a number of benefits to the NEM. These include providing grid stability, energy security and lower electricity costs.

Strategic Investment in Wind Energy

The Project represents a significant investment in large-scale renewable energy, contributing 840MW of generation and 2.4GWh of storage. The Project aligns with the overarching trends in renewable energy investment, addressing the supply gaps left by the closure of thermal plants and leveraging government incentives such as the Renewable Energy Target (RET) scheme.

Wind generation, despite its variability due to weather dependence, has proven to be a reliable and cost-effective source of energy. Its impact is evident in the record-breaking achievements over recent years. For example, on 25 June 2023, wind generation set a new benchmark with a total daily output of 158.7 GWh. Such milestones highlight the growing capacity and efficiency of wind energy projects. Additionally, in 2022, wind energy accounted for 12% of the total electricity produced in the NEM, a significant increase from previous years and almost double the contribution of gas generation.

The investment in this Project is timely and strategic, considering the rapid advancements and investments in renewable energy infrastructure. Since June 2019, nearly 5 GW of wind generation capacity has been added to the NEM, with 600 MW added in the 2022-23 period alone. These additions have not only expanded the renewable energy landscape but also reinforced the role of wind energy in achieving energy security and sustainability.

2.4.2 Other Project Benefits

Environmental Benefits

The Project would provide a number of broad environmental benefits. These include mitigating climate change impacts by reducing greenhouse gas emissions directly associated with electricity generation. Wind energy generation produces no direct emissions in the process of generating electricity, in turn directly lowering the carbon footprint of the energy sector which is by far the largest emitting sector in Australia.

Careful Site selection, design and operation can help avoid and minimise biodiversity impacts. While biodiversity impacts are generally localised, and can be avoided through careful design, the lack of wide reaching negative environmental externalities from wind energy generation gives wind farms a significant environmental advantage over coal fired power plants whose localised emissions spread throughout and remain within the atmosphere.

Relatedly, increased wind farm developments have significant potential for air quality improvements by offsetting sources of air pollutants such as sulphur dioxide (SO^2), nitrogen oxide (NO_x) and particulate matter. Removing a source of these pollutants (i.e. coal fired power stations) provides significant benefits for regional air quality, improving health outcomes for nearby communities.

Wind farms also have minimal to no operational water usage compared to traditional thermal power plants which require significant amounts of water for cooling. This helps in conserving water resources and protecting natural sources of water from extraction or polluting runoff. Similarly, wind farms typically use less land per unit of energy compared to other forms of energy generation, allowing for multiple land uses, such as agriculture or grazing to continue beneath the turbines. This low physical footprint also allows the land to be restored after decommissioning, reducing long-term environmental impacts. This is particularly important for the Project as agriculture will continue unaffected across the Site following construction of the Project.

Social Benefits

Wind farms play a crucial role in generating emission-free energy, offering a host of benefits that extend beyond merely producing clean electricity. The growing investment in wind energy infrastructure, supported by government incentives and community engagement, is a vital step toward a sustainable and resilient energy future for Australia. According to the Australian Wind Alliance (AWA) report, "Building Stronger Communities: Wind's Growing Role in Regional Australia," the construction and operation of wind farms deliver significant financial, social, and environmental advantages, particularly in regional areas.

The Project will establish Community Benefit Strategies that allocate resources for local projects and initiatives, fostering community development and cohesion. These funds will be designed in consultation with the local community, but typically support a wide range of activities, from educational programs and infrastructure improvements to environmental conservation efforts. In this instance, the Proponent may investigate the benefits of consolidating funds with other developers through Edward River Council, as has occurred nearby in Hay Regional Council.

These schemes foster greater local acceptance and support by ensuring that the economic benefits of renewable energy projects are shared with host communities. In NSW, strategic planning for REZ's involves coordinated community consultation and active engagement to promote collaboration and inclusivity. Solar, wind, and battery projects that gain access rights will pay a fee, with a portion directed towards providing community and employment benefits within these zones.

Payments to host landholders, and potentially immediate neighbours, also provide a reliable source of income, helping them withstand economic fluctuations and extreme weather conditions, supporting succession planning across the life of the Project and maintaining employment from these important local businesses.

Economic Benefits

The construction of wind farms generates substantial economic benefits, particularly in regional communities, creating jobs and stimulating local economies. The three NSW REZs are projected to attract up to $23 billion in private sector investment, support an average of 2,000 construction jobs annually, and provide a significant economic boost to regional communities.

Wind farm construction has injected nearly $4 billion into regional economies, with over half of this investment occurring in the last five years alone. This economic activity has created direct and indirect jobs, revitalised local businesses, and provided stable income streams for host landowners. In 2022, wind farms added 600 MW of new generation capacity to the NEM, further supporting local economies.

Wind farm projects contribute significantly to economic growth. The construction phase of these projects involves considerable investment in local services and infrastructure, thereby providing an immediate financial uplift to the surrounding areas.

In addition to this, the transition to clean energy is expected to generate 450,000 jobs in the construction of energy generation and transmission infrastructure by 2030, representing one-third of all job growth in Australia. The demand for skilled workers, particularly electricians, may even exceed the projected labour supply, requiring the addition of 32,000 electricians.

The economic benefits of this transition will be disproportionately experienced in regional Australia where the need for infrastructure upgrades including roads and digital systems will be critical to managing the increasing volumes of clean energy and storage. The construction of wind farms and associated infrastructure not only advances Australia's clean energy goals but also delivers significant economic benefits to regional communities. This investment in renewable energy infrastructure is vital for job creation, economic stimulation, and the long-term sustainability of regional economies.

Specifically the Project may create up to 439 direct jobs during construction and operation.

3. The Project

3.1 Project Description

The Proponent is proposing to develop, construct, maintain, operate and decommission the Wanganella Wind Farm, which includes the following key components (refer to Figure 11):

- 105, approximately 8MW wind turbine generators (WTGs) with a total generating capacity of approximately 840MW, a hub height of 180m, and a maximum tip height of 270m above foundation level.
- A BESS facility with an approximate capacity of 600MW/2400MWh, comprising battery packs, inverters, and associated equipment.
- Substation and switchyard, and associated transmission connection works, connecting the Project to VNI West.
- Underground electrical and communication cabling to connect each WTG and the BESS to an internal substation and switchyard.
- Operations and Maintenance compound, laydown areas, carparking, offices and buildings for storage of materials and equipment.
- Civil, benching, and drainage works.
- Access and egress points, internal access tracks and external road upgrades (if required).
- Fencing, gates and signage.
- Temporary on-site quarries (subject to availability of suitable material) and concrete batching plants.
- Temporary construction compound. Laydown areas and buildings, utilised for various construction works.
- Temporary Site construction camp (if required), incorporating accommodation facilities for construction workers and project staff, including dining facilities, Site offices and administration areas, health and safety facilities, and associated infrastructure.
- Temporary and permanent meteorological masts up to the turbine's hub heights. These will collect data regarding wind speed and direction, assisting in energy generation
- Potential subdivision.
- Landscaping, rehabilitation works and screening.

Details of the Project will be dependent on several factors including Site constraints and the outcome of stakeholder and host landholder engagement and will be resolved during the EIS stage.

The design has been refined to account for initial studies including biodiversity inputs, along with traffic, acoustic, social and landscape considerations. This has included input from specialists, authorities, landowners and neighbours, and has led to a Site design that is more responsive to its surroundings. This followed an extensive Site selection process that considered a wide range of environmental and social factors that led to the Site being chosen. Further design revisions will occur as part of the EIS process when further specialist inputs are gained and greater community engagement has occurred.

The Site covers an area of approximately 30,737 hectares. At this stage, the WTGs will be spread across the centre of the Site, avoiding high value and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) listed species in the north west corner, and presenting significant buffers to the major creeks in the south, including Billabong Creek. The actual disturbance area is estimated to be less than approximately 5%, or 1,537 hectares of the Site area and will minimise vegetation removal as far as practicable. Aside from the direct areas to be utilised for the Project, remaining land will continue to be used for agricultural purposes by the incumbent landowners, including cropping and grazing.

The Project remains at an early stage and certain Project elements are still to be decided and will be informed by technical assessment undertaken to support the EIS. The future EIS will provide greater detail on the Project and its key components.

3.2 Project Layout and Design

3.2.1 Site Access and Roads

Site access will occur from designated and upgraded access tracks provided off Cobb Highway at a selection of the 3 options shown on the Project Layout. Internal access roads will also be constructed to enable to the construction and maintenance of the WTGs and associated infrastructure. These networks will likely compose formed gravel roads and will be designed to accommodate the specific requirements of wind farm construction and maintenance.

To accommodate oversize and overmass (OSOM) vehicles and to facilitate safe Site access and egress, local road and intersection upgrades may be required. This may include segments of road outside of the immediate Site, including from the Site to the chosen delivery port, subject to further traffic impact assessment and a detailed route study (See Section 6.2.6). At this stage, the delivery Port has not been chosen, but early investigations suggest it is likely be to either Portland or Geelong in Victoria, Newcastle in New South Wales, or Adelaide in South Australia

3.2.2 Wind Turbine Generators

The Project will generally comprise of 105 three-bladed WTGs of up to 270m in tip height, with a hub height of 180m. Each WTG is expected to have a generation capacity of approximately 8MW. The final number of WTGs and overall generation capacity is subject to change as the Project progresses through the EIS and design stages, subject to ongoing consultation and environmental assessments and adoption of suggested mitigation measures.

Each WTG will be mounted onto footings and comprise a crane hardstand and turbine laydown area which will be utilised for the assembly, erection, maintenance, repair and decommissioning of each WTG.

3.2.3 Battery Energy Storage System

The Project will include a BESS with a storage and discharge capacity of up to 600MW/2400MWh.

The BESS will consist of battery modules and components, including inverters and automated battery management systems, as well as ancillary infrastructure such as cables to connect the BESS to the on site substation.

The BESS will be approximately 20 ha in size and located in the north west centre of the Site, allowing easy access to Cobb Highway and VNI West.

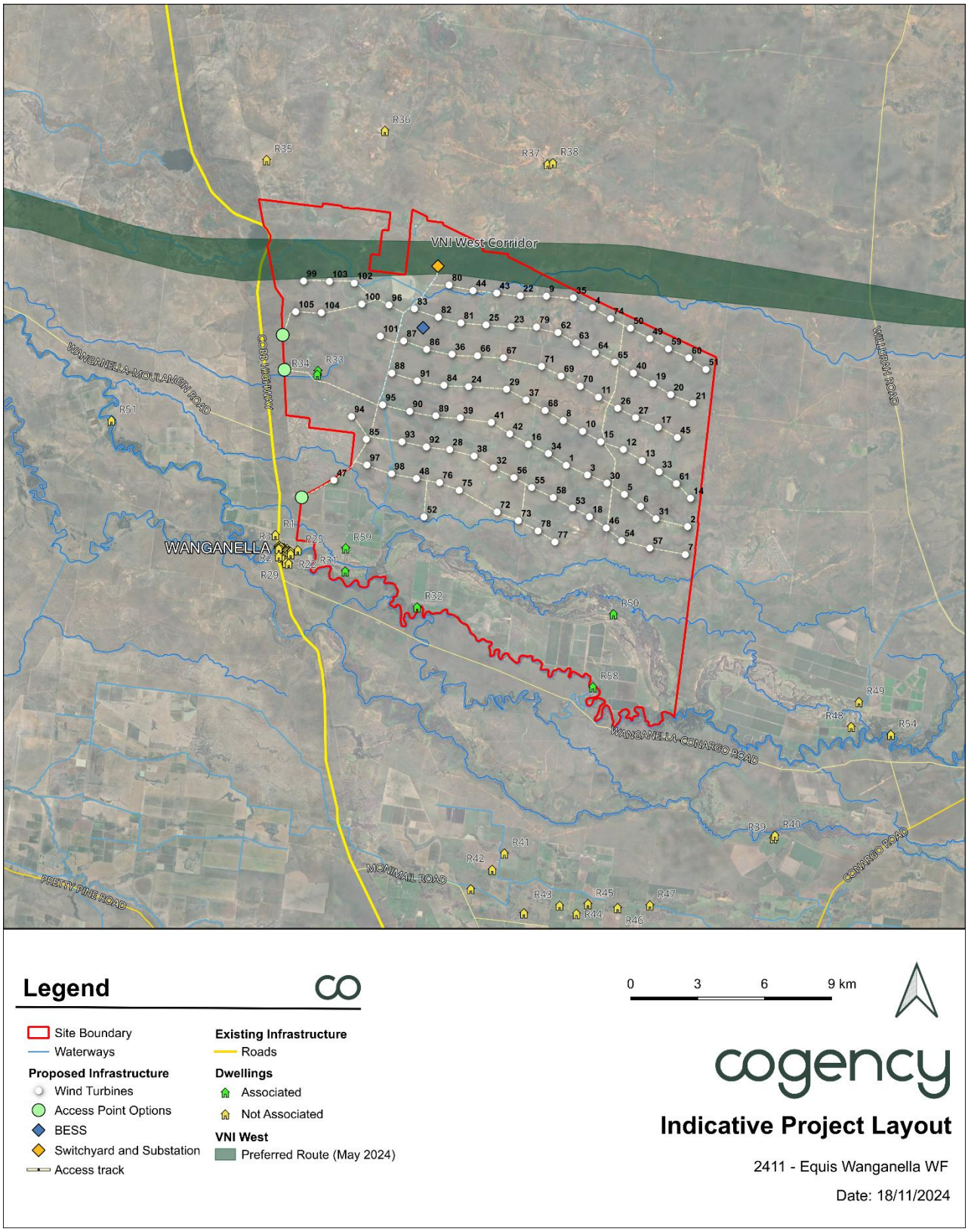

Figure 11 — Indicative Project Layout Plan

3.2.4 Electrical Connections

The Project will connect to the NEM through a new substation and/or switchyard proposed to be constructed in the north west corner of the Site, which will connect to the proposed 500kV VNI West transmission line. As the current VNI West corridor passes through the Site, construction of additional transmission lines on land outside the Site will not be required.

The substation/switchyard will be approximately 25ha in size and feature a range of electrical transformers and equipment to allow for satisfactory connection of the project to the NEM.

Connecting each WTG and the substation/switchyard will be a network of underground and overhead electrical cables.

3.3 Construction Activities

3.3.1 Construction Staging

The construction of the Project is expected to generally involve the following sequence of activities:

- Installation and maintenance of environmental controls and any services relocations
- Vegetation clearing and general Site preparation
- Upgrading and construction of access tracks between each all the project elements.
- Delivery of materials including concrete, and aggregate materials such as gravel and sand
- Earthworks to construct the WTG foundations
- Installation of underground and overhead electrical reticulation
- Delivery and installation of the WTG components including towers, nacelles and blades
- Delivery and installation of the BESS and substation components
- Testing and commissioning
- Removal of construction equipment and rehabilitation of temporary construction areas

3.3.2 Development and Construction Schedule

Table 7 outlines the indicative development and construction timing, based on an early project stage. The timing of development and construction is strongly dependant on the timing of VNI West, and will be further refined during the EIS. Expected construction hours will generally be during standard day time construction hours however certain stages may need to be completed outside these hours on occasion as construction demands permit.

Table 6 —Anticipated Construction Schedule

Project Timeline	
Phase	**Estimated Dates**
Scoping report and SEARs	Q4 2024 and Q1 2025
SSD - EIS preparation and approval	2025-2027
Construction	2027-2028
Commissioning	2029
Operation	2030+

3.3.3 Construction Workforce

The direct construction workforce is expected to consist of up to 420 staff working across a variety of construction roles. The Project would require the recruitment of a construction workforce which would provide opportunities for localised upskilling and training in the Riverina Region.

Any major contractors involved with the construction elements of the Project would be encouraged to demonstrate a commitment to utilising regional and local labour forces and creating equal and Indigenous employment opportunities.

3.4 Operations

The Project would directly employ approximately 19 full-time operational staff, and be designed to be available to operate on a 24/7, 365 days of the year, subject to wind and environmental conditions.

Ongoing maintenance activities will be required throughout the entire Project operational phase, including:

- Turbine and BESS monitoring and servicing
- Substation and electrical maintenance
- Access track and road maintenance
- Fuel reduction management (where applicable, such as asset protection zones)
- Landscape and vegetation maintenance
- General operational maintenance, including fencing, security and signage

Dependent on technological advancements and developments throughout the Project's operational lifespan, or the need for unscheduled maintenance, components may be replaced or upgraded to ensure maximum operational efficiency and standards utilising best practice technology and standards at the time.

3.5 Decommissioning and Rehabilitation

At the end of the Project's operational lifespan, the Project's components will be decommissioned.

Following the decommissioning and removal of Project infrastructure, the Site will be rehabilitated in consultation with the given landowner, likely to its preconstruction conditions. This would involve removal of the blades, nacelles and towers, and removal of the electrical substation. The retention of any infrastructure on site (e.g. buildings, carparking areas, and access roads) would be subject to discussions with the landowner

about any infrastructure they request to be retained on site. Project components would be recycled where feasible.

The landowner leases outline a range of decommissioning and rehabilitation obligations on Equis as the developer that will ensure appropriate decommissioning. The EIS will include information related to the decommissioning and rehabilitation of the Project. It is currently not known what decommissioning and recycling standards will be relevant but the EIS will look to describe the decommissioning and rehabilitation process and. Any decommissioning and rehabilitation plan will be developed, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and landowners.

3.6 Alternatives Considered

In the early conceptualisation of the Project and throughout its development, alternatives to the Project have been considered, including alternative locations, alternative design and not proceeding with the Project.

3.6.1 Alternative Locations

The Project has been informed by a detailed Site finding exercise conducted during 2023 to discover potential areas for new wind farm facilities across southwest New South Wales. Through this exercise, a large number of alternative Sites were considered for the development of a grid-scale Wind Farm within proximity to the proposed VNI West corridor options (see Figure 12 and Figure 13). Large areas near the following Riverina localities were considered during this exercise:

- Wanganella
- Wakool
- Caldwell
- Thyra
- Pretty Pine
- Hartwood
- Blighty

The Site was chosen due to a combination of factors, including presence with the South-West REZ, proximity to anticipated high capacity transmission infrastructure, high average wind speeds, lesser constraints, and large landholdings and favourable zoning under the Conargo Local Environment Plan 2013 and the Deniliquin Local Environment Plan 2013.

The Project has been selected as it would possess a number of benefits over other options, including the potential for avoidance or minimisation of impacts on sensitive species and communities.

The following considerations specifically informed the selection of the Site:

- Low population density and homogenous agricultural land use within and surrounding the Site, in turn minimising the number of sensitive receivers and impacts on diversified land uses.
- An ability to locate WTGs to avoid proximity to neighbouring dwellings and to ensure appropriate setbacks are maintained.
- Compatibility with existing agricultural land uses.

- Positive early consultation with landowners, and neighbours.
- Fewer environmental constraints relative to other parts of the region, including significant distance to National Parks and conservation areas.
- Easy access to the main road network in Cobb Highway.
- Ready access to the proposed electricity transmission infrastructure through VNI West, as well as being located in the South-West REZ.
- Terrain across the Site which could facilitate a wind farm development.

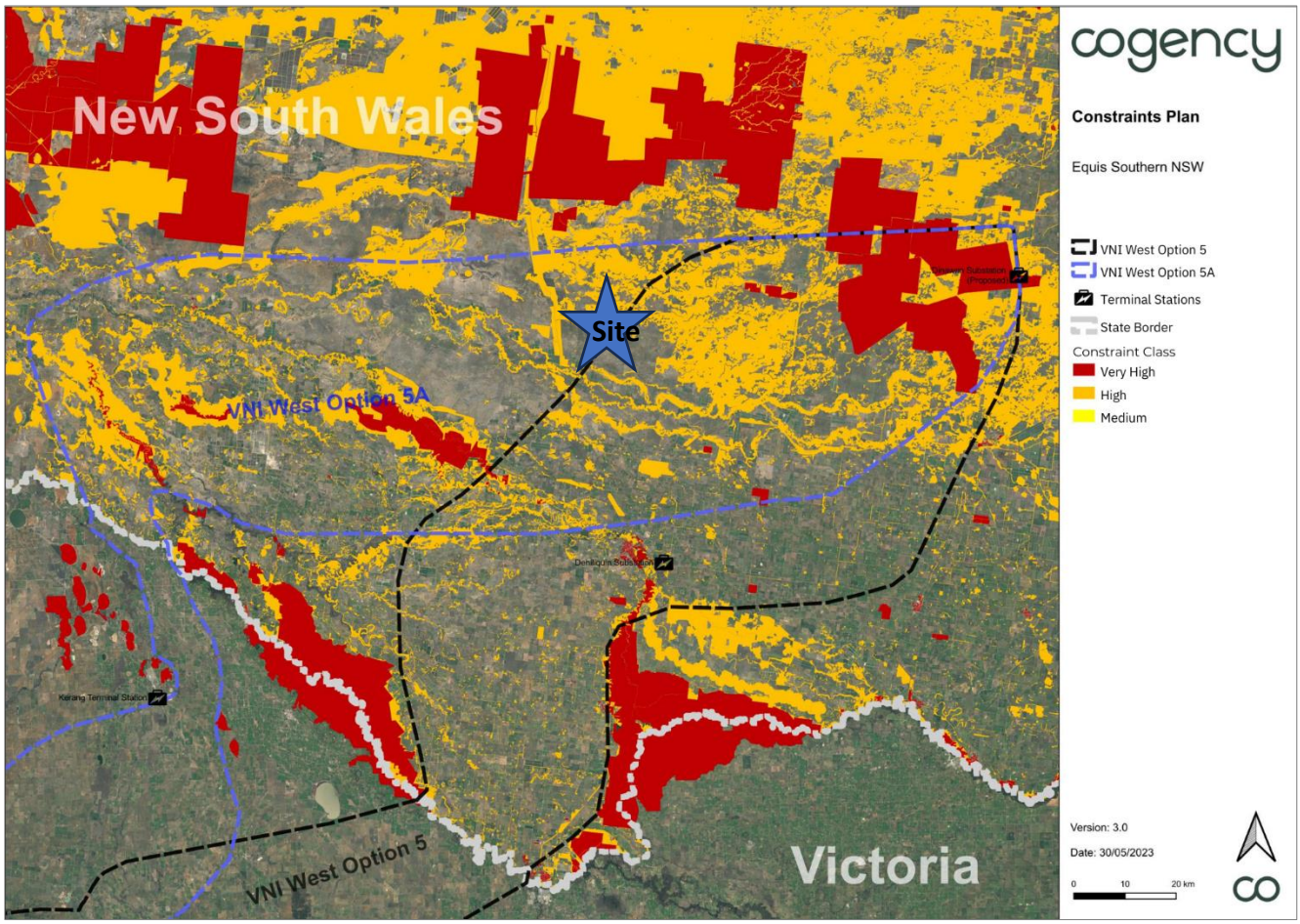

Figure 12 — Regional Site Finding Constraints Analysis

3.6.2 Alternative Designs

Site conditions and constraints have informed the Project design and layout to date and will continue to throughout the planning process. The design has followed an iterative process and been refined to account for initial studies including biodiversity inputs, along with traffic, acoustic, hydrology, social and landscape considerations. This has included input from specialists, authorities, landowners and neighbours, and has led to a Site responsive design that is more responsive to its surroundings. To date this has included:

- Increasing setbacks from the village of Wanganella.

- Removing turbines from the southern portions of the Site near Billabong Creek.
- Moving turbines from EPBC listed communities identified in preliminary biodiversity assessments.
- Removing turbines from the parts of the Site north of VNI west to consolidate turbines areas to the south.
- Relocating turbines further from significant waterways across the Site.
- Limiting access to Cobb Highway only.
- Not utilising land on the west side of Cobb Highway to reduce visual impacts to this corridor.
- Moving the Site to the south to provide adequate buffers to nearby wind farm developments in the north to minimise potential cumulative impacts.

A broad evaluation framework was developed to assess the suitability of each Site against a number of criteria including the presence of conservation areas, built up areas (dwellings, towns/cities, rural living zones and areas) as well as presence of existing or proposed wind and solar farm and BESS projects. Additional assessment criteria relating to the presence of biodiversity protection measures, agriculturally productive land, waterways and other public lands were also incorporated into the evaluation framework. Average predicted wind speed readings at 150m above ground level across the region were also taken into consideration when assessing potential Project locations.

Utilising this assessment framework, only 2 potential Sites, Wanganella and Hartwood were considered for further investigation. Both investigation areas presented an advantageous combination of sparse to no significant concentrations of dwellings or other sensitive receptors, little potential for land use conflicts, suitable topography and lack of ecologically sensitive areas. Both Sites featured a preferable lack of dwellings and sensitive receptors, however the area of investigation around Wanganella featured an advantageous lack of dwellings that would pose an impact on development potential, even when applying a 2.5 kilometre buffer to each dwelling. In addition, the Hartwood site presented significant cultural heritage and ecological sensitivities which were prioritised for avoidance.

Additional impact avoidance and minimisation strategies that may be adopted during the EIS preparation and detail design stages, through to eventual construction and operation include:

- Refining Project design, including turbine locations, access arrangements and underground cabling locations to minimise impacts on native vegetation.
- Refining siting of Project elements based on community consultation and engagement feedback in order to minimise impacts on sensitive receivers.
- Selection of access points to facilitate construction and operational requirements, and minimise native vegetation clearing.
- Protect significant Aboriginal cultural and historic heritage Sites and values through careful design.
- Review setbacks to recognised waterways and wetlands on the Site.
- Optimise use of previously disturbed land.

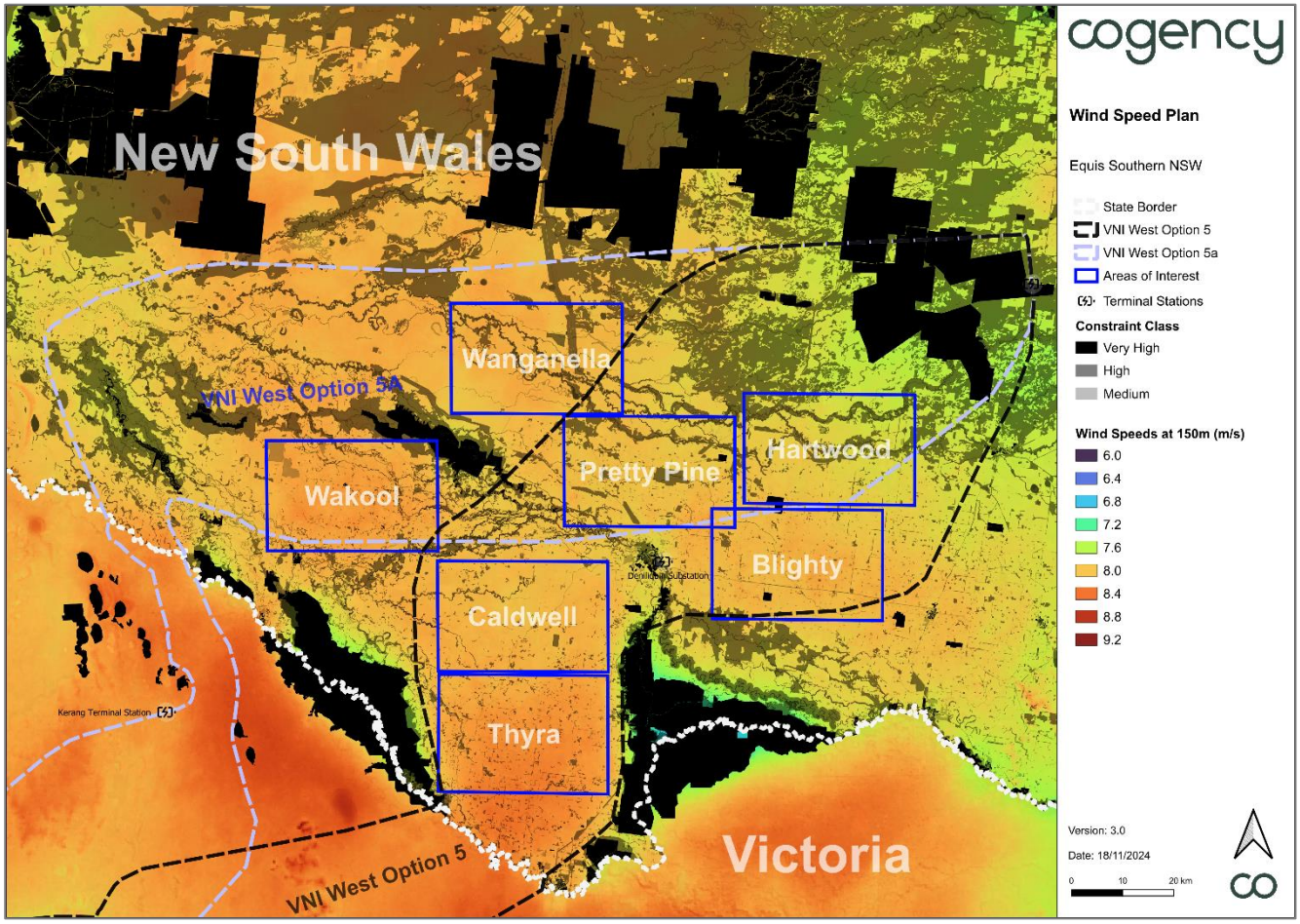

Figure 13 — Regional Site Finding Windspeed Analysis

3.6.3 Do Nothing Alternative

A 'do nothing' scenario was considered by the Proponent at the commencement of high-level scoping for the Project and to meet requirements of Section 3.3 of the *SSD Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* requiring proponents to consider the consequences of not carrying out the development.

Under a 'do nothing' scenario, Federal, State, Regional and Local strategic objectives for additional renewable energy generation, electricity decarbonisation and climate change action (as discussed in Table 3) will not be met. Specifically, the main disadvantage of this option is that the benefits of the Project, as outlined in Chapter 2.4, would be forgone. This includes the reduction in greenhouse emissions associated with dangerous climate change, achievement of Federal and State renewable energy targets and policy, supporting international commitments such as the Paris Agreement, and employment and economic benefits that flows from such a significant investment in the local and regional economy, including benefit sharing funds. Considering the strategic need for additional renewable energy capacity and electricity decarbonisation, and the Applicant's efforts to contribute to both, a 'do nothing' scenario was not seriously considered.

4. Statutory Context

This section outlines the key statutory requirements for the Project under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* 1979 and other Local, State and Federal Government Guidelines, with specific regard to the *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report* (DPIE, 2022).

4.1 NSW Planning Framework

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 (*EP&A Regulation) control land use planning and development within New South Wales. They establish the roles of state, regional and local planning authorities and also include provisions for regional plans that set long term of visions for growth and development. The EP&A Act and EP&A Regulation are supported by a number of Environmental Planning Instruments (EPIs), which include State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) and Local Environmental Plans (LEPs).

The Project is declared a SSD under Section 4.36(2) of the EP&A Act that states:

A State environmental planning policy may declare any development, or any class or description of development, to be State significant development.

Section 2.6(1) of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 (Planning Systems SEPP) states:

- *Development is declared to be State significant development for the purposes of this Act if-*

  a)the development on the land concerned is, by the operation of an environmental planning instrument, not permissible without development consent under Part 4 of the Act and

  b)the development is specified in Schedule 1 or 2.

Clause 20 (a) of Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act declares electricity generating works (using any energy source including wind) that has an estimated development cost of more than *$30 million.*

The Project is located within the Rural Production (RU1) Zone of the Conargo Local Environment Plan 2013 (Congaro LEP). Clause 2.36 (1b) of the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 (Transport and Infrastructure SEPP) considers electricity generating works as development permitted with consent within “any land in a prescribed non-residential zone”. Clause 2.35 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP defines the RU1 Zone is a prescribed non- residential zone. The Project is declared a SSD as it not permissible without consent, is defined as electricity generating works, and has an anticipated CIV in excess of $30 million.

Under Section 4.12(8) of the EP&A Act, a development application for a SSD is to be accompanied by an EIS. This Scoping Report is the first step in that process, and is intended to provide a broad overview of the Project, the Site its surrounds and range of potential impacts, to inform the issuing of SEARs.

4.2 Statutory Requirements

The main statutory requirements for the Project are summarised in Table 7 and discussed in further detail below.

Table 7 — Statutory Requirements Summary

Statutory Matter	Statutory Reference	Consideration
Permissibility	▪ Part 2 of the Conargo LEP ▪ Section 2.6 (1) of the Planning System SEPP ▪ Section 2.35 and 2.36 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP	▪ The Project is permissible on the Site.
Power to Grant Consent	▪ Part 4 Section 4.5 (a) and 4.36 (2) of the EP&A Act ▪ Section 2.6 (1) of the Planning Systems SEPP ▪ Clause 20 (a) of Schedule 1 of Planning Systems SEPP	▪ The Project is declared a SSD.
Consent Authority	▪ Section 4.5 of the EP&A Act ▪ Section 2.6 and 2.7 of the Planning Systems SEPP	▪ The NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is the Consent Authority ▪ Consent authority may be delegated to the Independent Planning Commission (IPC)
Mandatory Matters for Consideration	▪ EP&A Act Section 1.3 objects of the Act ▪ EP&A Act Section 4.15 Evaluation ▪ Other legislation as detailed in Section 4.2.6.	▪ The EIS will consider these matters.
Other approvals	▪ Other approvals that are required to carry out the Project. ▪ Section 4.2.6 – 4.2.8 outlines the NSW and Commonwealth approvals that may be required	▪ All required approvals will be sought, and further detailed in the EIS.

4.2.1 Permissibility

The Project is considered *electricity generating works* as defined under Clause 2.35 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP. Clause 2.36 of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP states:

> "*...development for the purpose of electricity generating works may be carried out by any person with consent on the following land – any land in a prescribed non-residential zone*"

Under Clause 2.35, a prescribed non-residential zone includes land zoned RU1 Primary Production.

The Site is zoned RU1 Primary Production under the Conargo LEP. Under Part 2 Permitted or Prohibited Development of the Conargo LEP, electricity generating works are usually prohibited in the RU1 zone,

however, in this instance, the provisions of Transport and Infrastructure SEPP supersede those of the LEP and accordingly allow development of a wind farm and BESS with consent on land zoned RU1 Primary Production.

4.2.2 Power to Grant Consent

The EP&A Act sets out that the applicable approval pathway for the Project as the State Significant Development (SSD) process. The Project will require SSD Approval pursuant to Clause 4.36 of the EP&A Act:

> *4.36 Development that is State significant development*
>
> *(1) For the purposes of this Act, State significant development is development that is declared under this section to be State significant development.*
>
> *(2) A State environmental planning policy may declare any development, or any class or description of development, to be State significant development.*

Clause 2.6 (1) of the Planning Systems SEPP defines a declared SSD under clause 4.36 of the EP&A Act:

> *(1) Development is declared to be State significant development for the purposes of the Act if—*
>
> *(a) the development on the land concerned is, by the operation of an environmental planning instrument, not permissible without development consent under Part 4 of the Act, and*
>
> *(b) the development is specified in Schedule 1 or 2.*

The Project is not permissible without development consent under Part 4 of the Act and is specified under Schedule 1, Clause 20 due to its type of development and economic value:

> *20 Electricity generating works and heat or co-generation*
>
> *Development for the purpose of electricity generating works or heat or their co-generation (using any energy source, including gas, coal, biofuel, distillate, waste, hydro, wave, solar or wind power) that—*
>
> *(a) has a capital investment value of more than $30 million, or*
>
> *(b) has a capital investment value of more than $10 million and is located in an environmentally sensitive area of State significance.*

As the estimated capital investment value of the Project is greater than $30 million, and the Project requires development consent under Part 4 of the Act, the Project is required to be assessed as a SSD.

Part 4 Division 4.7 of the Act allows the consent authority to determine and grant consent for SSD development application.

4.2.3 Consent Authority

Section 4.5 (a) of the EP&A Act sets out that the consent authority *'in the case of State significant development—the Independent Planning Commission (if the development is of a kind for which the Commission is declared the consent authority by an environmental planning instrument) or the Minister (if the development is not of that kind)'*.

Therefore, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is the consent authority for SSD applications, other than those under Section 4.5(a) of the EP&A Act whereby the consent authority for SSD is the Independent

Planning Commission (IPC) (if the development is of a kind for which the Commission is declared the consent authority by an environmental planning instrument).

In accordance with clause 2.7(1) of the Planning Systems SEPP if any of the criteria identified below are exceeded the IPC is the consent authority:

- The development is not supported by the relevant Council (Edward River Council), or
- The department has received more than 50 unique public objections, or
- The proponent has disclosed a reportable political donation in connection with the development application.

If none of the above criteria are triggered, DPHI will determine the development application on behalf of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

4.2.4 Mandatory Matters for Consideration

Section 1.3 of the EP&A Act outlines the following relevant objectives:

a) to promote the social and economic welfare of the community and a better environment by the proper management, development and conservation of the State's natural and other resources,

b) to facilitate ecologically sustainable development by integrating relevant economic, environmental and social considerations in decision-making about environmental planning and assessment,

c) to promote the orderly and economic use and development of land,

d) to protect the environment, including the conservation of threatened and other species of native animals and plants, ecological communities and their habitats,

e) to promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage),

f) to promote good design and amenity of the built environment,

g) to provide increased opportunity for community participation in environmental planning and assessment.

Pursuant to Section 4.15 of the EP&A Act, the consent authority is to take into consideration the following matters when determining a development application:

a) The provisions of –

   i) Conargo Local Environmental Plan 2013

   ii) Any proposed instrument that is or has been subject of public consultation under the EP&A Act and that has been notified to the consent authority,

   iii) Any planning agreement that has been entered into under section 7.4, or any draft planning agreement that a developer has offered to enter into under section 7.4,

   iv) The regulations that apply to the land which the development application relates,

b) The likely impacts of the development, including environmental impacts on both the natural and built environments, and social and economic impacts in the locality,

c) The suitability of the Site for the proposed development,

d) Any submissions made in accordance with the EP&A Act or the regulations,

e) The public interest.

The Consent Authority is further required to consider the relevant provisions of the legislation described in Table 8.

Pursuant to Section 2.10 of the Planning Systems SEPP, development control plans do not apply to SSD and are not therefore a relevant consideration.

4.2.5 Preconditions to Exercising the Power to Grant Consent

An EIS will be prepared in accordance with relevant legislative requirements and guidelines. No pre-conditions to exercising the power to grant consent for the project are currently envisaged.

4.2.6 NSW Environmental Legislation

A number of pieces of state level legislation may be applicable to the Project. Their exact applicability will be determined during preparation of the EIS.

Table 8 — Relevant NSW Legislation

Legislation	Requirement
Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016	This Act aims to conserve threatened species, populations and ecological communities through ensuring appropriate assessment, management and regulation of actions that may damage critical or other habitat for a listed threatened species, or may otherwise significantly affect a threatened species, population or ecological community. If an activity is likely to have a significant impact or will be carried out in a declared area of outstanding biodiversity value, the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) must be applied and a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) prepared. The EIS of the Project would include a detailed assessment of biodiversity impacts in accordance with the Act, and include a BDAR which considered avoid, minimise and offset opportunities and requirements.
Contaminated Land Management Act 1997	This Act outlines the circumstances in which notification of the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is required in relation to the contamination of land. This may become relevant during construction and/or operation of the Project and would be discussed in greater detail in the EIS.
Crown Land Management Act 2016	This Act provides for the administration and management of Crown lands in NSW. Crown land may not be occupied, used, sold, leased, licensed, dedicated, reserved or otherwise dealt with unless authorised by the Act. There are some areas of Crown land and travelling stock reserves/routes within the Site and should any work be proposed in these areas, approval would be sought from NSW Crown Lands.
Native Title (New South Wales) Act 1974	This Act provides for native title in relation to land or waters. The status of the Site in relation to a native title claim or determination, or an Indigenous Land Use Agreement, will be investigated as part of the EIS.
Protection of the Environment Operations (POEO) Act 1997	An environmental protection license (EPL) is required for scheduled activities or development work listed by the Act. Schedule 1 lists premise based activities that require a licence, Clause 17 of this Schedule applies to 'electricity works (wind farms)'. A EPL would be sought to authorise the scheduled activity.

Legislation	Requirement
Roads Act 1993	Section 138 of this Act states: *A person must not (a) erect a structure or carry out a work in, on or over a public road, or (b) dig up or disturb the surface of a public road, or (c) remove or interfere with a structure, work or tree on a public road, or (d) pump water into a public road from any land adjoining the road, or (e) connect a road (whether public or private) to a classified road, otherwise than with the consent of the appropriate roads authority.* The Project would include upgrades to public roads or other works within the road corridor. As such, the Project will require consent from Edward River Council or Transport for NSW, or other municipal Council as relevant.
Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery 2001	This Act encourages the most efficient use of resources in order to reduce environmental harm. Waste and resource impacts associated with the Project would be considered as part of the EIS.

Section 4.41 of the EP&A Act exempts the following additional approves for an approved SSD. These include:

- An excavation permit under section 139 of the *Heritage Act 1997*
- A permit under section 201,205, or 2019 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*
- An Aboriginal heritage impact permit under section 90 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1979*
- A bushfire safety authority under section 100B of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*
- A water use approval under section 89, a water management work approval under section 90 or an activity approval under section 91 of the *Water Management Act 2000*

4.2.7 NSW Environmental Planning Instruments

A number of New South Wales Environmental Planning Instruments may be applicable to the Project at the scoping stage and are discussed in Table 9. Their exact applicability will be determined during preparation of the EIS.

Table 9 — Relevant NSW Planning Instruments

Planning Instrument	Relevant Consideration(s)
Planning Systems SEPP	Under Section 2.6(1) in conjunction with Section 20 of Schedule 1 of the Planning Systems SEPP, the Project is classified as State Significant Development (SSD). Section 20 of Schedule 1 classifies *electricity generating works and heat or co-generation* as state significant if a proposal has: a) An estimated development cost of more than $30 million
Transport and Infrastructure SEPP	Under Division 4, Section 2.36(1) of the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP, development for the purpose of electricity generating works (the Project), may be carried out by any person with consent on the following land: b) … any land in a prescribed non-residential zone The Project elements will be entirely Sited on land Zoned RU1 – Rural Production under the Conargo LEP, a prescribed non-residential zone and therefore is permissible with consent.
State Environmental Planning Policy (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021	Chapter 5 of the Biodiversity and Conservation SEPP relates to development of land within the riverine environment of the River Murray, including land within Conargo and Deniliquin. Chapter 5 aims to:

Planning Instrument	Relevant Consideration(s)
	a) Ensure that appropriate consideration is given to development with the potential to adversely affect the riverine environment of the River Murray, b) Establish a consistent and co-ordinated approach to environmental planning and assessment along the River Murray, c) Conserve and promote the better management of the natural and cultural heritage values of the riverine environment of the River Murray The EIS will consider the implications of this SEPP.
State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021 **(formerly State Environmental Planning Policy No. 33 – Hazardous and Offensive Development)**	Chapter 3 of the Resilience and Hazards SEPP aims to: a) … ensure that any measures proposed to be employed to reduce the impacts of a potentially hazardous or dangerous industry development are taken into account b) … ensure that the consent authority has sufficient information to assess whether the development is hazardous or offensive and to impose conditions to reduce or minimise any adverse impact In accordance with Section 3.7 of the Resilience and Hazards SEPP, consideration will be given to current guidelines published by the DPHI regarding hazardous or offensive development.
State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021 **(formerly State Environmental Planning Policy No. 55 – Remediation of Land)**	Chapter 4 of the Resilience and Hazards SEPP provides a state-wide planning approach to the remediation of contaminated land. Under Section 4.6(1), a consent authority is required to consider whether a proposed development Site is contaminated before granting consent. A land contamination assessment will be prepared as part of the EIS to determine the potential contamination risk of the Project on surrounding land. This assessment will take into consideration historical land use within and surrounding the Site, noting the predominately historic agricultural land use.
Conargo Local Environmental Plan 2013 (Conargo LEP)	Relevant components of the Conargo LEP include: ▪ Section 1.2 – Aims of Plan ▪ Land Use Table – Objectives and permissible uses of the RU1 – Primary Production zone The LEP will be further considered during the development of the EIS.

4.2.8 Other Approvals – Commonwealth Environmental Legislation

Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The EPBC Act is the Commonwealth Government's overarching environmental legislation providing a legal framework for protecting the Australian natural environment, its inherent biodiversity as well as naturally and culturally significant places. Its application primarily revolves around ensuring that proposed development does not significantly impact the environment, particularly Matters of National and Environmental Significance (MNES). Table 10 provides a preliminary assessment against the MNES, which will be refined as part of a separate MNES report currently under preparation.

Table 10 — EPBC Act MNES Report Summary

Matter	Comment
World Heritage Properties	No World Heritage Properties were identified on site or within 10 kilometres.
National Heritage Place	No National Heritage Places were identified on site or within 10 kilometres.
Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR)	The closest RAMSAR wetland to the Site is the NSW Central Murray Forests Ramsar Site near Deniliquin, about 20km away This wetland will not be impacted by the Project.
Listed Threatened Ecological Communities	Potential for impacts. Will be discussed in the MNES report.
Listed Threatened Species	Potential for impacts. Will be discussed in the MNES report.
Listed Migratory Species	Potential for impacts. Will be discussed in the MNES report.
Commonwealth marine areas.	No Commonwealth marine areas were identified on Site or within 10 kilometres.
The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.	The Great Barrier Reef is more than 10 kilometres from the Site.
Nuclear actions (including uranium mines)	Not applicable
A water resource, in relation to coal seam gas development and large coal mining development	Not applicable

A detailed assessment of the Project's potential impact on MNES will be undertaken to inform a referral under the EPBC Act to the Minister for the Environment. The Minister will determine if the Project will be considered a controlled action and therefore require formal assessment and approval under the EPBC Act.

Native Title Act 1993

The *Native Title Act 1993* (Commonwealth) provides a legislative framework to provide a national system for the recognition and protection of Aboriginal land rights, tenure and land sovereignty and for coexistence with the national land management system. The act sets up processes to determine where native title exists, how future activity impacting upon native title may be undertaken and to provide compensation where native title is impaired.

A search of the National Native Title Register and National Native Title Tribunal Spatial Data did not identify any native title applications or determinations within the Project Site or the wider LGA.

Civil Aviation Regulations 1988

The Civil Aviation Regulations requires reporting of tall structures to the Royal Australian Air Force. A detailed assessment of the impacts of the Project on aviation activities will be undertaken and detailed in the EIS.

Heavy Vehicle National Law

As large, long structures, approval would be required for the transport of turbine blades and associated infrastructure. A detailed route study would investigate the most appropriate route from the Port to Site and identify any required road upgrades and support any request for approval from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator for the transport of OSOM vehicles.

5. Engagement

The Proponent is committed to a transparent and receptive engagement process that builds trusting and constructive relationships with the host landholders, community and stakeholders. In order to effectively do this, the Proponent seeks to understand the values, concerns and needs of those directly and indirectly affected by the Project from construction to eventual operation, by proactively seeking input and stakeholder feedback early and throughout the Project lifecycle.

The proposed engagement approach has been developed in alignment with regulatory approval requirements and industry best practice to ensure consistent, targeted and meaningful engagement. This section outlines the intended engagement approach, the relevant regulatory and industry requirements and principles guiding the engagement process and provides a summary of planned and undertaken engagement activities.

5.1 Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

As part of the Project's scoping process, a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan was prepared to support early development of the Project. It detailed the Project, relevant engagement principles and objectives and provided an outline of key relevant stakeholders for engagement through the early stages of the Project. It is a live document that will be used to guide all engagement activities carried out through the entire project lifecycle.

5.1.1 Engagement Principles

Engagement will be carried out with particular attention to the principles and commitments as outlined in the following key strategies and guidelines:

Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects (March 2024)
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

This document sets out requirements for effective engagement on SSD in New South Wales and provides guidance for proponents to assist planning their engagement approaches, undertaking engagement to inform and shape their proposal, and sets requirements for reporting on and assessing engagement undertaken and how it has shaped the Project.

The guidelines provide a number of specific recommendations for Proponents of SSD. These include:

- **Planning early**: an early engagement approach provides a number of benefits, including identifying relevant stakeholders, helping to understand the level of influence participants could have on the Project, as well as helping to consider the types of activities that will be appropriate, effective and practical to support engagement.
- **Engage as early as possible**: engaging relevant stakeholders early, particularly during the Site selection and scoping phases allows Proponents to identify potential early issues that can be avoided or managed without significant cost or delay.
- **Ensure engagement is effective**: ensuring engagement is effective is a crucial determinant of high quality planning outcomes. Effective engagement occurs when community, councils and government agencies have sufficient information to understand the key project elements and their impact.

- **Ensure proportionate engagement**: any engagement approach should be proportional to the Project's scale and likely impacts in order to avoid consultation 'fatigue' resulting in ineffective engagement.
- **Be innovative**: incorporate multiple approaches to engagement including traditional print, digital and in person approaches to enable participation from a broad spectrum of community members. Proponents are encouraged to use emerging digital engagement technologies and platforms for innovative engagement approaches.
- **Be open and transparent about what can be influenced**: Proponents should identify elements of the project that can effectively be influence or shaped by community during planning and assessment including Site positioning, design and operations.

Draft Wind Energy Guideline (2023)
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

The Draft Wind Energy Guideline have been created to support the development of a sustainable wind energy industry in NSW, encourage industry to select suitable Sites for projects and turbine locations, provide clear and consistent guidance on how to measure and assess environmental impacts of wind energy projects and promote meaningful, respectful and effective best practice community engagement.

The specific engagement guidelines include providing clear and concise information to community and stakeholders, implementing activities that encourage and facilitate public participation, and reporting on input and feedback received from community and stakeholders.

Draft Benefit Sharing Guideline (2023)
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

The Draft Benefit Sharing Guidelines have been developed to provide guidance to applicants, councils and the broader public on the importance of community benefit sharing, advice on incorporating benefit sharing into preparation and assessment of SSD applications, encouraging coordination of benefit sharing programs or schemes and to support the rapid development of renewable energy generation across NSW.

The Draft Guidelines contain the following policy principles, considered key for designing, establishing and managing benefit share initiatives:

- **Benefit sharing is standard**: benefit sharing should be considered standard practice in the preparation and delivery of renewable energy projects
- **Benefit sharing is collaborative**: benefit sharing initiatives are designed in partnership with councils. Opportunities to collaborate with other renewable energy projects should be prioritised to help leverage funds
- **Benefit sharing is transparent**: information on benefit sharing initiatives is made publicly available, including clear details on administration and distribution of proceeds
- **Benefit sharing is community focused**: benefit sharing initiatives are informed by consultation with the community or community representatives
- **Benefit sharing is proportionate**: the value and extent of community benefits provided reflect the scale of the project and the level of change experienced by the community
- **Benefit sharing delivers a net-positive outcome**: initiatives provide a positive, lasting and meaningful impact for the local community

Best Practice Guide for Renewable Energy Projects (2018)
Clean Energy Council

The Clean Energy Council's *Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Projects* is a voluntary set of commitments for CEC members designed to clearly communicate the standards that signatories will uphold in the development of current and new clean energy projects. These are:

1. We will engage respectful with the local community, including Traditional Owners of the land, to seek their views and input before submitting a development application and finalising the design of the project
2. We will provide timely information and be accessible and responsive in addressing the local community's feedback and concerns throughout the life of the project
3. We will be sensitive to areas of high biodiversity, cultural and landscape value in the development and operation of projects
4. We will minimise the impacts on highly productive agricultural land and explore opportunities to integrate agricultural production
5. We will consult the community on the potential visual, noise, traffic and other impacts of the project, and on the mitigation options
6. We will support the local economy by providing local employment and procurement opportunities, where possible
7. We will offer communities the opportunity to share in the benefits of the project, and consult them on the options available, including relevant governance arrangements
8. We commit to using the project to support educational and tourism opportunities, where appropriate
9. We will demonstrate responsible land stewardship over the life of the project and welcome opportunities to enhance the ecological, cultural and/or agricultural value of the land
10. During the life of the project, we will recycle waste materials where feasible and commit to responsible decommissioning or refurbishment/repowering of the Site at the end of the project's life

The documents and guidelines have shaped, and will continue to shape the engagement undertaken for the Project.

5.2 Stakeholder Identification

It is important to identify relevant stakeholders who will have an interest or influence on the Project. Table 11 provides an initial list of stakeholder groups that have either already been engaged or will be engaged during the Project lifecycle. The table also identifies the likely level of interest of the stakeholders and the geographic extent of their interest.

Stakeholder identification will be an iterative process, and the approach presented in this table will be updated as part of the EIS.

Table 11 — Stakeholder Identification Summary

Stakeholder identification			
Group	Sub-section	Description	Estimated Interest
Neighbours	Near (<2.5km)	Landowners up to 2.5 km from the site.	High
	Far (2.5-8km)	Landowners between 2.5 km and 8 km from the site boundary.	High
Local businesses	Near (<5km)	Businesses up to 5 km from the site boundary (inc Wanganella town).	High
	Far (5-20 km)	Businesses between 5 km and 20 km from the site boundary.	Medium
	Chambers of Commerce and Industry	Deniliquin Business Chamber Hay Chamber of Commerce Finley Chamber of Commerce Industry & Agriculture Tocumwal Chamber of Commerce Berrigan Chamber of Commerce Jerilderie Chamber of Commerce	High
Traditional owners	Cummeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)	The traditional owners of the site are the Baraba Baraba, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta people. The LALC for the area is the Cummeragunja LALC.	High
	Government	Office of Environment and Heritage	Medium
Wider communities	Nearby townships	Community beyond 8 kilometres from the project including towns of Booroorban and Conargo.	Medium
	Towns within Council Area	Other villages / townships within Edward River Council	Low
Print media	Local	Local publications and newsletters, including The Rural, Deniliquin Pastoral Times, The Riverine Grazier.	Medium
	State	NSW publications such as The Sydney Morning Herald, The Daily Telegraph	Low
	National	National publications such as the Australian Financial Review, The Australian, Renew Economy and The Weekly Times	Low
Other media	Local	Local TV and Radio including 88.5 FM, Edge 102.5 FM and Radio 2QN (1521).	Medium
	State	State TV and Radio including ABC Radio Sydney, Triple M Sydney amongst others.	Low
	National	National TV and Radio, including ABC National, 7News, 9News, Sky News, SBS.	Low
Social media	Facebook	Wanganella Community Noticeboard Facebook page, Edward River Council Facebook page.	Medium
Federal Government	Relevant Ministers	Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Hon Chris Bowen MP	Medium

Stakeholder identification			
Group	Sub-section	Description	Estimated Interest
		Minster for Environment and Water, Hon Tanya Plibersek MP Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, The Hon. Catherine King MP Minister for Industry and Science, Mr. Ed Husic MP Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Senator the Hon. Murray Watt	
	MPs/Senators	Lower House – Hon Sussan Ley MP (Liberals) – Member for Farrer Upper House – All 16 senators in NSW including Duty Senator *Deborah O'Neill – Labour NSW*	Medium
	Department Officers	Staff in government agencies such as Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), Environment and Heritage and DPHI	Medium
	Federal Agencies	DCCEEW Civil Aviation Safety Authority Department Of Defence John Sheldon, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) Regional Development Australia (RDA) - Riverina	Medium
State Government	State Agencies	DPHI NSW Independent Planning Commission NSW Environmental Protection Authority NSW Department of Industry – Lands and Waters Murray Local Land Services DCCEEW Water Group	High
	Relevant Ministers	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces – Paul Scully Minister for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment & Heritage – Penny Sharpe Minister for Agriculture, Regional NSW & Western NSW – Tara Moriarty Minister for Natural Resources – Courtney Houssos Premier – Chris Minns MP	Medium
	Local	Legislative Assembly (Lower House), Member for Murray – Helen Dalton Legislative Council (Upper House) – All 21 Members of the Legislative Council (MLC) including: Shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces – Scott Farlow Shadow Minister for Families and Communities – Natasha Maclaren-Jones	Medium

Stakeholder identification			
Group	Sub-section	Description	Estimated Interest
Local government	Relevant Councillors	Mayor – Peta Betts Deputy Mayor – Marc Petersen	High
	Local	Acting CEO – Gary Arnold Director Infrastructure – Mark Dalzell Acting Director Corporate Services – Jacinta Erdody	Medium
Emergency services		Deniliquin-Conargo SES Deniliquin Fire and Rescue Finley Rural Fire Brigade NSW Rural Fire Services (RFS) State Emergency Services (SES)	Medium
Water authority		Edward River Council	Medium
NGO and Local community organisations	Local committees	Deniliquin Community Group (NFP) Wanganella Hall Committee Wanganella Advancement Committee Edward River Sustainability Group	High
Community action groups	Broad Opponent groups	A variety of online community groups generally opposed to renewable energy	High
Transport and road authorities		Transport for NSW / Department of Transport and Planning (VIC) – Transport branch Edward River Council NSW Ports / Ports Victoria	Medium
Transmission line operator		TransGrid	High

5.3 Engagement Undertaken to Date

A range of engagement activities have been carried out to date to inform the Site selection, project design, identification of issues, and engagement approach (See Table 12 and Table 13).

5.3.1 Agency and Elected Official Stakeholder Engagement

Table 12 — Agency and Elected Official Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Agency	Date	Mechanism	Key Points
NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)	20 September 2024	Online meeting	Key items discussed include: ▪ Introduction of the Project, the Site and an introduction to Equis and Cogency ▪ DPHI expectations of Project scoping report and EIS. ▪ DPHI expectations around timing of SEARs ▪ DPHI expectations around community engagement and benefit sharing ▪ Relevant assessment guidelines to inform the EIS
Edward River Council	29 August 2024	Online meeting	Key items discussed include: ▪ Introduction of the Project, the Site and an introduction to Equis and Cogency ▪ Demographic background of Wanganella and the need for improved and expanded community services and needs, particularly around healthcare ▪ History of the land and Site suitability ▪ History of localised weather events, including recent flooding ▪ Importance of promoting local jobs ▪ Ensuring temporary accommodation camps for construction works are self sufficient and don't overwhelm village amenities
	10 October 2024	Online meeting	Equis representatives met with Brian Roberts, chief of staff to Helen Dalton.
Transport for NSW	6 November 2024	Online meeting	Key items discussed include: ▪ Introduction of the Project, the Site and an introduction to Equis and Cogency ▪ Site suitability ▪ Potential key construction routes ▪ TfNSW feedback regarding likely considerations for the EIS and leading into construction
DCCEEW (NSW)	28 September 2024	Online meeting	Key items discussed include: ▪ Introduction of the Project, the Site and an introduction to Equis and Cogency ▪ Expectations regarding vegetation and species surveys ▪ Expectations regarding cumulative impact assessment ▪ Importance of demonstrating avoidance and minimisation before offsets

Agency	Date	Mechanism	Key Points
Victorian Department of Transport	26 September 2024	Phone Discussion	Key items discussed include: ▪ Introduction of the Project, the Site and an introduction to Equis and Cogency ▪ Identification of likely Port and use of Victorian Roads. ▪ Online mapping of over dimensional routes ▪ Victoria having good experience in managing wind farm components through Geelong and Portland Ports ▪ Need for further meeting when greater detail is known during EIS

5.3.2 Community Engagement

Table 13 outlines community engagement activities undertaken to inform this Scoping Report and any relevant community sentiment or views expressed at the time.

Table 13 — Summary of Community Engagement Activities

Engagement Activity	Date Undertaken	Views/Sentiments Expressed
Targeted door knocking of neighbouring land owners surrounding the Site, including entire Wanganella Village	11 -12 September 2024	▪ Attachments to the unique landscape values of the flat Hay Plains ▪ Community attachment to Billabong Creek, particularly for fishing and other recreational activities ▪ Noise and visual impacts from wind turbines ▪ Noted benefits of renewables lowering cost of electricity ▪ Prioritising benefits for local community members
Project Website, Engagement Hub, dedicated email address and phone number	Launched October 2024	▪ Offers a range of methods for feedback
Wanganella Wind Farm Information Session	18 October 2024	▪ Attended by Equis Acting CEO for ERC along with project team members ▪ General positive sentiments from attendees and community regarding the Project ▪ Flooding and flood management ▪ Bushfire concerns and concerns over RFS capacity and resourcing ▪ A detailed summary is presented in Section 5.3.2.1

5.3.2.1 Targeted Door Knocking and Interviews (11 - 12 September 2024)

Preliminary community engagement in the form of local doorknocking and interviews was undertaken during September 2024 to gain a preliminary understanding of values and attitudes held by the local community, in particular neighbouring land owners surrounding the Site, including entire Wanganella village, in order to inform the Project's SIA Scoping Report. Community members were asked questions regarding the values they ascribe to the local area, how these contribute to their respective ways of living and concerns

that the Project may impose on these values. The results of this doorknocking and interviewing were collated and grouped into themes: *Community values – physical*, *Community values – lifestyle*, *possible impacts* and *community benefits* and are presented in Table 14.

Table 14 — Summary of identified community values identified via door knocking and interviews

Theme	Relevant comment/detail
Community values – physical	Flatness of the regional landscape Feelings and attachment to open spaces, wide open country and serenity Attachment to local flora, fauna and waterways including Billabong Creek
Community values – lifestyle	Attachment to outdoor activities i.e. fishing and hunting Benefits of rural living Attachment to peace and quiet Distance from urbanised areas and “hustle and bustle” Attachment to local community
Possible impacts	Concerns about noise impacts Concerns about visual impacts and alteration to landscape
Community benefits	Wind farms provide needed energy to the local community Community benefits should be directed to Wanganella and not distributed to other towns of the broader region

5.3.2.2 Community Information Session (18 October 2024)

Equis held a Community Information Session on 18 October 2024 held at the Wanganella Town Hall which was advertised and open to the broader community. A number of Equis staff, and a total of 14 community members attended the information session. The session featured a number of informational corflutes, a frequently-asked-questions pack and a ‘registration of ideas’ form where community members could offer suggestions for eventual community benefit sharing arrangements.

The information session was promoted through the following mediums:

- Information letter mail out (October 4, 2024)
- Mail out to 66 residents within an 8km radius of the Project
- Live radio announcements, 3 times per day, across 2 regional radio stations (EDGE FM & 2QN) with an estimated reach of 26,500 (October 8 – October 17, 2024)
- Online newspaper advertisement (October 8 – October 18, 2024) with an estimated 15,000 – 20,000 impressions
- Advertisements in regional newspapers within 150km of the Project Site (October 8 & October 11, 2024)
- Email correspondence with Edward River LGA, Wanganella Hall Association

- An additional surplus mail out pack with Project information to local postal service workers for circulation within the community
- Online Engagement Hub with 97 page views and 419 document downloads

The following items were discussed between Equis staff and community attendees:

- **On Site hydrology and local history of flooding:** some attendees raised queries over the area's history of flooding and how the Project's infrastructure might impact future flooding events
- **Bushfire risk:** some attendees raised queries on the Project's potential bushfire risk and the current capacity and resourcing of the local RFS
- **Visual amenity:** some attendees expressed interest in seeing more information the Project's potential visual amenity impacts as the design matures

5.4 Community Influence

The engagement approach for the Project has been guided by the IAP2 Core Values and the *Public Participation Spectrum* (see Figure 14). The spectrum is founded on the premise that different stakeholders will have varied levels of involvement in decision-making.

The level of engagement for the Project will vary across stakeholders and phases of the engagement. The Proponent commits to:

- **Collaborate** and/or **involve** regulators and key stakeholders including DPHI and Edward River Council
- **Involve** and/or **consult** with adjacent and nearby neighbours, Wanganella village and non-regulatory government agencies during the project lifecycle to ensure their views and preferences are at the forefront of the Projects design
- **Consult** and/or **inform** the Riverina communities including the townships of Wanganella, Deniliquin and Hay

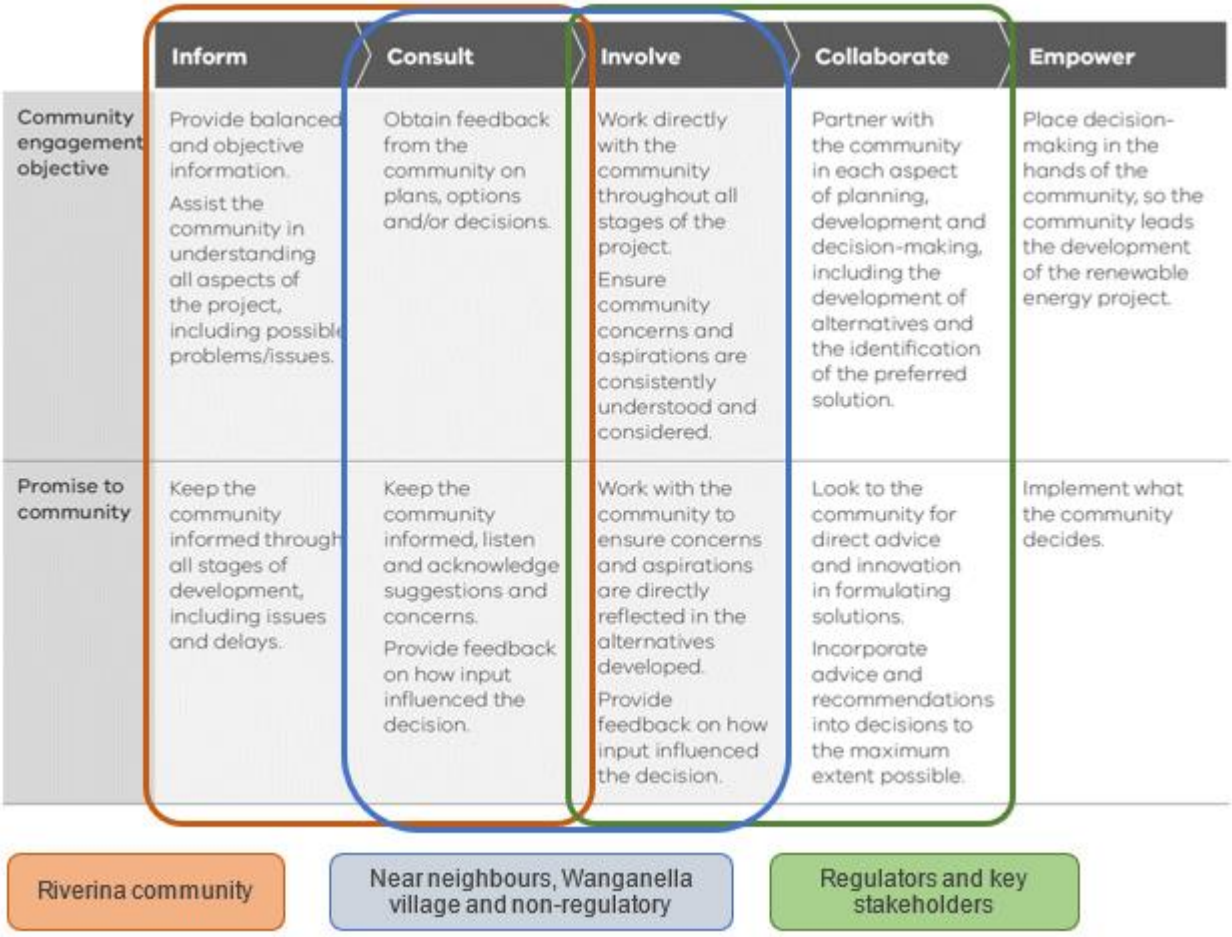

Figure 14 — The engagement commitment in relation to the IAP2 Public Participation System

As identified at Section 3.1, details of the Project will be dependent on several factors including Site constraints and the outcome of stakeholder and host landholder engagement and will be resolved during the EIS stage.

A number of elements of the Project may be influenced by the findings of the technical assessments undertaken during the EIS stage, including as a result of the community engagement that is carried out to support the preparation of these assessments. Elements of the Project that may be influenced by the technical assessments include turbine locations, other infrastructure including access roads and external access points, BESS and substation locations, on-site or receiver landscaping and turbine and BESS noise mitigation measures.

In addition to the Project elements being influenced by technical assessments, the development of the Project will include ongoing community engagement activities which will be influenced by community feedback. As identified at Section 2.4.2, the Project will establish Community Benefit Strategies that allocate resources for local projects and initiatives, fostering community development and cohesion. These funds will be designed in consultation with the local community, but typically support a wide range of activities, from educational programs and infrastructure improvements to environmental conservation efforts.

5.5 Engagement Proposed

Engagement activities are proposed throughout the entire project life cycle from scoping through to construction, operation and eventual decommissioning. Table 15 outlines each of the future engagement activities proposed across each of the major project stages.

Table 15 — Proposed Engagement Schedule

Phase	Project State and Proposed Engagement Activities
Phase 1 August – November 2024	**Project Scoping** Initial engagement, including door knocking, stakeholder meetings and community drop in session. Preliminary meetings with referral and consent authorities (Edward River Council, NSW DPHI) Launch project on Project website and engagement hub Project newsletter
Phase 2 Approx Dec 2024 – 2026	**EIS Preparation** Detailed stakeholder and community meetings Further neighbour engagement and door knocking program More detailed information on project's website and engagement hub Launch of online engagement tools Further community drop in sessions Benefit sharing framework drafting
Phase 3 Approx 2026	**EIS Exhibition** Community drop-in sessions Detailed stakeholder and community meetings Further neighbour engagement More detailed information on project's website and engagement hub Project team responds to submissions from community and stakeholders
Phase 4 Approx 2026/2027	**EIS Assessment** Project website and engagement hub updated Further stakeholder meetings, if required
Phase 5 Approx 2027/2028 – 2029/2030	**Construction and operation** Continued engagement with neighbours and community Benefit Sharing Strategy finalised in consultation with Wanganella community

Phase	Project State and Proposed Engagement Activities
Phase 6 TBC	**Decommissioning** Ongoing engagement throughout decommissioning

6. Proposed Assessment of Impacts

6.1 Key Environmental, Social and Economic Matters

As part of this Scoping Report, a number of key environmental, social and economic assessment matters relevant to the Project have been identified that will require further assessment during the EIS.

Identifying and evaluating the likely level of assessment for each of the following matters has involved:

- Undertaking a review of desktop assessments of relevant open-source databases, online mapping services and technical assessments of other similar SSD projects in the region to understand the sensitivity of the environment to change and consider cumulative impacts.
- Undertaking an initial technical assessment for biodiversity values, landscape and visual impact, noise and vibration impacts, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage impacts and social impacts to understand potential impacts from the proposed Project and potential mitigation.
- Reviewing SSD Guidelines – Preparing a Scoping Report (DPHI, Oct 2022), relevant government plans or policies that would need to be considered during further assessment.
- Reviewing outcomes of stakeholder and community consultation held to date to understand community views.

The proposed level of assessment is summarised in Table 16, with further detail provided in Appendix A.

Table 16 — EIS Key Matters requiring further assessment

Matter	Proposed Level of Assessment
Amenity – Visual	Detailed Assessment
Amenity – Noise and Vibration	Detailed Assessment
Biodiversity – Terrestrial, Aquatic and Avifauna	Detailed Assessment
Heritage – Aboriginal	Detailed Assessment
Heritage – Historic	Standard Assessment
Access – Traffic	Detailed Assessment
Economic and Social	Detailed Assessment
Hazards and Risks – Bushfire Risk	Detailed Assessment
Hazards and Risks – Dangerous Goods	Standard Assessment
Water and Land	Detailed Assessment

6.2 Matters Requiring Further Assessment in the EIS

6.2.1 Amenity – Visual

A Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment (PVIA) was undertaken by Moir Studio (dated 4 November 2024) to support this Scoping Report by providing a preliminary assessment of the Project's potential visual impacts (refer to Appendix B). The PVIA was undertaken in accordance with the Wind Energy Visual Assessment Bulletin for State Significant Wind Energy Development (DPIE, 2016).

Existing Environment

The Site is within the Riverina Bioregion, characterised by extensive saltbush plain with small depressions and low isolated rises. The Site's topography is generally flat with very minor and isolated rises of coarse-textured aeolian material due to the lack of extensive vegetation coverage.

The PVIA identified the following key landscape features, dwelling locations and key public viewpoints:

- **Geology and Landform:** the region is made up of quaternary alluvial sediments with shallow and small depressions which form a number of dry lakes studded in the landscape. In some areas, these depressions form large scale swamps/flood plains.
- **Vegetation Character:** A number of saltbush, cottonbush and grass varieties dominate the region with very sparse tree communities, thus offering clear open views of the expanse focused on the horizon. Mid-canopy species along the key watercourses which includes Billabong Creek are present in the landscape.
- **Dry Rivers, Creeks & Wetlands:** Given the dry and arid conditions of the region, lakes and creek lines remain dry most of the year. The most significant hydrological features include Billabong Creek, Delta Creek, Two Mile Creek, Wanganella Creek and Sheepwash Creek.
- **Roads and Highways:** Cobb Highway serves as an important road corridor connecting the towns of Hay and Deniliquin and Wanganella village. Minor road connections within the Study Area include Warwillah Road, Willurah Road, Wanganella-Conargo Road and Wanganella-Moulamein Road providing access to dispersed rural properties.
- **Nature Reserves, State Conservation Area, and National Park:** There are no nature reserves, state conservation areas or national parks within the Site.
- **Campgrounds and Points of Interest:** Key public viewpoints within proximity to the Site include within Wanganella, Wanganella Creek Campground and associated rest areas to the northwest of the Project Site along the Cobb Highway that forms part of the 'Long Paddock' scenic drive.

Preliminary consultation with the local community has been undertaken to identify community and landscape values relevant to the Project (refer to Section 5.3). Members of the community identified that the surrounding rural landscapes and scenic beauty are important values within the local natural environment. Specifically, respondents noted the "*…flatness of the landscape…*", and "*… the feeling of space, open country and serenity…*" as important elements of the local environment.

Potential Impacts

The PVIA utilises various tools to provide an early indication of potential visual impacts including:

- **Visual magnitude** – creates a threshold based on the height of the proposed turbines and distance from dwellings or public viewpoints to provide an indication of where the Project will be visible. The PVIA found that 34 non-associated dwellings fall within the visual magnitude threshold. Figure 15 shows the visual magnitude of the Project along with the Sensitive Receivers Setback as per the Wind Energy Visual Technical Supplement (DPHI, 2024).
- **Multiple wind turbine tool** – provides an indication of potential cumulative impacts through the mapping of Project turbines and other turbines within eight kilometres of the non-associated dwellings within the visual magnitude threshold. The PVIA found that turbines are identified for two non-associated dwellings. The PVIA notes that existing screening factors (vegetation and structures) may reduce the visibility of turbines and the Project.

- **Preliminary zone of influence** – represents the area over which a development can theoretically been seen. The PVIA finds that the majority of the turbines associated with the Project are likely to be visible from most areas across the wider eight kilometre study area, including from dwellings and public viewpoints (refer to Figure 16).

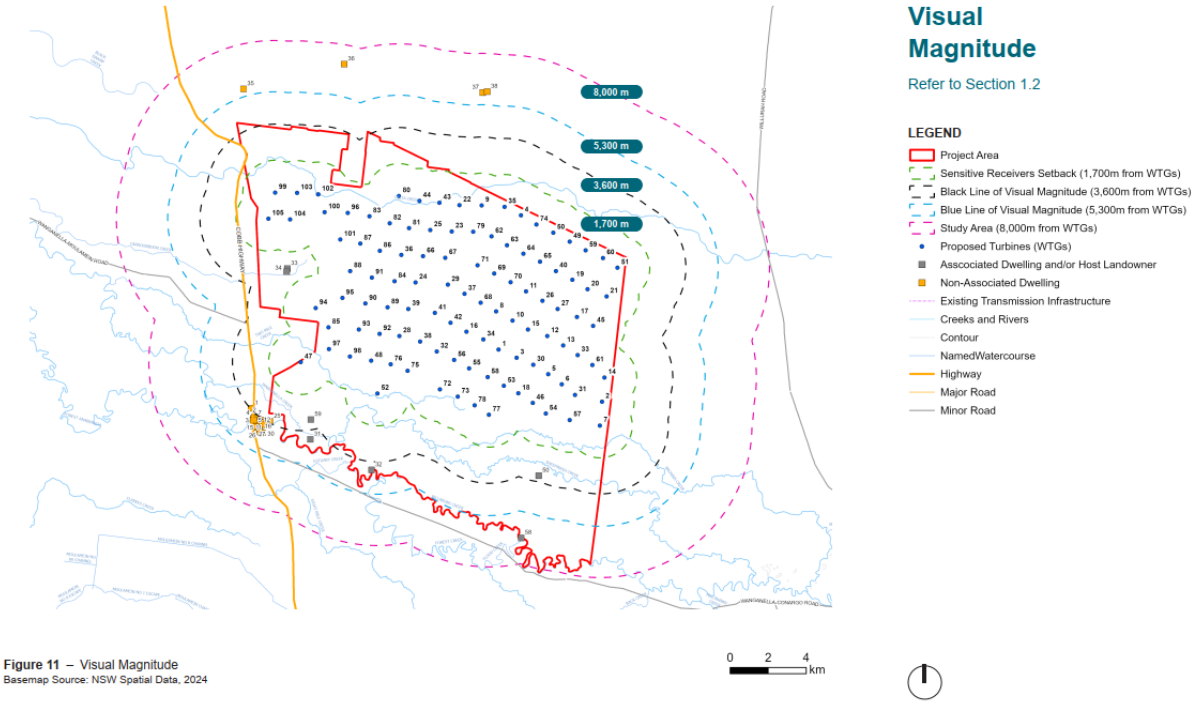

Figure 15 — Visual Magnitude Plan (Moir Studio, 2024)

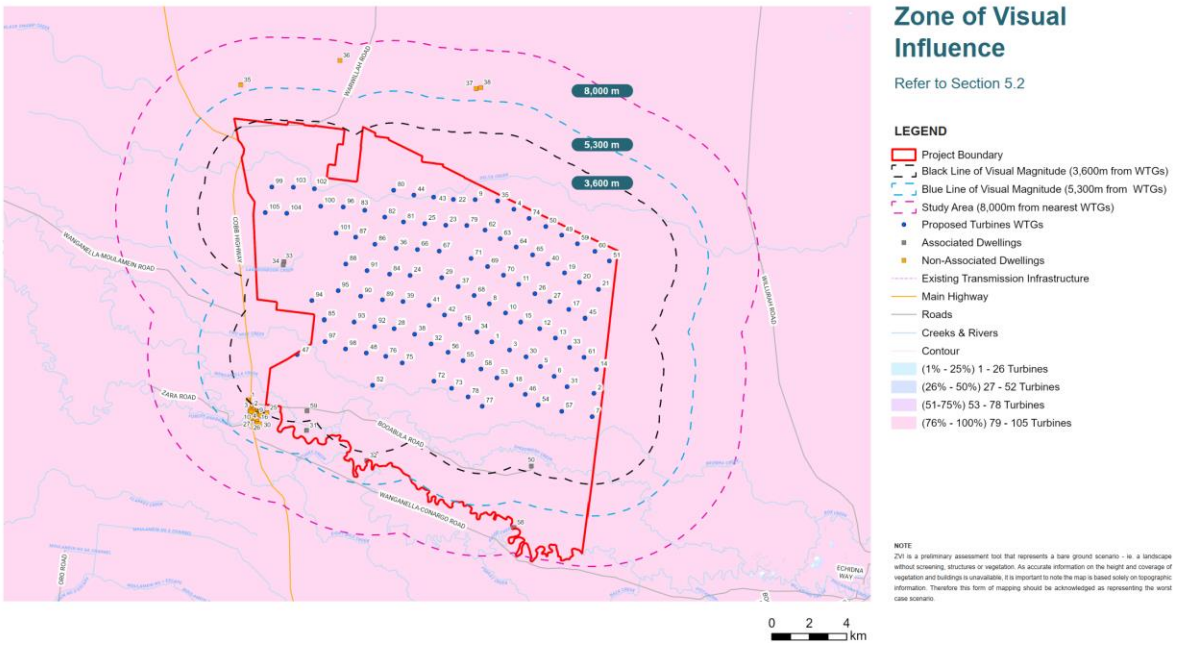

Figure 16 —Zone of Visual Influence Plan (Moir Studio, 2024)

Cumulative Impacts

Located within the South-West REZ, it is anticipated that land around the Project and within the Edward River LGA more generally will see an increase in the development of wind farm projects, likely developed concurrently. To date, 19 wind farm projects have been proposed in the South-West REZ and of these nearby proposals, Pottinger Energy Park is located in close proximity to the Project. The Pottinger Energy Park preliminary layout consists of 108 WTGs (with a maximum tip height of 280m), up to 500ha of solar panels, a BESS and associated ancillary infrastructure.

Given the Project is located on flat terrain, and a lack of obtrusive elements, it is likely that there will be areas from which multiple developments will be visible simultaneously. Figure 17 shows the renewable energy projects within proximity to the Project.

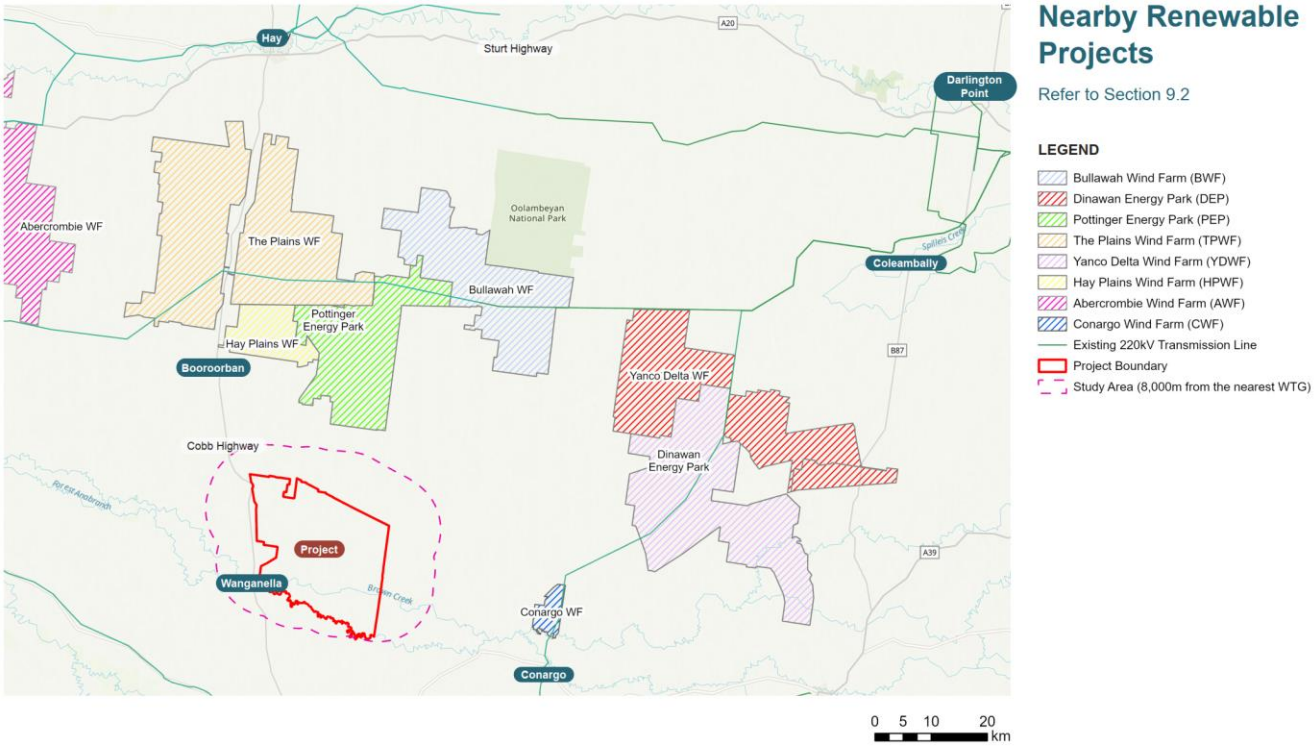

Figure 17 — Nearby Renewable Projects Plan (Moir Studio, 2024)

Assessment Approach

Findings from the PVIA will be utilised to inform a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) that will be undertaken during the EIS Phase. The LVIA will be prepared with reference to the requirements and procedures outlined in the following guidelines:

- NSW DPE – Wind Energy Framework (2016) or revised equivalent, if applicable.
- NSW DPE – Wind Energy Framework, SEARs (2016) or revised equivalent, if applicable.
- NSW DPE – Wind Energy: Visual Assessment Bulletin for State significant wind energy development (2016) or revised equivalent, if applicable.

The detailed LVIA will utilise the existing landscape character assessment to prepare a detailed Visual Baseline Study which will identify any additional key landscape features and significant viewpoints, determine the scenic quality of the Landscape Character Units, the Zone of Visual Influence and assess the ratings against the objectives outlined in the Bulletin.

Further assessment of the sensitive receivers identified within the PVIA will be undertaken as part of the EIS through ground truthing and individual site inspections and detail dwelling assessments. Each sensitive receiver will be assessed by taking into account topography, vegetation and other screening factors and a determination of potential visual impact of each sensitive receiver and relevant mitigation methods to reduce these impacts will also be determined as part of the EIS process. Further assessment and justification for the placement of each WTG in multiple sectors will need to be detailed in the EIS, along with a description of potential mitigation and management measures being employed to reduce impacts that are determined to be unacceptable in the relevant guideline.

The LVIA and EIS will also consider the potential cumulative impact of the Project with other Projects in the locality and broader region, in particular the cumulative impact to the visual environment.

Furthermore, a Preliminary Social Impact Assessment (SIA) to accompany this Scoping Report (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared to guide the proposed engagement, including engagement specific to visual amenity considerations.

6.2.2 Amenity – Noise and Vibration

A Preliminary Noise Impact Assessment (PNIA) was undertaken by Sonus (dated October 2024) to assess predicted noise emissions from wind turbines in accordance with the *Wind Energy: Noise Assessment Bulletin* (DPE, 2016) and *Draft Wind Energy Guideline* (DPIE, 2023) (refer to Appendix C). Additionally, predicted noise emissions from ancillary infrastructure (BESS and substation equipment), was also assessed in accordance with the *NSW Noise Policy for Industry 2017* (EPA, 2017). The PNIA focused on noise impacts related to the operations of the WTGs and associated infrastructure. Construction noise would be assessed in accordance with the Interim Construction Noise Guideline, 2009 in a detailed acoustic assessment to support the EIS.

The PNIA was undertaken based on the current indicative WTG locations with a hub height of 180m and a blade tip height of 270m, receiver locations and local topographic contours. Noise data for expected sound power for the WTGs, BESS and transformers were also utilised.

Existing Environment

There are 34 identified non-associated sensitive receivers that have the potential to be impacted by noise emissions from the WTGs and ancillary infrastructure, with these receivers ranging from distances of 2.5 to 6.9 kilometres from the nearest turbine.

Potential Impacts

The Project has the potential to have a number of noise and vibration related impacts, including noise and vibration impacts from construction activities, operational noise impacts from WTG and ancillary infrastructure and noise impacts related to additional traffic generated during construction and operation.

Noise levels from WTGs at nearby residences have been predicted using the noise propagation model defined in Internal Standard I*SO: 9613-2:1996 Acoustics – Attenuation of sound during propagation outdoors* (ISO 9613-2) and the *SoundPLAN noise* modelling software.

The *Wind Energy: Noise Assessment Bulletin* and the *Draft Wind Energy Guideline* provide criteria for WTG noise emissions based on a baseline noise limit criterion of 35dB(A), or 5dB(A) above the background noise level at each integer of wind speed for non-associated residences. Background noise levels were not monitored as part of the preliminary assessment. For ancillary infrastructure, the preliminary assessment assumed a noise trigger level of 35dB(A) at all locations.

Preliminary predictions indicate that WTG-associated noise levels at all non-associated residences are well outside of the 35db(A) range and easily achieve the baseline noise criterion (refer to Figure 188). Similarly, the highest ancillary infrastructure-noise level predicted at any receiver is 28dB(A) which achieves the 35dB(A) noise trigger level.

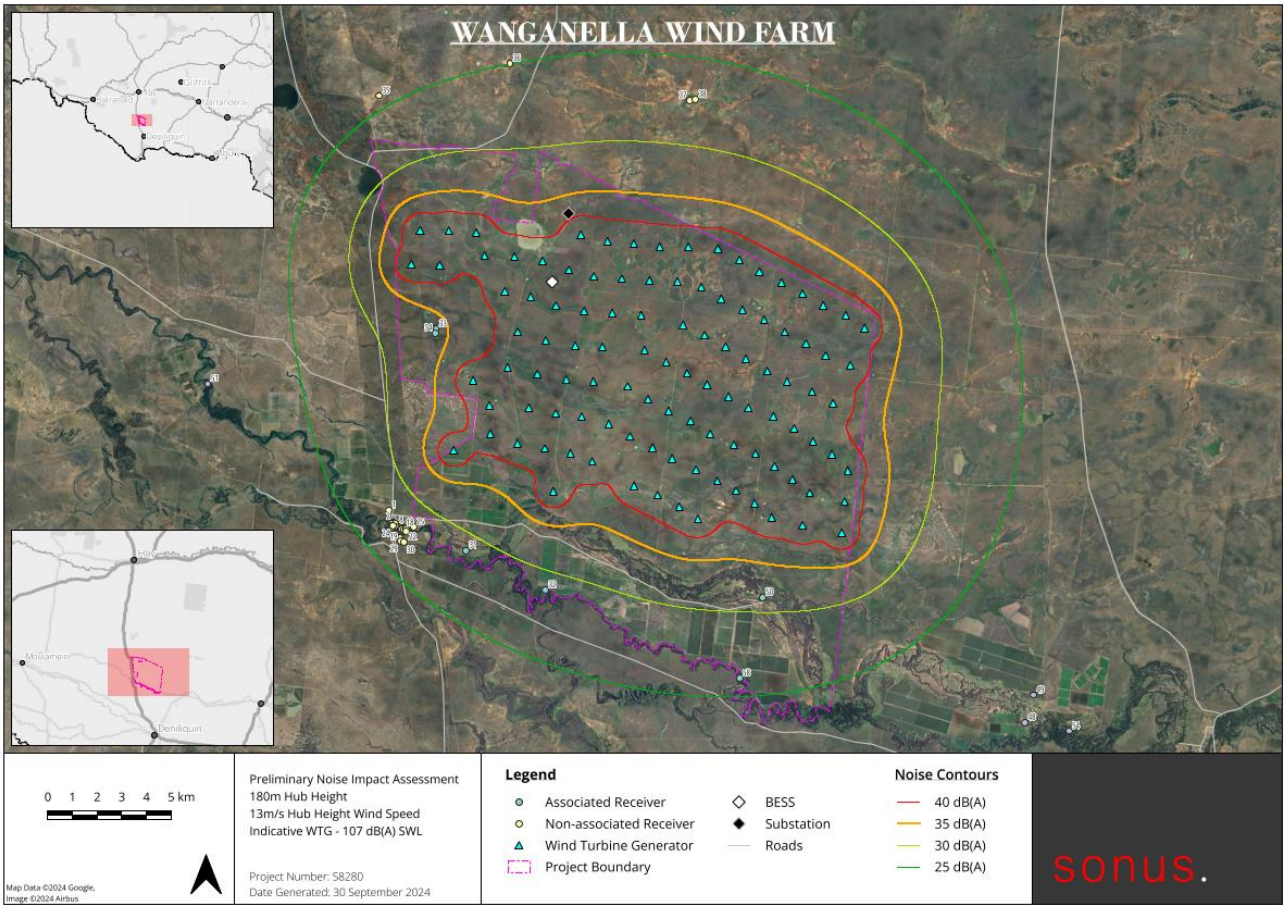

Figure 18 — Noise Contours (Sonus, 2024)

Assessment Approach

The findings from the PNIA will be utilised and expanded upon for a further Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment (NVIA) as part of the EIS. The NVIA would be prepared to address:

- WTG noise in accordance with the *Wind Energy: Noise Assessment Bulletin* and *Draft Wind Energy Guideline*, or revised equivalents, if applicable.
- Ancillary noise in accordance with the *NSW Noise Policy for Industry 2017*, or revised equivalent, if applicable.
- Construction noise in accordance with the *Interim Construction Noise Guideline, 2009,* or revised equivalent, if applicable.
- Traffic noise in accordance with the *NSW Road Noise Policy, 2011,* or revised equivalent, if applicable.
- Vibration in accordance with *Assessing vibration: A Technical Guideline, 2006,* or revised equivalent, if applicable.
- Cumulative noise impacts, considering other developments in the area

In particular, attendant noise data from the Site will be collected to provide an accurate measurement of background noise levels across the landscape of identified sensitive receivers, to ensure results from preliminary modelling is accurate. The expanded assessment will also incorporate an assessment of construction related noise and vibration impacts, to provide a holistic assessment across both construction and operation periods of the Project. Furthermore, it will provide recommendations to mitigate or otherwise effectively manage potential impacts during construction and operation, as required.

A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provides guidance on the proposed Project engagement, including engagement specific to noise and vibration considerations.

6.2.3 Biodiversity – Terrestrial, Aquatic and Avifauna

A Preliminary Biodiversity Assessment for the Project was undertaken by Ecology and Heritage Partners (EHP) (dated 13 November, 2024) to identify the extent and type of native vegetation present within the Site and to determine the likely presence of significant flora and fauna species and ecological communities (refer to Appendix D).

Existing Environment

Consistent with the broader landscape area, the Site comprises a mix of disturbed and intact shrublands, improved pasture and small to medium intact and remnant patches of grasslands and woodlands. In addition to Billabong Creek which forms the Site's southern boundary, Wanganella Creek, Sheepwash Creek and Browns Creek all traverse through the southern portion of the Site. Carroonboon Creek and Two Mile Creek both run through the western portion of the Site. The Site is located within the Riverina bioregion and is within land managed by the Murrumbidgee and Murray Catchment Management Authorities.

Relevant literature, online resources and databases were reviewed to provide an assessment of flora and fauna values associated with the Project Site. The desktop assessment reviewed a range of relevant Commonwealth, State and Local databases and was supported by a review of various spatial maps including the NSW DCCEEW Biodiversity Values Map, NSW Spatial viewer and aerial imagery.

A high-level Site assessment was also undertaken by a qualified botanist between 15 and 20 July 2024 to ground-truth the results of the desktop assessment and identify areas of ecological sensitivity and constraints. The on-site survey was undertaken by foot, with the overall condition of vegetation and habitats noted. The survey did find that some areas have been subject to extensive clearing for agricultural purposes including cropping and modified pastures for livestock grazing. Small, medium and large vegetation patches persist across the Site. These include intact and remnant vegetation and riparian vegetation associated with old creek beds.

Table 17 presents a summary of landscape features and biodiversity values across the Site based on a desktop review and initial Site assessment Figure 19 provides the ecological sensitivity of the Site, based on the high-level Site assessment.

Table 17 — Key Ecological Features Summary

Ecological Features	Summary
Native Vegetation	The Project Site is characterised by a mix of disturbed and intact shrublands, improved pasture and small to medium intact and remnant patches of grasslands and woodlands. Native vegetation in the Site is representative of seven (7) vegetation formations and classes, and eleven (11) Plant Community Types (PCTs). Of these PCTs, two (2) were observed to meet the thresholds for EPBC Act listed Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs)

Ecological Features	Summary
	Weeping Myall Woodlands and Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains and two (2) were observed to meet the thresholds for the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) listed TEC Artesian Springs Ecological Community in the Great Artesian Basin.
Threatened Species	It is likely that suitable habitat exists within the Site for seven (7) nationally significant and two (2) state significant flora species and twenty-six (26) nationally significant and seventeen (17) state significant fauna and / or migratory species. It is known that Black Falcon, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Plains-wanderer, Pied Honeyeater, Spotted Harrier and White-fronted Chat occur within the Site. Southern Whiteface, Blue-winged Parrot and Australian Painted Snip were also observed within the Site between 13 and 19 years ago (as of 2024) and given the potentially suitable habitat was observed, there is a high likelihood that these species still occur across the Site.
Aquatic Habitat	The Site comprises several creek lines, drainage lines and natural waterbodies. Farm damns and irrigation drains are also present across the Site. Indirect impacts and sensitive creek crossing designs will be considered as part of the EIS process.
Habitat Value	The study area consists of patches of remnant shrubby vegetation which provides important refuge, foraging and nesting habitat for fauna in an otherwise open landscape.

Potential Impacts

The ecological sensitivity mapping will inform the avoidance of ecological impacts during the preliminary design stages of the Project. This will be confirmed with further studies to inform the EIS. Footprints of proposed infrastructure elements will avoid high sensitivity areas where possible, minimise impacts to moderate sensitivity areas as far as practicable. This avoid and minimise approach will in turn minimise serious and irreversible impacts, particularly of biodiverse riparian land and threatened species and communities within the Site.

Areas of high sensitivity are concentrated in the north-west corner of the Site and in proximity to Browns and Sheepwash Creek in the south and southeast respectively. These areas comprise two EPBC Act-listed Ecological Communities: Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains (Critically Endangered) and Weeping Myall Woodlands (Endangered).

Construction of the Project could potentially impact biodiversity, including threatened species and ecological communities listed under the BC Act and EPBC Act. Biodiversity impacts would largely be associated with potential loss of native vegetation and fauna habitat loss. Biodiversity impacts during construction could potentially occur as result of the following:

- Vegetation clearance and disturbances associated with construction
- Possible mortality and/or injury of fauna species during vegetation clearance for Project elements or as a result of collisions with construction vehicles and equipment
- Disturbances from construction noise, vibration and lighting in vegetated areas

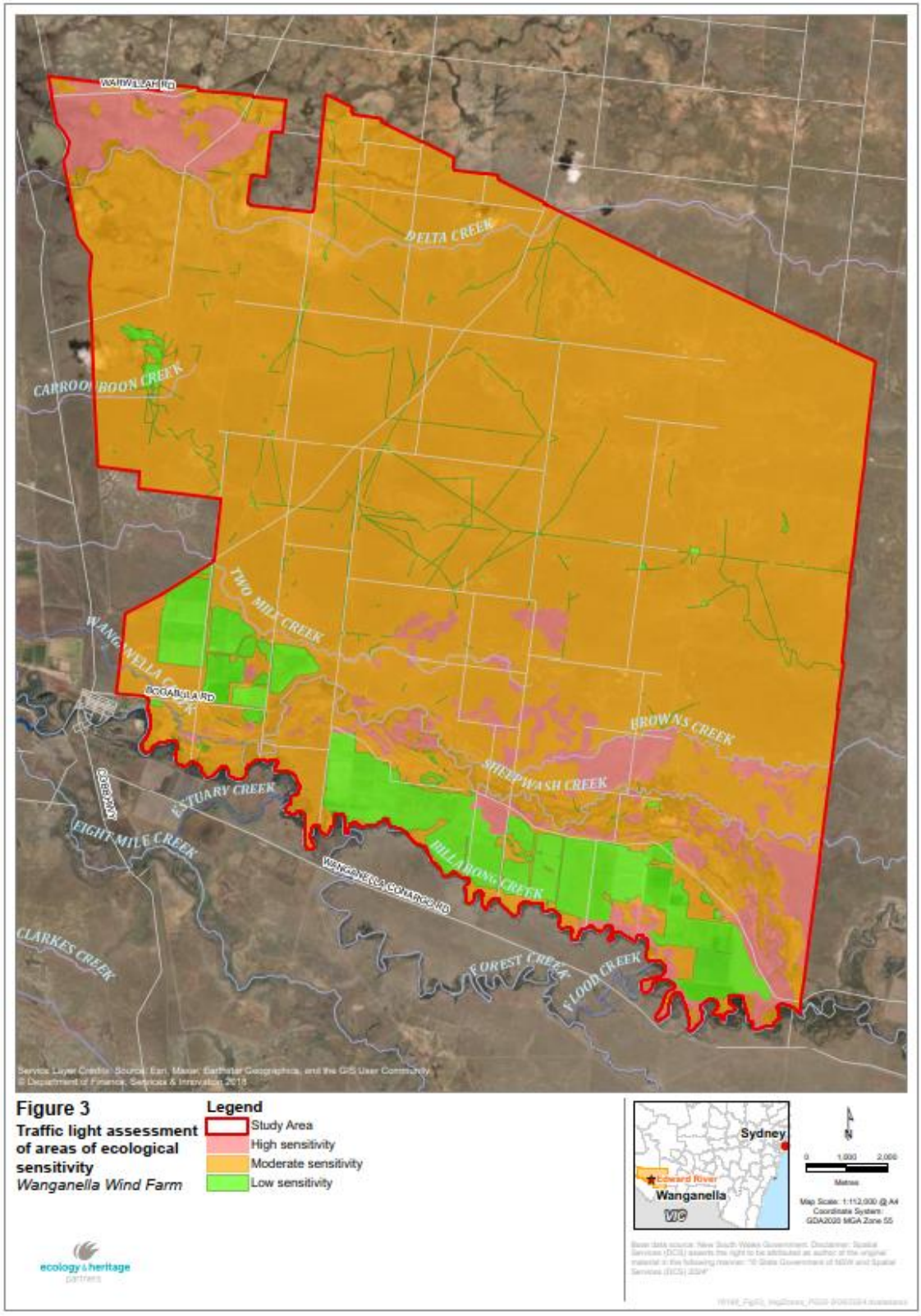

Figure 19 — Ecological Sensitivity Plan (EHP, 2024)

Assessment Approach

Assessment of potential biodiversity impacts caused by the Project are underway and will continue to be assessed in accordance with Section 7.9 of the BC Act and DPHI's Biodiversity Assessment Method and will be documented in a BDAR. The biodiversity assessment will be based on desktop reviews of database searches, regional biodiversity mapping as well as continued site inspections and detailed targeted field surveys.

Targeted surveys, including bird utilisation surveys, will be undertaken for seven (7) nationally significant flora species, twenty-six nationally significant and / or migratory fauna species, two threatened ecological communities listen under the EPBC Act, seventeen (17) state significant fauna species, two (2) state significant flora species and one (1) ecological community listed under the BC Act. Subsequently, an MNES report will be prepared to ensure assessment against federal environmental legislation.

The BDAR will provide an assessment of any direct, indirect, prescribed and cumulative impacts of the Project on flora and fauna species, populations, ecological communities and their habitats and groundwater dependent ecosystems. The BDAR will also provide an assessment of the significant of the impacts of the Project on species, ecological communities and populations and groundwater dependent ecosystems listed under the EPBC Act. It will also include avoidance and mitigation measures for the design of the Project to minimise impacts on threatened species and TECs within the Site.

A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provides guidance on the proposed Project engagement, including engagement specific to biodiversity considerations.

6.2.4 Heritage – Aboriginal Heritage

A Preliminary Cultural Heritage Assessment was undertaken by Biosis in October 2024, in order to support the development of this Scoping Report and to identify any potential constraints from a cultural heritage perspective (refer to Appendix E).

Existing Environment

The greater Riverina area forms part of the lands of the Wiradjuri people, stretching from the Murray River at Corowa up to Ningan in the Central West region of NSW. The Site is located on the border between the lands of the Baraba Baraba and Yorta Yorta people, however it is likely the boundaries of the Aboriginal groups in this area were mobile and subject to change.

Geologically, the Site is located within the Murray Geological Basin (MGB), an approximately 300,000 square kilometre area in inland south-eastern Australia. The main geological unit across the Site is alluvial floodplain deposits, characterised by regular flooding events. While the deposition of soils during flooding events has the potential to preserve archaeological deposits, water and soil movement due to flooding can also result in disturbances to deposits, meaning that archaeological artifacts may not occur *in situ*.

A number of Aboriginal cultural heritage investigations have been conducted for the Riverine Plain region and immediate surrounds, however, generally due to historic land use changes and European farming practices, many Aboriginal sites across the area have been destroyed.

Potential Impacts

As part of the Preliminary Cultural Heritage Assessment, an extensive search of the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) database was conducted on 5 September 2024 which identified 119 Aboriginal archaeological sites within a 25 x 25-kilometre search area, centred on the Site. The Aboriginal archaeological sites are predominantly Artefacts, Modified Trees, Hearths or Potential Archaeological Deposits. Earth mounds, Burial locations, Non-Human Bone or Organic Material and a Shell were also identified.

Two of these registered sites are recorded within the Site boundary and are discussed in further detail below.

- **AHIMS 54-2-0250/Old Wanganella Homestead Scarred Tree 1:** a modified tree site located within the Site, approximately 130 metres north-east of the Site's southern boundary, aligning with Billabong Creek. The likely function of the scars would have served as drag along canoes for holding children and supplies.
- **AHIMS 54-2-0034/Booabula East 1:** a burial site located approximately 380 metres north of the Site's southern boundary, aligning with Billabong Creek. A number of features area associated with the site including, midden, heath, non-human bone and organic material, and stone artefacts.

In addition to the registered sites, it is possible that unregistered sites or intangible heritage values exist within the Site given the long history of settlement and connection to land by Aboriginal peoples. To support future studies and design development, the Preliminary Cultural Heritage Assessment included a predictive model (refer to Figure 20) which identifies areas of high and moderate archaeological potential across the Site.

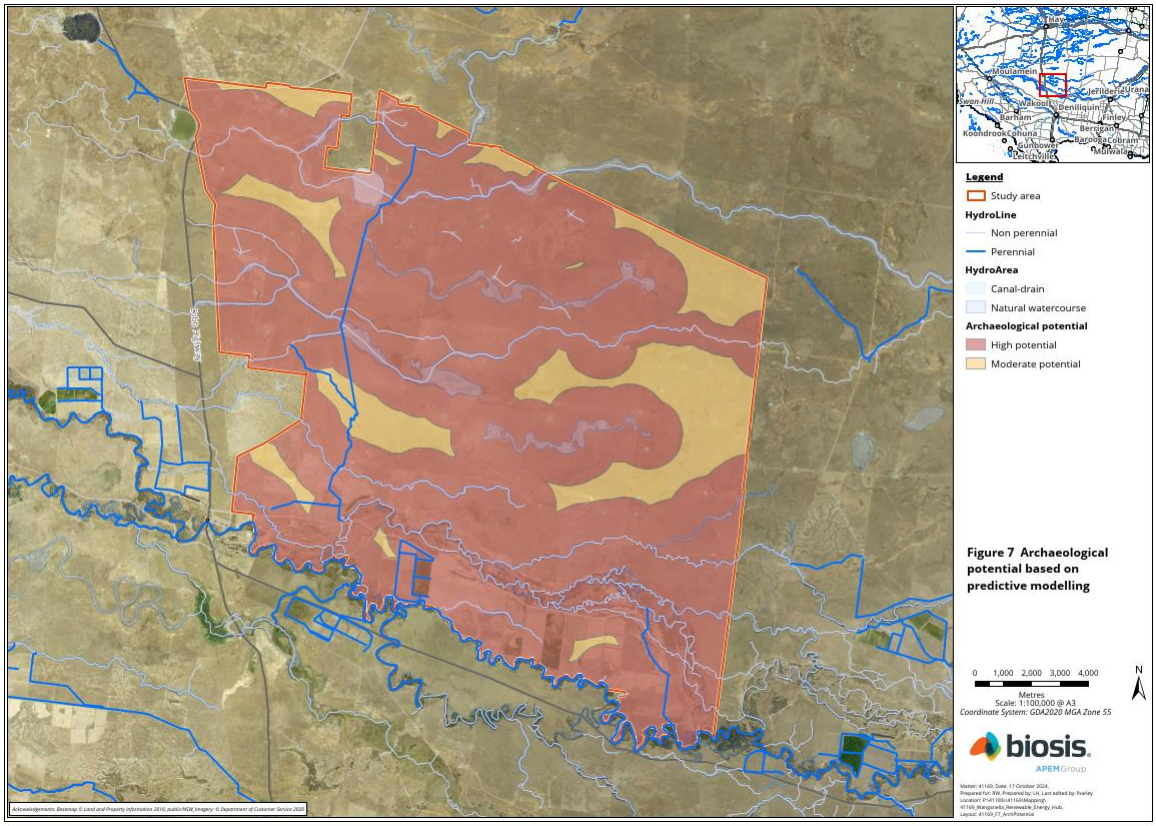

Figure 20 — Archaeological Potential Based on Predictive Modelling (Biosis, 2024)

Assessment Approach

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) will be prepared as part of the EIS and will consider the archaeological potential of the Site, including on-site physical Aboriginal heritage, general Aboriginal Heritage values or intangible heritage values. This assessment, and other associated investigations will be undertaken in accordance with the various assessment guidelines set out in:

- The Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, 2011), or revised equivalent, if applicable.

- The Code of Practice for the Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in NSW (DECCW, 2010a), or revised equivalent, if applicable.

It will also document environmental management measures that would need to be implemented to ensure minimal disturbance to cultural artefacts and sites. The ACHAR will include:

- Assessment of the Aboriginal archaeological potential across the Site
- Identification of Aboriginal sites within, and in the vicinity of the Site in accordance with the methods outlined in the *Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation for Aboriginal Objects in NSW*
- Identification of the potential for the Project to disturb Archaeological objects and to determine:
  - Level of artefact significance in consultation with the RAPs
  - The extent and significance of impact
  - Potential mitigation measures to avoid, manage or reduce harm to identified Aboriginal objects
- A comprehensive field inspection with members of the local Aboriginal community to identify and record any Aboriginal objects or places both within and external to the Site, specifically within areas proposed to impacted by the Project
- Archaeological test excavation of areas of archaeological potential identified during desktop and field assessment, undertaken in partnership with RAPs (where required)
- Identification of appropriate measures to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate potential impacts to Aboriginal heritage

A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provides guidance on the proposed Project engagement, including engagement specific to Aboriginal heritage considerations.

6.2.5 Heritage – Historic Heritage

Existing Environment

The European heritage values of Wanganella and the Edward River area are linked to the region's pastoral and agricultural history, early transport infrastructure and the transformation of the native landscape through irrigation.

Established in the mid-19th century, Wanganella Station is one of the key historical pastoral holdings in the Riverina region. Like many large sheep stations across the Riverina, it played an important role in the development of Australia's wool industry. The area then became a hub for Merino sheep breeding, renowned for developing fine-wool Merino sheep strains, which had a significant impact on Australia agriculture.

Cobb & Co. operated stagecoach routes through Wanganella and the Edward River region during the 19th century, utilising the Cobb Highway (which received its name from the titular stage coach service). The Highway and associated infrastructure were vital for connecting inland pastoral regions to markets and ports and continue to provide an important connection for current rural communities. European settlers began to transform the natural landscape for agricultural use, particularly grazing and later irrigated farming. The development of irrigation in the early 20th century supported the region's agricultural productivity and forms a key part of its European heritage values.

There are no State Heritage Inventory or Edward River LEP listed historic heritage places within the Site. The nearest registered Sites are within the village of Wanganella itself and to the northwest of the Site, west of the Cobb Highway.

Potential Impacts

The Project is not anticipated to contribute any significant impacts to existing European Heritage values across the Site and the wider Wanganella area.

The nearest registered Sites are outside of the Site boundary and will not be impacted by the Project.

The area's strong agricultural heritage and historic connections to stock and vehicle movements along the Cobb Highway and associated stock route, will continue throughout the life of the project.

Assessment Approach

A standard heritage impact assessment would be undertaken for the EIS which would summarise a list of relevant heritage items located across the New South Wales State Heritage Inventory, Edward River LEP and outline the details of the nearest registered heritage items within proximity to the Site. The impact assessment will be prepared with regard to the NSW Heritage Manual, relevant Heritage Council of NSW guidelines and with consideration of the principles contained in *The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* (ICOMOS, 2013).

If necessary, the standard assessment would identify mitigation measures to manage and minimise potential impacts.

A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provides guidance on the proposed engagement, including engagement specific to historic heritage considerations.

6.2.6 Access – Traffic

Existing Environment

Primary access to the Site is provided via the Cobb Highway (B75) which connects Echuca in Victoria (approximately 110 kilometres to the Site's south) to Wilcannia (approximately 420 kilometres to the Site's north) in north western NSW. Cobb Highway is a state highway that provides north-south connectivity to regional towns within the broader Riverina region. Surrounding the Cobb Highway is a generous stock route.

A number of local roads connect the Site to the state highway network including Wanganella-Moulamien Road to the west of the Site boundary and Warwillah Road to the north. There are a number of unsealed internal access tracks currently utilised for on-site agricultural activities.

As of October 2024, a suitable port of entry for the Project's OSOM components (wind turbine blades, tower sections etc.) and preferred route to Site is yet to be determined. A preliminary analysis of suitable routes was undertaken by Rex J Andrews Engineered Transportation in October 2024, which identified four (4) potential ports of entry for the Project's OSOM components: Adelaide, South Australia, Newcastle, NSW and Portland and Geelong, Victoria.

Potential Impacts

There are number of anticipated traffic and transport impacts associated with the Project. Construction of the Project would require the use of heavy and potentially oversized vehicles to deliver construction plant, equipment and materials, as well as removal of waste. Additional light vehicle movements would also occur, associated with the construction workforce. These increased traffic volumes could impact local intersections and traffic performance on the surrounding road network.

The Project may require road and intersection upgrades from the Port to Site and locally to access the Site from Cobb Highway.

Operational traffic generated by the Project would be limited to vehicles associated with maintenance on WTGs, electrical and civil infrastructure and vegetation management. These movements will almost exclusively take place inside the Site and will therefore not impact the public road network.

Assessment Approach

A detailed Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment (TTIA) will be undertaken to accompany the EIS. The TTIA will be undertaken following relevant NSW Government guidelines and assessment standards, including the:

- Draft Guide to Transport Impact Assessment (TfNSW, 2024), or revised equivalent, if applicable;
- Guide to Traffic Generating Developments (RTA, 2002), or revised equivalent, if applicable;
- Road Design Guide, or revised equivalent, if applicable; and;
- Relevant Austroads Standards and Austroads Guide to Traffic Management guidelines, or revised equivalents, if applicable.

It is expected that the key elements of the TTIA will include:

- A review of existing road conditions and future road network planning considerations
- A detailed assessment of traffic demands during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project
- A detailed assessment of intersection and access arrangements
- A Port to site investigation of transport routes
- A detailed road safety assessment and road use management plan
- Assessment of cumulative impacts
- Identification of necessary mitigation measures.

A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provides guidance on the proposed Project engagement, including engagement specific to traffic and transport considerations.

6.2.7 Economic and Social

A preliminary Social Impact Assessment (SIA) was prepared by ATX Consulting (dated 5 November, 2024) in accordance with the *Social Impact Assessment Guideline* (refer to Appendix F). The purpose of the SIA was to gain an initial understanding of the Project's social values, the characteristics of nearby communities, conduct an initial evaluation of the likely social and economic impacts for different groups near the Project and consider Project refinements in response to likely social and economic impacts.

Existing Environment

The Project would be located entirely within Edward River LGA in Southern NSW.

Edward River LGA is part of the Riverina Murray Region and is one of Australia's main food producing regions with rich natural resources and a diverse regional economy. The LGA covers 8,881 square kilometres in the southern Riverina region and includes the towns of Deniliquin and the six rural villages of Blighty, Booroorban,

Conargo, Mayrung, Pretty Pine and Wanganella. The LGA shares its boundaries with Murray Shire LGA to the south, Hay LGA to the north and Murrumbidgee and Berrigan LGAs to the east. The LGA is strategically located in the Murray Riverina regional with key highway links to Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne. Edward River LGA is heavily concentrated on Deniliquin, which accounts for approximately 75% of the council area's population. Across Edward River, the highest employing industry is Agriculture, followed closely by Health Care (ABS, 2021).

Wanganella, with a population of 61 (ABS, 2021), has a median age of 41 and predictably, agriculture comprised the largest industry, employing close to half of the village's population. Booroorban, another small village of 36 people, is located north of Site and whose population is entirely employed in agriculture. Deniliquin, located approximately 40 kilometres to the Site's south, is the most populous nearby settlement with a population of 6,431 (ABS, 2021). Unlike many of the smaller villages and towns across the Edward River LGA, Deniliquin features a more diverse range of employing industries, including Health Care, Retail and Education (ABS, 2021).

Strategic planning priorities across the LGA include the creation of healthy, socially connected and resilient communities, a diversified economy, and the delivery of quality and sustainable infrastructure.

Potential Impacts

The SIA defines the social locality of the Project based on the scale and nature, who may be affected, likelihood of affects to vulnerable and marginalised groups, built or natural features, social, cultural and demographic trends and history. Based on this assessment, the social locality of the Project includes the local communities of Wanganella, Booroorban, Deniliquin, the Edward River Local Government Area and the South-West REZ / Murray region. Refer to Figure 21 for a plan mapping this social locality.

The SIA identifies potential socio-economic impacts and set out how they may be assessed in the EIS stage. Potential socio-economic impacts identified include:

- Traffic related issues including heavy vehicle traffic and any potential for road closures
- Workforce influx impacts including workforce accommodation
- Visual impacts of turbines
- Local employment and training opportunities
- Demand for local goods and services
- Economic diversification
- Community benefits.

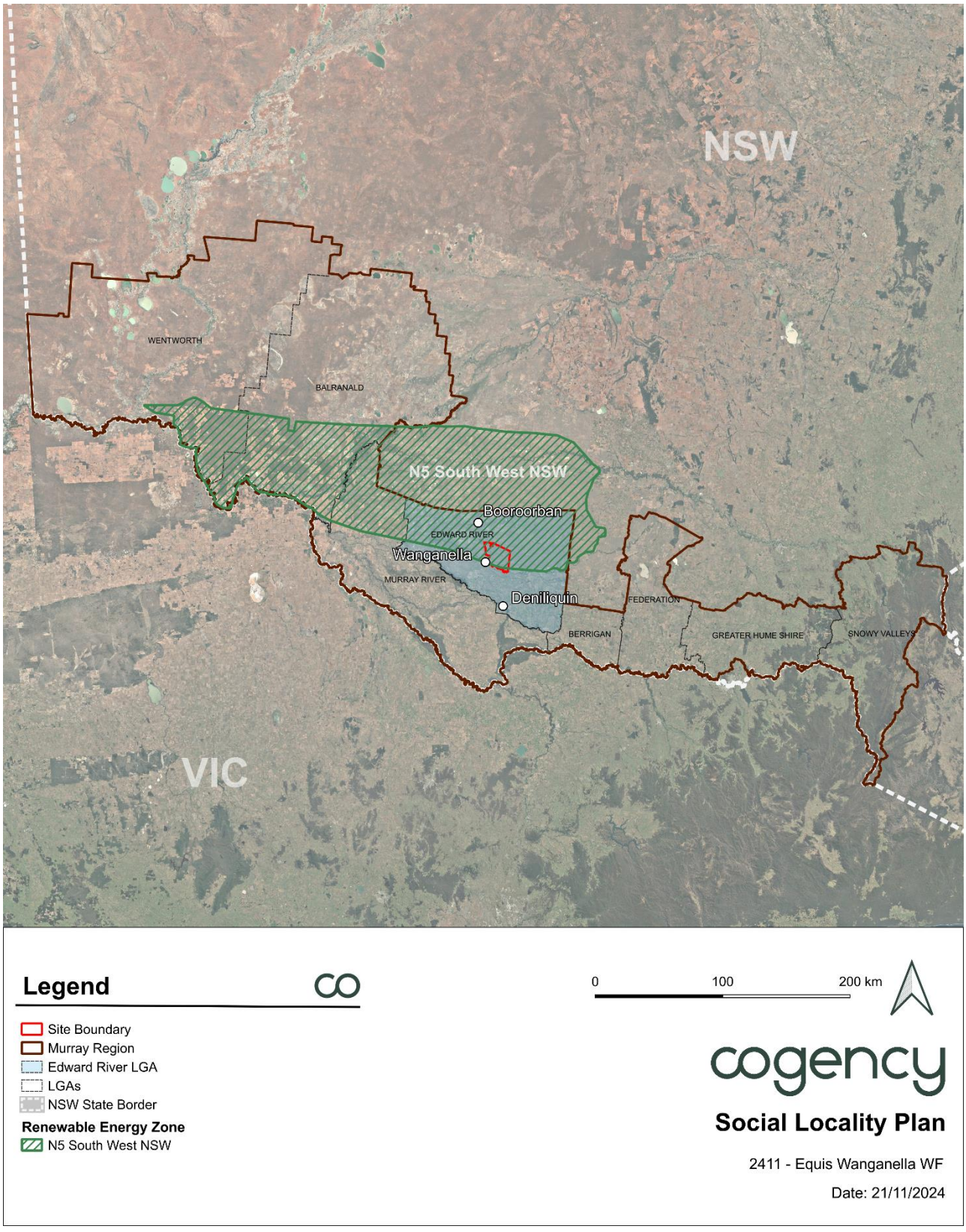

Figure 21 — Social Locality Plan

Assessment Approach

Both beneficial and adverse impacts could occur for the local community, regional area, Project landowners and neighbours during construction and operation.

A SIA would be prepared for the EIS to assess social and economic impacts and proposed mitigation measures in accordance with the NSW Social Impact Assessment Guideline (DPIE, 2021) and Technical Supplement *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (DPIE, 2023), or revised equivalents, if applicable. The main considerations for the SIA are:

- To undertake a comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement process. Engagement should be used to validate and test initial findings and to explore other potential impacts. The robustness of both the identification of social impacts and their mitigation or enhancement is highly related to the extent to which they are based on the integration of community knowledge and an understanding of how the local communities operate.
- To undertake further analysis, supplemented with additional community and stakeholder engagement, to identify and / or confirm the already identified or any new potential social impacts, including cumulative impacts. Equis has an existing Community Engagement Strategy that is being implemented and has helped to inform this preliminary SIA. It is intended that community engagement will continue throughout the next phases of the project and will be a component of the SIA.
- The Refinement of options and further development of approaches for any possible social impacts including:
    - The development of a Traffic Management Plan that includes the proposed routes, timing, frequency of trips, etc as well as flagging the need for any temporary road closures and how these will be managed and notified
    - The development of a Workforce Accommodation Strategy that includes management of any proposed accommodation
    - Any site planning or introduction of screening that may reduce adverse visual impact and the development of a Visual Impact Assessment that involves direct engagement with the most affected landowners
    - The development of Local Employment and Training Plan and a Local Procurement Plan created in consultation with local community stakeholders, businesses and Council
    - The development of a comprehensive and locally focused Community Benefits Scheme that is transparent and equitable and addresses approaches to both resourcing and administration.

Community and stakeholder engagement will continue to be undertaken to identify additional socio-economic impacts and as part of developing the EIS.

6.2.8 Hazards and Risks

The Project would involve the transportation, use and storage of potentially hazardous materials that could pose a threat to the surrounding environment and public. The following broad categories (bushfire, dangerous goods and waste) represent a particular relevant safety hazard that will require further assessment during the EIS stage.

6.2.8.1 Bushfire Risk

Existing Environment

A desktop assessment of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Bushfire Prone Land database was undertaken during the development of this Scoping Report. The search results indicate that the entirety of the Site is within Category 3 bushfire prone land (see Figure 22). The NSW RFS *Guideline for Councils to Bushfire Prone Area Land Mapping* describes Vegetation Category 3 land to be considered as 'medium' bush fire risk vegetation and primarily consists of grasslands, freshwater wetlands, semi-arid woodlands, alpine complex and arid shrublands.

Potential Impacts

Under normal operating circumstances, it's extremely unlikely that a wind farm can cause or adversely affect a bush fire. The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) proposes that wind farms are not expected to adversely affect fire behaviour, nor create major ignition risks.

In Australia, lightning is one of the main sources of bushfire ignition accounting for 90% of the total area burnt by all fires. AFAC highlight that wind turbines may reduce the risk of bushfires caused by lightning due to their in-built lightning protection mechanisms. Modern wind turbines are fitted with automatic controls that activate in the unlikely event of a fire, which may include shutting down equipment, fire suppression, and notifying emergency services.

Generally, the following factors contribute to bushfire risk:

- Fuels, weather, topography, predicted fire behaviour and local bushfire history
- Suppression resources, access (roads, tracks) and water supply
- Values and assets

While wind turbines are considered low risk of causing bushfires, during construction, maintenance and extreme weather events, there may be risks related to sparks from machinery or electrical faults. Similarly, the operation of the BESS carries a risk of fire in the rare event of a thermal runaway in which the internal battery cells overheat and potentially ignite. Operation of the Project has the potential to be exposed to bushfire risk from grasslands and nearby areas of dense vegetation.

Assessment Approach

A Bushfire Risk Assessment will be undertaken part of the EIS process, this will develop mitigation strategies guided by the project design and the factors that contribute to bushfire risk, listed above.

The NSW Rural Fire Service's Planning for Bushfire Protection will be a key consideration. The detailed assessment will include:

- an assessment of bushfire risks to the Project through analysis of vegetation mapping, satellite imagery and identified bushfire survey areas
- field investigations to assess existing vegetation, topographical conditions and access arrangements to bushfire survey areas
- identification of mitigation measures to be implemented during construction and operation to minimise bushfire risk.

The Bushfire Risk Assessment will also consider any cumulative impacts of the Project. A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provide guidance on the proposed Project engagement, including engagement specific to bushfire considerations.

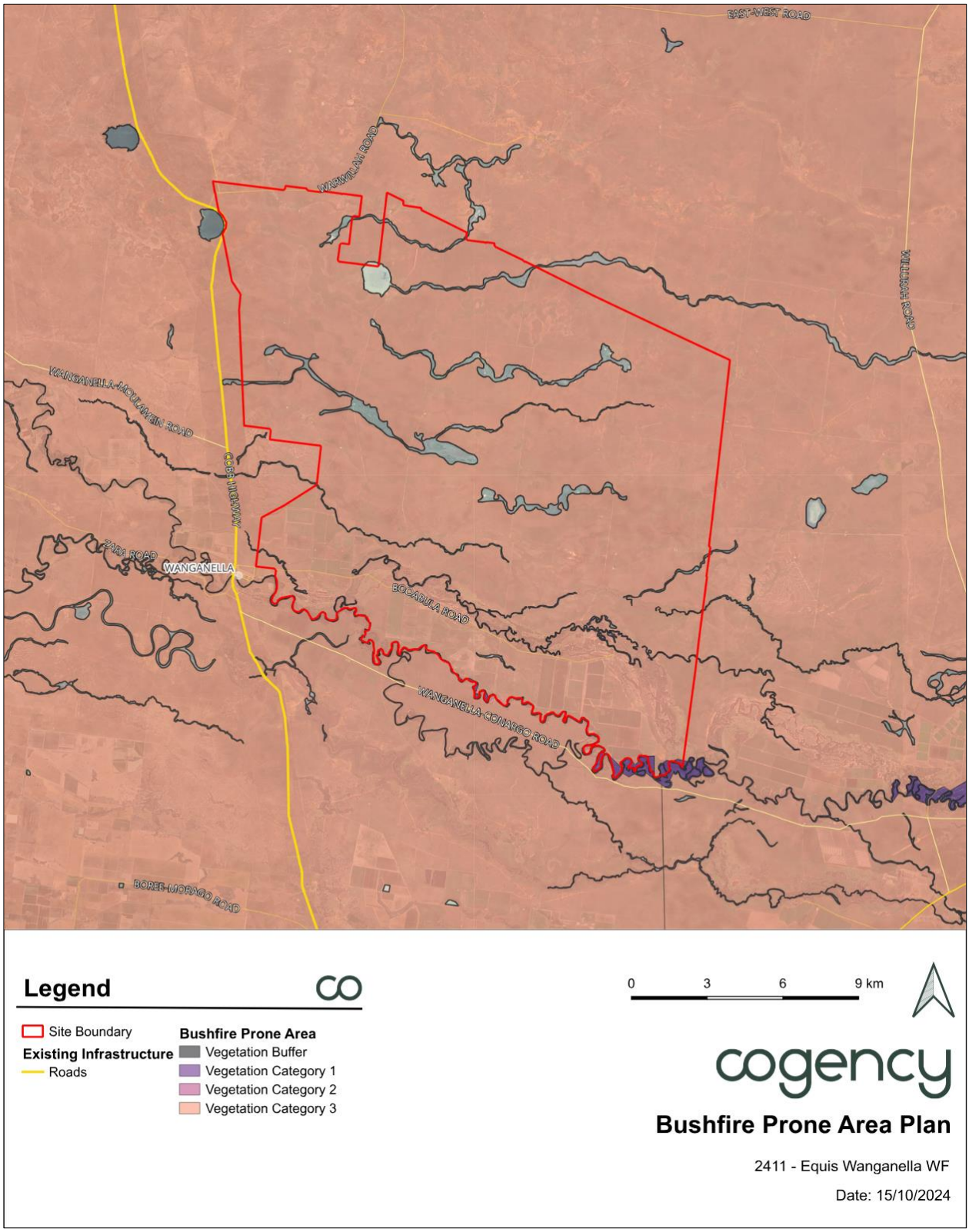

Figure 22 — Bushfire Prone Area Plan

6.2.8.2 Dangerous Goods

Potential Impacts

The development and operational phases of the Project would require the transportation, use and storage of potentially hazardous materials which present a potential risk to the local environment and community. These include the transportation, storage and use of lithium batteries, transformer oils, fuels, aerosols and solvents.

Under the Australian Dangerous Goods Code, lithium-ion batteries are identified as a Class 9 Dangerous Good which encapsulates a range of miscellaneous dangerous substances and articles that present a hazard during transport, but do not fall into the specific categories of other dangerous goods classes. Lithium-ion batteries are listed under this Class due to their potential to catch fire.

Under state planning guidelines, specifically, the Hazardous and Offensive Development Application Guidelines – Applying SEPP 33, Class 9 goods (including lithium-ion batteries) are excluded from the risk screening process for potentially hazardous industry since they are considered to '…pose little threat to people or property'. Regardless, the guidelines determine that '…the consent authority should consider whether or not a potential for environmental harm exists'.

Assessment Approach

A Preliminary Hazard Assessment (PHA) is required where potentially hazardous or offensive development under Resilience and Hazards SEPP (refer to Table 9). Clause 3.2 of the Resilience and Hazards SEPP defines a potentially hazardous industry is as:

> *"development for the purposes of any industry which, if the development were to operate without employing any measures (including, for example, isolation from existing or likely future development on other land) to reduce or minimise its impact in the locality or on the existing or likely future development on other land, would pose a significant risk in relation to the locality—*
>
> *(a) to human health, life or property, or*
>
> *(b) to the biophysical environment, …"*

Appendix 3 of the 'Applying SEPP 33 Guidelines' (DoP, 2011) lists the industries that may fall within the Resilience and Hazards SEPP (former SEPP 33), which do not include wind farms or energy storage facilities. However, the BESS facility proposed for the Project is likely to utilise lithium-ion batteries, which are listed as *Class 9 – Miscellaneous dangerous goods*. While Class 9 materials are excluded from the SEPP 33 screening test, the hazards related to these materials should be considered in accordance with the Resilience and Hazards SEPP guidelines.

Batteries can be a serious safety risk for occupants and installers, potentially leading to electric shock, fire, flash burns, explosion or exposure to hazardous chemicals or gases. The installation of the BESS will be assessed as per the guidelines stated in Appendix A.

A PHA will be undertaken for the Project, to assist the consent authority in determining the Project's risk potential and evaluate the likely risks to public safety, focusing on the transport, handling and use of hazardous materials. The assessment will also consider whether the Project should be considered a hazardous or potentially hazardous industry under Resilience and Hazards SEPP.

The PHA will also consider any cumulative impacts of the Project.

A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provide guidance on the proposed Project engagement, including engagement specific to dangerous goods considerations.

6.2.8.3 Waste

Assessment Approach

The EIS will describe the likely waste streams to be generated during construction and operation and describe measures to manage, reuse, recycle and dispose of this waste in accordance with relevant guidelines.

A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provide guidance on the proposed Project engagement, including engagement specific to dangerous goods considerations.

6.2.9 Water and Land

Existing Environment

The topography of the Site is flat, ranging from 84 to 94 metres in elevation (Australian Height Datum). The Site is located within the Riverina bioregion and is within land managed by the Murrumbidgee and Murray Catchment Management Authorities.

A number of creeks traverse the site including Billabong Creek, Wanganella Creek, Sheepwash Creek, Browns Creek, Carroonboon Creek and Two Mile Creek (refer to Figure 25). Apart from Billabong and Sheepwash Creek, most of these creeks are ephemeral and carry water only during heavy rainfall events, and have no defined bed and bank nor differences in vegetation (refer to Figure 23). The same applies to the mapped wetlands on the site, which are typically indistinguishable from the surrounding terrain at most times except after a rare heavy rainfall event.

The Site is proposed to be included in the Billabong Creek Floodplain Boundary and includes proposed 'floodway' and 'inundation extent' areas as identified by the Draft Billabong Creek Floodplain Management Plan. The Draft Plan also identifies ecological and heritage assets which may be dependent on the floodway. Figure 24 provides an extract of the Draft Plan in the location of the Site showing the draft 'floodway' and 'inundation extent' areas within the Site.

Figure 23 — Sheepwash (left) and Delta (right) Creeks

A soil and land capability assessment scheme was developed in 2008 by DPHI (formerly known as the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources), which aimed to assist in assessing the environmental impact of clearing native vegetation under the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*. The land and soil capability classification identifies the capability of the land to sustain land use, ranging between Class 1 to

Class 8. Class 1 is land capable of high soil impact and Class 8 represents land that is only capable of sustaining low impact. The capability classification is determined through:

> *the assessment of eight key soil and landscape limitations (water erosion, wind erosion, salinity, topsoil acidification, shallow soils/rockiness, soil structure decline, waterlogging and mass movement)* - DPE, 2021.

A review of the capability classifications identified that the Site is within land classified as Class 4, 5 and 6. Land Classes 4, 5 and 6 have moderate to very severe limitations for use as agricultural land. It is also noted that only 3% of the Site will be used for the wind farm, the balance of the Site will continue to be used for agricultural purposes. There are no mapped high-risk areas for acid sulphate soils within the Project Site.

Potential Impacts

Given the size of the Site and it's interaction with a number of waterways, there are a number of potential impacts as a result of the construction and operation of the Project, if not mitigated and managed. These relate to changes in:

- the permeability of the Site
- the nature of stormwater runoff
- natural flood flows or flood storage
- waterway crossings
- groundwater
- amount of agricultural land
- land stability

In addition to the known waterways, the Project also interacts with the proposed 'floodway' and 'inundation extent' areas identified in the Draft Billabong Creek Floodplain Management Plan.

Figure 24 — Extract of Draft Billabong Creek Floodplain Management Plan (DCCEEW, 2024)

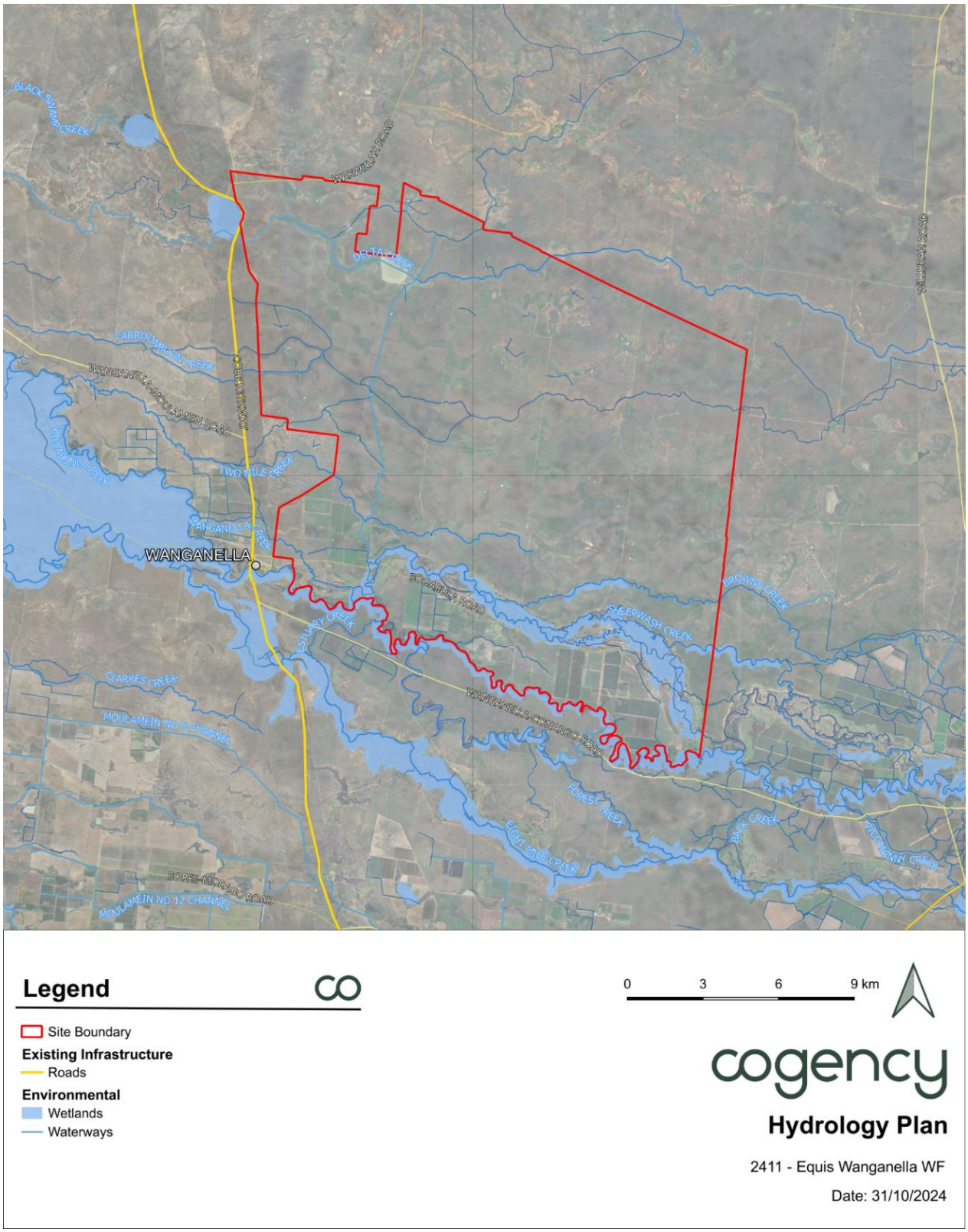

Figure 25 — Hydrology Plan

Assessment Approach

Impacts to water and soil resources are possible during the construction and operation of the Project. The Project design will consider and avoid locating infrastructure that has the potential to affect flows in the floodway areas where possible, and limit infrastructure in the 'inundation extent' areas.

Further, a relevant assessment of water and soil resources will be undertaken for inclusion in the EIS and consideration in detailed design, including:

- Flooding and Hydrology Assessment:
  - Existing flood behaviour through review of existing available data, developing computer models and defining flood levels, depths, velocities and flood hazard category for the Project Area for existing topographic conditions; and
  - Post development flood behaviour, including quantifying flood levels, depths, velocities and flood hazard category with the Project in place, and measures proposed to monitor, reduce and mitigate impacts;
- Water Resources Assessment:
  - Identify the existing water resources and environment;
  - Assess the potential impacts of the Project on hydrology;
  - Identify and indicatively quantify sources of water required during construction and operation of the Project and determine whether any water access licences under the WM Act are required;
- An assessment of the likely impacts on surface water resources, including local waterbodies and groundwater dependent ecosystems (GDEs);
- Identification of any works within 40 m of the high bank of any waterfront land, impacts and required mitigation;
- A discussion of construction erosion and sediment control measures to ensure that impacts during excavation, road works, transport of machinery, etc. are adequately mitigated through avoidance, minimisation and management;
- An assessment of the cumulative impacts of the Project on water and land resources; and
- Measures to monitor, reduce and mitigate the impacts of the Project.

An Agricultural Impact Assessment will also be undertaken as part of the EIS which will incorporate an assessment of land capability, loss of agricultural land, and inform construction management measures to reduce potential erosion and sediment impacts.

A preliminary SIA (refer to Appendix F) has been prepared which provides guidance on the proposed Project engagement, including engagement specific to water and soil resources considerations.

6.2.10 Other Matters

The EIS will also address other issues relating to:

- Access – Airport facilities – there are some private airstrips in the vicinity which will require some low level assessment as part of the EIS. Deniliquin Airport, located approximately 35 kilometres to the site's southern boundary, is the closest operational airport/airstrip. This distance exceeds the 30km separation distance recommended by the National Airports Safeguarding Framework.

- Air – Dust, Odour and Greenhouse Gasses – there is potential for construction and operation of the Project to result in emissions to air, including dust and odour, and greenhouse gasses (i.e. from vehicles). Specialist input will be sought to investigate potential emissions produced during the construction and operational phases of the Project.
- Amenity – Shadow Flicker – A Shadow Flicker Assessment will be undertaken to assess the potential for shadow flicker occurrence resulting from the proposed development at the nearest receptors.
- Hazards and Risks – Telecommunications and Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) – Wind turbines can obstruct or otherwise interfere with electromagnetic waves used in communications. The position of turbines will need to consider placement in relation to signal path, characteristic of rotor blades, characteristic of transmitter and receiver and local atmospheric conditions. An EMI Assessment will be undertaken as part of the EIS to consider potential electromagnetic emissions that may result from the Project.
- Hazards and Risks – Blade Throw – There is a risk of wind turbine blades breaking during operation, which may result in human injury or potential damage to infrastructure. A Blade Throw Risk Assessment will be prepared as part of the EIS to describe the potential impacts associated with the Project in consideration of relevant international studies and standards for the design of wind turbine components and blade throw risk.
- Land – Land Use Conflicts and Risk – the EIS will include a Land Use Conflicts and Risk Assessment (LUCRA) to assess the potential interactions of the Project with other land uses, including agricultural land uses. This assessment will draw on the findings of other related assessments including impacts on visual amenity, water, soil, noise, traffic, hazards, and safety.
- Decommissioning and rehabilitation.

Whilst these matters will be appropriately assessed in the EIS, detailed assessments are not proposed as the issues can be readily defined, assessed, and mitigated using well recognised approaches and conditions.

6.3 Matters Requiring No Further Assessment in the EIS

Table 18 outlines a number of assessment matters that will not require further assessment as part of the EIS process for the Project based on the range of assessment matters listed in the *Preparing a Scoping Report (SSD)* Guidelines.

Table 18 — Matters Requiring no Further Assessment in the EIS

Group	Specific Matter	Comment
Access	Port Facilities	The site is not located within immediate proximity to any port facility.
	Rail facilities	The Project does not propose to utilise any rail facilities.
Air	Atmospheric emissions	By design, the operation of the Project does not emit any greenhouse or negative atmospheric emissions. Consideration and assessment of emissions associated with the construction phase of the operation will form part of the EIS process.
	Particulate matter	No project elements are anticipated to produce significant airborne emissions of particulate matter.
Amenity	Odour	No project elements are anticipated to emit significant odours that would impact nearby

Group	Specific Matter	Comment
		sensitive receivers during construction and operation
Hazards and Risks	Coastal safety	The Project is not located within any coastal regions
	Dams safety	There are no significant dams within proximity to the Project. There are numerous small scale farming dams throughout the Project site. Current indicative turbine locations have been intentionally chosen to avoid these dams. Construction and operation of the Project is not anticipated to have an impact on dam operations, and vice versa.
	Land movement	The Project is not anticipated to result in any land movement. The Project results in relatively minor excavation works only, and the landscape is very flat.

7. Conclusion

This Scoping Report has outlined the proposed Wanganella Wind Farm, being developed by Equis, and has established the relevant planning context of the Project as it stands in the early planning stages. It has provided a summary of the Site and surrounds, the strategic context, the Project details, engagement, and identified early impacts based on a preliminary review.

As it will be classified as SSD under the Planning Systems SEPP, the Project would be assessed under Part 4 of the EP&A Act and would also be subject to assessment under relevant Commonwealth environmental legislation.

The Project design will be further refined based on more studies and technical inputs, along with more comprehensive community engagement planned going forward.

Based on results from preliminary assessments undertaken as part of this Scoping Report, an indicative scope for the EIS has been developed, focusing on the following key issues:

- Amenity – Visual, Noise and Vibration
- Biodiversity – Terrestrial, Aquatic and Avifauna
- Heritage – Aboriginal Heritage and Historic Heritage
- Access – Traffic
- Economic and Social
- Hazards and Risks
- Water and Land

Other issues will be investigated, commensurate with risk, via further investigation and inclusion within the EIS. The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the Project-specific SEARs, upon receipt. Mitigation measures related to identified risks will be developed for inclusion in the EIS and will address the management of key issues and other issues identified in the detailed assessment process.

Cogency Australia and Equis look forward to receiving the SEARs from DPHI to enable the preparation and lodgement of the EIS for assessment.

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Appendices

Appendix A Scoping Summary Table

Level of assessment	Matter	Cumulative Impact Assessment	Engagement	Relevant government plans, policies and guidelines	Scoping report reference
Detailed	Amenity – Visual	Y	Detailed	Wind Energy: Visual Assessment Bulletin for State Significant Wind Energy Development (DPIE, 2016) Guidelines for landscape character and visual impact assessment (TfNSW, 2023) Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment – Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (2013).	Section 6.2.1
Detailed	Amenity – Noise & Vibration	Y	General	Construction Noise Strategy (Transport for NSW, 2013) Draft Construction Noise Guideline (Environment Protection Authority, 2020) NSW Noise Policy for Industry (Environment Protection Authority, 2017) Assessing vibration: a technical guideline (Department of Environment and Conservation, 2009) Wind Energy: Noise Assessment Bulletin for State Significant Development (DPIE, 2016) NSW Road Noise Policy (DECCW, 2011)	Section 6.2.2

Level of assessment	Matter	Cumulative Impact Assessment	Engagement	Relevant government plans, policies and guidelines	Scoping report reference
Detailed	Biodiversity	Y	General	Biodiversity Assessment Method (Office of Environment and Heritage, 2020) Significant Impact Guidelines 1.1 – Matters of national environmental significance (Australian Government DCCEEW, 2013) Best Practice Guidelines for Implementation of Wind Energy Projects in Australia (Clean Energy Council, 2018)	Section 6.2.3
Detailed	Heritage – Aboriginal	N	Detailed	Aboriginal Consultation Requirements for Proponents (NSW DECCW, 2010) Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, 2011) Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigations for Aboriginal Objects in NSW (NSW DECCW, 2010)	Section 6.2.4
Detailed	Access – Traffic, road facilities, access to property	Y	General	Draft Guide to Transport Impact Assessment (Transport for New South Wales, 2024) Guide to Traffic Management – Part 3 Traffic Studies and Analysis (Austroads, 2017) Guide to Traffic Generating Developments (RTA, 2002) Road Design Guide and relevant Austroads Standards	Section 6.2.6

Level of assessment	Matter	Cumulative Impact Assessment	Engagement	Relevant government plans, policies and guidelines	Scoping report reference
				Austroads Guide to Traffic Management guidelines	
Detailed	Social – Community, surroundings, livelihoods	Y	Detailed	Social Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects (Department of Planning Industry and Environment, 2021) Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects (DPIE, 2021)	Section 6.2.7
Detailed	Hazards and Risks – Bushfire	Y	General	Planning for Bush Fire Protection (NSW Rural Fire Service, 2019)	Section 6.2.8.1
Detailed	Land – Land capability, soil chemistry	Y	General	The Land and Soil Capability Assessment Scheme (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, 2012)	Section 6.2.8.3
Standard	Heritage – Historic	N	General	The Burra Charter: the Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (ICOMOS, 2013) Significant Impact Guidelines 1.1 – Matters of national environmental significance (Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2013) Criteria for the Assessment of Excavation Directors (NSW Heritage Council, 2011)	Section 6.2.5

Level of assessment	Matter	Cumulative Impact Assessment	Engagement	Relevant government plans, policies and guidelines	Scoping report reference
Standard	Hazards – Dangerous Goods	Y	General	Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No.6 'Hazard Analysis' and Multi-level Risk Assessment (DoP, 2011) Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No.4 'Risk Criteria for Land Use Safety Planning' (DoP, 2011) Hazardous and Offensive Development Application Guidelines: Applying SEPP 33 (NSW Department of Planning, 2011) International Standard (ISO 31010) Risk Management – Risk Assessment Technique Australian Code for the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail (7th Edition) (National Transport Commission, 2007) Storage and Handling of Dangerous Goods Code of Practice (WorkCover, 2005)	Section 6.2.8.2

Appendix B Preliminary Visual Impact Assessment

Appendix C Preliminary Noise Impact Assessment

Appendix D Preliminary Biodiversity Assessment

Appendix E Preliminary Cultural Heritage Assessment

Appendix F Social Impact Assessment Scoping Report