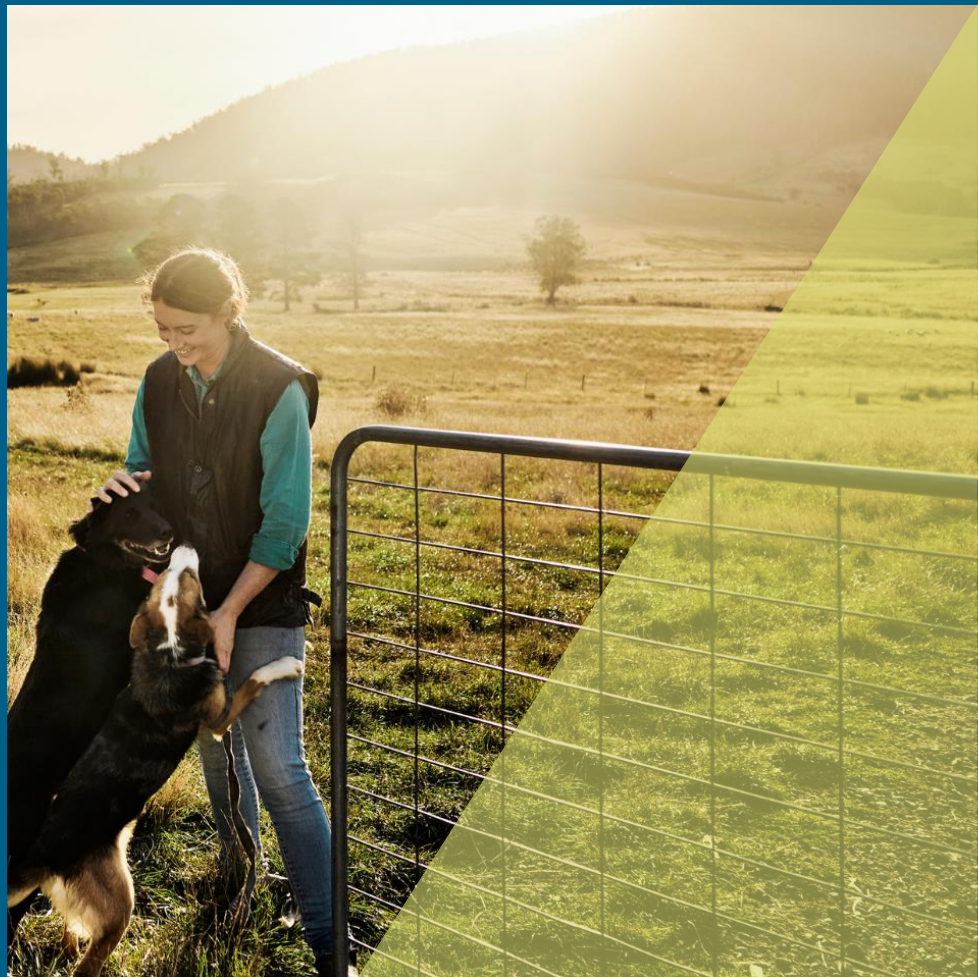


Social impact assessment

Apsley Battery Energy Storage System Mod 1

Premise on behalf of Energy Storage Project No 3

2 April 2026



Document version history

Version	Date	Revision description	Author	Reviewer
1.	25 March 2026	Draft report	Sonya Pascoe Senior Social Planner	Alysia Bradshaw Principal – Engagement and Social Planning
2.	1 April 2026	Address client comments	Sonya Pascoe Senior Social Planner	Alysia Bradshaw Principal – Engagement and Social Planning
3.	2 April 2026	Finalise report	Alysia Bradshaw Principal – Engagement and Social Planning	

Disclaimer

This social impact assessment has been prepared in accordance with the brief provided by Premise on behalf of Energy Storage Project No 3. The report relies upon information provided by Premise on behalf of Energy Storage Project No 3 and information collected at the time and under the conditions specified in the report. All findings, conclusions or recommendations contained in the report are based on that information. The report is for the use of Premise on behalf of Energy Storage Project No 3 and no responsibility will be taken for its use by any third party. Premise on behalf of Energy Storage Project No 3 may, at its discretion, use the report to inform regulators and the public.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation/acronym	Definition
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
the Applicant	Energy Storage Project No 3 Pty Ltd
ASGS	Australian Statistical Geography Standard
BESS	battery energy storage system
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Development Footprint	The area within the site on which the components of the project will be constructed as defined in development consent
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
DRC	Dubbo Regional Council
EIS	environmental impact statement
FTE	full-time equivalent
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
IEO	Index of Education and Occupation
IER	Index of Economic Resources
IRSD	Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage
IRSAD	Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage
LGA	local government area
the Modification	Apsley Battery Energy Storage System Mod 1
MW	megawatt
MWh	megawatt hour
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
OSOM	oversize/overmass
the Project	Apsley Battery Energy Storage System (the approved state significant development)
SAL	suburbs and localities
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SIA	social impact assessment
SSD	state significant development
VPA	voluntary planning agreement

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The Apsley Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (the Project) is an approved state significant development (SSD) to construct a 120 megawatts (MW) / 240 megawatt-hours (MWh) large-scale BESS in the locality of Apsley, approximately 10 km south of Wellington, NSW. The Project is located within the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone.

The delegate to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces approved the Project in June 2023 (SSD-35160796). The project is owned by Energy Storage Project No 3 (the Applicant).

The Applicant has engaged Premise Australia (Premise) to prepare a modification report to support a modification application to the approved Project.

Apsley BESS Modification 1 (the Modification) seeks to primarily increase the duration of the approved BESS from a 2-hour duration to 4-hour duration at the point of connection, which equates to 480 MWh. The modification will retain the supporting ancillary infrastructure per development approval.

Onward has been engaged to prepare an updated social impact assessment (SIA) for the Project as part of the modification application.

1.2. Purpose of report

This SIA has been prepared as part of a modification application to amend the original consent for the Apsley BESS project. The purpose of this SIA is to assess the potential social impacts associated with the proposed Modification to the approved development. This updated SIA focuses on determining whether the Modification would materially alter the nature, scale, or significance of social impacts previously assessed at the time of Project approval or result in any new social impacts not previously assessed.

This SIA has been prepared in accordance with the 'Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects: July 2025' (SIA Guideline) (DPHI, 2025a) and the 'Technical Supplement: Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects: July 2025' (SIA Technical Supplement) (DPHI, 2025b).

This SIA has also been informed by best practice guidance and standards set out by the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA). This includes concepts and principles described in the IAIA's 'Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects' (IAIA, 2015).

1.3. SIA declarations

This report has been prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced social planner, Sonya Pascoe, consistent with SIA Guideline requirements. The author holds appropriate qualifications and has the relevant experience to carry out the SIA for this Project. The curriculum vitae for the author is provided in Appendix A.

The author declares that this SIA report:

- was completed on 2/04/2026
- has been prepared in accordance with the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- has been prepared in accordance with the SIA Guideline
- contains all reasonably available Modification information relevant to the SIA
- contains information that is neither false nor misleading, as far as Onward is aware

2. Modification description

2.1. Summary

The extent of the proposed modifications is outlined as follows:

- increase the approved energy storage capacity duration from 2 hours to 4 hours, which would equate to 480 MWh at the point of connection
- minor changes to the Project layout and Development Footprint to accommodate the required battery units and connection infrastructure, which remain generally in accordance with the approved layout
- adjustment to the site access on the Mitchell Highway to satisfy Austroads requirements (sight distance, clear zones and drainage)
- changes to the number of anticipated construction and operational workforce
- changes to vehicle numbers during construction period
- minor changes to subdivision layout which remains generally in accordance with the approved layout
- introduction of six high risk oversize/overmass vehicle (OSOM) movements, including assessment of the OSOM routes

Details of the modified project are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Modification summary

Item	Approved Project	Proposed Modification
Development Footprint	~ 6 ha	Negligible change
Site	18.8 ha	21.4 ha
Delivery capacity	120 MW	No change
Energy storage capacity	240 MWh	480 MWh (at point of connection)
Lifespan	30 years with the possibility of upgrades to extend the operational life	No change
Workforce	Up to 50 full-time equivalent (FTE) construction jobs and 4 operational jobs	Up to 100 FTE construction jobs and 2 FTE remote operational jobs Up to 6 personnel undertaking ad hoc maintenance activities
Hours of operation	24 hours, 7 days per week	No change
Construction	Commence in mid-2024 and occur over a 5-month period Approximately 20,000 L of water per day required	Commence in late 2026 and occur over 18 months Approximately 80,000 L of water per day would be required during construction
Site access	New access to the Mitchell Highway including a rural Basic Left and rural Basic Right turning treatment	No change to intersection treatment proposed Site access location has been adjusted to ensure compliance with Austroads requirements (safe sight distance, clear zones, drainage etc)
Subdivision	• Lot 1 – 5.1 ha and to host the battery. To be leased by the applicant and retained in the ownership of the landowner • Lot 2 – 0.9 ha, to host the substation and to be dedicated to Transgrid • Lot 3 – 12.5 ha, the residual lot, to be held by the landowner	• Lot 1 – 5.8 ha and to host the battery. To be leased by the applicant and retained in the ownership of the landowner • Lot 2 – 0.4 ha, to host the project substation • Lot 3 – 12.9 ha, the residual lot

Item	Approved Project	Proposed Modification
		Note: The amended subdivision is based on surveyed boundaries and has been amended slightly to accommodate the updated layout. The subdivision remains generally in accordance with the approved development consent.
Transmission line	Overhead and/or underground	Overhead Two pole structures within the existing transmission easement to facilitate the connection to the project substation
Substation	Onsite project substation	No change
Other	BESS infrastructure anticipated to be delivered to either the Port of Sydney or the Port of Newcastle and transported to the site via roads approved for heavy vehicle use and then the proposed access driveway	BESS infrastructure anticipated to be transported from either Port of Newcastle or domestic source based in VIC. OSOM route assessment has assessed high-risk OSOM vehicles travelling from the Port of Newcastle and Victoria.

2.2. Workforce and accommodation

The Applicant expects construction workforce requirements for the modified Project would increase by 50 FTE, totalling 100 FTE. Workforce sourcing is expected to comprise of:

- 70% local workers
- 20% non-local workers
- 10% remote workers

As such, it is expected the Project would require accommodation for 20 non-local workers over the construction period. Of these, housing requirements for 10 non-local workers has been assessed in this SIA for the Modification. The Project has also committed to Dubbo Regional Council (DRC) that non-local workforce would be block accommodated through accommodation providers and would not be permitted to use the private rental market.

2.3. Community contributions

The Project includes community contribution arrangements comprising a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) with DRC and separately, an Energy Benefit Fund for households within a 2 km radius of the Project site.

The conditions of consent of the approved development include a requirement for a VPA to provide a contribution of \$120,000 at the commencement of operations and a further \$230,000 at the start of the fifth year of operations. In relation to the Modification, the Applicant has proposed an additional contribution of \$150 per MWh per annum for the additional 240 MWh, to apply over the operational life of the Project, in line with the Benefit Sharing Guideline (DPHI, 2024).

The Project will also establish an Energy Benefit Fund for eligible neighbouring households within 2 km of the site. This initiative will provide a tangible local benefit to those living closest to the site. The fund would provide a contribution of \$50 per month towards electricity bills for each eligible dwelling.

3. Methodology

3.1. Rapid SIA

This SIA has been undertaken as a targeted, rapid assessment focused on the modified aspects of the approved Project. To ensure the assessment responds proportionately to the changes proposed under the Modification, the rapid SIA is informed by:

- a review of the initial SIA prepared for the Project
- a comparison between the approved Project description and the changes proposed under the Modification

This updated SIA also considers the updated technical assessments prepared for the Modification. These include:

- traffic impact assessment
- Aboriginal heritage technical memorandum
- biodiversity assessment
- noise impact assessment
- preliminary hazard analysis
- landscape and visual assessment technical memorandum
- bushfire hazard assessment

This review has informed the scale and focus of the assessment by identifying any gaps or out-of-date information relevant to social baseline conditions, impact pathways, and the assumptions underpinning impact ratings.

The focus areas identified through this review are summarised in Table 3.1. Social impacts assessed in the initial SIA that are not expected to materially change in nature, scale, or extent because of the Modification have not been re-assessed. For these matters, the conclusions and significance ratings of the initial SIA are relied upon, as the proposed changes are not anticipated to result in new or materially different social impacts.

Table 3.1 SIA focus areas for the Modification

Focus area	Review findings	Initial SIA ID #	How addressed in this SIA
Impacts to rental housing and accommodation	• The Modification proposes increasing FTE construction workforce requirements from 50 to 100 FTE. • Of the additional 50 FTE workers, 10 are expected to be non-local and require accommodation in the local area. • The initial SIA does not assess impacts on housing and accommodation. • The initial SIA assumes the development of an accommodation and employment strategy at post-approval, which has the objective of maximising use of local contractors and facilities.	NA	• Provide updated housing profile in the social baseline, including typology, vacancy rates, use of social housing, and access to specialist social housing (Section 5.3.3) • Drawing upon nearby and recent SSD studies and council documentation, provide an appraisal of the capacity of local accommodation within a 45-min drive of the site (Section 5.3.3) • Describe potentially vulnerable or high-risk groups in the social baseline (Section 5.3.2)

Focus area	Review findings	Initial SIA ID #	How addressed in this SIA
			Assess potential impact of reduced access to rental housing and accommodation for existing residents, regarding potentially vulnerable or high-risk populations (Section 6)
Local employment opportunities	- The Modification proposes increasing workforce requirements: - from 50 to 100 FTE for construction - from 4 to 6 ad hoc personnel for operational maintenance - The social baseline in the initial SIA uses a 2016 dataset, which has been superseded.	LIV-1 LIV-4	- Update workforce profile for residents of Dubbo local government area (LGA) in the social baseline (Section 5.3.4) - Assess positive impact of opportunities for residents (Section 6)
Local business opportunities	- The Modification includes a longer construction period indicating requirements for services and supplies would extend for a longer period. - The social baseline in the initial SIA does not provide a breakdown of local business by industry. - The initial SIA assesses the economic contribution of the Project in relation to the Project's initial requirements for local supplies and services.	LIV-1 LIV-4	- Include description of industry and business across Dubbo LGA in the social baseline (Section 5.3.4) - Assess positive impact of opportunities for local businesses associated with the modified Project (Section 6)
Loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage	- The Modification requires a slightly broader study area for the Aboriginal cultural heritage survey. - The initial SIA does not assess potential impacts from unintended disturbance of Aboriginal cultural heritage items or sites.	NA	- Provide recognition of the Traditional Owners, cultural practices, and history relevant to the study area within the social baseline (Section 5.1) - Include summary of updated Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment outcomes, provide summary of potential social impact (Section 6)
Impacts to traffic conditions and feelings of safety during construction	- The Modification specifies an adjustment to the site access location (30 m north of the original access point) to ensure compliance with Austroads requirements. - The Modification description specifies additional construction traffic: - longer construction duration - additional workers travelling to site - addition of two high-risk OSOM movements - The initial SIA does not assess construction traffic impacts relative to additional traffic, as specified by the Modification description.	ACC-1	- Describe potentially vulnerable or high-risk groups in the social baseline (Section 5.2.2) - Describe potential traffic impacts regarding potentially vulnerable or high-risk residents in the local study area (Section 6)

Focus area	Review findings	Initial SIA ID #	How addressed in this SIA
Impacts to amenity from construction noise	- The Modification description specifies a longer construction duration and additional traffic. - The initial SIA does not assess construction noise impacts relative to a longer construction period and additional traffic, as specified by the Modification description.	WL-1	- Include outcomes from Modification engagement that relate to noise (Section 4) - Describe potentially vulnerable or high-risks groups in the social baseline (Section 5.2.2) - Describe potential noise impacts with regard to potentially vulnerable or high-risk residents in the local study area (Section 6)
Impacts to amenity from operational noise	- The initial SIA does assess this impact - The Modification description specifies fewer battery units that can store and release energy for longer durations - Engagement identified concerns about noise from potentially vulnerable groups	SUR-2	- Include outcomes from Modification engagement that relate to noise (Section 4) - Describe potentially vulnerable or high-risks groups in the social baseline (Section 5.2.2) - Describe potential noise impacts with regard to potentially vulnerable or high-risk residents in the local study area (Section 6)
Perceptions of risk associated with potential hazards	- The initial SIA does not assess concern or stress that may arise from uncertainties relating to potential hazards. - The updated preliminary hazard analysis found that the Modification would not exceed the risk criteria, however, public perception may not reflect these outcomes.	NA	- Include outcomes from Modification engagement that relate to perceptions of hazard risk (Section 4) - Describe potentially vulnerable or high-risks groups in the social baseline (Section 5.2.2) - Describe potential impacts relating to uncertainties surrounding risk (Section 6)
Community benefit sharing and contribution arrangements	- The initial SIA does not assess the impact of community contributions provided by the Project - The Modification description includes additional funding to DRC via a VPA and direct funding to nearby neighbours via an Energy Benefit Fund.	NA	- Describe socio-economic conditions and variation in relative disadvantage in the social baseline (Section 5.2.2) - Include outcomes from engagement relevant to local priorities and community expectations regarding Project-related benefits or contributions (Section 4) - Describe potential impacts relating to community benefit contributions.

3.2. Data sources and social study area

The social study area has been updated to reflect a social area of influence more relevant to the Modification. The social study area for this SIA includes the local area (combining the suburbs of Aspley and Neurea) and Dubbo LGA. Regional NSW (whole of NSW, excluding greater Sydney) has been used as a baseline for comparison throughout the social baseline.

This SIA adopts Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) defined geographies to establish the study area, including suburbs and localities (SAL), LGA, and Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA). The study area is described in Table 3.2 and shown in Figure 3.1.

The social baseline was developed using recent and reputable qualitative and quantitative data sources, including:

- the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (ABS, 2022) (the '2021 Census')
- the 2021 Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) state deciles (ABS, 2023a)
- local and state government strategic planning documents
- Torrens University Australia's Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU) Social Health Atlas (PHIDU, 2023)
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEWR) Small Area Labour Market (SALM) (DEWR, 2025)

An important aspect of assessing potential social impacts and benefits is understanding the level of sensitivity of potentially impacted communities. The level of sensitivity considers how different groups may experience or endure impacts differently, including high-risk or vulnerable groups (DPHI, 2025a). It also provides a basis to consider people's ability or means to adapt to impacts that from change. How potentially vulnerable or at-risk communities is defined and identified for this SIA is provided in Appendix B.

Table 3.2 Social study area

Study area	ASGS geography	Relevance to the modification	Population (ABS, 2022)
Local area	Apsley (SAL10068) Neurea (SAL12942)	The Modification sits within Apsley, close to the border with Neurea. There are eight residential dwellings within 2 km of the site boundary, where one dwelling is the associated (host) landholder. These dwellings are located across the suburbs of Apsley and Neurea. Residents may experience changes resulting from additional traffic and noise during construction, noting a longer duration. Residents may also experience uncertainties around hazard risk.	245
Dubbo LGA	Dubbo Regional (LGA12390)	The Modification is located within Dubbo LGA. Residents and businesses in Dubbo LGA may benefit from project opportunities. Local accommodation and rental housing in Dubbo LGA may experience increased demand from the need to house non-local workers.	54,922
Regional NSW	1RNSW Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (GCCSA)	Baseline for comparison.	2,829,637

Figure 3.1
Social study area

LEGEND

Project Area

Social study area

Local area

Dubbo LGA

Infrastructure and watercourse

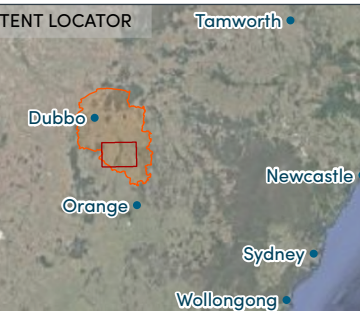
Primary road

Arterial road

Sub-arterial road

Local road

Watercourse

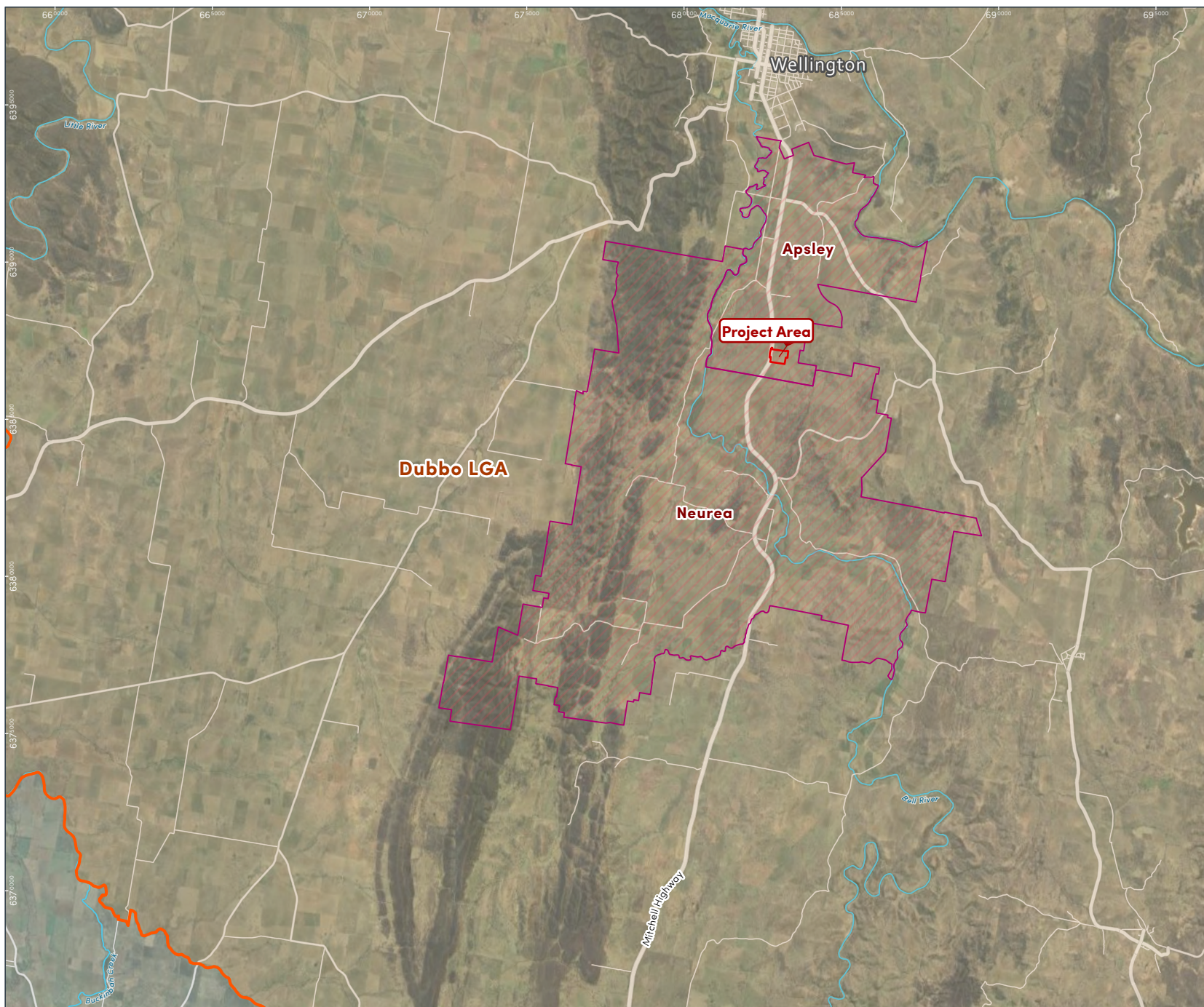
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Author: Jett McLachlan



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4. Engagement

Stakeholder and community was carried out during the preparation of the Project's environmental impact statement (EIS) phase and for the Modification report.

Outcomes from this engagement are summarised in the following section.

4.1. EIS engagement outcomes

Engagement activities carried out during the Project's EIS phase are summarised in the Project's EIS (Premise, 2022a). Outcomes of this engagement that are relevant to this SIA are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 EIS engagement outcomes

Stakeholder type	Outcomes relevant to this SIA
Neighbouring landowners	- Noise impacts – concerns about the potential for nighttime noise and how this would be managed - Visual impacts – concerns about visual impacts associated with the project and any noise attenuation walls that may be required - Traffic impacts – concerns about the potential for traffic conflict during the construction stage
DRC officers	- Traffic impacts – noted construction would bring significant vehicle movements - Aboriginal cultural heritage – noted need to consider impacts - Visual impacts – noted need to consider impacts and to demonstrate visual screening and landscaping to manage impacts

4.2. Modification engagement outcomes

Community and stakeholder engagement recommenced in March 2026 to inform the Modification report. Outcomes of this engagement that are relevant to this SIA are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Modification engagement outcomes

Stakeholder type	Outcomes relevant to this SIA
Neighbouring landowners	Key matters raised during consultation with neighbouring and nearby landowners include: - bushfire risk – concerns about potential bushfire risk and capacity of local RFS to respond - contamination to underground aquifers – concerns about impacts to the adjacent property - impacts to the health and wellbeing of a neighbour who experiences vulnerability e.g. noise impacts to sleep and vibration impacts for people with pre-existing health conditions - noise – concerns about the noise generated by the BESS and associated infrastructure - property value – concerns about the Project decreasing property value - Traffic and transport – noted current traffic construction and concerns about cumulative impact - Visual amenity – concerns about visibility of the Project from the Mitchell Highway and neighbouring properties

Stakeholder type	Outcomes relevant to this SIA
Dubbo Regional Council	Consultation with DRC included a project briefing and discussion around the accommodation options for the Project. It was suggested the Project could use temporary workforce accommodation that is being constructed in Wellington. Concerns were raised about the timing of the accommodation construction completion and further investigation required.
Local businesses	Wellington Caves and Caravan Park and Wellington Golf Club were provided Project updates. Wellington Caves raised questions about traffic impacts and requested further information when it is available.
Accommodation providers	Consultation with accommodation providers in Wellington indicates there is sufficient local capacity to accommodate the expected non-local construction workforce associated with the modification. • Nine accommodation providers in Wellington were contacted to discuss availability and suitability for worker accommodation. • A total of 140 rooms were identified as available across the providers consulted. • The expected additional accommodation demand associated with the modification is 10 rooms during the construction period. • The Applicant considers the identified capacity is sufficient to accommodate these additional workers. • The Applicant also considers the findings would cover a total of up to 20 non-local workers, if required. Overall, the findings indicate there is adequate accommodation available in Wellington to support the increase in workers during construction.

5. Social baseline

This section provides an updated social baseline reflecting the SIA focus areas set out in Table 3.1. The social baseline provides a snapshot of the existing social environment through a review of key DRC planning documents and analysis of the most recent social and demographic data. Key social and demographic indicators collected for the study area are presented in full in Appendix C and relevant findings are discussed in the following sections.

5.1. Traditional Owners and cultural values

Dubbo LGA is located on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people, the largest Aboriginal nation in NSW and one of the largest Aboriginal nations in Australia. The Wiradjuri are known as the people of the three rivers: the Wambool (Macquarie River), Kalare (Lachlan River) and the Murrumbidgee River. Wiradjuri Country extends across large areas of central NSW.

The Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment prepared for the Project's EIS (Premise, 2022) notes the cultural values associated with the Wellington Caves, located to the north of the Project (and Modification) site. As reported in this assessment, no specific information was provided by registered Aboriginal parties (RAP) on the cultural significance of the study area. The study area was considered to not indicate a high cultural sensitivity area. The report concluded there would be no impact to cultural heritage values of the broader area, noting that no loss or harm to Aboriginal sites or places as part of the Project (Premise, 2022).

5.2. Local study area

5.2.1. Overview

The local study area is comprised of Apsley and Neurea, within the Central West region of NSW. Apsley and Neurea are predominantly comprised of rural residential properties. The Mitchell Highway connects Apsley and Neurea to the nearest servicing town, Wellington. The Wellington town centre is located about 10 km north of the Project site.

Some features of the local area include Osawano Japanese Gardens, Wellington Caves, Wellington Caves Holiday Park, and the Wellington Golf Club. Wellington Caves and the Osawano Japanese Gardens are key tourist attractions which draw significant visitors from outside the area (DRC, 2020).

At the time of the 2021 Census, the combined population of the local area was 245 people, where 32 residents, or 13.1%, identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ABS, 2022). While the area had a higher median age (49 years) compared to Regional NSW (43 years), there was a lower proportion of people aged over 65 years (ABS, 2022).

The local area has a slightly higher rate of people with the same address as one year ago, and a much lower rate of people with the same address five years ago, indicating some population mobility (ABS, 2022).

Housing in the area is predominantly high-density (separate housing) (91.9%) and family households (84.9%). Median rent and median mortgage rates are below the Regional NSW average, where rates of mortgage stress are also lower, and no rental stress was recorded at the time of the 2021 Census (ABS, 2022).

5.2.2. Potentially high-risk or vulnerable groups

The approach to identifying the presence of potentially high-risk or vulnerable groups is described in Appendix B, and indicators for the study area is presented in Appendix C. Reviewing this data shows that, when compared to Regional NSW, the local area had only a few indicators to suggest the presence of vulnerable or high-risk groups.

This includes:

- a higher proportion of residents who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- a slightly higher rate of lone person households (over 65 years)
- a slightly higher rate of people with asthma

Several indicators suggested a lower potential for high-risk or vulnerable groups in the local area. When compared to Regional NSW the local area had:

- a lower rate of people aged over 65 years
- a lower rate of single parent families
- a higher median income (household and personal)
- a lower rate of low-income households
- a higher rate of high-income households
- similar rates of people with one or more long-term health conditions, and no people recorded to have dementia
- a lower rate of people with core activity need for assistance
- no residents recorded to have low English language proficiency or born in countries where English is not the primary language

SEIFA are described in detail in Appendix B and SEIFA state deciles for Apsley and Neurea are presented in Appendix C. SEIFA scores are calculated for defined geographic areas and ranked into deciles, where decile 1 represents the most socio-economically disadvantaged 10% of areas and decile 10 the least disadvantaged. The state deciles show the following:

- Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD): Apsley 3, Neurea 7
- Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD): Apsley 5, Neurea 7
- Index of Economic Resources (IER): Apsley 5, Neurea 7
- Index of Education and Occupation (IEO): Apsley 5, Neurea 9

These deciles show a gap in socio-economic advantage and disadvantage across the two localities that comprise the local area. Residents of Neurea experience a higher level of advantage, particularly for education and occupation. Residents in Apsley experience a relatively average level of socio-economic disadvantage across most indexes, however, the index for disadvantage alone shows a ranking below the average.

5.3. Dubbo LGA

5.3.1. Overview

Dubbo LGA is a key regional centre of the Central West region of NSW. Compared to Regional NSW, Dubbo LGA has a high population density and hosts significant services and facilities, including health, community, educational, and retail. Wellington is another key town and administrative centre within Dubbo LGA. Key villages include Geurie, Wongarbon, Stuart Town, Mumbil, Ballimore, Elong Elong, and Eumungerie.

The population of Dubbo LGA at the time of the 2021 Census was 54,922, of whom 9,101 residents, or 16.6%, identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, a rate much larger than the Regional NSW average of 6.6%.

Population projections show a steady annual population growth rate in Dubbo LGA (DPHI, 2024), where the 2041 population is expected to reach 64,997.

Residents of Dubbo LGA tend to be younger compared to the Regional NSW average, with a median age of 36 years compared to Regional NSW's 43 years, and a smaller proportion of people aged over 65 years.

5.3.2. Potentially high-risk or vulnerable groups

When reviewing indicators for potentially high-risk or vulnerable groups in Dubbo LGA, some rates suggest potential overrepresentation when compared to the Regional NSW, including:

- a higher proportion of resident who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- a higher rate of people aged under 14 years
- a higher rate of single-parent families and children living with an unemployed lone parent
- a higher rate of people born in a country where English is not the primary language
- a much higher rate of people accessing specialist housing services (compared to whole of NSW)
- a higher rate of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants who have a 'low' level of function (compared to whole of NSW)

Other indicators did not indicate the presence for potentially high-risk or vulnerable groups, including:

- a lower proportion of people aged over 65 years
- a higher median income (individual and weekly)
- a lower rate of households with low incomes
- a slightly higher rate of households with high incomes
- a lower rate of people with low English language proficiency
- a lower rate of people with one or more long-term health conditions, including dementia or those with lung conditions, however rates of asthma are slightly higher
- a lower rate of people who require assistance for core activities

Review of the SEIFA results indicates that Dubbo LGA demonstrates mid-range socio-economic conditions at the state level. Dubbo LGA records decile 6 rankings across measures of relative disadvantage, advantage and disadvantage, and education and occupation, and a decile 5 ranking for economic resources.

Analysing the SEIFA indexes in combination with the indicators for potential vulnerability and high-risk groups demonstrates a notably varied experience of socio-economic disadvantage and vulnerability across the residents of Dubbo LGA.

5.3.3. Housing and accommodation

Housing characteristics

When compared to the Regional NSW average, data gathered for the social baseline (Appendix C) shows housing characteristics of Dubbo LGA include:

- a higher rate of renters, however lower rates of rental stress¹
- a lower rate of home ownership, and lower rates of mortgage stress²
- a lower proportion of high- and medium- density housing
- a lower proportion of unoccupied dwellings
- an average rate of social housing among renters

¹ Renter households with rent payments greater than 30% of household income (ABS, 2022)

² Owner with mortgage households with mortgage repayments greater than 30% of household income (ABS, 2022)

Rental vacancy rates, as provided by SQM Research (SQM, 2025), show that rental stock and vacancy for the elected postcodes (see Section C.3 in Appendix C) is very low:

- The postcode for Apsley, Wellington, Mumbil and surrounds shows both very little rental stock and rental vacancy rates below the threshold of 3%.
- The postcode for Mudgee and surrounds (largely outside Dubbo LGA, however, in driving distance of the site) experiences sharp demands for rentals, where vacancy rates are in decline.
- The postcode for Geurie and surrounds shows very little rental stock (2 properties or less) since 2024.
- The postcode for Dubbo and surrounds shows more rental stock, however, vacancy rates have been well below the 3% threshold and have been in steady decline over the past decade.

Short term accommodation

Housing demand generated by the cluster of large infrastructure projects, including renewable energy development, such as the approved Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone Transmission Project, and the Australian Strategic Materials Toongi project, has prompted DRC to investigate options to avoid impacts to housing availability in Dubbo LGA. As part of this, DRC commissioned the Analysis of Short-Term Worker Accommodation Needs (Delos Delta, 2023).

The Analysis of Short-Term Worker Accommodation Needs reported the short-term accommodation supply and occupancy in Dubbo LGA during the study period (2023). These findings are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Short-term accommodation supply and occupancy (Delos Delta, 2023)

Indicator	Result
Motels, hotels, motor inns and caravan park proprietors	55
Total number of bookable rooms/lots/cabins available	1,526
Maximum capacity of all venues	5,684
Average short-term accommodation room/lot occupancy in DRC	75%
Average occupancy levels for Dubbo short-term accommodation	70%
Peak occupancy levels for Dubbo short-term accommodation	85-90%
Average number of rooms/lots available per night throughout the year	381

This study found the usual sharp fluctuations in demand (peak occupancy) presents a challenge for additional demand that would be generated by worker accommodation associated with renewable energy and other major projects.

Dwelling shortfall projections presented in this study exemplify this challenge. The study models scenarios under the assumption of 100%, 75%, or 50% of short-term workers requiring accommodation in Dubbo LGA. All scenarios indicate that accommodation capacity will be insufficient to meet peak worker demand, with surpluses only emerging later in the study period as worker demand declines (Delos Delta, 2023).

The analysis highlights that short-term workers will absorb a significant proportion of the available accommodation stock at peak demand, and this can strain the existing market and supply. The ongoing challenge of aligning accommodation supply with worker demand is identified as a key regional issue that will require coordinated planning and interventions (Delos Delta, 2023).

Council expectations

DRC specifies expectations for accommodation strategies developed by proponents for major projects (DRC, 2025). DRC expects major project proponents to actively manage workforce accommodation and employment impacts to ensure development delivers a positive and lasting legacy for Dubbo LGA. As part of

SSD approvals, proponents are required to prepare an accommodation and employment strategy in consultation with DRC prior to construction.

The strategy must demonstrate how sufficient workforce accommodation will be provided, consider cumulative impacts from other major projects, prioritise local employment where feasible, and include mechanisms for monitoring and review over the life of the project. DRC expects the strategy to be informed by local demographic and socio-economic conditions, workforce staging and accommodation demand, and an assessment of a range of accommodation options, with a preference for accommodation within or near existing urban areas and villages.

This approach seeks to minimise impacts on housing and tourism markets, support community integration, and enable longer-term reuse of accommodation and infrastructure, including through the adaptive reuse of existing buildings (DRC, 2025).

5.3.4. Workforce and industry

Workforce characteristics

Social baseline data (Appendix C) presents disaggregated workforce participation and unemployment rates for Dubbo LGA, with comparison to Regional NSW. Rates are shown for the overall population and the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population, and are further disaggregated by total population, male, female and youth cohorts. These graphs demonstrate the following:

- The overall workforce participation rate in Dubbo LGA was notably higher than Regional NSW.
- Workforce participation rates for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in Dubbo LGA were higher than Regional NSW for the total population, female and youth cohorts, but slightly lower for males.
- Within Dubbo LGA, the workforce participation rate for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people was lower than the overall population. This difference reflects the lower participation rate among the youth cohort, noting that male and female Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cohorts have higher participation rates than their overall population equivalents in Dubbo LGA.
- Unemployment rates in Dubbo LGA for the overall population are much lower compared to the Regional NSW average.
- Unemployment rates are higher for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people than the overall population in Dubbo LGA, particularly among youth.
- However, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander unemployment in Dubbo LGA is lower than Regional NSW across all cohorts (total, male, female and youth), suggesting comparatively stronger employment outcomes in Dubbo LGA despite disparity relative to the overall population of Dubbo LGA.

Local industry

Business counts for Dubbo LGA are presented in Appendix C, showing employment size and industry (ABS, 2025). The figures show the Dubbo LGA economy is characterised by a high proportion of non-employing and micro-businesses, with most businesses employing fewer than five people. This structure indicates a locally diverse but capacity-constrained business base, particularly in sectors such as construction, agriculture, transport and warehousing, and rental, hiring and real estate services.

While this business profile supports local economic resilience through a broad spread of small operators, it also suggests limits on the ability of local businesses to rapidly scale their workforce.

6. Impact assessment

This section presents predicted social impacts and benefits associated with the Modification. Significance ratings are assigned by considering the levels of likelihood and magnitude, as defined in the SIA Technical Supplement (DPHI, 2025b). The levels of likelihood and magnitude are mapped to the significance matrix, determining the overall significance rating. The significance matrix and concepts of likelihood and magnitude are provided in Appendix D.

Outcomes from other technical studies developed for the Project have been reviewed to understand predicted impacts from each respective study to further understand aspects of the magnitude and likelihood of change. Other technical studies reviewed for this SIA are listed in Section 3.

The social impact significance matrix is first used to assess potential social impacts and benefits before mitigation or enhancement measures are applied. The significance rating generated at this stage is referred to as the 'initial rating'.

The assessment is then repeated, assuming the social impact measures are effectively implemented. The significance rating generated at this stage is referred to as the 'residual rating'. Residual ratings are presented in Section 7.

Social impacts and benefits that may arise due to the Modification are described in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Social impact assessment

Impact	Description	Impacted groups	Initial rating
Impacts to rental housing and accommodation Non-local workforce accommodation requirements during construction would place additional demand on housing and short-term accommodation within a reasonable drive from the site.	This has the potential to reduce availability of rental housing for existing residents or the availability of short-term accommodation for those seeking emergency accommodation. Demand on rental housing can lead to both unaffordable asking prices and/or longer wait times. This may perpetuate the need for emergency accommodation among unsuccessful rental seekers. The social baseline found the use of specialised housing services to be particularly high in Dubbo LGA, compared to the Regional NSW average. The social baseline also identifies a growing demand for worker accommodation across major projects, where major deficits in housing is expected in coming years. The social baseline also identifies very low rental vacancy rates in the study area, indicating high demand (Section 5.3.3). To further understand potential accommodation impacts, the client consulted nine accommodation providers in Wellington regarding capacity and suitability for worker accommodation. This engagement identified a total of 140 available rooms across the providers contacted. Based on the Modification, the expected additional demand is for 10 non-local workers during the construction period. The Project has also committed to DRC that non-local workforce would be block accommodated through accommodation providers and would not be permitted to use the private rental market. The Applicant considers this available capacity is sufficient to accommodate the expected workforce and would also cover a scenario of up to 20 non-local workers, if required. On this basis, while the study area is experiencing existing housing pressure, the accommodation demand generated by the Modification is expected to be limited and able to be absorbed within identified short-term accommodation capacity, without drawing on the private rental market. The magnitude of change is assessed as minor, the likelihood is assessed as unlikely, and the impact is therefore assigned a low significance rating.	- Residents of Dubbo LGA seeking rental housing - Residents of Dubbo LGA seeking emergency short-term accommodation	Low (unlikely, minor) Negative

Impact	Description	Impacted groups	Initial rating
Local employment opportunities Employment opportunities would be generated for local residents, particularly throughout the construction phase.	Employment throughout construction provides an opportunity to support the livelihood of local residents. It also may support building local skills and experience to bolster employability for future jobs. This would be particularly beneficial for those under-represented in employment. The social baseline found Dubbo LGA has a higher workforce participation rate compared to Regional NSW, particularly among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents. While unemployment is low for the overall population in Dubbo LGA, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents experience higher levels of unemployment, especially youth. On this basis, the construction phase is expected to generate some employment opportunities for local residents, including an estimated 35 FTE roles that may be filled locally. These opportunities may support local livelihoods and provide skills and experience that strengthen employability beyond the construction period. This may be particularly beneficial for groups that are under-represented in employment, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents and young people. While overall unemployment in Dubbo LGA is low and workforce participation is relatively high, the identified disparities for some groups suggest there remains value in additional local employment pathways. The magnitude of change is assessed as minor, the likelihood is assessed as possible, and the impact is therefore assigned a low significance rating.	- Those seeking employment in Dubbo LGA - Under-represented groups in employment	Low (possible, minor) Positive
Local business opportunities Service and supply requirements for the construction phase would provide opportunities for businesses within the local supply chain.	Increased activity among local business has the potential to support the livelihoods of business owners and their employees. Increased demand associated with construction activities may present opportunities for targeted local procurement and subcontracting that align with the scale and capacity of small and medium enterprises. As found in the social baseline, the profile of local businesses in Dubbo LGA is characterised by small, non-employing businesses, which may be constrained to upscale, including the construction industry. On this basis, the construction phase is expected to generate some local business opportunities through service, supply and subcontracting requirements. While the scale and capacity of some local businesses, particularly small and non-employing businesses, may constrain the extent to which they can respond to increased demand, the Modification is still expected to create some opportunity for local participation in the supply chain. The magnitude of change is assessed as minor, the likelihood is assessed as possible, and the impact is therefore assigned a low significance rating.	Business owners and employees in Dubbo LGA	Low (possible, minor) Positive
Loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage Impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage may occur through unintended disturbance to	Construction activities that disturb Aboriginal cultural heritage may result in permanent heritage loss, with present-day and intergenerational impacts for Aboriginal communities. This can diminish cultural knowledge transfer, cause spiritual harm, and weaken connection to Country, sense of place and identity. The initial SIA did not assess the potential social impact associated with loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage. The updated Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment found the Modification	- Traditional Owners - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community	Low (unlikely, minor) Negative

Impact	Description	Impacted groups	Initial rating
unidentified objects or sites of significance.	involves only minor changes to the site boundary and would occur in areas that are already disturbed. It concluded that Aboriginal archaeological potential is generally low, no impacts to recorded sites are proposed, and the Modification does not change the conclusions or management measures of the original assessment. The original Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment also found no impacts to identified Aboriginal sites or places, with recorded sites located outside the impact area and avoidance measures proposed. On this basis, the Modification is not expected to result in additional loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage or associated social impacts beyond those previously assessed. The magnitude of change is assessed as minor, the likelihood is assessed as unlikely, and the impact is therefore assigned a low significance rating.		
Impacts to traffic conditions and feelings of safety during construction Construction traffic may affect traffic conditions and perceptions of safety for road users and nearby residents.	Increased vehicle movements during construction have the potential to cause temporary disruption, including changes to traffic flow, minor delays and increased awareness of heavy vehicle and OSOM movements. These effects may be more noticeable for people who use the local road network regularly. The social baseline identified only limited indicators of potentially vulnerable or high-risk groups in the local area, including a higher proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents, a slightly higher proportion of lone person households aged over 65 years, and a slightly higher rate of people with asthma. The updated traffic impact assessment found the modified Project would generate about 244 vehicle trips per day during construction, including 79 trips in both the AM and PM peaks. This increase was assessed as temporary and modest relative to the surrounding road network, with no measurable congestion or safety concerns expected. The assessment also found OSOM transport to be feasible with appropriate traffic management measures in place. While the extended construction timeframe increases the period over which these changes may be experienced, the overall traffic impact is still expected to be limited and short term. On this basis, changes to traffic conditions and feelings of safety during construction are expected to be noticeable but limited. The magnitude of change is assessed as minor, the likelihood is assessed as possible, and the impact is therefore assigned a low significance rating.	Nearby residents and road users	Low (possible, minor) Negative
Impacts to amenity from construction noise Construction noise may affect amenity for nearby residents and other sensitive receivers.	Increased construction activity over a longer construction period has the potential to extend the duration of temporary noise disturbance, which may affect comfort, daily routines and overall perceptions of amenity. As described above, the social baseline identified limited indicators of potentially vulnerable or high-risk groups in the local area, which may influence how noise impacts are experienced by some residents. However, engagement outcomes identified a nearby resident who raised concerns regarding noise impacts to a pre-existing health condition. The updated noise impact assessment indicates there is very little change from the findings of the original assessment, which found that, provided construction occurs during standard hours,	Nearby residents	Medium (possible, moderate) Negative

Impact	Description	Impacted groups	Initial rating
	adverse amenity impacts during construction are unlikely. It also confirms the initial conclusion that overall residual acoustic and vibration impacts are expected to remain low and compliant with applicable criteria. On this basis, construction noise impacts are expected to remain temporary but more noticeable due to the longer construction duration, with only limited change otherwise anticipated from the original findings. Although adverse impacts are still expected to be managed through standard construction hours and compliance with applicable criteria, the extended period over which noise may be experienced may result in a moderate level of disruption to amenity for nearby residents. The magnitude of change is assessed as moderate, the likelihood is assessed as possible, and the impact is therefore assigned a medium significance rating.		
Impacts to amenity from operational noise Operational noise may affect amenity for nearby residents and other sensitive receivers.	Operational noise sources associated with the Project include battery units, inverters and transformers. As described above, the social baseline identified limited indicators of potentially vulnerable or high-risk groups in the local area, which may influence how noise impacts are experienced by some residents. However, engagement outcomes identified a nearby resident who raised concerns regarding noise impacts to a pre-existing health condition. The updated noise impact assessment found very little change from the findings of the original assessment. As in the original assessment, it found a negligible exceedance of 2 dB was predicted for 1 receiver. This exceedance is considered to be negligible as it would not be discernible by the average human ear. However, the Applicant has already elected as part of the original conditions of consent to implement mitigation measures to reduce the operational noise to the most stringent evening and night-time noise criteria. The magnitude of change is assessed as moderate and the likelihood is possible. The impact is therefore assigned a medium significance rating	Nearby residents	Medium (possible, moderate) Negative
Perceptions of risk associated with potential hazards Perceptions of risk may contribute to stress, uncertainty or reduced confidence in the safety of the Project.	Perceptions of risk may arise where nearby residents or other stakeholders are concerned about potential hazards associated with the Project, even where technical studies indicate low or acceptable risk. This may contribute to stress, uncertainty or reduced confidence in the safety of the Project. As described above, the social baseline identified limited indicators of potentially vulnerable or high-risk groups in the local area. In response to the Modification, this issue has been considered with reference to the updated preliminary hazard assessment. That assessment considered the increase in battery storage capacity from two to four hours and found all identified hazard scenarios were not expected to result in offsite impacts. It concluded that risks at the site boundary would remain within acceptable risk criteria. On this basis, the Modification is not expected to materially increase hazard-related risk. However, because perceptions of hazard may still arise despite the technical findings, some nearby residents may experience concern or uncertainty about potential hazards. The	Nearby residents	Medium (possible, moderate) Negative

Impact	Description	Impacted groups	Initial rating
	magnitude of change is assessed as moderate, the likelihood is assessed as possible, and the impact is therefore assigned a medium significance rating.		
Community benefit sharing and contribution arrangements Community support and development generated by Project contributions and arrangements	Project contributions, including the VPAs with DRC and the Energy Benefit Fund for residents within 2 km, would provide localised benefits to the community. These arrangements would support community development outcomes and provide direct financial assistance to residents in proximity to the Project. The social baseline indicates variation in socio-economic conditions across the local area and Dubbo LGA, including differences in relative advantage and disadvantage between Apsley and Neurea, and a broader mix of socio-economic conditions across the LGA. In this context, both community-level contributions and targeted neighbour benefits may provide modest but meaningful support, particularly for households experiencing cost of living pressures or for community initiatives aligned with local priorities. Engagement undertaken for the Project and Modification did not identify strong or consistent community expectations regarding benefit sharing. However, consultation with DRC and the local MP highlighted the importance of aligning project-related initiatives with local conditions and planning considerations. On this basis, Project contributions are expected to result in a positive and certain benefit, although the scale of change is relatively modest and localised. The magnitude of change is assessed as minimal, the likelihood is assessed as almost certain. The impact is therefore assigned a low significance rating.	- Residents within 2 km - Residents of Dubbo LGA - Community groups and service users supported through Council-led initiatives	Low (almost certain, minimal)

7. Management measures and residual ratings

This section outlines the measures that would support social impact management across the life of the modified Project. It also updates, where relevant, the management measures identified in the initial SIA.

Residual ratings have been assigned for each identified social impact on the basis that the relevant management and enhancement measures are effectively implemented. The residual ratings for the impacts assessed in this report are provided in Table 7.1, together with the relevant Project mitigation measures.

Table 7.1 Residual ratings

Impact	Project mitigation measure	Phase	Residual rating
Impacts to rental housing and accommodation	- Local workforce plan to maximise local employment - Use of dedicated accommodation facility with local provider	Pre-construction	Negligible (unlikely, minimal) Negative
Local employment opportunities	- Local workforce plan to maximise local employment - Local workforce plan to maximise local employment	Pre-construction	Medium (likely, minor) Positive
Local business opportunities	Investigate opportunities to use local contractors, suppliers, and service providers, via consultation with key stakeholders	Pre-construction	Medium (likely, minor) Positive
Loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage	Continue engagement with relevant Aboriginal stakeholders regarding heritage management and chance finds procedures	Pre-construction Construction	Negligible (unlikely, minimal) Negative
Impacts to traffic conditions and feelings of safety during construction	- Continued engagement with community and emergency services, including communication about traffic changes and OSOM movements - Establish complaints management system	Construction	Low (possible, minimal) Negative
Impacts to amenity from construction noise	- Continued engagement with community - Establish complaints management system	Construction	Low (possible, minor) Negative
Impacts to amenity from operational noise	- Continued engagement with community - Establish complaints management system	Operations	Low (possible, minor) Negative
Perceptions of risk associated with potential hazards	- Continued emergency services engagement regarding emergency preparedness and response arrangements - Provide clear fire safety and risk communication to nearby stakeholders to support understanding of Project hazards and emergency procedures	Pre-construction Construction Operations	Low (unlikely, minor) Negative
Community benefit sharing and contribution arrangements	- Provide clear, plain-language information to the community about the planning agreement and Energy Benefit Fund, including eligibility, timing and access arrangements - Consult with DRC regarding governance and priority outcomes for planning agreement funding over the life of the Project	Pre-construction Construction Operations	Medium (almost certain, minor)

Management measures identified in the initial SIA were reviewed having regard to the social impacts assessed in this report. Where relevant, these measures have been refined to support the management of

potential adverse social impacts and the enhancement of potential benefits. Additions to the initial SIA measures are shown in red text, while strikethrough text identifies measures that are no longer considered relevant to the social impacts assessed in this report or that are addressed in other technical reports or the existing Conditions of Consent. Updated management measures are provided in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Updated mitigation measures

Phase	Mitigation measures
Pre-construction	• Provide communication and engagement with the community prior to site establishment. Measures could include newsletter and construction update on the scope of the project, likely high impact activities (noise, vibration, traffic, and pedestrian changes), and contact details for inquiries and complaints. Meetings/presentations with neighbouring properties and parents prior to construction should also be considered. • Develop an inquiry and complaint process for the construction. • Engage with the local community and neighbours to develop a working relationship to disseminate information during and after construction. • Continued emergency services engagement regarding emergency preparedness and response arrangements. • Provide clear fire safety and risk communication to nearby stakeholders to support understanding of Project hazards and emergency procedures. • Implement a local workforce plan to maximise local employment and reduce the need to accommodate non-local workers in the local area. Include targeted recruitment and communication measures to improve awareness of Project roles among local workers. • The Project would arrange for non-local workers to be housed in a dedicated accommodation facility in Wellington through an agreement with a local provider. • Provide clear, plain-language information to the community about the Voluntary Planning Agreements with DRC and Energy Benefit Fund, including eligibility, timing and access arrangements. • Investigate opportunities to use local contractors, suppliers, and service providers. • Consult with businesses, peak bodies (Chamber of Commerce), industry groups and tourism operators to provide opportunities for local procurement.
Construction	• A Construction Management Plan (CMP) should be prepared that incorporates the findings of the various project technical studies. • A Traffic Management Plan (TMP) should be prepared that incorporates the findings of the various project technical studies. • Implement a Heritage management including unexpected find procedure. Continue engagement with relevant Aboriginal stakeholders regarding heritage management and chance finds procedures. • Management of complaints via an established complaints management system. • Ongoing communication with the community to keep residents updated on construction scheduling. This may include signage, notifications, and other appropriate communication channels. Provide advance notice of construction traffic changes and manage heavy vehicle and OSOM movements to minimise disruption and maintain road user safety.
Operational	• Ongoing communication and engagement with the community which includes complaints management. • Consult with DRC regarding governance and priority outcomes for the Voluntary Planning Agreement funding over the life of the Project. • Maintain the plants installed along the project boundaries to ensure full growth and longevity. • Develop a landscape maintenance plan to include replacement of any plants that fail during the lifespan of the project. • Create an Accommodation and Employment Strategy.

8. Conclusion

This updated SIA has considered whether the Modification to the approved Apsley BESS would materially change the type, scale or significance of social impacts identified in the initial assessment, or introduce new impacts not previously identified.

Overall, the assessment finds the Modification would not fundamentally change the Project's social impact profile. Most impacts are still expected to be limited in scale, localised and temporary, particularly where existing commitments and additional management measures are applied.

Review of the updated technical studies indicates the Modification does not materially change the conclusions of the original Aboriginal cultural heritage, traffic, noise or preliminary hazard assessments in a way that would create major new social impacts. However, the Modification would extend the construction period and increase some construction-related activity. This means impacts relating to noise and traffic may be experienced for longer or be more noticeable than previously assessed.

The assessment also identifies some modest positive impacts during construction. About 35 FTE roles are expected to be available to local workers, which may provide some local employment and skills benefits. Construction activity may also create opportunities for local businesses through supply, service and subcontracting needs.

Accommodation demand associated with the Modification is expected to be manageable. Consultation with accommodation providers in Wellington identified enough short-term capacity to accommodate the expected additional non-local workforce, including the 10 workers assessed for the Modification and up to 20 workers if needed. The Project would arrange for non-local workers to be housed in a dedicated accommodation facility in Wellington through an agreement with a local provider, avoiding reliance on private rental accommodation. This approach has been discussed with DRC, and Council expressed satisfaction with the commitment. On that basis, the Modification is not expected to materially increase existing housing and accommodation pressures in Dubbo LGA.

The Modification would also provide a modest local benefit through the proposed community contribution arrangements, including the planning agreement with DRC and the Energy Benefit Fund for nearby residents. While limited in scale, these arrangements would provide a tangible contribution to local community outcomes and direct support for eligible neighbouring residences.

With implementation of the proposed management and enhancement measures, residual impacts are expected to remain low or negligible, while positive impacts associated with employment and local business activity may provide modest benefit.

On this basis, the Modification is unlikely to result in significant new or materially different social impacts compared with the approved Project.

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Appendix A

SIA authorship

A.1 SIA authorship

Sonya Pascoe – SIA author

Title: Senior Social Planner

Qualifications: Master of International Public Health, Bachelor of Social Science (Human Geography and the Environment)

Certifications and memberships: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

Sonya has more than eight years' experience as a social planner delivering social research, planning, impact assessment and stakeholder engagement. Sonya specialises in SIA and is a suitably qualified and experienced practitioner.

Throughout her career Sonya has developed more than 20 SIAs for private and government clients. Sonya was the SIA lead for state significant projects including Sandy Creek Solar Farm, Liddell Future Land Use and Enabling Works, Dinawan Solar Farm, Seaham Quarry Project, and Belmont Drought Response Desalination Plant.

Sonya also has extensive experience developing social needs assessments and workforce strategies informed by stakeholder engagement and socio-economic research.

Sonya is highly skilled in primary and secondary data collection, collation, and analysis for social research.

Appendix B

Potentially high-risk or vulnerable groups

B.1 Study area profiles: approach to identifying potentially high-risk and vulnerable groups

An important aspect of assessing potential social impacts and benefits is understanding the level of sensitivity of potentially impacted communities. The level of sensitivity considers how different groups may experience or endure impacts differently, including high-risk or vulnerable groups (DPHI, 2025a). It also provides a basis to consider people's ability or means to adapt to impacts that from change.

As defined by the IAIA Guidance, potentially vulnerable groups include 'Indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled people, the homeless, the poor, those struggling with substance abuse, and isolated elderly people' (IAIA, 2015). The SIA Guideline recognises that vulnerable and marginalised groups may include the following:

- people who are unable to represent themselves
- people with chronic medical conditions or in poor health requiring access to services
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- elderly people
- children
- people on low incomes
- people living with disabilities
- people who are homeless or in insecure housing
- single-parent households

Where possible, data has been collected to identify the presence of potentially vulnerable groups within the social locality, which is presented in Table B.1. Vulnerability can also be explored through socio-economic disadvantage, which is investigated through SEIFA (ABS, 2023).

Appendix Table B.1 Indicators of high-risk and vulnerable groups

Potentially vulnerable group	Indicator	Source
Indigenous peoples	Residents who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
People who are unable to represent themselves	Those who 'speak English not well or not at all' (low English language proficiency)	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
	Has dementia	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
People with chronic medical conditions or in poor health requiring access to services	Has one or more long-term health conditions	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
	Has asthma	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
	Has lung condition	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
Culturally and linguistically diverse communities	Those with a country of birth that does not use English as a primary language	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
Elderly people	People aged over 65 years	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
Isolated elderly people	Households with a lone occupant aged over 65 years	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
Children	People aged under 14 years	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
People on low incomes	Median individual weekly income	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
	Median household weekly income	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
	Households earning less than \$650 per week (low-income household)	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
	Households earning more than \$3000 per week (high-income household)	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)

Potentially vulnerable group	Indicator	Source
	Children under 14 years living with unemployed lone parent	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
People living with disabilities	Core activity need for assistance	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)
People who are homeless or in insecure housing	Specialist housing service access between 2023-24 (based on usual location of client)	Specialist Homelessness Services Collection data cubes 2011–12 to 2023–24 (AIHW, 2024)
Single-parent households	Single-parent families	2021 Census (ABS, 2022)

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

Using 2021 Census data, SEIFA is a set of four indices developed by the ABS to rank geographies by their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. Rankings are provided for the state/territory level and the national level. These indices consider key social and economic variables relating to income, educational attainment, employment, skills, occupation, health status, housing suitability, and family structure.

Scores are generated for various geographies and are grouped by deciles based on their rankings. The lowest 10% of areas are designated a decile of 1, and the highest 10% are designated a decile of 10. As such, low numbers are generally associated with more socio-economic disadvantage.

Decile scores reflect a ranking among comparable geographies (e.g. LGAs). A score should therefore be interpreted as the area's relative position within NSW (as used in this study), meaning a separate reference point for NSW is not required. A description of each index and a guide to interpret decile scores is provided in Table B.2.

Appendix Table B.2 SEIFA Indexes – description and interpretation of scores

Index	Description
IRSD	The IRSD focuses solely on disadvantage, capturing variables that reflect relative lack of resources and opportunities: - high score: indicates a relative absence of disadvantage (not necessarily the presence of advantage) - low score: indicates greater prevalence of disadvantage, such as lower income, lower education levels, higher unemployment, and jobs requiring lower skill levels
IRSAD	The IRSAD summarises both advantage and disadvantage in an area, based on a mix of variables: - high score: suggests relatively more households with higher incomes, skilled occupations, and educational attainment, combined with fewer indicators of disadvantage - low score: suggests more households experiencing disadvantage (e.g. lower incomes, unskilled work, limited education) and fewer signs of advantage
IER	The IER focuses on financial and housing-related aspects of socio-economic conditions. It includes measures such as household income, rent, and mortgage payments, but excludes education, occupation, savings, and equity investments (as these are not captured in Census data): - high score: indicates relatively greater access to economic resources, such as higher household incomes and housing assets - low score: indicates fewer economic resources, such as lower household incomes and reliance on lower-value housing
IEO	The IEO reflects access to educational and occupational opportunities. It is based on levels of educational attainment, current study participation, and workforce skill levels, but excludes income: - high score: suggests an area with higher proportions of people with higher education qualifications, currently studying, or employed in skilled occupations - low score: suggests an area with more people without post-school qualifications, not undertaking further study, or employed in lower-skilled occupations

Appendix C

Social baseline data

C.1 Key demographics

Key demographic indicators for the social study area are provided Table C.1.

Appendix Table C.1 Key demographics

Indicator	Local area		Dubbo LGA		Regional NSW	
Total population (2021)	245		54,922		2,829,637	
Population density (people per sq km)	NA		7.3		3.6	
ERP (2024) *	NA		56,997		2,922,081	
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) ³ population (2021)	32	13.1%	9,101	16.6%	185,873	6.6%
Population projection (2041) #	NA		64,595		10,070,467 (whole of NSW)	
Annual growth rate 2021-41 #	NA		0.8		1.1 (whole of NSW)	
Same address as 1 year ago	202	81.8%	40,706	75.2%	2,214,580	79.1%
Same address as 5 years ago	167	19.8%	25,557	38.7%	1,459,282	37.9%
Median age (all persons)	49		36		43	
Median age (ATSI)	NA ⁴		23		23	
Children and young adolescents (14 and younger)	37	15.1%	11,508	21.0%	505,534	17.9%
Working age (15-64 years)	167	68.2%	33,923	61.8%	1,696,049	59.9%
Elderly (65+years)	55	22.4%	9,486	17.3%	628,053	22.2%
Sources: 2021 Census (ABS, 2022) * ABS Population Projections (ABS, 2026) # 2024 NSW Population Projections (DPHI, 2024)						

C.2 Indicators for potentially vulnerable of high-risk populations

Indicators of potential vulnerable or high-risk groups, as defined in Appendix B, are presented in Table C.2.

Appendix Table C.2 Indicators for potentially vulnerable of high-risk populations

Indicator	Local area		Dubbo LGA		Regional NSW	
Low English language proficiency	-	0.0%	401	0.7%	25,266	0.9%
People born in countries where English is not the primary language	-	0.0%	3,395	6.2%	145,475	5.1%

³ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander has been abbreviated to 'ATSI' in these data tables for readability where repeated.

⁴ The median age for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents could not be calculated with the data available for Apsley and Neurea

Indicator	Local area		Dubbo LGA		Regional NSW	
Median individual weekly income	\$827		\$837		\$722	
Median household weekly income	\$1,677		\$1,597		\$1,434	
Households earning less than \$650 per week (low-income household)	7	8.5%	3,044	17.3%	201,149	20.2%
Households earning more than \$3000 per week (high-income household)	16	19.5%	3,276	18.6%	178,579	18.0%
Children under 14 years living with unemployed lone parent	-	0.0%	11,508	22.3%	505,534	20.7%
Single-parent families	8	9.3%	2,467	12.8%	125,417	11.7%
Lone person households (over 65 years)	5	5.8%	828	4.3%	54,341	5.1%
Has one or more long-term health conditions	82	33.5%	16,802	30.6%	941,726	33.3%
Has dementia	-	0.0%	439	0.8%	27,017	1.0%
Has asthma	26	10.6%	5,574	10.1%	271,403	9.6%
Has a lung condition	5	2.0%	1,226	2.2%	72,543	2.6%
Specialist housing service access (based on usual location of client) (2024-25) (count and % of ERP 2024) #	NA	NA	1,541	2.7%	61,585 (whole of NSW)	0.7% (whole of NSW)
NDIS participant who has 'low' level of function, as a proportion of total NDIS participants (FY24/25) ^	NA	NA	476	26.6%	46,831 (whole of NSW)	22.1% (whole of NSW)
Core activity need for assistance	10	4.1%	3,271	6.0%	193,513	6.8%
SEIFA	Apsley	Neurea	Dubbo LGA		Regional NSW	
IRSD (state decile) *	3	7	6		NA	
IRSAD (state decile) *	5	7	6		NA	
IEO (state decile) *	5	7	6		NA	
IER (state decile) *	5	9	5		NA	
Sources: 2021 Census (ABS, 2022)						
# Specialist Homelessness Services Collection data cubes (AIHW, 2024)						
^ NDIS Explore Data tool (NDIS, 2026)						
* Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) (ABS, 2023)						

C.3 Housing tenure, typology, composition, and affordability

Characteristics of housing for the social study area are provided in Table C.3.

Appendix Table C.3 Housing tenure, typology, composition, and affordability

	Local area		Dubbo LGA		Regional NSW	
Tenure						
Owned outright	39	45.3%	5,850	30.3%	406,902	38.0%
Owned with a mortgage	35	40.7%	6,544	33.9%	334,073	31.2%
Rented	9	10.5%	6,074	31.5%	287,264	26.8%
Other tenure type	-	0.0%	451	2.3%	24,962	2.3%
Social housing (% of total rented dwellings)	-	0.0%	874	14.4%	43,235	15.1%
Housing typology						
Separate house	79	91.9%	16,444	85.3%	882,102	82.3%
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc.	-	0.0%	1,502	7.8%	106,581	9.9%
Flat or apartment	-	0.0%	1,159	6.0%	68,041	6.3%
Other dwelling	3	3.5%	100	0.5%	11,158	1.0%
Household composition						
Family households	73	84.9%	13,367	69.3%	737,521	68.8%
Group households	-	0.0%	650	3.4%	35,087	3.3%
Lone person households	18	20.9%	5,256	27.3%	299,004	27.9%
Unoccupied dwellings	11	12.2%	1,623	7.8%	134,891	11.2%
Housing affordability						
Median mortgage repayment (per month)	\$1,522		\$1,517		\$1,733	
Median rent (per week)	\$243		\$300		\$330	
Mortgage stress ⁵	4	11.4%	624	9.5%	42,476	12.7%
Rental stress ⁶	-	0.0%	1,594	26.2%	103,450	36.0%

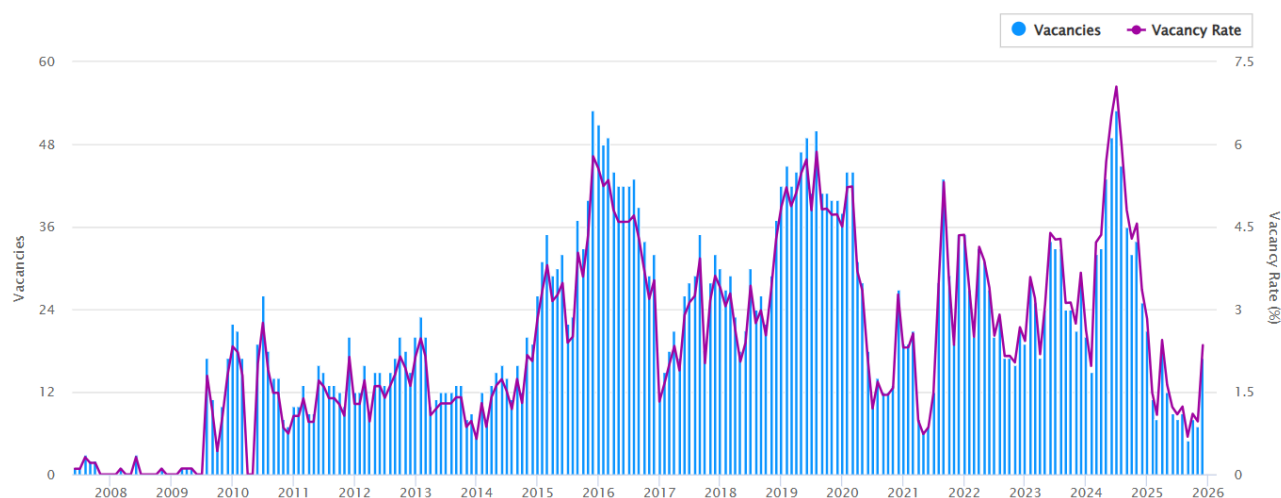
Rental vacancy rates reflect supply and demand within a rental market. A vacancy rate below 3% indicates an undersupply of rental properties within an area. An undersupply of rental housing usually results in greater competition among rental property seekers, including higher asking prices.

Rental vacancy rates for four postcodes were selected to represent the study area:

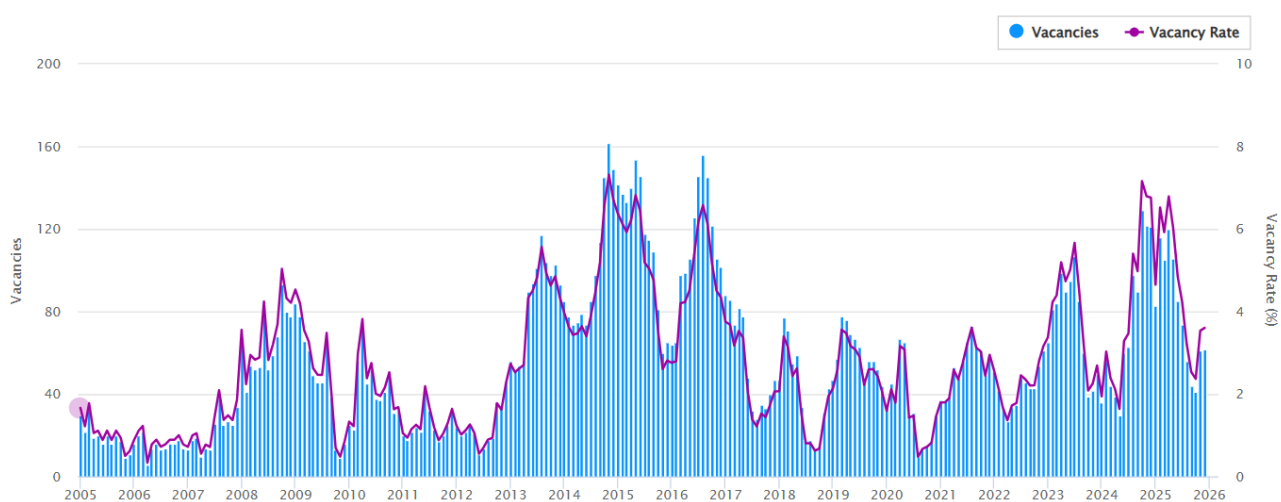
- 2820: Apsley, Wellington, Mumbil and surrounds (Figure C.1)
- 2850: Mudgee and surrounds (Figure C.2)
- 2818: Geurie and surrounds (Figure C.3)
- 2830: Dubbo and surrounds (Figure C.4)

⁵ Owner with mortgage households with mortgage repayments greater than 30% of household income (ABS, 2022)

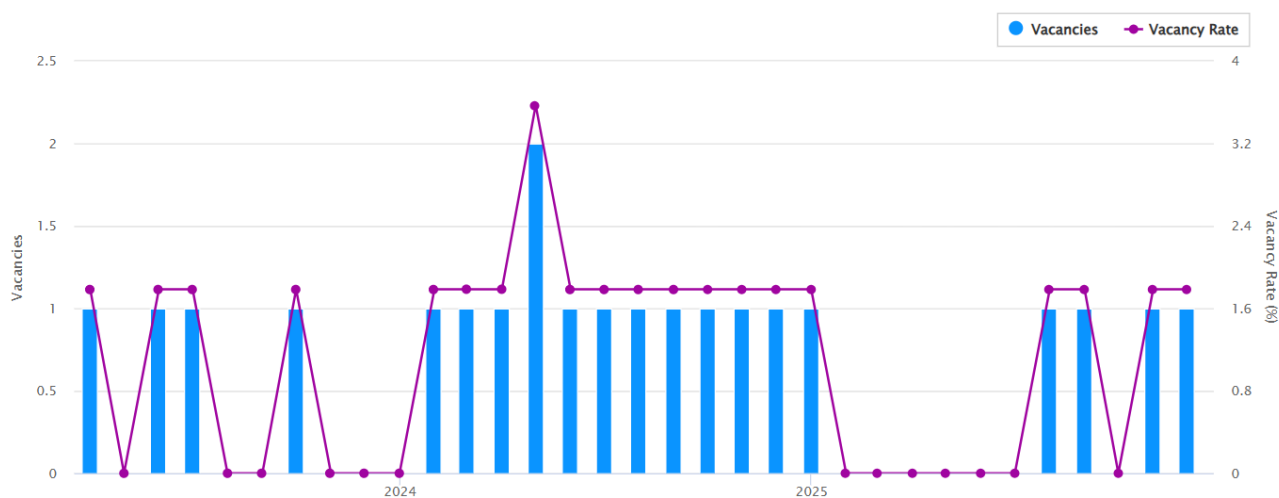
⁶ Renter households with rent payments greater than 30% of household income (ABS, 2022)



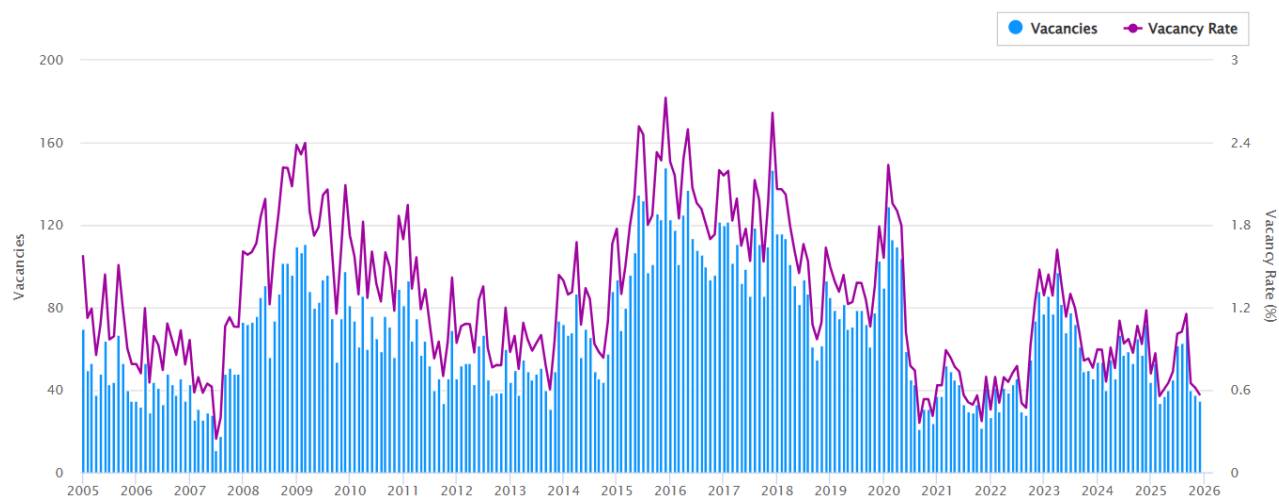
Appendix Figure C.1 Postcode 2820 – Apsley, Wellington, Mumbil and surrounds: rental vacancy rates (SQM, 2025)



Appendix Figure C.2 Postcode 2850 – Mudgee and surrounds: rental vacancy rates (SQM, 2025)

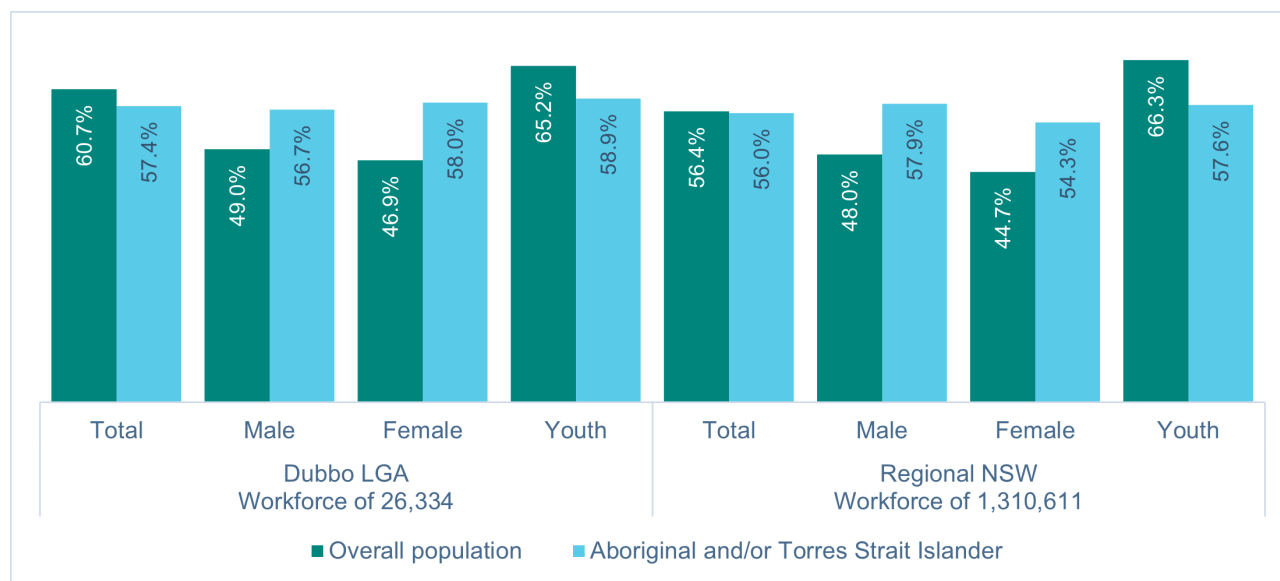


Appendix Figure C.3 Postcode 2818 – Geurie and surrounds: rental vacancy rates (SQM, 2025)



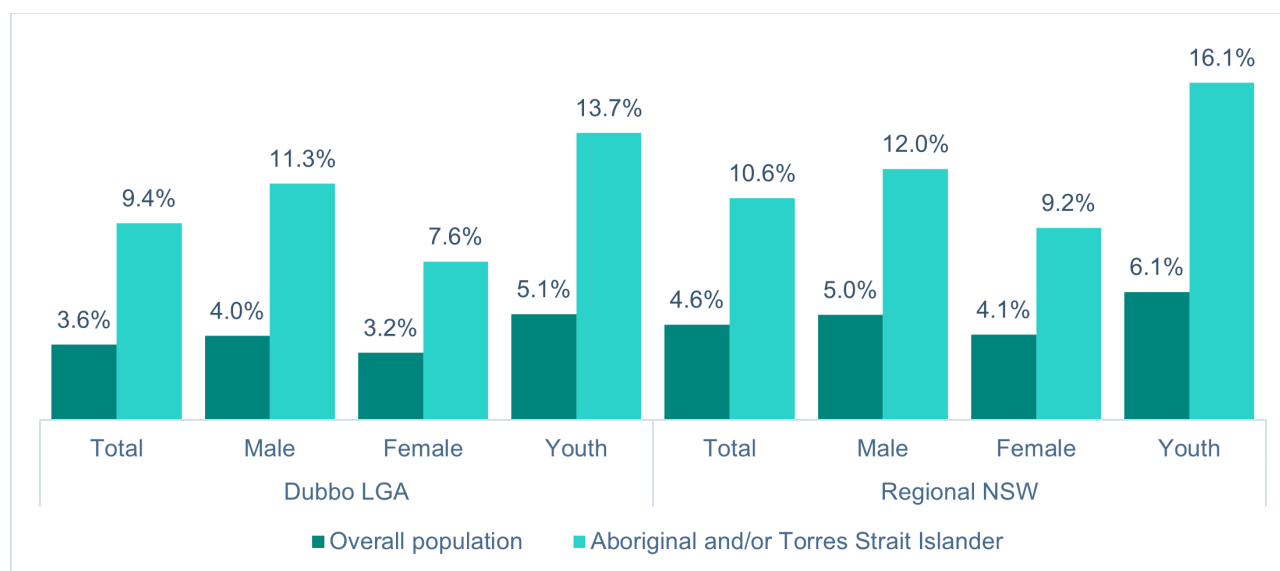
C.4 Workforce characteristics

Workforce participation rates are provided in Figure C.5, which present rates disaggregated by key demographic cohorts.



Appendix Figure C.5 Disaggregated workforce participation rates (ABS, 2022)

Unemployment rates are provided in Figure C.6, which present rates disaggregated by key demographic cohorts.



Appendix Figure C.6 Disaggregated unemployment rates (ABS, 2022)

C.5 Local industry

Business counts for Dubbo LGA are presented in Figure C.7 showing employment size and industry.

Industry	Number of employees					Total
	None	1 to 4	5 to 19	20 to 199	200+	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	916	209	52	19	-	1196
Mining	17	3	-	-	-	21
Manufacturing	92	40	28	10	-	170
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	11	7	3	3	-	21
Construction	647	362	106	9	-	1124
Wholesale Trade	72	28	26	10	-	136
Retail Trade	100	76	59	12	-	247
Accommodation and Food Services	79	76	69	18	-	243
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	275	75	13	12	-	375
Information Media and Telecommunications	8	5	-	-	-	15
Financial and Insurance Services	83	33	14	-	-	132
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	504	40	16	-	-	562
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	174	120	50	6	-	350
Administrative and Support Services	140	50	32	3	3	226
Public Administration and Safety	12	3	-	3	-	18
Education and Training	38	19	14	6	-	77
Health Care and Social Assistance	241	102	46	13	3	403
Arts and Recreation Services	36	19	5	-	-	61
Other Services	203	126	36	5	-	370
Currently Unknown	5	-	-	-	-	5
Total	3,653	1,392	572	131	4	5,752

Appendix Figure C.7 Business counts for Dubbo LGA, by annualised employment size, June 2025 (ABS, 2025)

Appendix D

Assigning impact ratings

D.1 Assigning impact ratings

Magnitude level						
		1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood level		Minimal	Minor	Moderate	Major	Transformational
A	Almost certain	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Very High
B	Likely	Low	Medium	High	High	Very High
C	Possible	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
D	Unlikely	Negligible	Low	Low	Medium	High
E	Very unlikely	Negligible	Negligible	Low	Medium	Medium

Appendix Figure D.1 Social impact significance matrix (DPHI, 2025b)

Magnitude	Dimensions	Details needed to enable assessment
	Extent	Which location(s) and people are affected? (e.g. near neighbours, local, regional, future generations). Who specifically is expected to be affected (directly, indirectly, and/or cumulatively), including any vulnerable people?
	Duration	When is the social impact expected to occur? Will it be time-limited (e.g. over particular project phases) or permanent?
	Intensity or scale	What is the likely scale or degree of change? (e.g. mild, moderate, severe)
	Sensitivity or importance	How sensitive/vulnerable (or how adaptable/resilient) are affected people to the impact, or (for positive impacts) how important is it to them? This might depend on the value they attach to the matter; whether it is rare/unique or replaceable; the extent to which it is tied to their identity; and their capacity to cope with or adapt to change.
	Level of concern/interest	How concerned/interested are people? Sometimes, concerns may be disproportionate to findings from technical assessments of likelihood, duration and/or intensity.

Appendix Figure D.2 Dimensions of magnitude (DPHI, 2025b)

Magnitude level	Meaning
Transformational	Substantial change experienced in community wellbeing, livelihood, infrastructure, services, health, and/or heritage values; permanent displacement or addition of at least 20% of a community.
Major	Substantial deterioration/improvement to something that people value highly, either lasting for an indefinite time, or affecting many people in a widespread area.
Moderate	Noticeable deterioration/improvement to something that people value highly, either lasting for an extensive time, or affecting a group of people.
Minor	Mild deterioration/improvement, for a reasonably short time, for a small number of people who are generally adaptable and not vulnerable.
Minimal	Little noticeable change experienced by people in the locality

Appendix Figure D.3 Magnitude levels (DPHI, 2025b)

Likelihood level	Meaning
Almost certain	Definite or almost definitely expected (e.g. has happened on similar projects)
Likely	High probability
Possible	Medium probability
Unlikely	Low probability
Very unlikely	Improbable or remote probability

Appendix Figure D.4 Definitions of likelihood (DPHI, 2025b)

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