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Social Impact Assessment

Baldon Wind Farm

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Declaration

SIA prepared by: NGH Pty Ltd

This SIA has been prepared in accordance with the *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (DPE, 2023a), to inform the EIS in accordance with Schedule 2 of the EP&A Regulation. It contains all available information relevant to the social impact assessment of the development, activity or infrastructure to which the SIA relates. The information contained in the SIA is neither false nor misleading.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BSC	Balranald Shire Council
BESS	battery energy storage system
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CSES	Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
Cth	Commonwealth
CWP	Community Working Party
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment (NSW) (formerly DPIE)
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cwth)
EP&A Act	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> (NSW)
ERC	Edward River Council
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GW	gigawatt
ha	hectare
HSC	Hay Shire Council
Heritage Act	<i>Heritage Act 1977</i> (NSW)
Hwy	Highway
ISEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007 (NSW)
km	kilometre
km ²	square kilometre
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LEP	Local Environment Plan
LGA	local government area
LSPS	Local Strategic Planning Statement
m	metres
MRC	Murray River Council

MW	megawatt
NES	Matters of National environmental significance under the EPBC Act (<i>c.f.</i>)
NEM	National Electricity Market
NPW Act	<i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)</i>
NSW	New South Wales
OECC	Office of Environment and Climate Change
RAMJO	Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation
REDS	Regional Economic Development Strategy
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
RMRA	Riverina Murray Regional Alliance
SAL	Suburbs and Localities
SCEP	Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan
SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy (NSW)
SHC	Swan Hill Council
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SW REZ	South West Renewable Energy Zone
UCL	Urban Centre and Locality

Executive summary

The Baldon Wind Farm is proposed to be located at 34034 Sturt Highway, Maude, NSW. The Project site is situated in the Hay Plains region, spanning largely across the Murray River local government area (LGA) with the northern section extending into the Hay LGA. The closest town to the Project is Moulamein, approximately 13 km south of the Project boundary and within the Murray River LGA. To the east, lies the Edward River LGA and to the west, the Balranald LGA.

The Project involves the construction, operation, and decommissioning of 180 wind turbines with up to 1,400MW capacity, with an associated battery energy storage system (BESS) with a capacity of 200MW/400 MWh (2-hour duration). The Project will provide power to the national electricity market (NEM) with the BESS element of Project allowing for optimisation of the available wind energy resource by storing the energy generated and aligning its supply to the NEM demand periods. The Project also includes all other associated infrastructure required to access, construct, operate, maintain and decommission the Project.

Project construction would take approximately 36 months, with a peak construction period of the first 9–24 months commencing in late 2025. Approximately 350 to 400 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs over the construction period and 35 FTE ongoing jobs during the operational stage are anticipated.

The Project has been declared a State Significant Development as defined under Part 4 of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and approval under the EP&A Act and Schedule 2 of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021* (EP&A Regulation) to construct and operate the Project is being sought.

This SIA has been prepared as part of the Project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and responds directly to the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued for this Project by the NSW Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment (DPIE) on 21 September 2022. This SIA has been prepared to comply with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (DPHI) *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (the SIA Guideline) (DPE, 2023a) which are applied to all State Significant projects.

The assessment aims to identify, predict and evaluate the likely social impacts and benefits arising from the Project, and to propose appropriate responses to mitigate and manage negative impacts and enhance positive benefits. This SIA builds on the initial social impact scoping and engagement undertaken by the Proponent at the project scoping phase.

The social locality or 'social area of influence' for this Project includes host communities of Moulamein and Maude (using the ABS 'Suburbs and Localities' geographical classifications), key towns of Hay, Balranald, Deniliquin and Swan Hill (using the ABS 'Urban Centres and Localities' geographical classifications) and Murray River, Hay Shire and Edward River Councils (LGAs) all of which are located in the Riverina Murray Region.

A social baseline profile for the social locality was developed to describe the existing social context and establish a benchmark against which potential social impacts can be assessed. SIA stakeholder engagement was also undertaken to inform and validate the social baseline and assessment of social impacts. This involved:

- A community survey, available for participants both online and as a paper version (n=25).
- Targeted, semi-structured interviews (n=15 interviews, 24 participants).
- Attendance at community information sessions in Balranald, Hay and Moulamein (one session in each town).

Building on the preliminary SIA undertaken by the Proponent during the scoping phase of the Project, the social impacts for each Project activity were then evaluated across the social impact categories as defined in the SIA Guideline:

- way of life,
- community,
- accessibility,
- culture,
- health and wellbeing,
- surroundings,
- livelihoods, and
- decision-making systems.

The evaluation involved a further review of relevant inputs, e.g., relevant EIS technical reports, stakeholder and community engagement findings, and comparative studies. The likely significance of each potential impact was determined, based on its predicted magnitude and likelihood as defined in the SIA Guideline (DPE, 2023a). Finally, measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate potential negative impacts and enhance positive benefits were developed to address impacts.

The Murray River LGA was estimated to have a population of 12,850 people, most of whom lived in Moama, Barham and Mathoura. Other key relevant highlights from the social baseline include:

- The Project aligned to existing local planning instruments within the region.
- The population comprised significant proportions of elderly and First nations residents.
- The region faces skills, labour, accommodation and social infrastructure and services pressures.

The community survey results suggested that approximately 60 percent of survey participants supported the Project. Key issues of importance that were noted within the survey included:

- use of agricultural land,
- native vegetation impacts,
- action on climate change,
- community benefit opportunities,
- employment or business opportunities,
- potential for diversification of land use/income streams,
- transportation planning and the use of local roads, and
- visual impacts.

These themes were re-iterated within both the Project-wide and SIA community and stakeholder engagement processes.

In general, these engagement processes revealed a strong sense of the need to capitalise on the economic opportunities of the renewable energy boom in the SW REZ for the benefit of the communities now and into the future. For the town of Moulamein in particular, there was a strong sense that the Project and other proximal developments presented a unique opportunity for the town which offered a strong imperative for economic development and community benefits to be experienced from these projects. However, the limited supply of housing and acute labour and skills shortages were frequently raised as regional challenges. In general, there was not too much concern about potential visual impacts from the Project; people accepted that the Project was part of a new industry which was evolving.

Many stakeholders highlighted interest in developing local education, training and employment opportunities from this and similar projects, particularly for school students and young people. Stakeholders also stated high level of interest in seeing local businesses getting work with this Project, including local Aboriginal businesses. People also wanted to see legacies through the community benefit fund such as investment in programs or infrastructure which met strategic community needs and contributed to community development over the longer term. Other key concerns raised related to potential impacts of construction

traffic on local road access, conditions, and safety; potential impacts on native flora and fauna, particularly bird strikes; and cultural heritage impacts.

Related to this, the avoidance of environment, visual and cultural heritage impacts was also prominent during the broader EIS technical field investigations. Subsequently, significant amendments have been made to limit biodiversity impacts, areas of highest Aboriginal cultural values, and to reduce visual impacts for neighbouring properties.

Social impacts and benefits that were identified within the SIA are summarised below and arranged by significance level (prior to application of mitigation or enhancement measures).

Impacts of high social significance were identified as:

- Strengthened economies
- Increased pressure on housing and accommodation
- Increased pressure on social infrastructure and services
- Local labour force impacts
- Construction related social amenity impacts (traffic, air quality, noise)
- Increased traffic and road safety impacts
- Potential harm to Aboriginal cultural values and heritage

Impacts of medium social significance were identified as:

- Changes to landscape character and visual amenity
- Health and wellbeing impacts for near neighbours
- Increased general community awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage and assets
- Risks to the construction workforce's health and wellbeing
- Increased local employment opportunities
- Increased training opportunities
- Increased procurement opportunities
- Changes in community composition, character, and cohesion
- Potential for lack of procedural fairness
- Increased agency for the local community
- Increased community investment
- Concern about impacts to the environment
- Generation of renewable energy

Impacts of low social significance were identified as:

- Public safety and hazard risks
- Social amenity (noise) impacts due to wind farm operations
- Loss of agricultural land and productivity

Enhancement and mitigation measures have been developed that directly respond to these potential social impacts (positive and negative) associated with the Project. These measures have been identified through consideration of Project impacts, existing knowledge, and SIA and Project-wide community and stakeholder consultation.

Where relevant, some of these mitigation and enhancement measures have been consolidated into the following management strategies.

- Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (CSES)

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- Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan (IAPP)
- Community Benefit Sharing Program (CBSP).

It is recommended that the CSES is updated to reflect the findings of the SIA and the Project-wide community and stakeholder engagement. Frameworks for both the IAPP and the CBSP have been detailed within this SIA. However, further work is required to refine, develop, add to, and test (with the community) the details of both the IAPP and the CBSP.

Some social impacts of the Project would be managed primarily through other various environmental management strategies identified in the EIS (including the Cultural Heritage Management Plan, Construction Traffic Management Plan, Construction Noise Management Plan, Emergency Response Plan, and the Construction Environmental Management System). The CSES would be the platform that ensures adequate linkage between these management plans and community concerns and interest relating to these matters.

1. Introduction

NGH has been engaged by Goldwind Capital (Australia), on behalf of Baldon Wind Farm Pty Ltd (The Proponent), to complete a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the proposed Baldon Wind Farm (the Project).

The Project has been declared a State Significant Development as defined under Part 4 of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). The Proponent is seeking approval under the EP&A Act and Schedule 2 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 (EP&A Regulation) to construct and operate the Project. This SIA has been prepared as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Project.

The SIA responds directly to the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued for this Project by the NSW Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment (DPIE) on 21 September 2022:

Social Impact – including an assessment of the social impacts in accordance with Social Impact Assessment Guideline (DPIE, 2021) and consideration of construction workforce accommodation.

1.1. Project overview

The proposed Baldon Wind Farm would be located at 34034 Sturt Highway, Maude, NSW. The Project site is situated in the Hay Plains region, spanning largely across the Murray River local government area (LGA) with the northern section extending into the Hay LGA. The closest town to the Project is Moulamein, which is approximately 13 km south of the Project boundary, within the Murray River LGA. To the east, lies the Edward River LGA and to the west, the Balranald LGA. The Project will involve the construction, operation, and decommissioning of 180 wind turbines with up to 1,400MW capacity, with an associated battery energy storage system (BESS) with a capacity of 200MW/400 MWh (2-hour duration). The Project will provide power to the national electricity market (NEM). The BESS element of Project will allow for optimisation of the available wind energy resource by storing the energy generated and aligning its supply to the NEM demand periods. The Project also includes all other associated infrastructure required to access, construct, operate, maintain and decommission the Project.

A propriety limited company has been established for the Project, Baldon Wind Farm Pty Ltd, which is owned as a partnership between Goldwind Capital (Australia) Pty Ltd (Goldwind) and Omni Wind Pty Ltd. Goldwind supplies wind turbines to the Australian market and has been involved in the development of over 1.5 Gigawatts (GW) of renewable projects across Australia. Goldwind is a subsidiary of Xinjiang Goldwind Science & Technology Co Ltd (Goldwind International) which is a major manufacturer of wind turbine technology and energy solutions. The Company has supplied over 31,000 wind turbines globally over the past 21 years, which now exceeds 50GW of installed capacity.

The proposed Project site sits within the NSW South West Renewable Energy Zone (SW REZ) and spans across 46,259 hectares (ha). The site is comprised of two rural properties, held by different landowners, which are primarily used for sheep grazing. The current vegetation is low and sparse saltbush. The Project site is located approximately:

- 13km north of Moulamein
- 23km southwest of Maude
- 44km east of Balranald
- 64km southwest of Hay
- 100km northwest of Deniliquin.

The Project locality is shown in Figure 1-1 below.

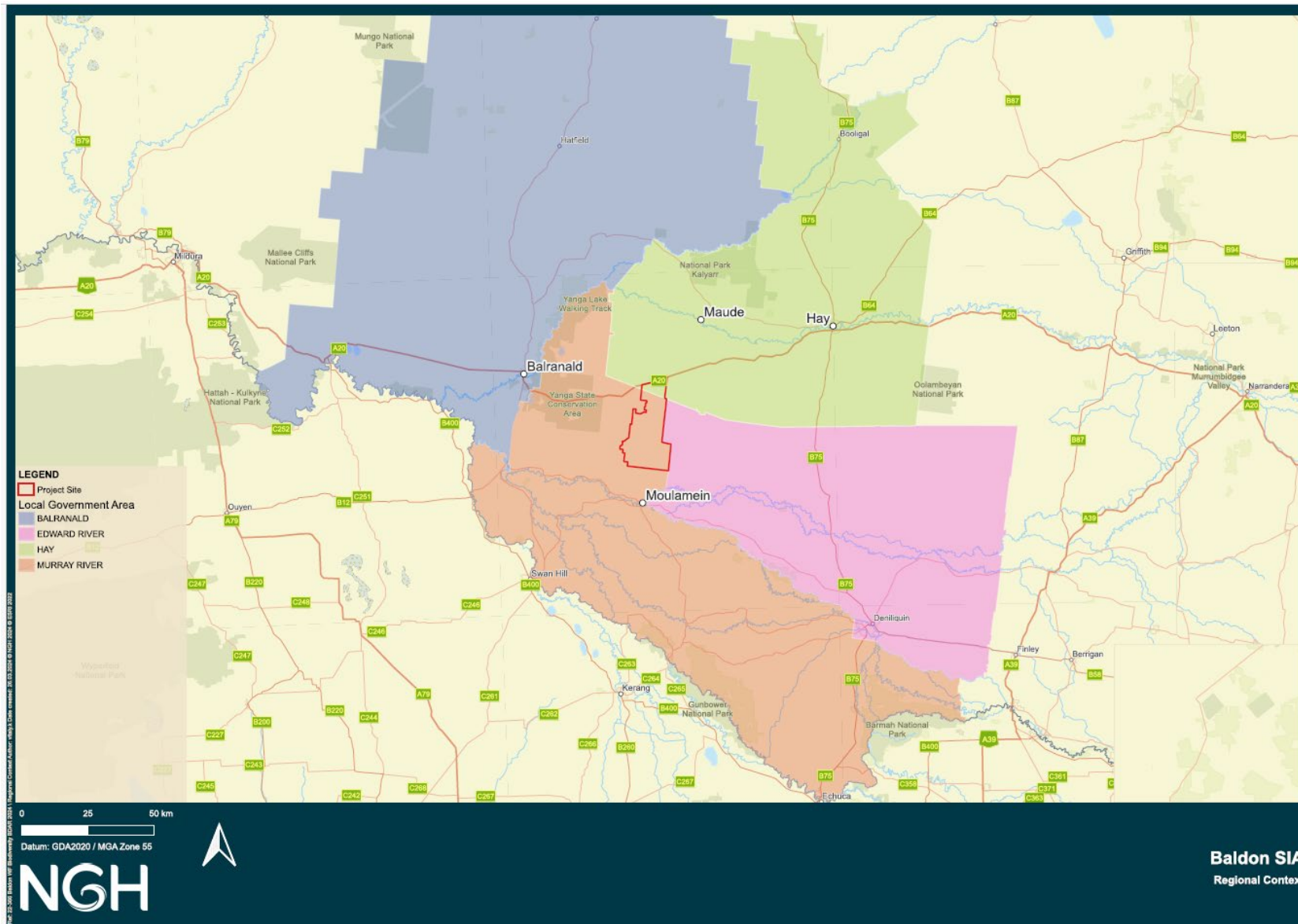


Figure 1-1 Baldon Wind Farm locality map and key features

It is anticipated that construction of the Project would take approximately 36 months, with a peak construction period of the first 9–24 months. Construction is expected to start in late 2025. Approximately 350 to 400 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs over the construction period and 35 FTE ongoing jobs are anticipated.

Construction of the Project may be delivered in two stages. Stage 1 would consist of the grid connection works, construction of 45 turbines, and associated infrastructure. Stage 2 would extend to the construction of the remaining 135 turbines and additional associated infrastructure.

It is estimated that the Project would have an operational lifetime of approximately 35 years, with either decommissioning or refurbishment to be undertaken after this period.

The Project consists of the following key infrastructure component, outlined below in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1 Key project components

Key components	Details
Location	34034 Sturt Highway, Maude, NSW, 2711
Nominal capacity	Generating capacity: Up to 1,400MW BESS: 200MW/400MWh (2-hour duration)
Development footprint / Project site	Approx. 819 ha dispersed across two rural properties, totalling an area of 46,259 ha
Permanent infrastructure components	A wind farm including approximately 180 wind turbines and all associated infrastructure required to access, construct, operate, maintain and decommission the Project. 5 permanent and 7 temporary 130m meteorological masts.
Temporary construction facilities	Several construction compounds. Approximately two or three concrete batch plants adjacent to the construction compounds. These may be relocated to different construction locations, depending on Project staging and workfront location. Gravel borrow pits and gypsum extraction if feasible. Temporary Meteorological masts. A temporary accommodation camp may be required, subject to availability and suitability of accommodation in the surrounding region. Approval is sought for a camp size sufficient to cater for the entire project workforce (~400 persons) in the event that the surrounding local accommodation options are saturated by other development occurring concurrently in the region. An area of 4.3ha near to the Sturt Hwy site entrance has been assessed for siting the accommodation camp and would be sufficient in size. The camp would be decommissioned and the area rehabilitated or cleaned up and handed over to the landholder (as agreed with the landholder) once the construction period is complete.
Transport and access	The Project has direct Sturt Highway access and includes the installation of a new intersection for the primary construction and operation access.

Key components	Details
	<p>The highway access avoids the use of local roads by delivery and construction vehicles, with materials and windfarm components able to be transported from ports in either Newcastle or Adelaide (to be determined post approvals) and the ability to source construction materials from a range of sources and via regional highways.</p> <p>Secondary access points are available off local roads for emergency access provisions.</p>
Transmission line connections	<p>Underground cabling to connect groups of turbines to the substations or BESS facilities.</p> <p>Overhead transmission lines (likely 220kV or 330kV), approximately 33km in total, to connect the Project substations to the point of connection. Overhead lines may also be used as well as cabling within the Project site to connect groups of turbines.</p> <p>Connection to the National Electricity Grid via either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the existing 220kV transmission line • the 330kV Project Energy Connect in the central part of the Project site.
Onsite substation and switchyard	<p>Substations and switching stations and other related electrical facilities. Up to 7 substations/switching stations may be proposed and these areas may also include some operations facilities (1–5ha each). The substation and all ancillary buildings would be no taller than 4m excluding pole like structures such as gantries, bus bars and other transmission connection infrastructure.</p>
BESS facilities	<p>One or both of the following forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A larger BESS located at or near one or more of the Project’s substations. • A number of smaller BESS connected to all or a subset of turbines.
Decommissioning and rehabilitation	<p>During Project decommissioning, above ground infrastructure would be removed and these areas of disturbance would also be rehabilitated, returning the vast majority of the site to its current land capability, for ongoing agricultural or other use.</p>
Construction timing and workforce	<p>Approximately 350–400 FTE workers during over the approximately 36-month construction period, with peak construction period over the first 9–24 months (for 180 turbine project).</p> <p>Workforce accommodation, if required to supplement existing offsite facilities will be constructed onsite.</p>
Operational timing and workforce	<p>Approximately 35 FTE workers during operations (for 180 turbine project). 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.</p> <p>It is estimated that the Project would have an operational lifetime of approximately 35 years, with the potential for refurbishment.</p>

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Key components	Details
Estimated Development Cost	\$2.78 Billion

2. Methodology

This section presents a summary of the SIA methodology. A detailed methodology is provided in Appendix A.

This SIA has been prepared to comply with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (DPHI) *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (the SIA Guideline) (DPE, 2023a). The SIA guideline applies to all State Significant projects.

The assessment aims to identify, predict and evaluate the likely social impacts and benefits arising from the Project, and to propose appropriate responses to mitigate and manage negative impacts and enhance positive benefits.

This SIA builds on the initial social impact scoping and engagement undertaken by the Proponent at the project scoping phase. An overview of the key phases and tasks is presented in Figure 2-1 below.

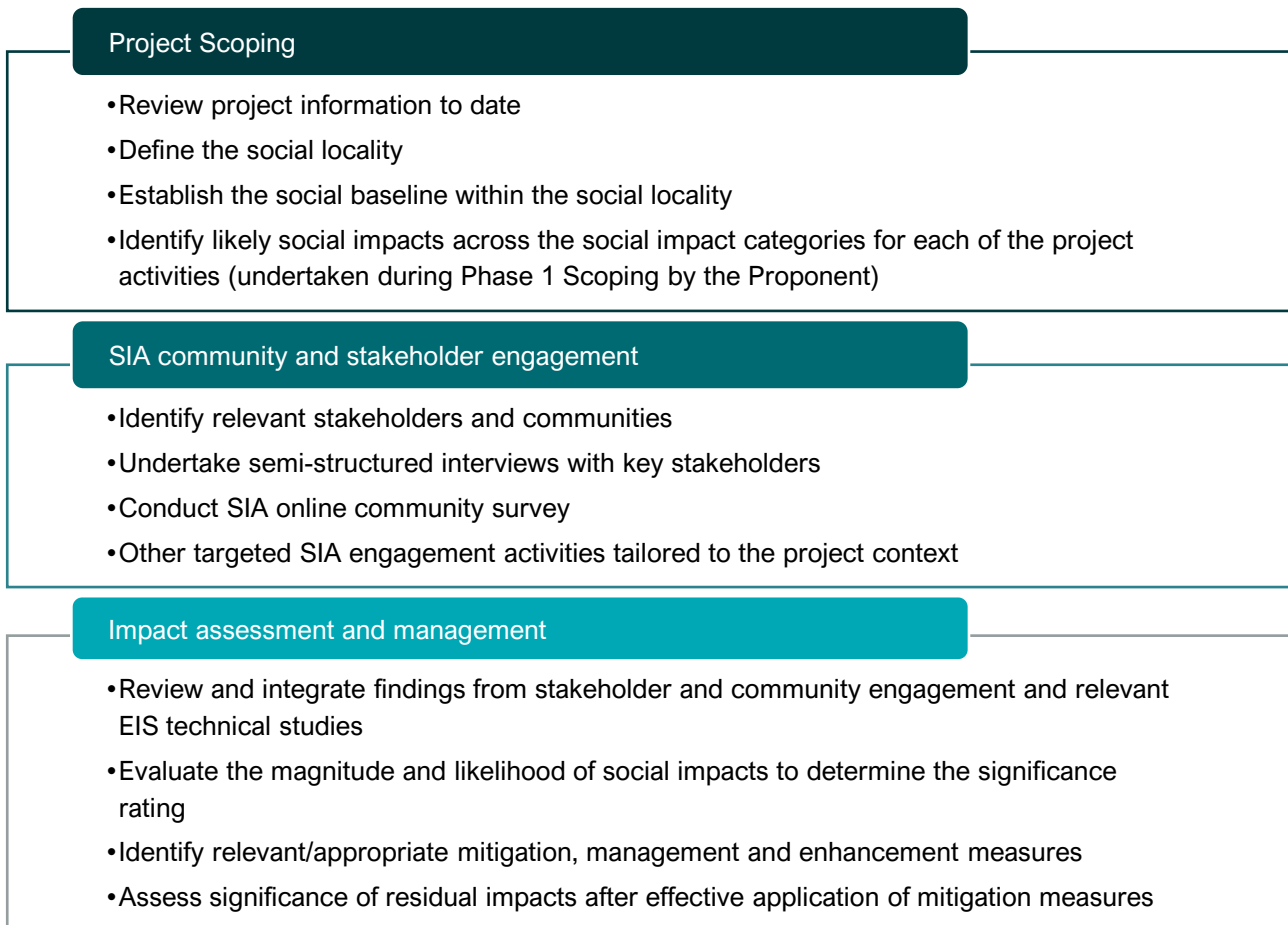


Figure 2-1 Overview of SIA methodology

The social locality or 'social area of influence' for this Project has been determined by identifying the main place-based or populated communities where people live, work and visit, as well as the existing networks of travel between them, with consideration of the nature and scale of potential impacts arising from the development. The areas and communities of interest that comprise the social locality for this Project are outlined in Table 2-1 and shown in Figure 2-2.

Table 2-1 Areas of interest within the social locality

Area of interest (ABS/ ASGS/ State classification)	Name
Host localities/communities (Suburbs and Localities – SAL)	Moulamein Maude
Key towns and cities (Urban Centre and Locality – UCL)	Hay Balranald Deniliquin Swan Hill
Local Government Area (LGA)	Murray River Council Hay Shire Council Edward River Council
Region (NSW DPE)	Riverina Murray
State (for comparison of averages)	NSW

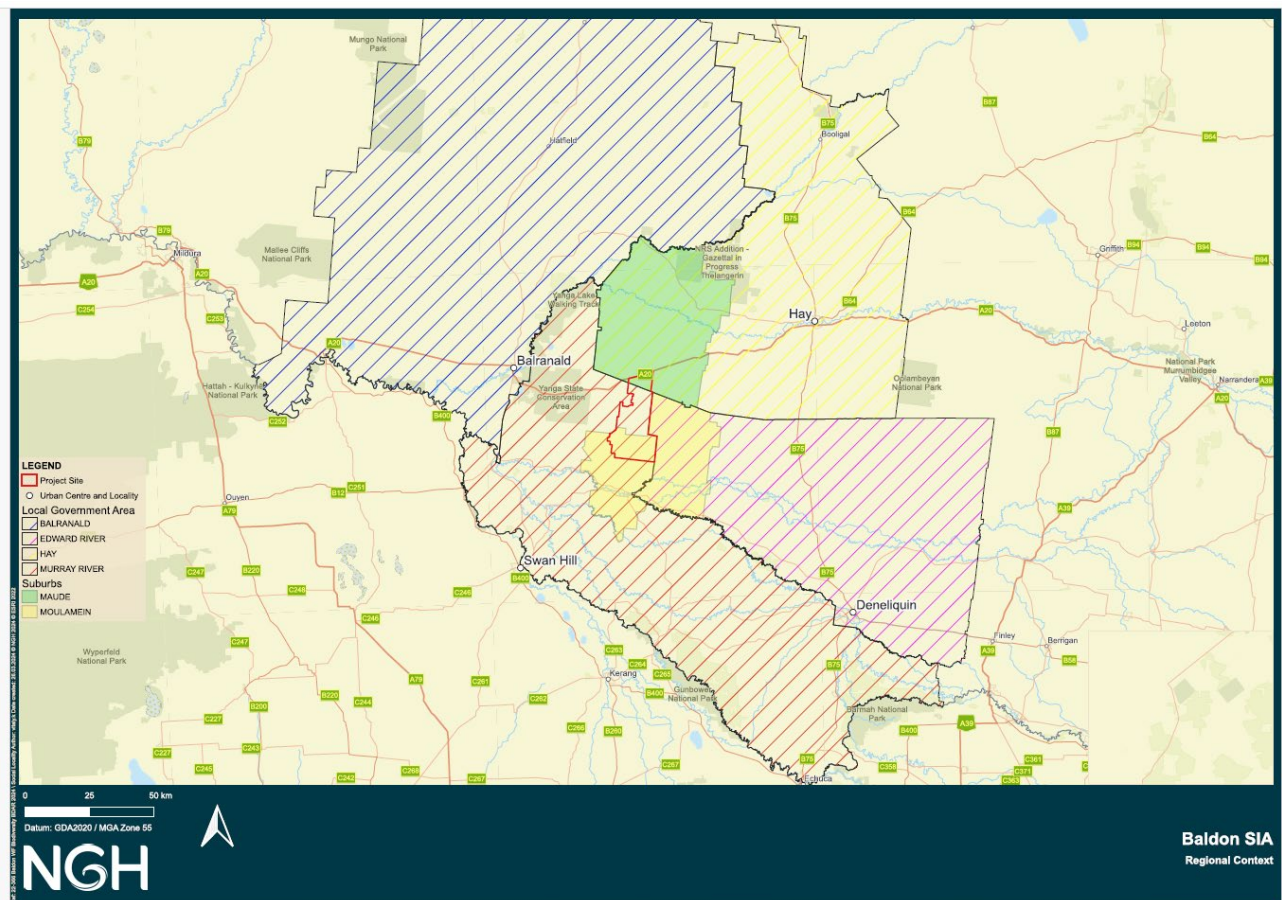


Figure 2-2 Social locality

A social baseline profile for the social locality was developed to describe the existing social context and establish a benchmark against which potential social impacts can be assessed. Due to the small populations of Moulamein and Maude, the social baseline has a primary focus on the Murray River and Hay Shire LGAs, and the larger towns in the social locality. The social baseline was informed by both primary and secondary data sources.

SIA stakeholder engagement was also undertaken to inform and validate the social baseline and assessment of social impacts. This involved:

- A community survey, available for participants both online and as a paper version (n=25).
- Targeted, semi-structured interviews (n=15 interviews, 24 participants).
- Attendance at community information sessions in Balranald, Hay and Moulamein.

Building on the preliminary SIA undertaken by the Proponent during the scoping phase of the Project, the social impacts for each Project activity were then evaluated across the social impact categories as defined in the SIA Guideline:

- way of life,
- community,
- accessibility,
- culture,
- health and wellbeing,
- surroundings,
- livelihoods, and
- decision-making systems.

The evaluation involved a further review of relevant inputs, e.g., relevant EIS technical reports, stakeholder and community engagement findings, and comparative studies. The likely significance of each potential impact was determined, based on its predicted magnitude and likelihood as defined in the SIA Guideline (Table 2-2). Finally, measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate potential negative impacts and enhance positive benefits were developed to address impacts. This included an assessment of the significance of residual impacts post-application of mitigation measures.

Table 2-2 Social impact significance matrix

		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	Medium	Medium	High	High
D	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
E	Very unlikely	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

Source: SIA Guideline – Technical Supplement (DPE, 2023b)

3. Community and stakeholder engagement

The two streams of Project engagement (Project-wide EIS engagement and SIA targeted engagement) were undertaken in an integrated way. Findings from both, as well as previous engagement undertaken by the Proponent to inform the Scoping Report, have informed this SIA.

3.1. Scoping Report engagement results

A summary of topics and concerns raised by stakeholders which were outlined in the Project's Scoping Report is outlined in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 Scoping Report topics and concerns

Topics	Concerns raised	Raised by
Jobs and economic benefits	Desire to maximise opportunities for local communities.	Hay Shire Council officials. Murray River Council officials. Most community members.
Community benefits package	Opportunities to maximise benefits for local communities. Interest in structure of benefits package.	Murray River Council officials. Most community members.
Community engagement	Ensuring thorough community engagement.	Edward River Council officials.
Local accommodation	Opportunities for local accommodation providers to benefit during construction.	Several local community members/business owners.
Local housing availability	Concern that local housing supply will not be sufficient for influx of workers and unavailability of suitable blocks of land for housing/light industry development.	Several local community members.
Local work force	Concern that construction would drain local workforce and increase wage expectation, negatively impacting local businesses.	A few local community members.
Potential visual impacts	Concern over negative visual impact in flat landscape. Concern over potential cumulative impacts with other wind farm developments.	A few local community members.
Potential noise impacts	Concern over negative noise impact	A few local community members.
Grid upgrades	Concern around grid constraints and cumulative impacts of multiple windfarms competing for grid availability. Concern Project EnergyConnect may propose larger/additional upgrades.	A few local community members.
Timing and feasibility of project	Questions around timing of Project EnergyConnect upgrades and ability of project to export power.	A few local community members.

3.2. EIS engagement program

A Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (CSES) that outlined the approach to EIS community consultation and facilitated engagement with the community, was updated during the EIS phase to reflect the progression of the Project. The CSES included an Engagement Action Plan, which was implemented by NGH in collaboration with the Proponent. A range of engagement activities aimed at broadening awareness of the Project, responding to concerns, working through issues, and capturing opportunities were delivered.

Community engagement and consultation for the EIS phase commenced in January 2023. The community context assisted in tailoring the engagement approach, i.e., a rural area with agriculture and low population

density. A key focus of the EIS engagement program was to understand the concerns of the proximal neighbours, landholders, and communities. As such, the engagement program aimed to capture the perspectives of residents further from the Project, as well as interested members in the broader community with consultation and information provision extended to the regional service centres of Hay and Balranald in September 2023.

The consultation methods were delivered in the form of phone calls, emails, face-to-face meetings, community pop-ups, and drop-in information sessions. The key stakeholder categories included host landowners, near neighbours, wider community, haulage route users, Hay Shire Council, Edward River Council, Murray River Council, State MPs, Traditional Owners, RFS/Urban fire/emergency services, civil aviation, government agencies, schools, TAFEs and universities, business and industry, local community groups, groups of wind farm objectors and advocacy groups.

3.2.1. Summary of EIS engagement program results

Key themes raised during the Project-wide engagement program included:

- General show of support for renewable energy developments on the Hay Plains and this Project in particular.
- Strong interest in the need to maximise opportunities for local communities through jobs and economic benefits, including securing opportunities for local accommodation providers during construction.
- Strong desire for partnerships between local education providers and renewable energy developers.
- Strong interest in community benefit opportunities for the region.
- Concern about limited local housing supply and limited ability to house construction workforces for this and other projects.
- Concern about the VNI West transmission route.
- Limited concern about potential visual impacts from the Project. People accepted that the Project was part of a new industry which was evolving.
- Some concern about potential impacts on native flora and fauna, particularly bird strikes.
- Interest in cultural heritage impacts, particularly about preserving sites of significance.
- General interest in the technology used in the renewable energy sector.

More detail regarding the EIS engagement program and results can be seen at EIS Section 5.

3.3. SIA engagement findings

The methodology of the SIA engagement program is detailed in Section 2. Key findings are reported below, while more detailed results related to perceived and potential impacts, mitigations and enhancements are presented throughout Sections 5 and 6 of this report.

Findings from the SIA interviews and the online survey strongly reiterated the findings from the EIS engagement program. This was in terms of both the general sentiments regarding the Project, as well as the key areas of focus that emerged.

3.3.1. Overview of SIA engagement findings

The key issues and opportunities raised during SIA engagement included:

- Support of renewable energy developments in general, and this Project in particular. Despite this, there were strong concerns expressed (particularly in Moulamein) about the VNI West transmission route.

- Strong sense of the need to capitalise on the economic opportunities of the renewable energy boom in the SW REZ for the benefit of the communities now and into the future. Strong recognition that these renewable developments will bring once-in-a-generation economic development opportunities to the region broadly. For the town of Moulamein in particular, there was a strong sense that the Project and other proximal developments presented a unique opportunity for the town which offered a strong imperative for broad community benefits to be experienced from these projects.
- Strong desire to maximise opportunities for local communities through jobs and local business opportunities, including for local Indigenous people and businesses. Related to this, the acute labour and skills shortages in the region was also commonly raised. There was also some degree of concern expressed about the potential that the construction phases of the renewables projects in the region would drain local workforces and increase wage expectation, negatively impacting local businesses.
- Strong interest in developing local education, training and employment opportunities and pathways for this and similar projects, particularly for school students and young people.
- Most stakeholders and many survey participants noted that a community benefit sharing program would be highly valued by the community and it would help to demonstrate the Proponent's support of the community. People wanted to see legacies through the community benefit fund such as investment in programs or infrastructure which met strategic community needs and contributed to community development over the longer term.
- The limited supply of existing housing across the region was a key issue raised by many stakeholders. This deficiency already presented obstacles to attract and retain workers in key sectors such as health and education, thus impacting service provision. Concern that local housing supply would not be sufficient for any influx of construction workers.
- Interest in cultural heritage within the area with concern about preserving sites of significance.
- Some limited concern for visual amenity impact along the Hay Plains.
- Potential impacts of construction traffic on local road access, conditions, and safety.
- Community members also wanted to see engagement continue throughout the Project lifecycle.

3.3.2. Community survey results

Ten participants (40%) indicated that they 'strongly support' and another five (20%) 'support' the Project (see Figure 3-1). These findings indicated that approximately 60 percent of participants supported the Project. Two participants 'strongly oppose' or 'oppose' the Project. Of the 14 Moulamein respondents, six 'strongly support' the Project, and another four 'support' (n=2) or 'somewhat support' (n=2) the Project. One example of a supportive comment included: "He the project takes off and has a long successful life span".

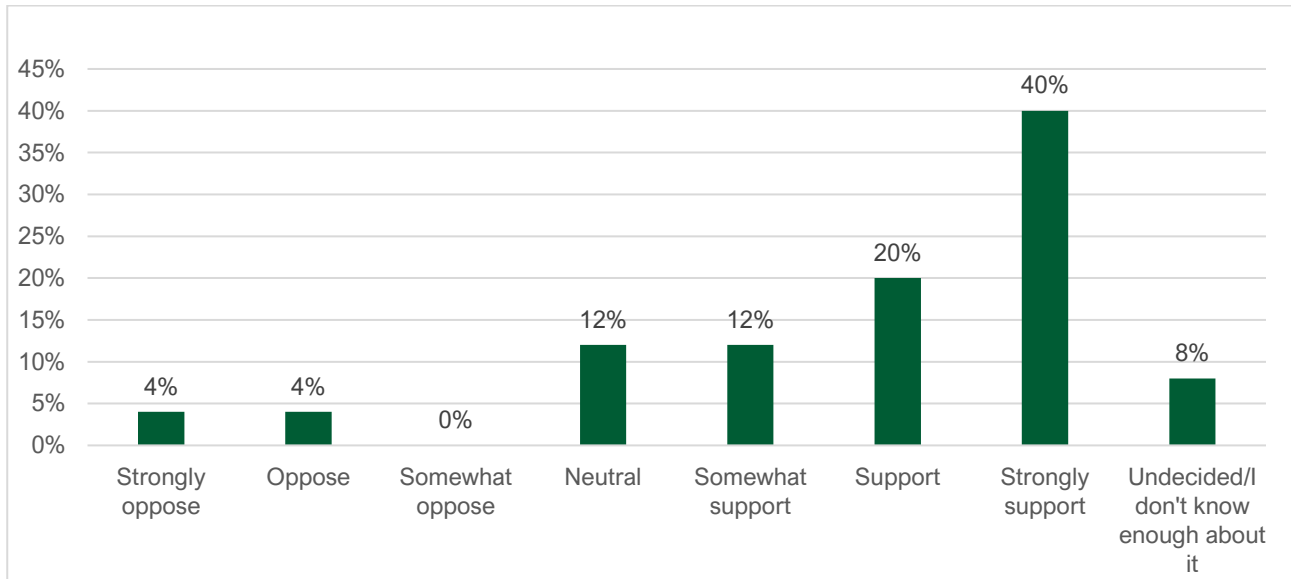


Figure 3-1 Survey question: Please rate your overall level of support for the proposed project (n=25)

The most frequently selected main reasons participants were interested in the Project were the potential positive impacts on the local area (72%, n=18) and wanting to build their understanding of the Project (36%, n=9).

When asked about their views on potential benefits and impacts of wind farms generally, participants identified local economic opportunities (80%, n=20) and community benefits (68%, n=17) as key benefits, followed by renewable energy generation (64%, n=16) and diversification of land use/income streams (56%, n=14). When asked about their concerns about wind farms generally, participants identified potential visual impacts (36%, n=9), effects on natural areas or habitats (32%, n=8), and effects on land values (28%, n=7).

In terms of the Project specifically, participants identified the most important environmental factors as the 'alternative use of agricultural land within the region' and 'native vegetation impacts' (both 40%, n=10), followed by 'the positive development of renewable energy/action on climate change' (36%, n=9) (multiple answers could be selected). 'Community benefit opportunities' was the most important social and economic factor (56%, n=14), followed by 'securing employment or business from the project' and 'potential for diversification of land use/income streams' (both 40%, n=10) while 'transportation planning and the use of local roads' was the most important amenity factor (36%, n=9), followed by 'potential for visual impacts for near neighbours' (32%, n=8) (Figure 3-2).

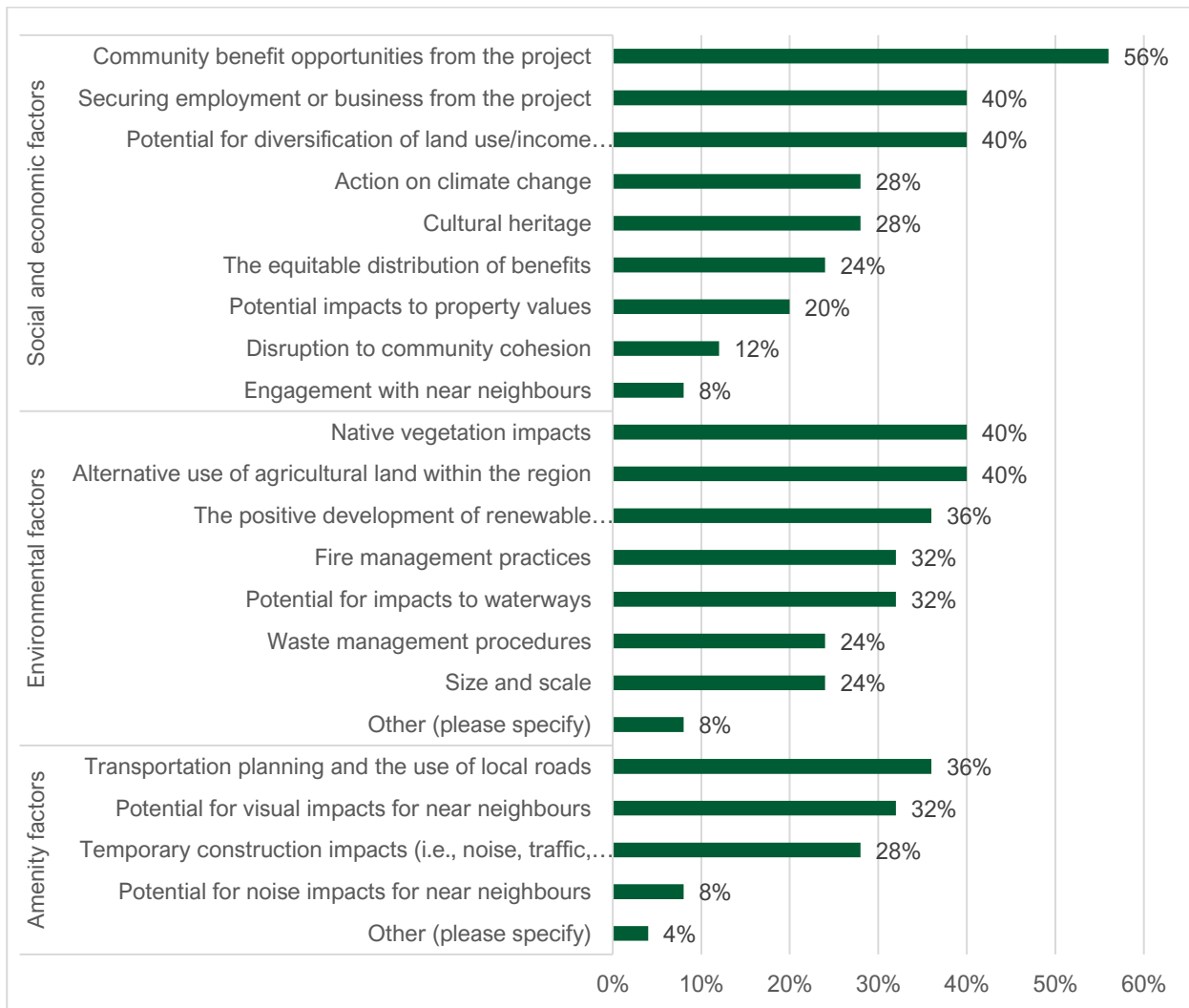


Figure 3-2 Survey questions: Important environmental, social and economic, and amenity factors related to this Project (n=25)

When asked what they value most about the local area, the top responses were 'community/family ties' (72%, n=18), and 'agriculture' (68%, n=17%), followed by 'natural values, including biodiversity and ecosystems' (56%, n=14) and 'landscape and views' (48%, n=12) (multiple answers could be selected). When asked to describe something this community is proud of, many of the participants from Moulamein and surrounding localities such as Moolpa and Mallan mentioned community spirit, being a tightknit, supportive and social community, volunteers and the resilience of the community. Other responses mentioned the local sporting teams, the town and river, rich biodiversity and the historical and cultural heritage.

The landscape characteristics or views in the region and local area that are important to survey participants can be broadly grouped into two themes. These are waterways, i.e., rivers (n=13), the lake (n=5) and creeks/billabong (n=3); and the plains, i.e., wide open plains/spaces (n=3) and the flat landscape (n=2). Other views included the sunrises and sunsets (n=2), and farms and the old courthouse in Moulamein (each n=1)

Participants rated rivers/creeks as of high scenic value (76%, n=19) while 64% (n=16) rated bushland areas high and vegetation as of moderate scenic value. Most participants rated the plains as of low (40%, n=10) or moderate (36%, n=9) scenic value. Townships were also rated as moderate to high scenic value (56%, n=14 and 40%, n=10 respectively).

4. Social baseline

This section presents an overview of the existing socio-economic conditions within the social locality. All population and demographic data presented here are from the ABS 2021 Census, unless otherwise stated. Detailed demographic and industry characteristics and data relating to the social locality are provided in Appendix B and Appendix C.

4.1. Regional context

4.1.1. Riverina Murray region

The Project is situated on the Hay Plains in the Riverina Murray region of southwest NSW, within the Murray River and Hay Shire LGAs and adjacent to the Edward River LGA. Located to the west of the Great Dividing Range and extending along the state border with Victoria, the Riverina Murray region, encompasses 20 LGAs, contains vast waterways and river systems. The west of the region is dominated by open plains of native grasslands and semi-arid shrublands and is home to the Yanga, Kalyarr, Oolambeyan, and Murray Valley National Parks and the Ramsar-listed NSW Central Murray Forests.

The region's river systems and natural water assets shape settlement patterns, lifestyles, and the economy. The Riverina Murray is known as Australia's food bowl and is one of Australia's most productive agricultural regions. Agriculture is the primary use of rural land, worth over \$2 billion each year, and the industry is heavily reliant on the river systems for irrigation and access to water (DPE, 2023c). Major agricultural and horticultural crops in the western Riverina plains include cotton, rice, citrus, grapes, and nuts. The region is a leader in both production and manufacturing and has excellent freight connections to Melbourne and ports in NSW. Renewable energy development is a rapidly growing sector in the Riverina Murray region.

The region is home to more than 283,000 people. Over half of the region's population live in the three major regional cities of Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith. These cities provide 58% of all jobs in the region, and commercial, residential, cultural, and industrial opportunities as well as higher-order regional-level services. Major towns in the southwestern part of the region include Hay, Deniliquin, and the border town of Moama.

The Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita and Yorta Yorta countries make up the Riverina Murray region. There are 20 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) in the region (DPE, 2023c). Many parts of the Riverina Murray region have seen stronger than expected population growth since 2016, particularly along the Murray River. Despite overall population growth, six LGAs within the region, including Hay and Edward River, experienced a decline in population (DCJ, 2023). This has been attributed partly to a decrease in agriculture related employment, within the irrigation dependent towns of Deniliquin and Wakool (RAMJO, 2020). Albury, Griffith, Wagga Wagga and cross-border communities are expected to accommodate a large portion of the predicted growth over the next 20 years. With an ageing population, it is anticipated that the proportion of people over 65 will increase from 20% in 2021 to 25% by 2041 (DPE, 2023c).

Recent years have seen the people of the Riverina Murray region continue to confront challenges such as drought, bushfire, the pandemic, inflationary pressures, and 2022's floods.

4.1.2. Murray River LGA

The Murray River Council LGA is located in the Riverine Plains in the central part of the Murray Basin. Covering an area of 11,865 km² of relatively flat and fertile land, it extends along the Murray River from the township of Moama in the east to Tooleybuc in the west. The LGA is bounded by the Edward River Council to the north, Berrigan Shire to the east, Balranald Shire to the west and Hay Shire at the north-western corner. Adjoining Victorian LGAs are Moira, Campaspe, Gannawarra and Swan Hill.

In 2021, the Murray River LGA had an estimated population of 12,850 people with a median age of 49 years (ABS, 2021). Over 85% of the population lives in the main towns of Moama and Barham or in the other settlements of Koraleigh, Mathoura, Moulamein, Murray Downs, Tooleybuc, and Wakool (Wakefield Planning, 2023). Many of the LGA's settlements are cross-border, neighbouring communities that are separated only by the Murray River, including Murray Downs/Swan Hill, Barham/Koondrook and Moama/Echuca. These twin towns operate together, with services, commerce, infrastructure and employment provided on either side of the river utilised by people on both sides of the border (MRC, 2020). The NSW Murray River communities have stronger social and economic connections to communities in northern Victoria and Melbourne than to other parts of NSW (DPE, 2023c).

The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry sector is the LGA's largest economic contributor and is also the largest employer. About 70% of the Murray River LGA area is used for cropping, with livestock grazing dominant on the more marginal dryland areas (MRC, 2020). Other important industries are manufacturing, construction, health and community services, professional services, retail trade and accommodation and food services (Remplan, 2023).

4.1.3. Hay Shire LGA

The Hay Shire Council area is located within the western Riverina Murray Region of New South Wales alongside the Murrumbidgee River. Covering 11,326km², Hay Shire is bounded by Carrathool Shire to the north and east, Murrumbidgee Council to the east, Edward River and Murray River to the south and Balranald Council to the west.

The main township of Hay is located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, on the junction of the Cobb, Sturt and Mid-Western Highways approximately 720km west of Sydney, 420km north of Melbourne and 650km east of Adelaide. Hay Shire has strong connections to its two nearest regional cities of Griffith (130km east) and Wagga Wagga (270km east) where residents can access higher-order health, education, retail, commercial and transport services (Habitat Planning, 2022).

In 2021, Hay Shire had an estimated population of 2,882 people with a median age of 48 years. The majority of residents (79%) live in the township of Hay and its immediate surrounds (ABS, 2021). The remaining population resides in the rural areas and small villages within the shire, including Maude and Booligal.

Hay Shire lies in the middle of the NSW State Government's nominated South West REZ. Hay is centrally located to Project EnergyConnect with a strong pipeline of construction within or near the LGA, which presents opportunities for growth (HSC, 2022b).

Hay is recognised as a centre for agriculture and has attracted significant long-term foreign investment to the region. The Shire has a diversified agricultural production with dryland (sheep and cattle livestock) and irrigated activities (cotton, rice, fruit and vegetables) both prominent. The agricultural industry supports more than 1 in 5 jobs and nearly 40% of all value added (.idcommunity, 2023a). Diversification into the tourism and hospitality sectors has created a range of employment and business opportunities in the private and government sector (HSC, 2022b).

4.1.4. Edward River LGA

The Edward River LGA covers 8,881km² in the southern Riverina area of NSW. Deniliquin, on the bank of the Edward River, is the largest town in the LGA and is located at the intersection of the Riverina and Cobb Highways approximately 285km north of Melbourne. Edward River Council shares its boundaries with Murray Shire LGA to the south, Hay LGA to the North and Murrumbidgee and Berrigan LGAs to the east.

In 2021, the Edward River LGA had an estimated population of 8,456 residents with a median age of 46 years. The majority of the LGA's residents (88%) live in Deniliquin and surrounds (ABS, 2021). The remaining population is located within the rural villages and localities of Blighty, Boorooban, Conargo, Mayrung, Morago, Pretty Pine and Wanganella.

The Edward River region supports both dryland and irrigated agriculture. Key enterprises include rice, other cropping including cereals, hay and horticulture, dairy and extensive grazing of sheep for meat and wool, and cattle. Deniliquin is home to Sun Rice, the largest rice mill in the southern hemisphere. In recent years, drought conditions and reduced water allocation and availability have detrimentally impacted agricultural production in the region, which has triggered substantial flow on effects to processing and service industries.

Tourism is a growing industry in the LGA. The Edward River, Murray Valley Regional Park and Hay Plains are key attractions for many tourists. The region hosts a range of events throughout the year, with the Deniliquin Ute Muster attracting 20,000 people annually (ERC, 2020).

4.2. Local setting

Land use within the Project site and surrounding properties is predominantly characterised by agricultural use, namely grazing native vegetation and irrigation cropping, with remaining native vegetation being low and sparse. The Project site has flat terrain with little topographic variation. The Sturt Highway crosses east-west through the northern part of the Project area. There are few roads in the vicinity of the Project, most notably Maude Road which passes to the east of the project area and Baldon Road which runs through the southeast corner of the Project. Lake Road runs east-west between Maude Road and Baldon Road.

The community around the Project area is rural with a strong focus on agriculture and a very low population density. Some properties cover large areas and have significant operations. There are approximately 14 non-associated dwellings located within 8km of the Project site.

Moulamein is the nearest town to the Project, located approximately 15km to the south. Moulamein is the oldest town in the Riverina, located at the junction of the Edward River and Billabong Creek and historically falls within the territory of the Wemba Wemba (or Wamba Wamba) people. The township is small and constrained by flood issues. The 2021 population of 489 people is ageing with a median age of 48 years and substantial growth in the proportion of residents aged 65 to 74. The Moulamein landscape is dotted with varying sites of significance to the Wemba Wemba people, including the 'Big Tree', one of the largest living specimens of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* ever recorded in New South Wales. Two large grain storage facilities are located to the north and north-east of the urban area. Piggery operations located off Balpool Road are a large employer in the township and surrounding area (Murray River Council, 2018), as is the aged care.

Maude is a small township located approximately 23km northeast of the site and to the north of the Sturt Highway, with a 2021 population of 110 residents. To the west of the site, the rural locality of Kyalite was home to 87 people.

The closest larger population centres are the regional NSW towns of Balranald, Barham, Hay, and Deniliquin, and the Victorian city of Swan Hill. A high-level summary of townships/localities is presented in Table 4-1 below.

Table 4-1 Proximal townships and localities, population, services and facilities

Township/ locality	Distance from Project Boundary	Population (2021 Census)	Services and facilities
Moulamein	15km south	489	Small town with some services (e.g., hotel, supermarket, post office, school, bowling club, caravan park, Council business centre, library).
Maude	23km northeast	110	General store, hotel, caravan park and post office.
Balranald	44km west	1,063	Regional centre with services (e.g., district hospital, schools, accommodation, Council business centre, Service NSW Agency).
Kyalite	44km west	87	Pub, general store, caravan park.
Swan Hill	56km southwest	10,869	Major regional centre with a range of higher order health (hospital, specialist, allied health), education, and transport services (coach, rail).
Hay	64km northeast	2,208	Regional centre with services (e.g., hospital, schools, TAFE etc.).
Barham	65km south	1,569	Regional centre with services (e.g., schools, retail, accommodation etc.).
Deniliquin	100km southeast	6,431	Regional centre with services (e.g., hospital, schools, TAFE etc.).

4.3. Traditional Owners and Aboriginal governance

The Wiradjuri, Nari Nari and Yitha Yitha peoples are the traditional custodians of the land and waterways in Hay Shire. The language and tribal borders are not fixed, and the present township of Hay remains a historical site of interaction between the Nari Nari and Wiradjuri people (HSC, 2023; RMRA, 2022).

The Edward River LGA is situated on the traditional lands of the Wamba Wamba/Wemba Wemba, Barapa Barapa/Perrepa Perrepa peoples, as is the Murray River Council, which also lies on Yorta Yorta Country. These traditional lands encompass areas on both sides of the Murray River. Moulamein, Deniliquin, and Swan Hill are all within Wamba Wamba borders (Jarjoo Warrngara, 2022). The township of Balranald is located in Mutthi Mutthi traditional Country.

The Project site itself is in an area that contains the indeterminate boundaries between the Mutthi Mutthi, Watthi Watthi, Wemba Wemba and Nari Nari language groups (ATR, 2024). Key highly valued cultural features within the landscape of the Project area include heat retainer ovens and mounds, modified trees and burial sites (NGH, 2024).

Within the region, there are a range of community organisations, businesses and government agencies that represent First Nations interests and provide direct employment, training and social support and services to local First Nations people and communities. These include the Hay, Wamba Wamba, Balranald, and Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC), Nari Nari Tribal Council, Hay Aboriginal Community Working Party (CWP), Hay Aboriginal Medical Service, Deniliquin CWP, Pappin Family Aboriginal Corporation, and Wakool Indigenous Corporation.

The Riverina Murray Regional Alliance (RMRA) was formally launched in 2016 as a regional governance structure to coordinate the provision of services across the Riverina Murray region (RMRA, 2022). It is not an incorporated body and is comprised of representatives of each of the CWPs from member communities, including Hay and Deniliquin.

4.4. Strategic planning setting

4.4.1. Renewable energy development context

The South West REZ was formally declared by the NSW Government on 4 November 2022, the state’s third REZ. REZs are defined geographic zones that allow for a grouping together of new renewable energy generation, so that energy can be efficiently stored and transmitted across NSW. REZs are the equivalent of modern-day power stations in that they combine:

- New renewable energy infrastructure, including generators (such as solar and wind farms)
- Storage (such as batteries and pumped hydro)
- High-voltage transmission infrastructure.

The SW REZ was chosen due to an abundance of high-quality wind and solar resources, proximity to existing and planned high voltage transmission including Project EnergyConnect, relative land-use compatibility and a strong pipeline of proposed projects (EnergyCo, 2023a). It extends east from Buronga and is centred around the towns of Hay and Balranald. The indicative location of the SW REZ is show below in Figure 4-1.

The SW REZ is expected to receive up to \$2.8 billion in private investment by 2030, and support over 2,000 construction jobs in the region at its peak. In October 2021, the NSW Government received 49 registrations of interest, representing 34GW from potential generation and storage projects, which was more than 13 times the intended 2.5GW capacity, which will result in a high level of competition between projects for access.



Figure 4-1 SW REZ

Source: EnergyCo: <https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/sw-rez>

Renewable energy is a rapidly growing sector in the Riverina Murray region, and operational renewable developments include the Limondale, Sunraysia and Coleambally solar farms. This Project is proposed amid a growing number of renewable energy proposals and energy infrastructure projects within the region, including the proposed Victoria to NSW Interconnector (VNI) West. At the time of writing, the VNI West draft transmission corridor is proposed to extend north from Kerang in Victoria to both areas both to the north and south of Moulamein (excluding the township) before extending east to Dinawan where it will connect with Project EnergyConnect (Transgrid, 2023).

Renewable projects at various stages of development, construction, and operation within the Murray River and Hay Shire LGAs and broader region, as well as other SSD and SSI projects, are outlined in Section 5.9.

The cross-border region, taking in 14 local government areas across New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, is on the cusp of significant large-scale new and expanded projects across the critical minerals, renewable energy, and irrigated horticulture industries (Regional Australia Institute, 2023).

Neighbouring windfarms include:

- Tchelery Wind Farm
- Keri Keri Wind Farm
- Keri Keri Solar Farm
- Wilan Wind Farm.

It is noted that the Project is located in the South West Renewable Energy Zone, where proponents such as the Applicant will need to tender and compete to win access rights to allow future renewable energy sources to be grid connected to Project EnergyConnect. As a result, it is unlikely that all these projects will gain access rights and be constructed.

4.4.2. Regional-level planning

Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041

Land use planning at the regional level is guided by the *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041* (the Regional Plan) (DPE, 2023c). The 20-year vision outlined in the Regional Plan is for a diversified economy founded on Australia's food bowl, iconic waterways, and a network of vibrant communities. The Regional Plan provides a framework for improving regional housing delivery, taking a risk-based approach to natural hazards, and enhancing biodiversity. It has a strong focus on harnessing the region's potential by capitalising on a changing regional economy driven by agricultural diversification, innovation, and value-adding, and large-scale infrastructure catalyst projects, and unlocking sustainable growth opportunities that come from the region's proximity to Victoria and the ACT.

The Regional Plan highlights the region's role in supporting NSW's transition to a net zero carbon emission state by 2050 (Objective 13), including enabling the establishment of the SW REZ. To support this transition, the Regional Plan identifies the need for strategic and statutory planning to manage land use conflict issues and local impacts of renewable energy projects and associated infrastructure both within and outside the REZ.

The Regional Plan also calls for the need to provide for short term accommodation (Objective 8). It notes that there has been significant housing stress in some towns and villages during the construction of large-scale developments, including renewable energy projects. It recommends that development applications for large-scale projects be supported by a workforce accommodation strategy that assesses anticipated impacts on the local housing market, including cumulative impacts, and illustrates how the Project will contribute to the supply of local housing.

Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation

Hay Shire, Murray River and Edward River Councils are all members of the Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO). The RAMJO's key function is to establish and implement strategic regional priorities and strategies. The *RAMJO Statement of Strategic Priorities 2022–2026* identifies the need to build the capacity of the Joint Organisation and the member councils in facing big issues including the ability to attract and maintain a robust workforce (particularly engineering, surveying, planning, finance and project management); and the ability to attract contractors for infrastructure maintenance and construction (RAMJO, 2022a).

The Statement sets out seven Strategic Priority Pillars to underpin the goal of diverse population growth within RAMJO. Pillars relevant to this Project include:

- Pillar 2: Improve energy security and affordability.
- Pillar 6: Boost industry, workforce and jobs.
- Pillar 7: Improve housing in our region.

The *RAMJO Regional Energy Strategy 2022-2032* positions RAMJO and the member Councils to take advantage of the opportunities that are arising with the rapid shift to renewable energy and ensure rural and regional communities obtain benefits (RAMJO, 2022b). Proposed actions include a focus on mechanisms for local communities and Councils to obtain financial, social and employment benefits from the shift to renewable energy and to quantify the flow of money related to energy in and out of the region.

Regional Economic Development Strategies

Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy 2023

The Murray River and Edward River LGAs sit within the Murray Functional Economic Region (FER). This FER's *Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) – 2023 update* identifies the key endowments underpinning the region's economy as the Murray River and associated irrigation infrastructure, water supply, and cultural significance; rich Aboriginal heritage; the established tourism sector; road transport infrastructure, and the SW REZ (DRNSW, 2023a).

The FER's engine industries include agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, road transport, and energy supply, including renewable energy. The Murray REDS notes that net zero targets and related policies will have a direct impact on the Murray FER, by supporting a range of major planned renewable energy generation and storage projects. Many of these projects will occur within the SW REZ.

Western Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy 2023

The cross-border Western Murray FER includes the Balranald, Hay, and Swan Hill LGAs (DRNSW, 2023b). The *Western Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 update* identifies agriculture as the core engine industry of the region's economy. Other engine industries include construction and mining, tourism and manufacturing. Energy generation is the strongest emerging industry for the FER.

A key challenge is ensuring the region can derive long term local benefit from new renewable energy generation projects, especially post the investment intensive construction phase. Towards this, the Western Murray REDS identifies opportunities to grow the mining, manufacturing and construction industries by leveraging the renewable energy investment and exploring manufacturing opportunities enabled by the REZ. Potential barriers to fully capitalising on these opportunities include a lack of skilled workers and training pathways, and a lack of housing availability and accommodation for major project workforces and their families, both of which will require a collaborative approach to address.

4.4.3. Council-level planning

Murray River Council

The Murray River Council's *Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020–2040* (MRC, 2020) establishes a 20-year vision for land use planning and growth in the LGA. It documents community priorities and aspirations for the LGA along with actions to enhance its character, preserve its natural attributes and improve residents' quality of life. It identifies nine planning priorities grouped under three themes:

A robust, growing and innovative economy.

Liveable communities with social capital.

Environment, heritage and climate change.

The planning priorities most relevant to the Project are:

- Priority 1: Grow, strengthen and sustain agriculture. Noting the high level of interest in developing agricultural land for solar farms, Council will seek to manage conflicting land uses.
- Priority 9: Climate change and natural hazards. To achieve this priority, Council will promote local renewable energy projects by collaborating with energy providers and implementing best practice waste management and by create planning instruments and management plans that encourage developments that are climate-responsive, water-sensitive, and energy-conscious.

The *Community Strategic Plan 2022–2032* (MRC, 2022) has been developed as the overarching strategic document that guides the delivery of all other Council plans and strategies. It includes seven themes, of which Theme 5: A place of prosperity and resilience, is highly relevant to the Project. Theme 5 includes the following goals and objectives:

- Encourage and support economic development across the region:
 - Strategic Objective 5.4: Alternative and renewable energy investment opportunities.
- Continue to develop strong and resilient communities:
 - Strategic Objective 5.6: Increased educational opportunities.
 - Strategic Objective 5.7: Development of a resilient economy.

Hay Shire Council

The Hay Shire Council's *Local Strategic Planning Statement* (LSPS) (HSC, 2020) sets the 20-year framework for the LGA's economic, social and environmental land use needs. It outlines how growth and change will be managed to maintain the high levels of environmental amenity, liveability and landscape quality that characterise the Hay Shire. It identifies 10 planning priorities across three themes: Liveability, Economy, and Environment and Resources.

Planning Priority 9 seeks to encourage the growth of renewable energy developments. It identifies that Hay Shire is well-positioned to cater for renewable energy on all scales, from domestic to utility-scale, with ample sunshine, level topography, affordable land, and grid connections available.

Council's *Community Strategic Plan 2022–2032* (HSC, 2022a) sets out the community's vision, objectives, strategies, priorities and aspirations. Community and stakeholder consultation to inform the plan identified renewable energy, growing the local skilled labour force, more recycling, and expanding tourism opportunities as key priorities. The plan's objectives and associated outcomes, strategies and targets are grouped under five themes, including:

- A – Environmental Sustainability: targets include a reduction in non-renewable energy.

- B – Liveable and vibrant community: strategies include improved access to a diverse range of housing opportunities (B2.1); and targets include a skilled labour force and increases in employment and education options.
- C – Economic prosperity *and sustainability*: targets include an increase in business numbers and opportunities across the community. Also aiming to increase housing options within the community.

Renewable energy is also identified as an existing strength in the Council's *Investment Attraction Strategy 2022–2027* (HSC, 2022b). Aspirational opportunities related to renewable energy include green tech, alternative fuels, and training and maintenance. The strategy identifies the role of Council in shaping economic outcomes by providing a range of enablers and incentives, including developing a housing strategy, conducting a skills audit, and identifying and developing training opportunities with the energy industry and TAFE.

Balranald Shire Council

The Balranald Shore Council Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) sets the land use framework for the shire's economic, social and environmental land use needs over the next 20 years. It addresses the planning and development issues of strategic significance to the Council through planning priorities and actions, spatial land use direction and guidance (BSC, n.d). The LSPS recognises the Shire's access to transmission infrastructure, land availability and favourable climate conditions make Balranald Shire a competitive location for large scale solar, energy storage, and associated renewable energy generation technologies to provide opportunities to bolster the economies of townships. In addition, the BSC aspires to become an International Centre for Excellence in Solar Renewable technologies and provide necessary infrastructure, energy security, employment and education and community investments benefitting the economy and residents.

The LSPS also identifies that the construction of two large solar energy farms provides access to transmission infrastructure, land availability and favourable climate conditions in the Shire. When reviewing the implications and impacts of large-scale solar farms and other major projects, the LSPS recognises strategic planning must include the potential corollary of conflict between project-driven urban expansion and productivity of agricultural land. Streamlining large scale solar operations and identifying optimum land to support solar infrastructure BSC is acknowledged to support solar energy projects using the principles of comparative and competitive advantage, which minimise impacts on productivity of agricultural land, Aboriginal cultural heritage, biodiversity, and the amenity of residents.

The LSPS:

- Advocate for and negotiate local community contributions by all new major power generation projects, to benefit the Balranald Shire community.
- Protect the Shire's road transport networks from the heavy traffic demands of extractive industries ensuring these roads can be maintained through equitable cost arrangements.
- Identify suitable areas for transmission grid capacity, while minimising the potential impacts on residents, agricultural lands and natural assets.

Actions stated to deliver this include:

- Ensure roads used for extractive material haulage have the capacity to support the activity
- Activate contributions from solar farm proposals for community projects through negotiations in stakeholder consultation and pre consent stages of proposals
- Commence analysis of transmission grid corridor options through collaboration with utility agencies.

Renewable energy is also identified as an opportunity for economic growth in the BSC Economic Development Strategy (2012) and to support the growth of local industry sectors in the Community Strategic Plan (2022).

4.5. Social baseline summary

As noted above, this is a summary of the more detailed community profile provided in Appendix B.

In 2021, Murray River LGA was estimated to have a population of 12,850 people, most of whom lived in Moama, Barham and Mathoura. There are population disparities between the Murray River, Edward River and Hay Shires, with a population of 2,882 people recorded in Hay Shire in 2021, and 8,456 people in the Edward River Shire. Within the town of Moulamein, a population of 489 persons was recorded and Balranald had a population of 1,063 people. The Murray River Shire's population has steadily increased since 2011 and this trend is expected to continue with a projected population of 15,456 in 2041, an annual increase of 1.1% (DPE, 2022a). In contrast, Hay Shire Council's population has decreased since 2011 and is predicted to decline to approximately 2,594 people in 2041, an annual decrease of -0.5% (DPE, 2022a).

As noted above, the Project area lies in an area that contains the indeterminate boundaries between the Mutthi Mutthi, Watthi Watthi, Wemba Wemba / Wamba Wamba and Nari Nari language groups. A high percentage of the population identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in Hay (9.3%) and Balranald (9.6%), whereas only 2.5 % identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in Moulamein.

Around a quarter of the population in Hay Shire (23%) and Murray River (29%) were aged 65 and over, compared to 18% across NSW. All three LGAs had a higher median age than the state median of 39 years, ranging from 46 years in Edward River to 48 years in Hay Shire and 49 years in Murray River.

The median household weekly income across the three LGAs was well below the NSW median of \$1,829, ranging from \$1,236 in Hay Shire LGA to \$1,260 in Murray River LGA. The Murray River LGA was relatively advantaged, with a decile of 7 for the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD), while the Hay LGA had the highest level of relative disadvantage with a decile of 3. Furthermore, the towns of Moulamein and Balranald were both assigned deciles of 2, while the larger urban centres of Deniliquin and Swan Hill were assigned deciles of 3 (ABS, 2023).

In 2021, around 90% of residents across the three LGAs lived in separate houses, much higher than the NSW average of 66%. Furthermore, all townships and localities included in the social locality had a higher proportion of dwellings that were owned outright compared to the NSW average (32%).

The broader Murray Riverina region has been struggling with housing unaffordability for several years, made worse by the pandemic, population growth, and a lack of appropriate and affordable accommodation types for the resident population as well as for seasonal and construction workforces. Consultation confirmed that the region is experiencing severe housing and rental shortages. In consultations, issues related to housing were raised by nearly all stakeholders and community members who highlighted the lack of housing stock as well as lack of developable blocks.

Since 2018, the broader Western Murray region has recorded consistent population growth and decreasing unemployment, which are contributing to challenges in the housing market (DRNSW, 2023b). Between June 2018 and June 2022, median house prices in the Murray River LGA increased 78% from \$320,000 to \$570,000 and by 85% to \$353,000 in the Edward River LGA (DRNSW, 2023a). It is estimated that since 2021, median house prices have risen by 44% to \$201,000 in Hay Shire and by 26% to \$220,000 in Balranald Shire (DRNSW, 2023b).

Many parts of the region were experiencing very tight labour market conditions and acute workforce shortages. The average LGA unemployment rate over 12 months to June 2023 ranged from 1.6% in Balranald Shire and 1.9% in Murray River, to 3.1% in Hay Shire, 3.3% in Swan Hill and 3.9% in Edward River (JSA, 2023). Aboriginal unemployment rates were lower than the NSW Aboriginal unemployment rate of 9.8%, while Hay LGA (10.9%) and Balranald LGA (12.2%) were slightly higher. However, as these rates are all significantly higher than the NSW unemployment rate of 4.9%, an ongoing focus is needed on maximising opportunities to support economic participation and economic prosperity for Aboriginal communities across the Murray and Western Murray regions.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry sector, centred on cropping and livestock grazing, is the Murray River LGA's largest economic contributor. The sector accounts for 27% of total output (\$450.2 million). It is also the largest employer, supporting an estimated 1,167 jobs (24%). Other important industries are manufacturing, construction, health and community services, professional services, retail trade and accommodation and food services (Remplan, 2023).

About 70% of the Murray River LGA area is used for cropping, with livestock grazing dominant on the more marginal dryland areas. Biodiversity is an important feature in Murray River LGA with extensive river red gum forest stands and wetland systems which are of international significance. Around 11% of the LGA is protected in national parks and conservation areas which mainly cover floodplains and remnant forests. The top three of five industries of employment include local government administration, sheep and cattle farming, retail and other fruit and tree nut growing.

Across the sociality locality, the proportion of residents who reported no long-term health conditions in the 2021 Census were below the NSW average. However, slightly higher proportions of residents in Edward River LGA (10%) and the Hay township and surrounds (10%) reported having a mental health condition compared to 8% across NSW.

The Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN) Health Needs Assessment 2022–2025 identified that Hay Shire LGA had comparatively higher rates of avoidable deaths in males and from heart disease, premature deaths from external causes, and potential years of lives lost due to road traffic injuries compared to both the MPHN and NSW rates. Health risk factors include higher numbers of males who are smokers (MPHN, 2022a). Murray River LGA had higher rates of avoidable deaths from traffic incidents and potential years of life lost due to road traffic injuries, and higher rates of skin melanomas in females compared to the broader MPHN and NSW. Health risk factors include higher numbers of people who consume alcohol at harmful levels (MPHN, 2022b).

Many of the settlements in the Murray River, Balranald, and Swan Hill LGAs are cross-border, neighbouring communities, separated by the Murray River, but operating together. The Victorian city of Swan Hill, neighbour to the NSW township of Murray Downs, is an important regional centre that services many regional settlements within the western part of the Murray River LGA and has strong ties to Balranald and Moulamein. Swan Hill offers a range of higher order health (hospital, specialist, allied health), education, and regional transport services (bus and train) that are relied upon by Murray River residents.

Balranald and Hay, and to a lesser extent, Moulamein and Barham, offer a more limited range of medical, community health, aged care, and allied services. As with many regional communities, it has been difficult to attract and retain healthcare services and workforce (DRNSW, 2023a). The health facilities in Hay are sufficient for the town's size, but there are issues with distance from specialised services (HSC, 2020). The Moulamein Community Health Centre is the only access to any form of health care in the district. The town does not have a GP, ambulance or pharmacist, with residents forced to travel to Swan Hill for basic medical care (Polkinghorne, 2023).

Basic education opportunities are provided through primary and high schools across the region, including Barham High School, Balranald Central School and Hay War Memorial High School, and secondary colleges in Swan Hill. Post-secondary education and vocational training is available at TAFE Riverina Institute campuses in Hay and Deniliquin, and SuniTAFE in Swan Hill, as well as various other providers. With no universities located in the region, the Regional University Study Hubs program is enabling students to access and complete higher education without having to leave their community. Access to telecommunications is inconsistent across the region.

Renewable energies are recognised by local governments and local stakeholders as a key economic opportunity for the region.

4.5.1. Summary of baseline attributes by region

Table 4-2 provides an overview of the baseline attributes including challenges and vulnerabilities and strengths and opportunities for the Murray River, Hay and Balranald Shires. The content is not exclusive and has been extracted from the identified sources.

Table 4-2 Summary table of baseline attributes

Challenges/Vulnerabilities	Strengths/Opportunities
Murray River (from MRC strategic documents)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing infrastructure assets. • Poor access to information technology services and communications infrastructure. • Rapid population growth in some townships. • Ageing population. • Cross-border issues. • Declining population growth in some smaller villages and townships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable to live and raise a family. • Maximising the visitor economy. • Diverse economic base and industry development opportunities [incl. tourism]. • Opportunities to provide a variety of large-lot and rural-lifestyle housing close to settlements. • Moulamein Heritage Village project (due to open 2024).
Hay Shire (from HSC strategic documents)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water availability. • Population decline. • An ageing population. • Less children. • A climate changing to more days of higher temperature. • Limited access to medical services. • Limited housing choice. • Decline in Retail and Food services employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ageing population that wants to stay in Hay. • Affordable land, suitable for development such as industrial development or large-scale energy generation. • High life expectancy and healthy lifestyle. • Increase in employment in the agricultural and construction sectors. • Ample river frontage land, and water recreation opportunities. • Villages of Booligal and Maude with affordable land. • Hay Town on the intersection of three highways, with significant commercial, industrial, freight and tourism opportunities. • Opportunities to create a wide variety of housing choice

Challenges/Vulnerabilities	Strengths/Opportunities
Balranald Shire Council (from BSC meeting minutes, Strengthening Basin Communities Community Development Plans for Balranald and Euston 2012-16)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change & impacts on agriculture & sustainability • Water security for agriculture & potable water supplies • High dependence on agriculture which can be cyclical • Value capture by other LGAs, including larger settlements such as Swan Hill & Mildura that may have higher level services/infrastructure to attract industrial/business/retail growth • Long travel distances & limitations to existing infrastructure including transport & communication • An ageing population • Lack of access to higher education & training (Vic TAFE Swan Hill 95km; Mildura 150km; NSW TAFE Deniliquin 205km; Wagga Wagga 400km) that may partly result in loss of young/educated workers. • Lack of skilled (local) labour makes it difficult to capture new employment opportunities & exacerbates use of temporary workforces • Lack of available & suitable housing (both to buy & rental) is exacerbating the difficulties faced with attracting skilled workers to fill local positions & for major projects. • Lack of variety of things to do for young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balranald Shire Council’s extensive set of Development Committees with both councillor and community representation. • Lifestyle opportunities afforded within the shire. • A progressive well serviced and vibrant community. • Local Indigenous culture and history - extensive Indigenous sites of significance (108 known sites). • A strategic location for renewable energies. • Upgraded town centre. • Has a low crime rate. • Competitive price of housing. • Strong and diversified agricultural economy. • Highway location advantages and close proximity to Mildura and Swan Hill. • Deep and strong networks and family relationships. • Community support for new businesses, to make things easier. • Local hospital and schools. • Secure water supply. • Diverse and unique landscapes. • Regular community newsletter.
Regional – Riverina Murray (Regional strategic documents)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing competition for land use, climate uncertainty, global supply chain issues and increased incidence of natural disasters. • Water insecurity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality agricultural lands, industry clusters and access to national significant freight routes and export hubs. • Agricultural and food product sectors, including food processing.

Social Impact Assessment

Baldon Wind Farm



Challenges/Vulnerabilities	Strengths/Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross-border access challenges, including access to services, education and training, highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic border closures.• Cumulative impacts of multiple projects inside and outside the SW REZ on the natural environment.• Changing migration patterns and greater demand for key services including health and education.• Shortage of skilled and unskilled labour.• Housing shortages, with a lack of housing options hampering efforts to attract workers to the region.• Limited capacity of the energy network and waste management infrastructure, and poor digital connectivity impeding industry and population growth.• Potential spillover of opposition to transmission projects, especially the VNI West, to renewable energy projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Renewable energy generation and proximity to existing transmission infrastructure.• Economic development and diversification opportunities from the SW REZ, including agriculture, manufacturing, green hydrogen production, and emerging circular economy processing.• Potential supply chain opportunities around wind farm component production, fabrication of solar equipment and sovereign manufacturing.• Circular economy opportunities.• A strong and robust visitor economy that benefits from natural endowments, including the Murray River and other significant water systems, wetlands, forests and sandhills; well-established holiday destinations; and a range of recreational activities.• Expanding and facilitating Aboriginal-led development of the cultural tourism sector.

5. Social impacts

5.1. Livelihoods

5.1.1. Increased employment opportunities

Capturing employment opportunities at the local level is a key potential benefit of the Project. Construction of the Project is expected to be staged and take 36 months. It is anticipated that approximately 350–400 construction personnel would be required, with a peak construction period during the first 9–24 months. The ongoing Project workforce of 35 people presents key lasting employment opportunity within the local area, particularly for people living within the Moulamein and Maude districts, but also the broader region. All stages of the Project may include specific employment opportunities for residents of Moulamein and surrounding areas, underrepresented groups (such as Aboriginal people, young people, and women) and learning workers (such as apprentices and trainees).

It is also noted that no agriculture-related job losses on the Project site are anticipated from the change of land use as both landholders will continue to undertake agricultural activities on the balance of their land.

Ensuring the realisation of employment opportunities for local people was widely identified through both Project-wide and SIA engagement as a key Project benefit and a key contributor to building social license. This was raised as being a particular opportunity for young people. This Project, as well as the other REZ developments, have the potential to create career opportunities and pathways for this generation of young people that have not existed before in the region. These jobs would be available within these young peoples' home communities, alleviating the need for them to move away from home for employment. This can then also provide a springboard for career development and opportunity within the renewables or other sectors around the country.

The workforce strategy is to prioritise the use of local workers and contractors to deliver most of the work (where they are available). However, the extent to which local people will be available and able to capture the opportunities depends on several factors. Firstly, there are existing skills and labour shortages in the region, and this was confirmed during consultation, with many stakeholders stating that many businesses in the region are struggling to fill roles.

Secondly, as many stakeholders noted during consultation, with renewables projects, it is common that local people and support agencies and networks do not know enough about the details of what skills will be required and what jobs will be available. This was particularly raised in relation to young people, who may not be able to see what all these renewable energy projects coming to the region could mean for them. One stakeholder noted that “no-one has spelt out the exact opportunity...what job is it? Electrician...plumber?”. Stakeholders highlighted that building community awareness about the detail of the job opportunities is key task to achieving local participation. To support this, stakeholders noted the importance of the proponent actively linking in with local education, training and employment service providers as well as other relevant community networks and groups.

Many local agencies and organisations are focused on developing the capabilities of local people and businesses and connecting local people and businesses to development projects. One example of this is a locally led taskforce being established early this year to drive the creation of a workforce for the future in the Murray-Mallee, which came out of late last year's Future-Focused Local Workforce Forum, convened to address regional workforce shortages, and they are aiming to develop a 'Cross Border Future Industry Workforce Roadmap' to guide a localised and skilled workforce (Murphy, 2023).

Participants at this forum identified the following opportunities for local workforce development: better linkages between industries and local high schools; more flexible work arrangements, in particular to assist women in joining the workforce; harmonisation of trade licensing, incentives for drive-in, drive-out workers to

work locally; better promotion of the cross-border (i.e. NSW-Victoria) region as a great place to work and live; a shift from short-term problem-solving to long-term skills and job planning; and better collaboration between industries, training and skills providers and community (Murphy, 2023).

Given the importance that many stakeholders place on this benefit, but the need for a very active focus to achieve good local employment outcomes, this (unenhanced) benefit has been assessed as medium significance (possible, minor).

5.1.2. Increased procurement opportunities

The Project will directly and indirectly, through its supply chains, create demand for goods and services such as accommodation, food, construction materials, freight and construction services. It is likely that local businesses in Moulamein, Balranald, Hay, and other regional centres, will be able to supply some of these services. Ensuring the realisation of procurement opportunities for local businesses was widely identified during consultation as a key Project benefit. It was recognised that local procurement is a key vehicle through which Goldwind can realise local benefits across all Project stages. All councils interviewed for the SIA expressed interest in these opportunities for their business community.

Stakeholders noted capability within both the host and surrounding LGAs as well as within the Moulamein district. In Moulamein alone, there is capability in engineering, electrical, construction, plumbing, transport, and earthmoving. In the surrounding LGAs, stakeholders noted that there are larger contractors who would be keen to take up opportunities.

The extent to which local and regional businesses will be able to capture the opportunities depends upon how project-ready they are. Local small businesses need to have the necessary capabilities and compliance measures in place to be able to work or sub-contract within larger construction contexts, and stakeholders noted that capacity building is needed to enable some smaller companies to work with larger contexts. For example, some don't read their contracts, and then when things go wrong, they can't deliver, and this can put their business at risk. Others are not informed enough about necessary compliance measures, while some small local businesses don't know how to engage and feel as though these opportunities are not for them.

There are some lessons that could be learned from recent experiences in Hay when a Mad Max film was being filmed in town in 2022. During this time, some local contractors stopped working for locals, instead choosing to contract to the film production. After being let down by these contractors, locals then wouldn't employ them, and it was reported that some contractors lost their businesses. As a result, it was noted during consultation that there was a fear amongst small businesses or contractors in Hay of losing their local customer base if they take on too much work with the renewable energy Projects.

Given the importance that many stakeholders place on this benefit, but again, the active focus that is required to achieve good local procurement outcomes, this (unmitigated) benefit has been assessed to be of medium significance (possible, minor).

5.1.3. Increased training opportunities

The Project presents an opportunity to benefit local people with training and development. This could particularly be the case for young people and people from underrepresented groups (including women, the long term unemployed, Aboriginal people, and people facing barriers to employment). In addition, the NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board has found that within the SW REZ, realising job opportunities locally will require significant upskilling of agricultural workers (OECC, 2022).

Given that the Project is within the REZ, the project would offer plentiful work opportunities for local community members in renewable energy development over the coming years, producing viable career pathways in the renewable energy sector for local community members.

Many local agencies and organisations are focused on developing the capabilities of local people and connecting local people to development projects. Within Hay, TAFE is the key training organisation that is

responding to the workforce needs associated with the REZ, and it is focused on becoming a renewable energy training hub for the region. TAFE has partnered with EnergyCo and is delivering a new online micro-skill course 'Prepare to work in the renewable energy sector' which provides an introduction to the renewable energy sector (EnergyCo, 2023). Goldwind has already committed to involvement with the roll-out of this course.

During SIA consultation, TAFE advised that they could develop other tailored micro-skill sets. Regarding these, it was noted as being beneficial for proponents to be involved in the design and delivery of these skills sets, as it useful for job seekers to talk to prospective employers about the opportunities in renewable energy, so that can see the link between their training and a practical job at the end of the training. In addition, TAFE delivers the Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) program which connects employers with secondary schools.

Consultation with stakeholders in the Edward River, Balranald and Murray River LGAs highlighted however that, in general, community members in those areas look to Swan Hill (in Victoria) as their service centre and so initiatives in Hay may not adequately reach and service those communities.

The schools are also other key institutions that many stakeholders noted should be leveraged to increase skills development for this Project and the REZ. There are a number of key schools in the region, and Balranald Centre School, in particular, has a Trade Training Centre. Stakeholders noted the potential for the proponent to partner with local schools to encourage young people to think about careers in renewable energy and identify the pathways to get there. To this end, Balranald Shire Council, through their Economic Development Strategy, is currently exploring options to increase apprenticeships through renewables projects.

The proponent could take active steps to establish training and employment processes and pathways ahead of construction, such as working with employment, training and support agencies that assist people to improve their capacity and job readiness. In addition to providing opportunities to support people to directly attain employment with the project, opportunities to contribute more broadly to regional-level training and development initiatives as part of the Project's community benefit framework should be considered.

Given the importance that many stakeholders place on this benefit, and the active focus that is required to create meaningful training opportunities for local people, the (unmitigated) benefit has been assessed as medium significance (possible, minor).

5.1.4. Strengthened economies

This Project would bring about an increase in economic activity within the local and regional areas as well as diversification of the economies. It also strongly aligns with the economic development planning objectives outlined within the various regional and local level plans. During consultation, stakeholders commonly recognised that for all Project phases, the increased local procurement for goods and services as well as the increased employment will have flow-on economic benefits for the regional economy.

Within the construction phase, the increased income and spending of the construction workers and others across the supply chains, would add to the stimulation of the local economies. Consultation with Balranald stakeholders highlighted the economic benefits that local pubs, shops, cafes and accommodation providers experienced during construction of the Limondale and Sunraysia SFs. For these projects, the worker accommodation village (WAV) in Balranald also contributed to local spend, as the facility itself sourced local produce and servicing. There was consensus amongst Balranald stakeholders that accommodating construction workers within the camp on the edge of town brought significant and highly valued economic activity to town, even during the time-limited construction phase, with one stakeholder noting that these "developments bring the town back to life".

Given this, in the event that workers are accommodated at the Project site, these valued economic benefits within the host town/s would not be realised due to the remote nature of the site and the likelihood that the camp would be self-sufficient. This was noted by stakeholders.

Additionally, this Project would contribute to strategic economic development within the region, at both the local and regional scales. At the local scale, the town of Moulamein has had few economic development opportunities in recent decades. Being linked in with, and supported by, a project of this scale presented an opportunity to unlock economic development potential. This would likely be in terms of flow-on effects from additional custom, service provision or procurement during both construction and operations, and from population growth due to some of the operation workforce choosing to live in town.

More broadly, having this and/or other large scale renewable energy projects in its vicinity, and being supported by these projects and their proponents, may also give Moulamein a stronger voice and presence at Council or other decision-making arenas, which could then help to spur the town's development. A key growth constraint for Moulamein has been the lack of available land for housing development. Consultation with Moulamein residents and community groups highlighted a strong community desire for development of the town through expansion of the town's population in general, and for housing of the Project's operational workforce, in particular. The Project presents an opportunity for Goldwind to support the Moulamein community to build their community through both population growth directly associated with the Project, and more broadly, support the Moulamein community in community planning and advocacy in negotiations with Council as they seek to address planning constraints. Additionally, it was noted during consultation that the roads into Moulamein were highly degraded, and the Project could present opportunity or impetus to upgrade the roads which would then further support economic development of the town.

Considering cumulative impacts at the more regional level, as an example, consultation indicated that the regional centre of Hay, given its remote location, has historically been held back by lack of access to markets. A Hay Shire Council stakeholder highlighted that the REZ developments would unlock this constraint and allow Hay to have larger energy users operating in town, which would then attract further investment. This stakeholder noted that the REZ would draw capital to the region for the first time and that "we've never had access to this sort of funding before".

Given the importance that key stakeholders place on the potential positive impact for the local and regional economies, this impact is assessed to be of high social significance (likely, moderate).

5.1.5. Reduced labour availability for local businesses and services

Large construction projects can draw in workers from existing businesses and industries in local areas, as workers are attracted to the potentially higher wages and opportunities that larger construction projects can offer. Given the context of the REZ broadly, this was raised as an issue of concern by several stakeholders during SIA interviews, with some noting that local businesses were worried about the impacts that the REZ would have on their businesses with potential for increased labour competition and wage increases.

Given the potential for cumulative impacts and the importance that key stakeholders place on this impact, it has been assessed to be of high social significance (likely, moderate).

5.1.6. Concern about loss of agricultural land and productivity

This Project would divert some land away from agricultural use. A Soils, Land and Agriculture Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the EIS (Minesoils, 2024), which found that the impacts on agriculture as a result of the Project were determined to be generally minor, temporary, and limited to the disturbance footprint.

Of the 46,259ha of landholdings associated with the Project, a very small proportion (less than 1%) of the two properties would be required for the turbines and ancillary infrastructure. For the life of the Project, this land would be diverted away from sheep grazing. However, this leaves approximately 45,900ha of the properties

still available for continued agricultural use, and sheep grazing would be continued. Therefore, over the short to medium term, the non-agricultural land-use of the siting the turbines and associated infrastructure at the Project site was not incompatible with continued agricultural use of the property as a whole. Additionally, during Project decommissioning, above ground infrastructure would be removed and these areas of disturbance would be rehabilitated, returning the vast majority of the site to its current land capability, for ongoing agricultural or other use.

As such, the temporary and permanent impacts on agriculture listed above are considered a negligible impact in the context of the gross commodity values and land use coverage of the agricultural industries operating within the Murray River and Hay Shire LGA's (Minesoils, 2024).

Despite this, for this Project, some stakeholders did express some concern about the potential loss of agricultural land, with one Moulamein resident stating that "it is barren looking land, but it is still grazing land". When asked what they value most about the local area, 68% of survey respondents noted agriculture.

Nevertheless, on balance, there was little concern about this impact expressed, particularly as it relates to just this Project. Some stakeholders were concerned about the broader changes within the region and the perceived loss of agricultural land within the region due to the REZ. Also, within Moulamein, at the time of the SIA field visit, the community was demonstrating acute concern about the VNI West project and the impact that that project could have on productive land within the region.

Conversely, it was also noted that the region is very much at the whim of nature and climate change and has recently experienced the effects of both droughts and floods. One Council stakeholder noted that in general, landholders were really supportive of the REZ projects in general, and that they want them on their land as it will even out their income. It was noted that "those landholders were all in drought for ten years - they didn't earn anything". This Project would create opportunity for diversification of income for the host landholders.

This impact has been assessed as of low social significance (likely, minimal).

5.2. Accessibility

5.2.1. Increased pressure on housing and accommodation

For construction, the estimated workforce would be comprised of 400 workers at peak construction. It was anticipated that an engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contractor would be used for Project construction. Goldwind has committed to hiring locally (where possible) to support local workers and minimise the number of non-resident workers moving into the area. However, it is anticipated that non-resident workers would be required in the construction phase, due to the number of jobs that the Project will create, current skills and labour shortages, and the skill level of some of the jobs. Depending on the accommodation arrangements for these workers, these workers would further add to existing demand for short term accommodation in the region.

Goldwind intends for the majority of these non-resident workers to principally be accommodated in the existing Balranald WAV, as well as in available accommodation in surrounding areas (i.e., Hay, Balranald, Moulamein, or Maude). If the Balranald WAV and other suitable worker accommodation is not available due to concurrent demand from other projects, Goldwind has proposed to construct temporary workers accommodation at the Project site. The proposed camp is envisaged to supplement existing accommodation facilities.

For operations, the Project would require 35 workers. It is intended that these workers would come from the local or regional areas, but some workers may move into the area and need permanent housing.

Lack of accommodation was a key issue raised by nearly all stakeholders and community members; however, many were also eager to capitalise on opportunities for local accommodation providers. For this Project, there would be potential for increased pressure on the constrained housing and rental stock from the

construction and operational workforces, and on short term accommodation during the construction phase. It is likely that any increased housing or short-term accommodation pressures would be felt most by vulnerable population groups, who are already impacted by rising housing costs and constrained availability. This can also become a particular concern when considering cumulative impacts. Tourism may also be affected.

As outlined in the baseline, the region is experiencing severe housing shortages. In consultations, issues related to housing were raised by nearly all stakeholders and community members who highlighted the lack of housing stock as well as lack of developable blocks. Stakeholders noted that housing shortages had been a feature within the region for decades, and that these issues have exacerbated since the COVID pandemic, along with recent house and rental price rises. Stakeholders in both Balranald and Hay described that for some previous projects or developments (including the influx of the Mad Max film crew), people were renting out rooms in their houses or moving out and renting their entire houses, with others buying houses and then renting them out at inflated prices. Rental and house prices increased during that time.

For Moulamein, there is land surrounding the town, yet the current Local Environment Plan prohibits housing development on lots smaller than 1,500 acres. For Balranald, the land surrounding town is farmland or crown land. Balranald Shire Council noted that there is potential for infill in Balranald, with many properties on double blocks, but this is currently constrained by zoning. In Hay, there is unused housing stock within town, with a Hay Shire Council stakeholder noting that there are approximately 130 vacant houses or buildings in town.

The WAV was built at Balranald to house the Sunraysia SF construction workforce, and at the time of the SIA field visit, the facility was accommodating the EnergyConnect transmission project workforce. The facility, a 'dry' camp, is located on the edge of town and provides economic benefits for the town with local suppliers providing food and goods. Local stakeholders noted that this arrangement has worked well, with good workforce management protocols in place that provide for stability within the community. Consultation suggested that the facility is capable of swelling to accommodate approximately 400 workers, and representatives from the facility noted that they were looking to expand beyond this if there was demand over the coming years. Other potential users of the facility include agricultural workers (e.g. almond processing workers) and future renewable energy projects, and there are a number of these potential users that would likely be competing for housing and accommodation within the region at the time of Project construction.

Several Moulamein residents highlighted the opportunity for the Project to develop legacy accommodation by supporting the development of accommodation stock at the Moulamein Lakeside Caravan Park that could be left for some form of community use. It was noted in consultation that another prospective project proponent is intending to accommodate their construction workforce at the Moulamein caravan park. Similarly, a Hay based stakeholder noted that Transgrid was considering leasing land on the outskirts of Hay, putting transportable accommodation there for their workforce, and leaving them there as legacy accommodation for the community.

There was consensus amongst stakeholders that for all projects, workforce housing would need to be actively planned for and addressed, early within the project planning phases, with some suggesting that housing should be being built now to respond to coming demand.

Regarding the operational workforce, all councils expressed desire for the workers to live in their towns, as did the residents of Moulamein.

This unmitigated impact has been assessed as of high significance (likely, moderate).

5.2.2. Increased traffic and road safety impacts

For this Project, vehicular access is proposed to be via a connection with Sturt Highway. A total of three secondary access locations have been identified which connect with the local road network and would generally only be utilised in the event of an emergency. This excludes the southern access on Baldon Road which may be utilised by up to ten light vehicles per day travelling to/from Moulamein.

A Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) (Amber, 2024) was undertaken, and found that the peak traffic generating potential for the Project is during construction, which would generate traffic associated with the workforce accessing the Project site and the delivery of raw materials and plant. For the construction workforce, if the Balranald WAV is used, shuttle buses would be used to transport workers to site. It is anticipated that during peak construction the Project could generate up to 134 light and 142 heavy vehicles per day. Construction of the Project is expected to generate up to 87 vehicles per hour in the morning and evening peak hours during the peak construction period, with an average of 54 vehicles per hour during the peak hours across the entire construction period.

The assessment found that overall, the construction traffic was expected to have a minimal impact on the existing operation of the road, and that the road network was assessed as being able to accommodate the traffic generated by Project construction. It is still undecided whether the Project's oversize/overmass (OSOM) deliveries (including the wind turbine components) would originate from the Port of Adelaide or Port of Newcastle. Separate assessments have been undertaken to assess these routes (Andrews, 2022a; Andrews, 2022b) which identify a number of road upgrades required for both these routes in order to allow these OSOM deliveries to be transported to site successfully.

In general, stakeholders during SIA consultations did not express a high degree of concern about the potential road use disruptions and increased traffic. However, thirty-six percent of survey respondents stated that transportation planning and the use of local roads was an important amenity factor relating to the Project. During consultations, it was noted that local people were used to sharing roads with large vehicles and stock, and there was not a high degree of local road congestion. Balranald Shire Council did raise concerns about the ability of the town of Balranald to handle the blades moving through town, because of a tight intersection near the bridge.

The TIA mentions the potential to use Baldon Road to access the Project, and SIA consultation revealed that this road (and all roads leading to Moulamein) were still damaged from the 2022 floods and that there have been delays with road repairs due to issues with flood recovery funding. The positive impact that any potential upgrades to the Baldon Road and other roads leading into Moulamein could have on the town's economic development was noted during consultations (see Section 5.1.4).

In addition, one stakeholder noted the potential for increased road safety risks if the construction workers were accommodated onsite. This related to the potential for the workers to travel to proximal towns for dinner or drinks at local pubs during recreation time, and then drive back to the Project site. Further to this, an Australian Parliamentary Inquiry into Fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) workforce practices in regional Australia found that in regions where DIDO workforces were prevalent, road safety is of serious concern and accident and death tolls were often higher (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013). This may be an issue of concern for the Project, particularly when considering the potential for cumulative impacts of the REZ.

Increased traffic and oversized loads resulting in disruption to roads, deterioration of road conditions and increased safety risks (cumulative) has been assessed as a high impact (moderate and likely).

5.2.3. Increased pressure on social infrastructure and services

Major development projects can result in demographic changes due to non-resident workers coming into areas. This can place pressure on local social infrastructure and community services.

For this Project, the construction phase is of a relatively large scale and duration, and there will be a large number of non-resident workers coming into the area who may require emergency or health services at times. Given that there is very minimal health service provision in Moulamein, with no ambulance service or permanent GP, and that health services are stretched in both the towns of Hay and Balranald, it was perceived by stakeholders that some basic level of medical staffing would be required to meet this demand, with stakeholders suggesting that this may be at the Project site or within the town of Moulamein. If it were at

the town of Moulamein, stakeholders noted that this could potentially be a shared position, that services both the Project and the community. Consultation with the Balranald WAV also highlighted that medical staffing is often required at the accommodation facility, to limit the additional burden on Balranald's health service system, and they noted that they can provide this, if requested.

In terms of the operational workforce, if workers are sourced from outside the region, this additional population may put some additional pressure on other social infrastructure. For example, consultation indicated that childcare is well beyond capacity in Hay, but the schools could cope with additional students. For Moulamein, consultation with community members suggested that the school is constantly aiming to maintain its numbers so that adequate funding and service provision can be maintained. As such, additional students at Moulamein Public School would be welcomed.

Regarding cumulative impacts due to the REZ more broadly, given the potential increased population due to construction workforces from concurrent projects and the potential for increased safety risk on regional roads where DDO workforces are common, these factors are likely to place increased pressure on local health and emergency services. It is likely that a health and emergency service workforce strategy is needed for the region to respond to these issues.

Given these factors, this potential negative impact has been evaluated as being of high significance (likely, moderate).

5.2.4. Generation of renewable energy

The development of renewable energy projects strongly aligns with federal, state and local government energy policies and land use plans. The NSW *Draft Wind Energy Guideline* (released in late 2023) states that 'wind energy supports the state's transition away from fossil fuels, helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to the delivery of a safe, stable and reliable energy supply to the people of NSW'. It also contributes to meeting NSW's Net Zero by 2050 commitment (DPE, 2023d) and two United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 7 – Affordable and clean energy and 13 - Climate Action (UN, n.d.)

With an installed capacity of 1400 MW, the Project has the potential to provide sufficient renewable energy to support the annual electricity needs of the equivalent of approximately 598,000 average NSW households. Operation of the Project would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity and move towards cleaner electricity generation.

In terms of local community perceptions about this, SIA and Project-wide engagement revealed a range of attitudes towards renewable energy development. However generally, the sentiments expressed were neutral to supportive, and supportive attitudes were principally related to potential economic opportunities. Sixty-four percent of survey participants indicated that renewable energy generation was a key benefit of wind farms generally.

Council representatives reported that local communities were generally happy to see renewable energy developments progressing, and some stakeholders expressed excitement about the renewable energy boom within the region. In Hay however, attitudes towards wind farms in general were mixed, although stakeholders reported that there was not a high degree of resistance to renewables.

At the time of the SIA field visit to Moulamein, there was much community concern about Transgrid's proposed new VNI West transmission line route through the Moulamein region. Community information sessions had been held by Transgrid in Moulamein and Hay in the weeks prior to the SIA field visit, and both the VNI West route and dissatisfaction with Transgrid's consultation approach were frequently mentioned during SIA engagement. This context was to some extent clouding the core issue of the Project's potential social impacts for some Moulamein stakeholders, but for others, once a clear distinction was made between the Transgrid project and this Project, stakeholders did not express concern about this Project.

The general sentiment within Moulamein was that "people are generally supportive of wind farms...haven't heard anything negative...they see it as an opportunity". However, it was noted that

some Moulamein residents, particularly the older generation, perceived that this focus on the development of renewable energy was unnecessary, and would not meet the country's power demands. One Hay-based stakeholder noted that there was presently a coordinated anti-renewable energy campaign, aimed at creating opposition to renewable energy within the region, and they were leveraging the sentiment in Moulamein surrounding the VNI West project.

The provision of renewable energy has been assessed as a positive impact of medium significance (almost certain, minor).

5.3. Community

5.3.1. Changes to community composition, character, and cohesion

Major development projects can result in demographic changes due to non-resident workers coming into areas during construction. This can change the composition of the local community, and so change the local and community feel of towns.

No concerns were identified about the potential negative impacts of an influx of construction workers on the composition or character of the community in Moulamein or in the regional centres of Hay and Balranald. As noted in the baseline, Moulamein is a tight-knit community, and several Moulamein interviewees suggested that an influx of construction workers would be good for the town.

Balranald residents and other stakeholders described positive experiences with the Sunraysia SF construction workforce, noting that they brought economic activity to the main street and that they were managed well by the WAV in terms of providing stable accommodation, managing consumption of alcohol, and maintaining good relationships with local businesses and stakeholders. However, many Balranald stakeholders noted that the construction workforce for the Limondale SF was poorly managed as no accommodation arrangements were put in place. The construction workforce influx for that project caused disruptions to community norms, as workers were camping in unauthorised campsites on the edges of town, there were problems with rubbish and other waste disposal, and problems with public nuisance.

Considering cumulative impacts more broadly, several stakeholders noted that the REZ presented an opportunity to draw new residents and skilled professionals, and their families into the region. This was seen as a positive benefit, bringing vibrancy to the communities, and countering the trend in recent decades of population decline and service loss within some parts of the region.

Another aspect of cohesion relates to the degree of conflict in communities. Proposed development projects can be grounds for contestation within local communities, and in turn, this contestation can negatively impact on community cohesion. This can affect whole communities, and/or distinct groups within communities. Conversely, development projects can also bring together groups with a shared identity.

At the local level, as described in Section 3, engagement revealed largely neutral to positive attitudes towards the Project and wind farms generally within the Moulamein community. Although two SIA interviewees noted that some of the older generations were less supportive of renewable energy, and there was widespread opposition to the VNI West, no concerns were raised about potential negative impacts to community cohesion resulting from differing perspectives about this Project.

Given past negative experiences relating to an unmanaged construction workforce, this potential negative impact has been assessed to be of medium social significance (possible, minor).

5.3.2. Increased community investment

The Project presents an opportunity for increased community investment in localised initiatives through the proposed Community Benefit Sharing Program. Pending Project approval, the program will be established,

and Goldwind intends to invest \$1,100 per MW / annum over the life of the Project (indexed to CPI) commencing from when operational.

Consultation highlighted that in general, local stakeholders highly value benefit sharing schemes and observed that the CBSP has the potential to be a key Project benefit. Some stakeholders noted the positive impacts generated by community benefit schemes of other proposed developments in the region; in Moulamein, in particular, stakeholders noted the positive impact that the proposed Keri Keri WF has had for the Edward River Gardens Residential Aged Care facility in town, and the positive social licence that has resulted. Sixty-eight percent of survey participants indicated that community benefits were a key benefit of wind farms generally.

The local councils expressed eagerness to capitalise on the opportunities that investment in the SW REZ presents and ensure benefits for their communities now and into the future, in line with community need. Key messages from the local councils included:

- Balranald Shire Council perceives that past local projects did not contribute enough to the community. Council wanted future projects (including this one) to link in with Council's strategies, plans and advisory committees.
- Murray River Council noted that smaller scale sponsorships are good, but legacy projects are more important to the community. Council is generally supportive of anything that brings benefits to the community, as long as the project or development is what the community wants.
- Hay Shire Council is currently developing a Community Capacity Building Framework which will outline Council's intent for working with proponents on community benefits.
- All the local councils suggested that they would prefer formalised agreement-making through Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPAs).

Both councils and other stakeholders suggested that the CBSP provides for broad benefits for the community and that consideration of legacy or long-term benefits is important. Survey participants indicated community benefits (68% of respondents) were benefits of wind farms generally. Community benefit opportunities were the most important social and economic factor related to this Project specifically (56% of respondents).

See Section 6.3 for more information about the detail of the proposed CBSP.

This impact was assessed to be of medium significance (almost certain, minor).

5.4. Way of life

5.4.1. Construction related amenity impacts (traffic, air quality, noise)

During construction, there may be adverse social amenity impacts associated with traffic, dust, and noise and vibration for neighbours near the Project site and/or along the proposed haulage route. This may include impacts on nearby residents' way of life, privacy, peace, and quiet enjoyment, and include disruptions to commuting or travelling time, their experience of travel, and their ability to move around freely.

During the Project design phase, the layout of the turbines has also been amended to limit the visual impact of the Project for neighbouring properties. This would have the effect of further distancing neighbouring properties from construction activities relating to the turbines. There may however be cumulative construction impacts from concurrent construction phases of the nearby or neighbouring proposed projects.

A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) was undertaken as part of the EIS (Sonas, 2024). The assessment found that no non-associated dwellings were predicted to experience construction noise greater than standard noise criteria. Additionally, no construction traffic noise impacts were identified for non-associated receivers. However, it was also found that cumulative noise impacts during construction of the Project, Wilan, Keri Keri and Tchelery may occur, if construction activities are undertaken concurrently.

SIA and Project-wide consultations did not reveal any concern about these issues. However, temporary construction impacts, including noise, traffic and dust, were stated as an important amenity factor for seven survey participants (28%).

Given these factors, this has been as a high social significance (likely, moderate).

5.4.2. Amenity impacts from operations

The Project is located over two very large properties and has minimal neighbouring residences and the nearest community (Moulamein) is 15km to the south. The Proponent has taken this into consideration when designing the layout of the wind turbines, ensuring that no turbine is closer than 4km to a neighbouring residence. This will help to mitigate potential impacts of the Project due to potential for operational noise, as well as landscape and visual impacts.

The NIA found acceptable noise impacts from Project operations (Sonas, 2024). During the Project's Scoping phase, some local community members raised concerns about the potential impacts on host landholders and near neighbours from operational noise and shadow flicker. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was undertaken as part of the EIS (Moir, 2024), and as part of this a shadow flicker assessment was undertaken, which found that no non-associated dwellings were identified with potential shadow flicker hours. However, it was identified that portions of the Sturt Highway and Balranald Road were likely to experience shadow flicker for a short period of time each year. The shadow flicker assessment was identified for a 10km stretch of Sturt Highway and a 12km extent of Baldon Road. The VIA found that the Project was compliant with necessary guidelines.

Potential amenity impacts from operations have been assessed as being of low significance (minimal, unlikely).

5.5. Culture

5.5.1. Potential harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage

An Archaeological Technical Report (ATR) was undertaken part of the EIS (NGH, 2024). The ATR outlines that the Project site is in an area that contains the indeterminate boundaries between the Mutthi Mutthi, Watthi Watthi, Wemba Wemba and Nari Nari language groups (NGH, 2024). It is likely that the boundaries of cultural areas, including language groups, likely incorporated a degree of fluidity prior to the impacts of colonisation, and that the processes of dispossession, have significantly impacted the connections between family and tribal or language groups in addition to disrupting the connections to land (Barber, 2015, as cited in NGH, 2024). As such it is not unexpected that the identification of boundaries between groups is now difficult and that there may continue to be some dispute within the Aboriginal community about the boundaries of various groups (NGH, 2024).

Key cultural landscape features within the region are highlighted within the ATR as heat retainer ovens and mounds, and modified trees. Human burials are also a very prominent feature within the Project site and surrounding landscape. Given the prominence of these features, harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage is a key social consideration for this Project, particularly during the construction phase.

The ATR found that a total of 97 newly recorded sites within the Project site may be impacted by the development. The archaeological material located during this investigation is similar to what has been found previously within the region, comprising burials, earth mounds, isolated finds, artefact scatters, hearths and culturally modified tree sites. The results of the ATR suggest that more sites could be expected to occur in the region than was previously envisaged.

Consultation as part of the ATR confirmed that all sites and Aboriginal objects hold cultural value to the Aboriginal community and should, where possible, be avoided by any impacts. It was also stated that the sites identified, particularly the human remains are one tangible component of the multi-component cultural

landscape in which the Project is located. These ancestral remains are accorded very high cultural value and this is whether the evidence was comprised of weathered bone fragments or identifiable bones such as a cranium. Disturbance of burials either by pastoral activity, erosional activity or other processes causes distress for community representatives (NGH, 2024).

Earth mounds were noted to be of high significance, particularly given the confirmed or potential presence of burials and higher densities of associated cultural features and should be avoided by the proposed development activity. It was also noted that erosional forces were generally having substantial detrimental impacts on mound features across the Project site, and in the region more broadly, and that a program to preserve some high value, less degraded examples of mounds, that aims to ensure the survival of some of these finite cultural features, would be appreciated by the local Aboriginal community.

The ATR found that stone artefacts were viewed as features of high value and these surface artefacts that are unable to be avoided by the development activity collected before any construction works occurs. Consultation for the ATR revealed that importance was placed on collecting the artefacts and placing them in a safe location to avoid future disturbance (NGH, 2024). It was also stated that culturally modified trees were a particular feature that should be avoided by the proposed development due to their high cultural value.

During the Project's EIS phase, there was a redesign of the proposed Project footprint in order to avoid high heritage value site types identified within the Project site, which excluded these areas from potential harm from the Project. Avoidance of many Aboriginal Heritage sites within the Project Area has been facilitated by the significant redesign of the proposed development corridor undertaken by the Proponent. Ten previously recorded AHIMS sites and 109 newly recorded sites within the Project Area would be avoided by these amendments.

Despite these amendments to the original Project design that have occurred, the continued potential for harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage was deemed to be of high social significance (almost certain, moderate) for this Project.

5.5.2. Increased general community awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage and assets

The cultural heritage study for this Project revealed that the Project site holds highly significant cultural heritage assets, which have very strong meaning for the local Aboriginal community. Building on this, given the significance of these finds, and the stated likelihood of there being similar cultural heritage assets across the regional landscape (NGH, 2024), there is also potential for these finds to have broader meaning and implications.

The ATR noted that while there have been archaeological investigations for other projects in the region, there is no clear regional synthesis of the nature, number, extent and content for archaeological sites in the Baldon area and within the broader Murray River and Hay Shire Council LGAs. This Project and others may contribute to such a regional synthesis of these findings. More broadly, these findings contribute to a changing conceptualisation of the region, with broader understandings across the wider community about the richness of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the region.

This potential benefit has been assessed as a medium social significance (possible, minor).

5.6. Health and wellbeing

5.6.1. Health and wellbeing impacts for near neighbours

Development projects and any contexts of conflict surrounding them can create psychological stress, uncertainty, and anxiety in people who oppose the project and/or are directly impacted (Prenzel & Vanclay, 2014). This can result from uncertainty regarding whether the project will proceed and relate to fear about construction noise, dust, lighting, and toxic materials, as well as potential safety hazards during operation.

It should also be noted that impacts from construction (e.g. dust and noise) may have secondary impacts on the health and wellbeing of those directly impacted (i.e. host landholders and neighbours). These impacts are addressed in Section 5.4.1.

No such concerns were raised about these potential impacts during the SIA or broader Project-wide consultation. Nonetheless, circumstances can change for people and concern may arise about this Project at any time. Also, given the potential for cumulative construction impacts at the neighbourhood scale, stress about these impacts, or secondary health impacts due to this context of construction, may arise.

As such, potential health and wellbeing impacts for near neighbours have been assessed as being of medium significance (possible, minor significance).

5.6.2. Risks to the construction workforce's health and wellbeing

While local workers would be utilised as much as possible, a significant proportion of the Project's construction workforce would likely come from outside the region. There is potential for health and wellbeing impacts for the construction workforce relating to the remote nature of the work and the social isolation of the Fly in – Fly out (FIFO) or Drive in – Drive out (DIDO) experience. Mental and physical risks for FIFO and DIDO workers include:

- the use of alcohol and other drugs
- poor diet and physical inactivity
- increased sexually transmitted and blood borne infections
- mental health issues
- fatigue related injury
- an increase in injury related to high-risk behaviour (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, 2013).

These risks would likely be even more prevalent when considering the potential for a remote construction worker camp to be located at the Project site, away from the normality of a regional country town and recreational opportunities.

Given these factors, this impact has been assessed as medium significance (possible, moderate).

5.7. Surroundings

5.7.1. Changes to landscape character and visual amenity

The Project would involve a change of land use from rural with some grazing and cropping, to land being used to site wind turbines and associated electricity infrastructure with ancillary grazing, during the operational phase. This would create a change to the visual and landscape character within the local area, which may impact on the local scenic values as perceived by the local community.

As a result of community consultation during the development period, Goldwind has designed the layout of the wind turbines to mitigate potential landscape and visual impacts. This has ensured that no turbine is closer than 5km to a neighbouring residence, and that there has been consideration in the siting of the proposed turbines to provide a balanced appearance along the ridgelines.

As noted in Section 5.4.2, visual amenity and landscape character has been assessed in the EIS through a LVIA. The LVIA concluded that the Project can be viewed from non-associated dwellings within an 8,000m radius. The greatest visual effect was most likely to be felt by residents in the immediate vicinity of the Project. Of the 14 non-associated dwellings within 8,000m of the Project that were assessed, 12 were likely to have a negligible - low visual impact and two were likely to have a moderate visual impact (one of which

appeared to be derelict). The VIA also found that there would be cumulative impacts for properties from both the Project and the surrounding Wilan and Keri Keri WFs.

In terms of public viewing points, the St Pauls Rest and Willows Rest areas, both located along Sturt Highway were identified as points of interest within 8,000m of the nearest turbine. However, the rest areas do not offer views to any key landscape or scenic features. The LVIA found that although the Project would be a dominant feature in the views from these locations, the existing character of the landscape (defined by large tracts of open, flat agricultural lands) would continue to co-exist with the Project. It was also noted that the Sturt Highway has a low viewer sensitivity level.

The LVIA considered the potential cumulative visual impact assessment of proposed renewable energy projects in the area concluded that it is likely that the re-occurrence of wind farms within the region has the potential to alter the perception of the overall landscape character. When considering the cumulative effects from the many wind farms that are proposed within the regional area, even given that not all proposed projects will be developed (due to limited access rights), it is likely that there will be a corridor of wind farms running along the Sturt Highway from Balranald to Hay and then extending in a southeasterly direction.

The LVIA also discussed the potential for impacts to host landowners and neighbours due to nighttime aviation obstruction lighting which has the potential to be visible from distances in excess of 20 kilometres. The assessment found that there would be impacts to the dark night sky, but these could be mitigated through careful selection of light intensity and surrounding design mitigations.

Visual impacts were raised during consultation in relation to the impacts to the existing flat landscape of the plains, particularly given the potential for cumulative impacts, with a range of perspectives being expressed. Balranald Shire Council stakeholders reported that they hadn't heard any community concerns about visual impacts, while Hay and Murray River Council stakeholders reported mixed views from their communities. Considering cumulative impacts, one Hay Shire Council stakeholder noted that "there is a romantic view of the Hay Plains, and it will become more of an industrial landscape. It will change the landscape...this will take some management, but this is the price that people are willing to pay".

Moulamein and Hay residents and other stakeholders also reported mixed views about potential visual impacts, with some suggesting that the turbines would give the community something to look at, while others felt it would disrupt the natural landscape. Sentiment can be summarised by one Moulamein stakeholder's comment that "the Hay Plain has its own beauty...but there's nothing to look at on the Hay Plains...yet some people will be bothered by having blades in the landscape". One Moulamein resident suggested to paint the turbines, as this "would be good to look at while driving to Hay". Responses to the survey indicated that 'the plains' were considered to be a highly valued landscape characteristic by only 6 respondents (24%), whereas 'bushland areas' or 'rivers and creeks' were considered to be highly valued landscape characteristics by 16 (64%) and 19 (76%) respondents respectively. Despite this, the survey also revealed that visual impacts were the most commonly identified concern (36% of respondents) about wind farms generally.

The implication of the potential visual impact of the Project on changes to property values was not raised in consultation, but was noted within the survey, with 20% of respondents noting that this was an important socio-economic factor relating to the Project.

Given these factors, this impact has been assessed as a medium social significance (likely, mild).

5.7.2. Concern about impacts to the natural environment

Potential negative impacts on the natural environment can undermine the social acceptance of renewable energy projects.

During consultations, some concerns were raised about potential impacts of the wind turbines on native flora and fauna, particularly birds, and this was also a concern relating to the potential cumulative effects. One stakeholder representing an environmental group noted that the Murray region was one of the richest and most biodiverse hotspots in the country, and that he was concerned about the cumulative impacts of the

wind farms in the area as they are in the flight path of critically endangered birds between RAMSAR wetlands. Another stakeholder noted the fragile soils of the Hay Plains and the potential for erosion impacts from Project construction. Consultation revealed that the Project site has been overgrazed in the past, and that saltbush has been planted to help stabilise the soil. In relation to this Project, 40% of survey participants indicated that native vegetation impacts were the most important environmental factor, and consultation for the ATR highlighted a strong preference for minimising the removal of trees from the Project site regardless of whether they have evidence of cultural modification.

Other consultation feedback within the town of Hay suggested that there are some within the community who were concerned about other perceived impacts relating to wind farms, and some of these concerns related to misinformation that was circulating within the community. For example, one stakeholder noted that a vocal group of people in Hay that were concerned about the negative health and environmental effects of the paints that are used to coat the turbines. Others were concerned about the end-of-life of the turbines and questioned the potential to recycle the components. A few SIA interviewees commented on the need for the proponent to engage well with the community to allay concerns about the real and perceived impacts to the environment.

This impact has been assessed as an impact of medium social significance (likely, minor).

5.7.3. Safety and hazard risks

Safety and hazard risk concerns were not raised as key concerns during consultation. However, there one near neighbour raised concern about the potential for fire and bushfire risk from the BESS. A Preliminary Hazard Analysis was undertaken as part of the EIS (Sherpa Consulting, 2024), which found that the BESS was not considered as potentially hazardous according to relevant guidelines and identified recommended controls.

Another stakeholder identified potential biosecurity risks from having workers coming to the site from around the country and even from overseas and identified the need for biosecurity protocols.

This impact has been assessed as an impact of low social significance (unlikely, minor).

5.8. Decision-making systems

5.8.1. Potential lack of procedural fairness

Procedural fairness relates to people's ability to participate and have a say in decisions that affect their lives. This includes the effectiveness of engagement mechanisms to enable all groups to participate in the assessment process and opportunities for people to have a say in a project's community investment decisions. Meaningful and inclusive community engagement is integral to this process.

Engagement for this Project has occurred amid a backdrop of widespread opposition within Moulamein to the VNI West transmission line project. For that project, stakeholders in both Moulamein and the region reported that there was widespread perception amongst the Moulamein community that they have been excluded from decision-making and that there had been inadequate consultation. From the SIA interviews, stakeholders suggested that the VNI consultation was received poorly by the community. This was principally because there was a strong appearance of 'city folk' making decisions for those in the country without proper consultation, and the proponent failed to have decision-makers out on the ground, engaging with the community.

In stark contrast, Goldwind and particularly the current Manager of Development for the Project, is highly engaged with the local community and stakeholders in both Moulamein and the broader region. As a result, for this Project in general, local stakeholders perceived that there has been adequate consultation and they highly valued Goldwind's efforts to repeatedly consult with, and be present within, their community.

Survey participants were asked to indicate their agreement with five statements that aimed to identify their perceptions of Goldwind and the Project in relation to decision-making and community engagement processes. Around half of participants agreed that the Project team seems open, honest, and transparent (56%, n=14) and that the Project team engages in genuine two-way dialogue and will be interested in knowing what they think about the project (each 52%, n=13). Just under half of participants (48%, n=12) agreed that people in their community will have opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.

For this Project, the SIA engagement and the survey respondents suggested that good engagement in this local community was characterised by:

- The opportunity to have regular one-on-one meetings with the Proponent as well as community meetings and information sessions.
- Having a range of regular communication channels (i.e., information sessions, community meetings, one on one meetings, social media, media broadcasts, newspaper (including through Moulamein's 'Wongi' paper), radio, local networks, presence at community events, talking to local people at cafes). Being kept up to date is important.
- Feeling as though feedback to the Proponent is being heard and recognised, whether it is positive or negative. Feeling as though the Proponent has respect for people and property boundaries.
- The Proponent having a strong presence in the community (through having employees in the community or employing a local person).
- The Proponent forming real linkages with the Aboriginal community.
- The Proponent helping to support and promote the local community.
- Providing people with opportunities to increase their knowledge about the wind industry, having "understandable information". Getting technical specialists to the information sessions so that the community's questions can be answered then and there.
- Including local targeting of the opponents to the Project or the wind industry opponent.

For the town of Hay, one stakeholder noted that people in town are normally very engaged, and that there were a lot of companies who are coming into Hay to engage with the community at the moment. It was further noted that for Hay residents, people are unlikely to get too engaged, as they accept the developments. Another stakeholder in Moulamein noted consultation fatigue, stating that "all the proponents come in and tell their story, but there is nothing concrete. People are sick of hearing the stories".

Given these factors, despite that Goldwind has a very good record of engagement so far with this Project, it will be a matter of ensuring that this strong engagement focus continues over the life of the Project, particularly in the event of Project personnel changes.

As such, this potential negative impact has been evaluated as being of medium significance (possible, minor).

5.8.2. Potential increased empowerment for the local community

Moulamein is a small tight-knit community whose residents are very engaged with community life and the town's development. This Project (as well as the other local proposed proximal projects that have Moulamein as their closest town and local hub) has the potential to significantly contribute to the development of Moulamein and the potential for the local community to have strengthened ability to influence decision-making relating to the development of their town. This may be through the additional community investment and associated localised governance arrangements that would be provided by a Community Consultative Committee and Community Benefit Sharing Program. Involvement with these processes would build and/or strengthen the capacity of community members in governance, community organising, and community and economic development.

More broadly, having a Project of this scale on its doorstep (and others if they too progress to development) and being supported by a proponent such as Goldwind, may also contribute to giving the town of Moulamein

a stronger voice and presence at Council or other regional levels of governance, as the community seeks to develop and expand their town. As noted in Section 5.1.4, this could involve the proponent actively supporting the Moulamein community in community planning and advocacy in negotiations with Council or other agencies.

As such, this potential benefit has been evaluated as being of medium (possible, moderate).

5.9. Cumulative social impacts

Cumulative impacts occur as a result of incremental, sustained and combined effects of human action and natural variations over time and can be both positive and negative. They can be caused by the compounding effects of a single project or multiple projects in an area, and by the accumulation of effects from past, current and future activities as they arise.

At the broader regional level, the infrastructure pipeline in the Riverina Murray region is unprecedented, with more than \$20 billion allocated to projects that are funded or underway, with more planned. This includes over \$3.2 billion for more than 18 renewable energy projects. In 2022, the Industry Capability Network (ICN) estimated that six of these projects (Snowy 2.0, Inland Rail, Project EnergyConnect, Snowy 2.0 Connect, VNI West and Hume Link) alone will require more than 5,000 workers during their construction phases (Business NSW, 2022).

At the localised level, centred around the town of Moulamein, there is a cluster of other wind and solar farm project proposals (such as Tchelery WF, Keri Keri WF and SF, and Wilan WF), as well as the Transgrid VNI-west project, which if some or all of them progress to development, will have an impact on the township in the construction phase but lessen once operational.

Major projects within 100km of the Project that may result in social impacts and influence social change processes are identified in Table 5-1. The development of the Project coincides with several other major project developments in the region, however not all of these projects will be constructed, for example they may not be approved or financed and thus, represents a highest impact scenario.

Other current or reasonably foreseeable projects relevant to the assessment of cumulative impacts with the Project were identified through desktop review of the following sources:

- DPE's Major Projects planning portal.
- Infrastructure Partnerships Australia's infrastructure pipeline.
- Planning Victoria's Environmental assessments portal.

At the time of writing, other major renewable energy and storage projects in the broader region (more than 100km from the Project) that are in the planning phase or have been approved and which may have overlapping construction timelines include:

- Koorakee Energy Park, Balranald Shire LGA (Scoping Report)
- Mallee Wind Farm, Wentworth Shire LGA (Prepare EIS)
- Yanco Delta Wind Farm, Edward River LGA, Murrumbidgee LGA (Approved)
- Dinawan Solar Farm, Murrumbidgee LGA (Response to submissions)
- Dinawan Wind Farm, Murrumbidgee LGA, Edward River LGA (Prepare EIS)
- Argoon Wind Farm, Murrumbidgee LGA (Prepare EIS)
- Woodland BESS, Murrumbidgee LGA (Response to submissions)
- Deniliquin East BESS, Edward River LGA (Prepare EIS)
- Coleambally BESS, Murrumbidgee LGA (Approved).

Cumulative effects for this Project are expected to principally relate to the following areas:

- positive economic impacts such as increased employment, procurement, and training opportunities,
- increased local and regional economic development and opportunity;
- labour and skills shortages;
- pressure on social infrastructure, services and housing and accommodation;
- road use and safety risks;
- changes to landscape and scenic amenity;
- increased generation of renewable energy;
- changes to the community feel of towns;
- concern about loss of agricultural land;
- increased community investment; and
- potential for both harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage, but also for greater awareness of the extent and presence, and thus recognition of, Aboriginal cultural assets in the region.

The Project's indicative timeline suggests a construction start in late 2025, with operations commencing in early 2029. Just considering the proposed proximal projects (i.e. Tchelery, Keri Keri and Wilan projects), available information these projects (through DPE's Major Projects planning portal and Infrastructure Partnerships Australia's infrastructure pipeline) suggests that they all have overlapping intended construction schedules.

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Table 5-1 Proximal major development projects

Project Name	Developer	Type	Capacity (MW)	Status	Distance from site / Location (approximate)	LGA*
Renewable energy, storage and transmission projects						
Keri Keri Wind Farm	Acciona	Wind BESS	1,000 200	Prepare EIS	6km west 31km east of Balranald	MRC
Keri Keri Solar Farm	Acciona	Solar BESS	400 200	Prepare EIS	6km west 31km east of Balranald	MRC
Tchelery Wind Farm	Neoen	Wind	800	Prepare EIS	Directly adjacent - east 79km east of Balranald, 20km northeast of Moulamein	ERC
Wilan Wind Farm	Kilara Energy	Wind BESS	800	Prepare EIS	15km northwest 25km east of Balranald, 40km north of Moulamein	MRC, HSC
Limondale BESS	RWE	BESS	40	Approved	50km west 10km south of Balranald	BSC
Junction Rivers Wind Farm (formerly Burrawong)	Windlab	Wind + BESS	800	Prepare EIS	50km west 15km south of Balranald	MRC
The Plains Solar Farm	Engie	Solar BESS	400 400	Prepare EIS	50km east 28km south of Hay	HSC

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Project Name	Developer	Type	Capacity (MW)	Status	Distance from site / Location (approximate)	LGA*
The Plains Wind Farm	Engie	Wind	1,500	Prepare EIS	40km east 20km south of Hay	HSC, ERC
Bullawah Wind Farm	BayWa r.e.	Wind + BESS	1000	Prepare EIS	30km SE of Hay	HSC, MC, ERC
Pottinger Wind Farm	Someva Renewables	Wind	750	Prepare EIS	60km south of Hay	ERC, HSC
Pottinger Solar Farm	Someva Renewables	Solar	300	Prepare EIS	60km south of Hay	ERC, HSC
Euston Wind Farm	DP Energy	Wind	700	Prepare EIS	8km north of Euston	BSC, WSC
Other						
Balranald Mineral Sands Mine	Iluka	Mining	n/a	Construction	12km northwest of Balranald	BSC
Goschen Mineral Sands and Rare Earths Project	VHM	Mining	n/a	Exhibition	~85km south of Project 35km southwest of Swan Hill	GSC

* Balranald Shire Council (BSC); Edward River Council (ERC); Gannawarra Shire Council (GSC); Hay Shire Council (HSC); Murray River Council (MRC); Murrumbidgee Council (MC); Swan Hill Council (SHC); Wentworth Shire Council (WSC)

5.10. Social impact summary

Mitigation strategies have been developed for negative impacts of moderate (or greater) significance, and impact significance has then been assessed again for these residual impacts. The residual impact significance rating represents the likely significance of an impact once the proposed mitigation measure has been successfully implemented. Enhancement measures for all positive impacts have also been developed and are listed also.

Table 5-2 below has been organised by Project phase. If the stated impact has relevance within more than one category of social impact, this has also been listed.

Table 5-2 Social impact summary

Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
Health & wellbeing	Pre-construction Construction	Health and wellbeing impacts for near neighbours (negative)	Host landholders Near neighbours Broader community	Low	Medium (possible, minor)	Open, transparent, timely and accessible communication of Project information with the aim of minimising uncertainty and to address concerns.	Low (possible, minimal)
Culture	Pre-construction Construction Operation	Increased general community awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage and assets (positive)	Aboriginal stakeholders Broader community Visitors & tourists	Medium	Medium (possible, minor)	Through Community Benefit Sharing and in partnership with local Aboriginal stakeholders, explore potential for support for activities relating to protection and understanding of cultural assets and values or other programs (such as: a program to preserve some high value, less degraded examples of earth mounds, or specific artifacts found at the Project site or within the region more broadly; Indigenous Ranger program; support key local Aboriginal stakeholders access land for cultural purposes where appropriate). Ensure that local Aboriginal people are given opportunity to facilitate Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Awareness Inductions and other related programs for the Project.	High (likely, moderate)

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Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
Way of life Access Health & Wellbeing	Construction	Increased traffic and road safety impacts (negative)	Near neighbours Broader community Agricultural producers Local businesses Emergency services Local government Road users	High	High (likely, moderate)	Implement traffic management measures outlined in the Construction Traffic Management Plan. Communicate traffic management measures to the local community. Engage with medical and emergency services about the scale, timing and workforce arrangements for the Project's construction phase. Develop accessible, adequate and responsive grievance and remedy mechanisms in the event of complaints. Open, transparent, timely and accessible communication of Project information, including transport routes. Develop policies and guidelines detailing expectations for Project workforce behaviours and safety.	Medium (possible, minor)
Health & wellbeing	Construction	Risks to the construction workforce's health and wellbeing (negative)	Construction workers	Low	Medium (possible, moderate)	Develop policies and guidelines detailing expectations for Project workforce behaviours and safety, and to support the workforce's health and mental health. Prohibit drugs or alcohol on-site at all times. If an onsite worker accommodation village (WAV) is utilised, consider the inclusion of telecommunication systems, gym and recreation spaces.	Low (possible, minimal)
Way of life	Construction	Construction related social amenity impacts (traffic, air quality,	Host landholders Near neighbours Residents along haulage route Broader community	Low	High (likely, moderate)	Implement measures outlined in the Construction Environmental Management Plan, including traffic and noise management measures. Develop accessible, adequate and responsive grievance and remedy mechanisms in the event of complaints.	Medium (possible, minor)

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Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
		noise) (negative)				Open, transparent, timely and accessible communication of Project information, including transport routes.	
Livelihoods	Construction Operation	Increased local employment opportunities Increased training opportunities Increased procurement opportunities (positive)	Job seekers Local and regional employment and training service providers Local and regional businesses, contractors and suppliers Local government Broader community	High	Medium (possible, minor)	Develop Industry Participation Plan in consultation with local stakeholders. As part of this, develop Local Jobs and training Program, Local Procurement Policy, Local Business Participation Plan and Aboriginal Participation Plan. Specific intent and mitigation measures for these plans are outlined in Section 6.2.	High (likely, moderate)
Livelihoods	Construction Operation	Strengthened economies (positive)	Local and regional businesses, contractors and suppliers Local accommodation providers, retailers, and food services	High	High (likely, moderate)	Develop Industry Participation Plan in consultation with local stakeholders. As part of this, develop Local Jobs and Training Program, Local Procurement Policy, Local Business Participation Plan and Aboriginal Participation Plan. Specific intent and mitigation measures for these plans are outlined in Section 6.2. Community Benefit Sharing Program. Communicate strategies clearly to community as per Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.	Very high (likely, moderate)

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Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
			Local government Broader community			Collaborate with local councils and other key regional economic development stakeholders to support regional economic development initiatives.	
Livelihoods	Construction Operation	Local labour force impacts (negative)	Residents Local businesses Broader community	Medium	High (likely, moderate)	Collaborate with local councils and other key regional economic development stakeholders to support local workforce development.	Medium (possible, minor)
Community	Construction Operation	Changes in community composition, character, and cohesion (negative)	Broader community	Medium	Medium (possible, minor)	Develop policies and guidelines detailing expectations for Project workforce behaviours and safety. Continue regular engagement with Councils and the community (through an elected community committee), particularly during construction, to discuss and adaptively respond to any emerging community and business concerns. Develop accessible, adequate and responsive grievance and remedy mechanisms in the event of complaints.	Low (unlikely, minor)
Access Livelihoods	Construction Operation	Increased pressure on housing and accommodation (negative)	Residents Local businesses Service providers Broader community Visitors & tourists	High	High (likely, moderate)	Prioritise the use of the workers accommodation village at Balranald for most of the construction workforce. Explore the potential to accommodate some construction and operational personnel in Moulamein. This could be through use of existing short-term accommodation, and/or through development of housing stock in Moulamein for later use by Project staff or other form of community use.	Medium (possible, minor)

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Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
						<p>In locations where Project workers may live (particularly Hay and Moulamein), work with councils and other stakeholders to unlock both a) land for additional housing development, and b) the underutilisation of the existing housing stock (e.g. in Hay).</p> <p>Continue regular engagement with Councils, particularly during construction, to discuss and adaptively respond to any emerging community and business concerns.</p> <p>Engage with accommodation providers to avoid negatively impacting on tourism opportunities and vulnerable populations who are utilising temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Collaborate with local councils and other key regional economic development or social sector stakeholders to support housing responses in the region.</p> <p>Communicate workforce accommodation strategies clearly to community as per Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.</p>	
Access	Construction Operation	Increased pressure on social infrastructure and services (negative)	Broader community Local government Service providers	Medium	High (likely, moderate)	<p>During construction, ensure some level of medical staffing at the worker accommodation village and at the Project site or within the town of Moulamein.</p> <p>Continue regular engagement with Councils and social service providers, to discuss and adaptively respond to any emerging community and business concerns.</p> <p>Develop policies and guidelines detailing expectations for Project workforce behaviours and safety.</p>	Medium (possible, minor)

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Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
						Engage with medical and emergency services about the scale, timing and workforce arrangements for the Project's construction phase. Community engagement as per the Community and Stakeholder and Engagement Strategy.	
Community	Construction Operation	Increased community investment (positive)	Broader community Community groups Environmental groups Local service providers Local government Vulnerable community members	High	Medium (almost certain, minor)	Development and implementation of the Community Benefit Sharing Program with Council and key stakeholders, including the local Aboriginal stakeholders. Provide ongoing opportunities for the local community (particularly the Moulamein community) to be involved in decision-making processes relating to the Project and the Community Benefit Sharing Program. Communicate strategies clearly to community as per Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan.	High (almost certain, moderate)
Surroundings	Construction Operation	Changes to landscape character and visual amenity (negative)	Near neighbours Broader community Visitors and tourists	Medium	Medium (likely, mild)	Amendments to Project design to avoid areas of potentially high visual amenity impact. Implement measures outlined in the LVIA. Community engagement as per the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan.	Medium (likely, mild)

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Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
Surroundings	Construction Operation Decomm.	Concern about impacts to the environment (negative)	Host landholders Near neighbours Broader community Environmental groups	Medium	Medium (likely, minor)	Implement proposed soil, dust, and water management measures as outlined in the Construction Environmental Management Plan. Robust engagement with the community to allay concerns about the real and perceived impacts to the environment.	Low (possible, minimal)
Culture	Construction Operation Decomm.	Potential harm to Aboriginal cultural values and heritage (negative)	Aboriginal stakeholders	High	High (almost certain, moderate)	Amendments to Project design to avoid areas of potentially high cultural value. Implement mitigation measures outlined in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA), including preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP). Ongoing engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders throughout construction. Ensure that local Aboriginal people are given opportunity to facilitate Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Awareness Inductions and other related programs for the Project.	Medium (unlikely, moderate)
Surroundings	Construction Operation Decomm.	Public safety and hazard risks (negative)	Host landholders Proximal landholders Broader community Emergency services	High	Low (unlikely, minor)	Mitigation measures not required for low negative impact, however: Implement mitigation measures outlined in the Preliminary Hazards Assessment (PHA). Include biosecurity protocols as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan. Communicate strategies clearly to community as per Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan.	Low (unlikely, minimal)

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Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
			Environmental and community groups				
Way of life Health and wellbeing	Operation	Amenity impacts due to wind farm operations (noise) (negative)	Host landholders Near neighbours	Low	Low (unlikely, minimal)	Mitigation measures not required for low negative impact, however: Amendments to Project design to meet operational noise criteria at all neighbouring dwellings. Implement mitigation measures outlined in the NIA. Communicate strategies clearly to community as per Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. Develop accessible, adequate and responsive grievance and remedy mechanisms in the event of complaints.	N/A (as mitigations not required)
Surroundings Access	Operation	Generation of renewable energy (positive)	Broader community Energy consumers NSW Government Federal Government	Medium	Medium (almost certain, minor)	Work with economic development stakeholders to showcase the Project and the industry within the region. Tell the positive story of the Project's success.	Medium (almost certain, minor)
Livelihoods Surroundings	Operation	Concern about loss of agricultural land and productivity	Broader community Agricultural producers Local businesses	Low	Low (likely, minimal)	Mitigation measures not required for low negative impact, however: Rehabilitation of land as per Environmental Management System.	N/A

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Social impact category	Project phase	Potential impact (unmitigated)	Affected stakeholder group	Stakeholder significance (perceived)	Impact significance (unmitigated)	Mitigations / enhancement measures	Residual impact significance
		(negative)					
Decision-making systems	All	Potential for lack of procedural fairness (negative)	Near neighbours Broader community	Low	Medium (possible, minor)	<p>Open, transparent, timely and accessible communication of Project information.</p> <p>Provide multiple Project contact options and feedback mechanisms for the community and stakeholders.</p> <p>Community feedback is demonstrably considered in Project planning.</p> <p>Develop accessible, adequate and responsive grievance and remedy mechanisms in the event of complaints.</p> <p>Provide ongoing opportunities for the local community (particularly the Moulamein community) to be involved in decision-making processes relating to the Project and the Community Benefit Sharing Program.</p>	Low (unlikely, minor)
Decision-making systems	All	Increased agency for the local community (positive)	Moulamein community	Medium	Medium (possible, moderate)	<p>Support the Moulamein community in community planning and advocacy in negotiations with Council and other planning arenas.</p> <p>Provide ongoing opportunities for the local community (particularly the Moulamein community) to be involved in decision-making processes relating to the Project and the Community Benefit Sharing Program.</p>	

6. Social impact management

This section provides a framework for managing social impacts, including a schedule of actions outlining timings for delivery of the framework's components.

The enhancement and mitigation measures outlined below directly respond to the potential social impacts (positive and negative) associated with the Project. These measures have been identified through consideration of Project impacts, existing knowledge, and SIA and Project-wide consultation.

Key components of the social impact management framework include:

1. Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (CSES)
2. Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan (IAPP)
3. Community Benefit Sharing Program (CBSP).

Where relevant, some of the mitigation and enhancement measures outlined in Section 5.10 have been consolidated into these management strategies. Some social impacts of the Project will be managed primarily through the various environmental management strategies identified in the EIS. These include the Cultural Heritage Management Plan, Construction Traffic Management Plan, Construction Noise Management Plan, Emergency Response Plan, and the Construction Environmental Management Plan. The CSES will be the platform that ensures adequate linkage between these management plans and community concerns relating to these matters.

In addition to these measures, the proponent has also demonstrated their commitment to avoid potential Project impacts through amending Project design. This has particularly been through avoidance of environment, visual and cultural heritage impacts. Significant amendments have been made to limit biodiversity impacts, areas of highest Aboriginal cultural values, and to reduce visual impacts for neighbouring properties.

For the key cumulative impacts and benefits that would be experienced across the region, consideration should be given to the potential to work together (at least to some extent) with government and other renewable energy proponents that seek to establish operations in the local or regional area. This would allow some degree of coordination (or even integration) of social impact management across the region. This would likely need to be facilitated by a government or other similar agency.

6.1. Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The SIA has revealed some key engagement needs for stakeholder and community engagement during the coming Project phases, which include:

- Open, transparent, timely and accessible communication of Project information with the aim of minimising uncertainty and to address concerns.
- Address concerns about potential amenity and safety impacts (e.g., traffic, noise, visual) as well as real and perceived impacts to the environment.
- Continue regular engagement with Councils, particularly during construction, to discuss and adaptively respond to any emerging community and business concerns.
- Develop accessible, adequate and responsive grievance and remedy mechanisms in the event of complaints.
- Communicate intentions about the accommodation of both the construction and operational workforces.
- Robust engagement with the community to allay concerns about the real and perceived.

- Establish Community Consultative Committee and Community Benefit Sharing Program. Provide ongoing opportunities for the local community (particularly the Moulamein community) to be involved in decision-making processes relating to the Project, the Community Consultative Committee, and the Community Benefit Sharing Program. Ensure representation of Traditional Owners and other key local Aboriginal stakeholders.
- Collaborate with local councils and other key regional economic or social development stakeholders to support regional economic and social development initiatives.
- Work with economic development stakeholders to showcase the Project and the industry within the region. Tell the positive story of the Project's success.
- Integrate engagement needs for the development of the IAPP and CSBP.

In communicating with the local community (Moulamein), it is recommended to apply the engagement suggestions outlined by the community (see Section 5.8.1). These suggestions included the consideration of employing a broader range of regular communication channels (i.e., information sessions, community meetings, one on one meetings, social media, media broadcasts, newspaper (including through Moulamein's 'Wongi' paper), radio, local networks, presence at community events, talking to local people at cafes), and having a strong presence in the community (through having employees in the community or employing a local person).

It is recommended to update the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to integrate findings from this SIA and the broader Project-wide engagement program.

6.2. Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan

Goldwind is committed to maximising employment and training opportunities for the local community through the Project. Goldwind's goal is to create inclusive employment opportunities including for diverse population groups, such as First Nations and multi-cultural communities, women, school leavers and people that were previously unemployed, whilst employing a mix of unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers.

Given skills shortages, an active approach will be needed to achieve positive local employment and business outcomes for this Project. The IAPP will articulate the measures that Goldwind will put in place to achieve these goals.

The IAPP will encompass considerations regarding local employment and procurement, as well as the accommodation of the non-resident construction workforce. It will be primarily targeted towards the people and businesses within the Edward River and Hay Shire LGAs, as well as Balranald and Murray River LGAs, and the Riverina Murray region more broadly. Specific opportunities for Aboriginal people and businesses, women, and young people will be outlined.

The Plan will include the following key components:

- Local Jobs and Training Program
- Local Procurement Policy and Local Business Participation Program
- Aboriginal Participation Plan
- Workforce Management and Accommodation Plan.

The Plan will strongly link in with the CSES.

6.2.1. Key stakeholders

The IAPP will be developed in partnership with key local and regional stakeholders, including:

- First Nations stakeholders from the diverse groups within the local area (including but not limited to Nari Nari Tribal Council; Pappin Family Aboriginal Corporation; Wakool Indigenous Corporation) and also from the Riverine Murray region more broadly.
- Edward River, Hay, Balranald, Murray River and Swan Hill Shire Councils.
- Local chambers of commerce.
- Economic development and industry support agencies (e.g., Industry Capability Network, Regional Development Australia, Future-Focused Local Workforce Forum taskforce, etc.).
- Training and employment support agencies (e.g. TAFE Hay and Swan Hill).
- Other local social service or support agencies, real estate agents, and accommodation providers.

6.2.2. Local Jobs and Training Program

Goldwind would seek to maximise opportunities for local jobs by actively looking for the right skills amongst residents and by working with partner organisations to support the development and delivery of relevant training programs to support the upskilling and work readiness of local people.

Specific measures for the Local Jobs and Training Program (LJTP) would include:

- Prioritise engagement of local workers, contractors and suppliers. Employ the use of local employment and local content targets, which will be developed with consideration of OECC's NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board's Plan (OECC, 2022), as well as other relevant guidance. For Project operation, deliver structured training programs for learning workers (e.g. apprentices, trainees).
- Build local community awareness about the Project's employment (unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled jobs) and contracting opportunities through construction and operation (e.g., advertise opportunities on the Project website, seek expressions of interest, hold employment and industry briefing sessions, keep a register of interest).
- Build relationships with the local employment and industry support stakeholders across the region, including in Swan Hill that assist people and businesses improve their capacity and capability (e.g., chambers of commerce, Sureway Employment and Training, Summit Employment and Training etc).
- Work with training organisations and other regional stakeholders to support the development of training pathways ahead of construction.
- Map out how different local demographic groups access information about employment and training opportunities and provide information or connect with these groups through those means of access.
- Include clauses in the EPC's contract that outline expectations about local procurement, local participation and appropriate skills development and training. Ensure specific opportunities for First Nations people and businesses, young people and women.
- If temporary accommodation camp is utilised for the Project, ensure that local people don't have to stay there. Consider running buses to the Project during construction for local workers.
- Engage in collaboration with key regional stakeholders to support workforce and career pathway development initiatives related to the Project, such as with TAFE, the Future-Focused Local Workforce Forum taskforce and Hay Country Universities Centre. Establish and maintain relationships with government agencies, training groups and community groups to assess potential skills gaps and potential training requirements.
- Partner with local schools (including primary school in Moulamein and the secondary schools in Hay, Balranald and Swan Hill) to inform students about the renewable energy industry and job opportunities in the region.
- Adopt equal employment opportunities for recruitment and support a diverse workforce that includes vulnerable and under-represented population groups. Consider flexible work arrangements to

encourage women to work with the Project and offer incentives for drive-in, drive-out workers to work locally.

6.2.3. Local Procurement Policy and Local Business Participation Program

The Local Procurement Policy (LPP) would outline the proponent's commitment to procuring locally. The policy will give preference to local contractors and suppliers where they are competitive during all Project phases, and it will include specific focus on First Nations businesses.

When considering local content, there is need to work to ensure local procurement at both the very local level (i.e., Moulamein or Maude districts) as well the LGAs of Hay, Murray River, and Balranald, and the broader Riverina-Murray region.

The Local Business Participation Program (LBPP) will be the key initiative to identify capability and capacity in the local community and maximise opportunities for local subcontractors and suppliers to participate in the Project.

Specific measures for the LPP and LBPP would include:

- Prioritise engagement of local contractors and suppliers. Ensure strong focus on procurement at the very local level (i.e., Moulamein or Maude districts) as well the LGAs of Hay, Murray River, and Balranald, and the broader Riverina-Murray region.
- Employ the use of local content targets, which will be developed with consideration of OECC's NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board's Plan (OECC, 2022), as well as other relevant guidance.
- Ensure business communities with host and surrounding LGAs are aware of the opportunities.
- Work with industry support organisations/agencies to support the smaller businesses to develop capacity, capability and confidence to take up the opportunities with the Project.
- Embed clauses in the EPC's contract that outline expectations about local procurement, local participation and appropriate skills development and training. Ensure specific opportunities for First Nations people and businesses, young people and women.
- Build local community awareness about the Project's employment (unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled jobs) and contracting opportunities through construction and operation (e.g., advertise opportunities on the Project website, seek expressions of interest, hold employment and industry briefing sessions, keep a register of interest).
- Build relationships with the local and regional area's business community (e.g., join the chambers of commerce, attend some meetings in person).
- Map out local suppliers to gain a comprehensive understanding of local capability.
- Explore opportunity for distribution of economic opportunity throughout local businesses if a worker accommodation village is utilised.

6.2.4. Aboriginal Participation Plan

As part of the IAPP, Goldwind would develop an Aboriginal Participation Plan (APP) with local First Nations groups that seeks to increase employment and income opportunities for Aboriginal peoples and communities during the construction and operation of the Project.

Key stakeholders would include Aboriginal stakeholders from the diverse groups within the local area (including but not limited to Nari Nari Tribal Council; Pappin Family Aboriginal Corporation; Wakool Indigenous Corporation) but also more broadly, Aboriginal stakeholders within the broader Riverina-Murray regional area.

In addition to the measures outlined above for the LJTP, LPP and LBPP, specific measures for the APP would also include:

- Employ the use of Aboriginal participation targets; ensure there is adequate consideration of local Aboriginal participation. Goldwind is committed to a target of 2.5% Aboriginal participation within both the construction and operational workforces.
- Map out local and regional Aboriginal businesses to gain a comprehensive understanding of local capability, through engaging directly with a broad range of local Aboriginal groups and checking the Supply Nation register.
- Engage with key local Aboriginal stakeholders and employment support agencies to identify local Aboriginal people who may be suitable for work with the Project for both the construction and operations phases.
- Ensure that local Aboriginal people are given opportunity to facilitate Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Awareness Inductions and other related programs for the Project.

6.2.5. Workforce Management and Accommodation Strategy

This strategy would detail the options for the accommodation of the non-resident workforce, and management of the potential social impacts and benefits related to this workforce.

Specific measures would include:

- Prioritise the use of the worker accommodation village at Balranald for most of the construction workforce.
- Explore the potential to accommodate some construction and operational personnel in Moulamein. This could be through use of existing short-term accommodation, and/or through development of housing stock in Moulamein for later use by Project staff or other form of community use.
- In locations where Project workers may live (particularly Hay and Moulamein), work with councils and other stakeholders to unlock both a) land for additional housing development, and b) the underutilisation of the existing housing stock (e.g. in Hay).
- Ensure the WAV that is utilised for the construction workforce uses local suppliers.
- Encourage increased spend by workers and contractors in the local area to enhance local economic benefits.
- Develop policies and guidelines detailing expectations for Project workforce behaviours and safety whilst workers are in transit to site from their home communities, onsite, in accommodation camps, and when interacting with local communities.
- Develop policies and mechanisms to ensure the Project workforce's health and mental health.
- Prohibit drugs or alcohol on-site at all times. If an onsite WAV is utilised, consider the inclusion of telecommunication systems, gym and recreation spaces to manage health and wellbeing risks for workers.
- Engage with medical and emergency services about the scale, timing and workforce arrangements for the Project's construction phase.
- Continue regular engagement with Councils, particularly during construction, to discuss and adaptively respond to any emerging community and business concerns relating to the Project workforces.
- Engage with accommodation providers to avoid negatively impacting on tourism opportunities and vulnerable populations who are utilising temporary accommodation.
- Collaborate with local councils and other key regional economic development or social sector stakeholders to support local housing development solutions in the region.
- Where possible, consult with community liaison representatives for other renewable energy and large infrastructure projects in the region to coordinate and appropriately manage the influx of workers to the region to minimise pressure on local stakeholders and businesses.

6.3. Community Benefit Sharing Program

This section will inform the development of the Project’s Community Benefits Sharing Program which would aim to increase benefits to local community members throughout the Project lifecycle.

Goldwind proposes to develop a Community Benefit Sharing Program that ensures benefits of the Project are shared with the community in a way that enhances the Project’s social and economic outcomes and that provides a meaningful contribution to social and economic development within the local and regional area. In developing and delivering this framework, Goldwind recognises the need to partner with the local community and key stakeholders.

The following principles will guide the development of the Community Benefit Sharing Program (adapted from Lane & Hicks, 2019).

Table 6-1 Benefit sharing principles (Lane & Hicks, 2019)

Principle	Description
Appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored to local context, circumstances, culture and need. • Helps to address patterns of conflict or inequality. • Benefits perceived as appropriate and proportionate to the scale of the project and the level of change or disturbance. • Developer works with the local community to develop specific benefit sharing strategies. • Local community provides guidance.
Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to community involvement, influence, and negotiation. • Flexibility to respond to local context. • Flexibility to evolve over the lifecycle of the development in line with community needs.
Transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit sharing strategy is transparently available to the community. • Provides a clear and understandable rationale for the various programs and eligibility. • Managed in a transparent and accountable way that involves local stakeholders. • Must not come with conditions of silence or consent.
Integrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to integrate the project owner/operators as valuable community members by building links and relationships into the community. • Integrated with the company’s broader approach to community engagement and project development.
Mutually Beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to bring mutual benefit to local communities, the project and its owners and financiers.
Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a positive legacy in the local community. • Seeks to bring ongoing and lasting value to the local area. • Seeks to integrate benefit sharing opportunities with broader strategies by building local partnerships.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits provided from at least the start of construction and throughout the operational phase. • One-off initiatives do not provide ongoing sustainability or support.
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Goldwind intends to invest \$1,100 per MW / annum over the life of the Project (indexed to CPI) commencing from when the Project becomes operational. Goldwind intends to deliver the program by considering benefits at both the local and regional scales, as outlined in Table 6-2 below.

Table 6-2 Areas of focus

Scale	Geographic area/s	Rationale
Local	Murray River and Hay Shire LGAs Specific focus on near neighbours, Moulamein community, Maude community	These communities are host communities to the Project. These communities are in close proximity to the Project; Moulamein in particular is considered a local hub for the Project.
Regional	Up to 80km radius from the Project boundaries	Open to the LGAs of Balranald, Hay, Edward River and Murray River, yet focused on initiatives located within 80km of the Project. This will include the regional centres of Balranald and Hay.

The program will include funding through two key streams: Voluntary Planning Agreement and a Communities Fund. It will also include consideration of a pre-construction sponsorship fund as well as the potential for in-kind contributions. The core components of the program are outlined in Table 6-3 below.

Table 6-3 Community Benefit Sharing Program components

Program components	Focus/details	Governance	Scale	Funding allocation
Key components				
Voluntary Planning Agreement	Funding contributions to projects that meet strategic community need.	Managed as two distinct funds by a) Murray River Shire Council and b) Hay Shire Council. This will be through two distinct Voluntary Planning Agreements, with funds managed by the respective councils.	Local	\$500/MW/yr of installed capacity within each council area’s footprint.
Communities Fund	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic community partnerships and/or projects Community sponsorships Education and employment initiatives (including Scholarship Program) 	Managed by Baldon Wind Farm in partnership with the community and key stakeholders (likely through an elected committee consisting of community members and a Project representative).	Local, Regional	\$500/MW/yr of installed capacity
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> First Nations Initiatives, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for local initiatives for community and/or employment purposes Education opportunities Facilitating, where possible, access to 	Managed by an independent committee (yet to be determined) in partnership with the local Aboriginal community.	Local, Regional	\$100/MW/yr of installed capacity

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Program components	Focus/details	Governance	Scale	Funding allocation
	<p>land within the Project boundary for cultural purposes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for education and cultural awareness in the local school network - Cultural heritage protection support 			
Additional components				
Pre-construction Sponsorship Fund	Build brand awareness and Project's social licence. Support for community-based initiatives and projects.	Managed by Goldwind	Local, Regional	NA - Goldwind's discretion
In-kind contributions	Opportunities to provide labour, equipment, and expertise free of charge to assist the local community.	Managed by Baldon Wind Farm	Local, Regional	NA

During consultation, stakeholders expressed specific suggestions for community investment for this Project for both Moulamein and for the broader area. These suggestions have been categorised into themes and are summarised in Table 6-4 below.

Table 6-4 Stakeholder investment suggestions expressed to date by theme

Theme	Stakeholder investment suggestions expressed to date	
	For Moulamein	For the broader regional area
Strategic projects / Legacy initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of housing stock <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Construction of housing that could be left for community use ○ Development of emergency housing • Support improved aged care infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independent living units (at Edward River Gardens Residential Aged Care) • Renewal of local infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Restoration of the Moulamein wharf (damaged in 2022 floods) ○ Moulamein Town Hall upgrade ○ Moulamein main street upgrade ○ Moulamein pool ○ Education facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund or contribute towards projects that meet identified long-term strategic community needs, i.e. those identified within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Balranald Shire Council's Settlement Strategy, Action Plan or Advisory Committees ○ Hay Shire Council's Community Capacity Building Framework • Development of regional infrastructure (e.g., improved telecommunications)
Community capacity building and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local tourism development • Youth activities, such as MRC's Y-Hub in Moulamein • Community projects involving heritage museum or courthouse • Support for farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist smaller towns in the region with development of Place Plans • Fund grant writing for community organisations (including First Nations organisations specifically) • Seed funding for innovative regional industries/projects • Free or subsidised electricity for local people
Skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth scholarships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link in with and support existing initiatives that build capacity and renewable energy work/project readiness of individuals and businesses in the region, for both construction and operations. e.g. through support of Energy Co and TAFE's microskills

Theme	Stakeholder investment suggestions expressed to date	
	For Moulamein	For the broader regional area
		training course rollout or support for the Hay Country Universities Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth scholarships (e.g. through Country Education Foundation), traineeships, apprenticeships Supporting local youth in employment and training opportunities
Local sporting clubs and sport and recreation facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moulamein Football Netball Club Upgrade and shade the Moulamein skate park Support for the tennis club, swimming pool, race club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sporting clubs within any of the regional towns
Support community groups and community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for local community groups (e.g., Moulamein Art Gallery, Rural Fire Service) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hay 'Glow in the Dark' event There are many organisations in every town that could do with support, e.g. Balranald Men's Shed Revegetation services by Western Murray Land Improvement Group Sharing of Project machinery or equipment with local community organisations
Education facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moulamein Public School Shade structure for Moulamein Public School 	
Health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support of aged care facility in Moulamein. Registered Nurse for the aged care facility and the community Support for improved local health service delivery 	
Arts funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paint the turbines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider funds for 'vibrancy' (e.g. regional arts events)
First Nations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for First Nations youth, particularly while still at school. Explore potential to partner with the Paul Ramsay Foundation and the Clontarf programs.

Theme	Stakeholder investment suggestions expressed to date	
	For Moulamein	For the broader regional area
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options to support a program of protection or preservation of culturally important artifacts and/or landscape features within the Project area and with the region • Support local stakeholders with the Indigenous Advancement Strategy Indigenous Ranger program • Support local Aboriginal stakeholders with securing land for cultural use • Support for local Aboriginal stakeholders to develop businesses • Schools language program • Youth scholarships, traineeships, apprenticeships • Biodiversity offsets on Aboriginal owned land • Sharing of Project machinery or equipment with local Aboriginal organisations

Further work is required to refine, develop, add to, and test (with the community and councils) the details about the Community Benefit Sharing Program, and these stakeholders suggested investment ideas in particular.

6.4. Schedule of actions

Table 6-5 Social impact management framework schedule of actions

Social impact management component	Timeframe		Responsibility
	Commence	Complete	
Update Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy	Update within EIS phase	Evaluate and update again prior to construction commencing	Proponent
Develop Industry Participation Plan	Post approval	Prior to construction commencing	Proponent
Ground truth and further develop Community Benefit Sharing Program	Post approval	Prior to construction commencing	Proponent

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Appendix A Detailed methodology

A.1 Background and overview

This SIA has been prepared to comply with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (DPHI) Social Impact Assessment Guideline (the SIA Guideline) (DPE, 2023a). The SIA Guideline applies to all State Significant projects.

A SIA 'is a process of analysing, monitoring and managing social consequences, both positives and negatives, of planned interventions (policy, plan, program, project) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions' (Vanclay, 2003).

As such, this assessment aims to identify, predict, and evaluate the likely social impacts and benefits arising from the project, and to propose appropriate responses to mitigate and manage negative impacts and enhance positive benefits.

'Social impacts' can be defined as the consequences that people experience when a new project brings change. For the purposes of the SIA, 'people' are classed as individuals, households, groups, communities, or organisations (DPE, 2023a). These impacts can be positive (such as increased employment and retail trade), and they can be negative (such as creating strains on local housing markets or social infrastructure).

The SIA Guideline groups likely social impacts into eight categories as shown below in Figure A-1. These categories form the frame which allows for a thorough identification of potential social impacts across the range of the social domain (i.e., across all the social categories) for each of the different project activities, in the Project's initial social impact scoping stage (which was undertaken as part of the Scoping Report prepared by the Proponent).

Way of life	including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, and how they interact each day
Community	including composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, resilience, and people’s sense of place
Accessibility	including how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private, or not-for-profit organisation
Culture	both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, practices, obligations, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings
Health and wellbeing	including physical and mental health especially for people vulnerable to social exclusion or substantial change, psychological stress resulting from financial or other pressures, access to open space and effects on public health
Surroundings	including ecosystem services such as shade, pollution control, erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity
Livelihoods	including people’s capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business
Decision-making systems	including the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives (procedural fairness), can make informed decisions, and have access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms

Figure A-1 Social impact categories (DPE, 2023)

This SIA considers the findings of several other technical specialists’ studies and is informed by stakeholder and community engagement activities.

An overview of the key SIA stages is presented in Figure A-2 below.

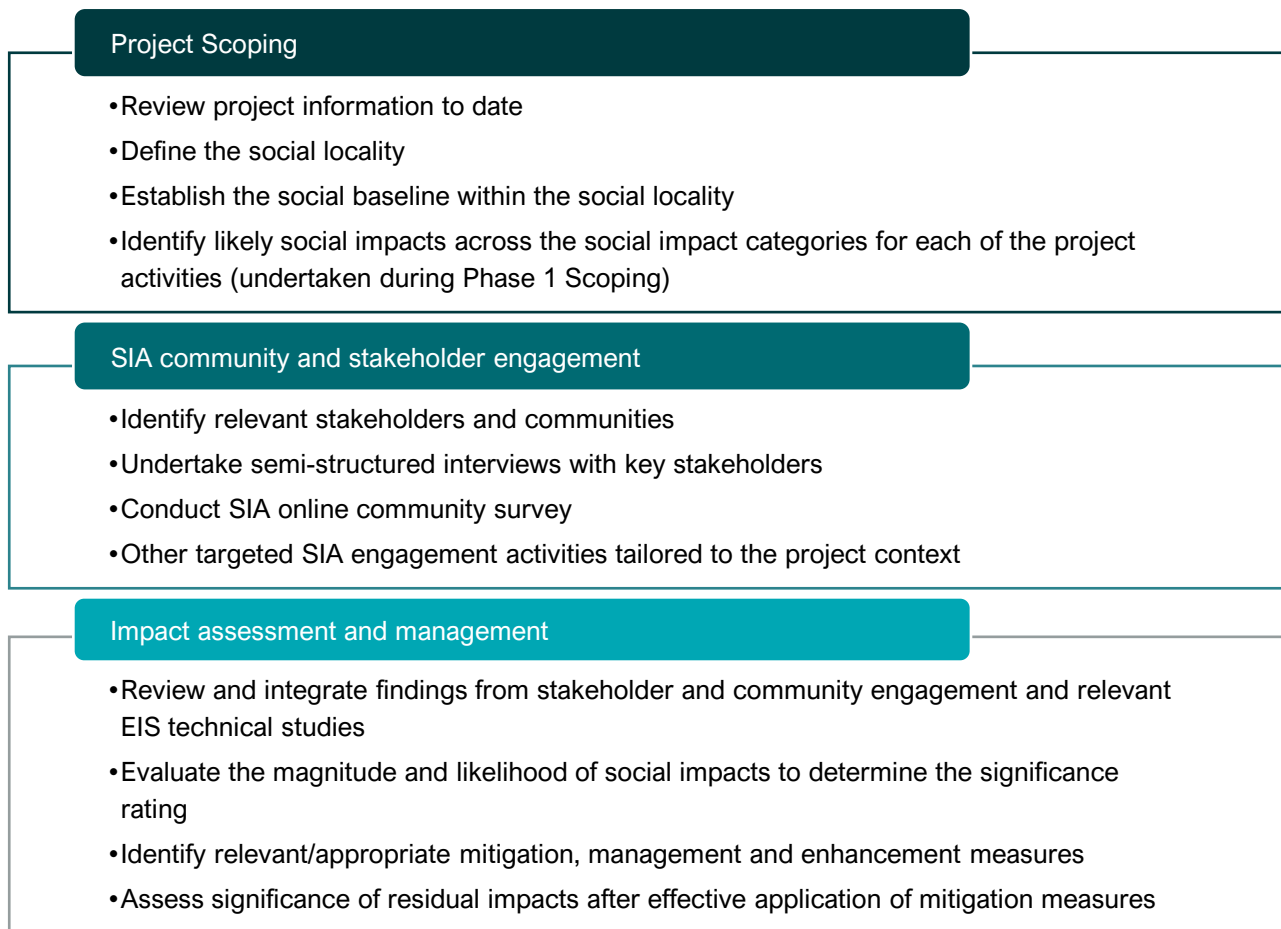


Figure A-2 Overview of SIA assessment methodology

The SIA has been informed by the principles of best practice as outlined in the SIA Guideline, and the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) Guidance Note, Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects (Vanclay, Esteves, Aucamp, & Franks, 2015). As such, the SIA is evidence-based, precautionary and responsive to the local context.

A.2 Defining the social locality

The social locality describes the social extent of a project and consists of the people who are potentially impacted by a project. Affected peoples can include both ‘communities of place’ and ‘communities of interest’. The social locality is determined with consideration of the nature and scale of potential impacts arising from the development, and review of the characteristics of the affected communities. The social locality includes:

Host and adjacent/near neighbour properties

Localities/townships likely to experience construction-related workforce, procurement, and traffic impacts and/or benefits from the Project

Major towns/cities providing core services to these localities/townships.

Host LGA/s

The existing networks of travel, the main transportation corridors, and infrastructure and service hubs in the region.

The proposed Project site is situated in the Hay Plains region, in the rural localities of Moulamein, within the Murray River LGA, and Maude within the Hay Shire LGA. It is also in proximity to the Edward River LGA and the NSW-Victorian border. The wind farm would be located approximately 15km north of the township of Moulamein, 55km east of Balranald, 75km southwest of Hay, and 100km northeast of Deniliquin. The closest major service centre, the Victorian city of Swan Hill, is located approximately 60km to the southwest.

Given the location, the social locality for this Project has been defined as the Murray River and Hay Shire LGAs, with a primary focus on the towns of Moulamein and Hay, and a secondary focus on the Edward River LGA, the towns of Deniliquin, Balranald and Maude, and the city of Swan Hill. Many of the settlements in the Murray River, Balranald, and Swan Hill LGAs are cross-border, neighbouring communities, separated by the Murray River. These townships operate together, with services, commerce, infrastructure, and employment provided on either side of the river utilised by people both within the towns and across the broader region (MRC, 2020).

Statistical areas of analysis for the purpose of this assessment are shown in Table A-1.

Table A-1 Areas of interest within the social locality

Area of interest (ABS/ ASGS/ State classification)	Primary focus	Secondary focus
Host localities/communities (Suburbs and Localities – SAL)	Moulamein	Maude
Key towns and cities (Urban Centre and Locality – UCL)	Hay	Balranald Deniliquin Swan Hill
Local Government Area (LGA)	Murray River Council Hay Shire Council	Edward River Council Balranald Shire Council
Region (NSW DPE)	Riverina Murray	
State (for comparison of averages)	NSW	

A.3 Establishing the social baseline

The baseline provides a snapshot of existing social conditions within the social locality, establishing a base case against which potential impacts can be assessed. It is informed by both primary and secondary data sources, as shown in below. Due to small size of the Moulamein population, the social baseline has a primary focus on the larger areas of the Murray River and Hay Shire LGAs, and the larger towns in the social locality.

Table A-2 Scoping activities and data sources

Activity	Task/source
Desktop research and data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Project’s Scoping Report (Goldwind & Lacour, May 2022) • Review of relevant community service providers and local community organisations websites, including City/Regional Council/s, local business association/s • Social infrastructure and stakeholder mapping • Identification of relevant key projects/developments in the LGA and broader region
Data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021 Census and other relevant socio-economic data), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Population and demographic indicators ○ Business, industry, employment, and income indicators ○ Housing and accommodation characteristics • DPE population forecasts • Infrastructure, service, transport, and community features
Literature and strategic planning review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of publicly available research/SIAs on comparable infrastructure projects • Review of relevant public policies, plans and strategies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (2023)</i> ○ <i>Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update (2023)</i> ○ <i>Western Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update (2023)</i> ○ <i>South West Renewable Energy Zone Declaration (2022)</i> ○ <i>Murray River Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020–2040 (2020)</i> ○ <i>Murray River Local Profile (2018)</i> ○ <i>Murray River Draft Residential Housing Strategy (2022)</i> ○ <i>Murray River Council Community Strategic Plan – 2022–2032 (2022)</i> ○ <i>Hay Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020–2040 (2020)</i> ○ <i>Hay Structure Plan 2022 (2022)</i> ○ <i>Hay Shire Council Community Strategic Plan – 2022–2032 (2022)</i>
Stakeholder and community engagement review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of previous engagement outcomes undertaken by the Proponent.

A.4 SIA stakeholder engagement

The SIA engagement program included targeted consultation activities that were undertaken independently of the Project EIS engagement activities to inform and validate the social baseline and assessment of social impacts. The methods used are described below and a summary of the findings from the consultation activities is presented in Section 3.2.

A4.1 Stakeholder mapping

A comprehensive stakeholder identification process informed consultation and engagement with key stakeholders for both the broader EIS and the SIA programs. Initial stakeholder mapping was undertaken at the commencement of the EIS phase of the Project to identify stakeholders with an interest in the Project, as well as those directly or indirectly affected by the Project, and any potentially vulnerable or marginalised groups within the community.

Identified stakeholders included groups and individuals that live, work, or engage in recreation near the Project; use or value a resource associated with the Project; and/or have an interest in the various aspects of the Project.

Additional stakeholders were identified through snowball sampling as the SIA engagement progressed. The list of stakeholders identified as in scope for SIA consultation is shown in Table A-3.

Table A-3 Identified stakeholders – SIA consultation

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder
Adjacent and neighbouring landholders	Landholders and neighbours within 5km of Project site
Communities within the social locality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moulamein • Maude • Balranald • Hay
Local businesses, special interest groups and clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moulamein Community Development Inc. • Moulamein Mended and Rice Museum Inc. • Moulamein Art Gallery • Moulamein Bowling Club • Moulamein Caravan Park • Moulamein football/netball clubs • Maude & District Community Association Inc. • CWA Hay
Local government Regional/Economic Development and/or Social/Community Development	<p>Host LGAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murray River Council • Hay Shire Council <p>Neighbouring LGAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balranald Shire Council • Edward River Council

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swan Hill Rural City Council • Riverina & Murray Joint Organisation (RAMJO)
Traditional Owners – Indigenous community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nari Nari Tribal Council • Hay Local Aboriginal Land Council • Hay Aboriginal Community Working Party • Wamba Wamba Local Aboriginal Land Council • Balranald Local Aboriginal Land Council • Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council • Mallee District Aboriginal Services
Education, training, employment, and industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW TAFE - Hay • Industry Capability Network Murray Riverina • Regional Development Australia – Murray/Riverina • Balranald Central School • Moulamein Public School
Environmental organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Murray Land Improvement Group • Murrumbidgee Landcare / Hay Plains Landcare
Agricultural sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Dept of Primary Industries • NSW Farmers’ Association
Workforce accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QANTAC Workforce accommodation village Balranald
RFS/ Urban fire/ emergency services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFS and emergency services, e.g., Balranald Rural Fire Brigade

A4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Purposive sampling was used to select potential participants in relation to the Project’s potential range of social impacts and benefits. A total of 36 individuals and organisations were contacted and invited to participate.

Fifteen semi-structured interviews with a total of 24 individuals were completed between August and November 2023. Most of the interviews were conducted in-person in September 2023 in parallel with broader EIS community engagement activities in Balranald, Hay, and Moulamein. The remainder of the interviews were conducted online.

A breakdown of the participants is shown in Table A-4 below. As is characteristic of small, tight-knit regional communities like Moulamein, many residents were involved in multiple local community organisations and activities. As a result, all Moulamein community members who were interviewed also represented local groups and interests.

One Moulamein resident declined to be interviewed and instead provided feedback via email. Efforts were made to engage two adjacent landholders who at the time of the SIA field visit were also considering hosting proposed wind farms on their properties. One declined an interview, indicating that they had no concerns and were satisfied with continued contact with the Proponent as necessary, while no response was received from the other. The Proponent also met with local Aboriginal stakeholders and asked them questions that were in line with the SIA interviews.

Interview findings were thematically coded. Draft findings informed ongoing SIA and EIS consultation.

Table A-4 Stakeholder groups – interviews and participants

Stakeholder group	Interviews	Participants
Local businesses, special interest groups and clubs (Moulamein)	4	7
Local government	4	6
State government	1	1
Education, training, employment, and industry	2	3
Environmental organisations	1	1
Workforce accommodation	1	1
Aboriginal stakeholders (undertaken as meetings with the Proponent)	2	5
Total	15	24

A4.3 Community survey

A short online survey was developed on the SurveyMonkey platform and made available via a link on the Proponent’s website, replacing the existing feedback form. The link was distributed to residents, the community and stakeholders as part of the broader EIS engagement via email updates, a mailout to residents in Moulamein. The link was included in newspaper adverts for the 2023 community information sessions. Printed copies of the online survey were also made available at community information sessions and engagement events.

The survey was open between 16 February 2023 and 12 March 2024. A total of 25 survey responses were received during that time. Nearly all surveys (23) were completed by attendees at the Moulamein Festival on 18 February 2023, who visited the Project stall. Just over half (n=14, 56%) of survey participants lived in Moulamein, while another six participants (24%) lived in other towns within the social locality (Figure A-3).

The relatively low number of responses from Moulamein residents and surrounds may in part be due to variety of factors, including:

- participation in other Project SIA and broader EIS consultation processes,
- some residents who are unlikely to experience direct Project impacts may not be sufficiently interested,
- some residents may have been unaware of the opportunity to participate, or not sufficiently interested enough to participate,

given the scale of potential cumulative developments in the region, some residents may be experiencing consultation fatigue.

As with many surveys of this nature, participants most likely to engage with the survey will hold strong views either in support of or opposition to the Project. While the views expressed in the survey responses align with the outcomes of the SIA interviews and broader community consultation, they should not be regarded as representative of community sentiment.

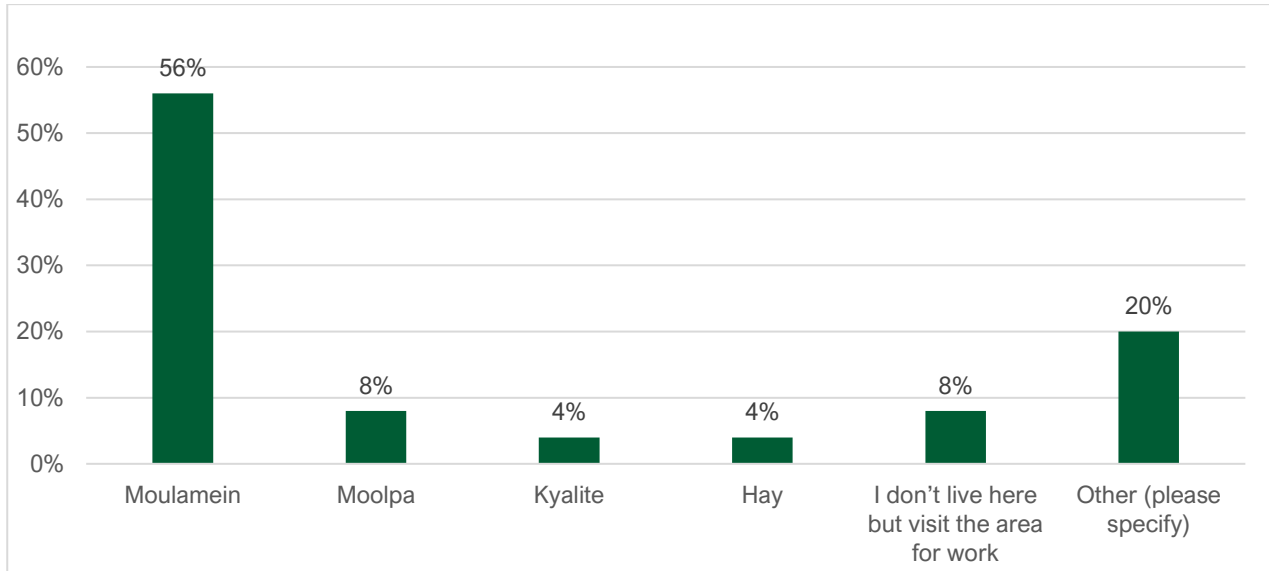


Figure A-3 Community survey participants – location (n=25)

A.5 Social impact evaluation

Building on the preliminary SIA undertaken by the Proponent during the Project’s scoping phase, the social impacts for each Project activity were evaluated across the social impact categories described above in Figure A-1.

The evaluation involved a further review of relevant inputs, e.g., relevant EIS technical reports, stakeholder and community engagement findings, and comparative studies. The likely significance of each potential impact was determined, based on its predicted magnitude and likelihood as defined in the SIA Guideline (Table A-5, Table A-6, and Table A-7 below.)

Table A-5 Defining likelihood levels of social impacts

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

Source: SIA Guideline – Technical Supplement (DPIE 2023)

Table A-6 Defining magnitude levels for social impacts

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.

Source: SIA Guideline – Technical Supplement (DPIE 2023)

Table A-7 Social impact significance matrix

		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	Medium	Medium	High	High
D	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
E	Very unlikely	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium

Source: SIA Guideline – Technical Supplement (DPIE 2023)

A.6 Identification of management, mitigation, and enhancement options

Finally, measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate potential negative impacts and enhance positive benefits were developed to address impacts. This included an assessment of the significance of residual impacts post-application of mitigation measures, following the same process outlined above.

A.7 Assumptions and limitations

This SIA has been developed based on several assumptions and limitations, including:

This SIA has been undertaken with information that is known about the Project and the social context at the time of writing, and social impacts have been predicted based on this information.

Some stakeholders were engaged multiple times through multiple engagement mechanisms, so their views may have been expressed more than once.

Due to the relatively low number of SIA interviews and responses to the community survey, it should be noted that the responses used to inform the impact assessment and mitigation strategies are not representative of the full range of residents in communities within the social locality.

Every effort has been made to access the most recent data available to inform the social baseline, using a range of sources.

Appendix B Detailed community profile

All population and demographic data presented here is from the 2021 Census (ABS, 2021) unless otherwise stated. The dataset for this community profile is presented in Appendix C.

B.1 Population and growth

Many parts of the Riverina Murray region have seen stronger than expected population growth since 2016, particularly along the Murray River. Cross-border communities, including those in the Murray River LGA, are expected to accommodate a large proportion of the predicted growth over the next 20 years (DPE, 2023c). In 2021, Murray River LGA was estimated to have a population of 12,850 people, most of whom lived in Moama, Barham and Mathoura. The township of Moulamein had a population of 339 residents with another 150 people in the surrounding locality. The LGA's population has steadily increased since 2011 and this trend is expected to continue, with a projected population of 15,456 in 2041, an annual increase of 1.1% (DPE, 2022a). Most in-migration has been experienced from Victoria. However, other smaller, irrigation dependent communities, including Deniliquin (Edward River LGA) and Wakool have seen a decline in population attributed in part to a significant decrease in agriculture related employment, in turn impacted by the water market and Murray Darling Basin Plan (RAMJO 2020). This suggests that industry diversification with RE would be a positive thing. Drought has resulted in the reduction in dairying and annual crops impacting dryland agriculture. Horticulture is more resilient but high intensity water crops impact on water pricing and infrastructure (RAMJO, 2022b).

In comparison, Hay Shire was home to an estimated 2,882 people in 2021. The main township of Hay (2,288) and its immediate surrounds accounted for approximately 79% of the total population. The Shire's population has decreased since 2011 and is predicted to decline to approximately 2,594 people in 2041, an annual decrease of -0.5% (DPE, 2022a). This decline is consistent with population trends since 1981 and is attributable to several factors such as drought, water availability and productivity/technological advancements in agriculture. However, it is expected that the population of the main township of Hay will remain steady or in fact may slightly increase due to migration from retired farmers and the elderly from outlying rural areas and small villages into the main township to access the wider range of services and housing types (HSC, 2020).

The population is predicted to remain stable to 2041 in the neighbouring Edward River, which had a 2021 population of 8,456 people. However, it is likely that the population's age structure will change as the proportion of residents aged 60 years and over continues to increase (ERC, 2020).

B.2 Age, households and cultural diversity

In 2021, all three LGAs had a higher median age than the state median of 39 years, ranging from 46 years in Edward River to 48 years in Hay Shire and 49 years in Murray River. Around a quarter of the population in Hay Shire (23%), Edward River (25%) and Murray River (29%) were aged 65 and over, compared to 18% across NSW. All three LGAs are predicted to see an increase in older age groups by 2041. This is consistent with the ageing population profile across the broader Riverina Murray region, where it is anticipated that the proportion of people over 65 will increase from 20% in 2021 to 25% by 2041 (DPE, 2023c).

Around two thirds of households were family households, although all three LGAs had a lower proportion of couple families with children compared to NSW (34% to 36% and 45% respectively). Murray River and Edward River LGAs had a slightly lower proportion of sole parent families than NSW, with the highest proportions of sole parent families in the township of Hay and the broader LGA.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in the Murray River and Edward River LGAs was slightly higher than the NSW average (4%, 5% and 3% respectively). Hay Shire LGA and urban centre of Hay had a significantly higher Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (8% and 9%).

Relatively higher proportions of residents in the LGAs were born in Australia (80% to 84%) compared to 65% in NSW. Other common countries of birth included New Zealand, the Philippines, England, and India. A small minority of households (between 4%-6%) reported using a language other than English at home, well below the NSW average of 30%.

B.3 Socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage

Levels of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in the region were examined using Social-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) data. SEIFA is a measure that combines Census data to summarise the socio-economic characteristics of an area. Each area receives a SEIFA score indicating how relatively advantaged or disadvantaged that area is compared with other areas, in terms of people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society. The areas are ordered by disadvantage and divided into deciles, from decile one (most disadvantaged areas) to decile 10 (most advantaged areas). Within the social locality, the Murray River LGA was relatively advantaged, with a decile of 7 for the Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD), while the Hay LGA had the highest level of relative disadvantage with a decile of 3. The towns of Moulamein and Balranald were both assigned deciles of 2, while the larger urban centres of Deniliquin and Swan Hill were assigned deciles of 3 (ABS, 2023).

B.4 Housing and accommodation

In 2021, around 90% of residents across the three LGAs lived in separate houses, much higher than the NSW average of 66%. Home ownership was highest in Murray River LGA with nearly three quarters of all occupied private dwellings either owned outright or with a mortgage. Edward River LGA followed a similar pattern, while home ownership in Hay Shire LGA was on par with the NSW average at around 65%. All townships and localities included in the social locality had a higher proportion of dwellings that were owned outright compared to the NSW average (32%).

At the time of the 2021 Census, lower proportions of households in the social locality were in housing stress (i.e., households in the lowest 40% of incomes who were spending more than 30% of their gross weekly income on home loan repayments or rent) compared to the state average, although this differed between mortgage and renter households.

The proportion of mortgage households that were in housing stress ranged from 7% in Hay Shire LGA to 10% in Murray Downs LGA, well below the NSW average (17%), while the proportion of renter households that were in housing stress, ranged from 22% in Hay Shire LGA to 30% in Edward River LGA, still below the state average of 36%. As the Census was conducted prior to the series of interest rate rises that began in May 2022 and related rental market and cost of living pressures, the proportion of households in stress is likely to have increased.

Between June 2018 and June 2022, median house prices in the Murray River LGA increased 78% from \$320,000 to \$570,000 and by 85% to \$353,000 in the Edward River LGA (DRNSW, 2023a). Although the consistency and availability of housing data is limited due to the smaller population sizes, it is estimated that since 2021, median house prices have risen by 44% to \$201,000 in Hay Shire and by 26% to \$220,000 in Balranald Shire (DRNSW, 2023b).

The proportion of rented dwellings varies significantly across the social locality, and in 2021 ranged from 19% in the Murray River LGA to 26% in the Hay Shire LGA, well below the NSW average (33%). Around 20% of dwellings in Moulamein were rented, compared to around 30% in the Hay and Balranald urban centres.

There was a relatively high proportion of unoccupied private dwellings across all three LGAs which are likely to be vacant rental properties, holiday homes or short-term rentals (Wakefield Planning, 2023).

There is limited rental stock in the smaller townships and very little rental data is available for Moulamein or Balranald. In the September 2023 quarter, the median weekly rent in Hay (postcode 2711) was \$250 for a house and \$180 for a unit, an annual increase of 4% and 12.5% respectively (DCJ, 2023). Residential vacancy rates in Hay have fluctuated over the past decade, reaching a peak of 6.3% (27 properties) in May 2019 and May 2020, but have fallen since the end of 2020 and averaged below 1% since the beginning of 2022, representing fewer than five properties in any given month (SQM Research, 2023). Residential vacancy rates in Deniliquin and surrounds (postcode 2710) decreased sharply to 0.3% in mid-2020 and have remained at that level or below, rising only slightly to 0.6% (five properties) in November 2023. Although a larger regional centre, Swan Hill (postcode 3585) also has a constrained rental housing market, with vacancy rates below 1% since 2018 and consistently below 0.5% (eight properties or fewer) since April 2021 (SQM Research, 2023).

There is a range of short-term accommodation options in the social locality, although these are limited in the smaller townships. There are nine motels/hotels and five caravan parks in Hay Shire, as well as a range of self-contained, bed & breakfast, farm-stay, and dormitory-style options. Options in Moulamein include a hotel, caravan park, and bowling club, all of which offer self-contained cabins. There are six motels/hotels located in Balranald, as well as a caravan park. To the south, Barham and Swan Hill also offer both motel and self-contained accommodation.

The broader region has been struggling with housing unaffordability for several years, made worse by the pandemic, population growth, and a lack of appropriate and affordable accommodation types for the resident population as well as for seasonal and construction workforces. Since 2018, the Western Murray region has recorded consistent population growth and decreasing unemployment, which are contributing to challenges in the housing market (DRNSW, 2023b). As the population grows, there may be a potential mismatch between the type of housing stock available and the needs of the population. For example, the most significant population growth in the Murray River LGA is in the 55 years and over age groups. While the 55-70 age group may still seek to occupy traditional larger detached dwellings, older cohorts may seek to downsize. However, only nine percent of housing in the LGA is provided in medium density dwellings (Wakefield Planning, 2023). There is also a lack of social housing.

The Regional Plan reports that there has been significant housing stress in some towns and villages from seasonal agricultural housing needs and an influx of workers during the construction of large-scale developments, such as renewable energy projects, mining, and Murray River bridge crossings. It highlights the impacts that major projects and seasonal agricultural workforces may have when their housing needs are met locally, without analysis of any impacts or remediation, which affects the availability of housing for residents and the visitor economy (DPE, 2023c). To mitigate further impacts, the Regional Plan recommends a coordinated and ongoing process to understand the scale of major projects and workers and where they will occur, to enable appropriate planning for the right types and locations of housing.

B.5 Income, employment and industry

In 2021, the median household weekly income across the three LGAs was well below the NSW median of \$1,829, ranging from \$1,236 in Hay Shire LGA to \$1,260 in Murray River LGA. Both the Moulamein and Hay townships and surrounds reported the lowest median household weekly income (\$1,116) while the median was highest in Maude (\$1,781).

Across the social locality, there are generally slightly lower workforce participation rates compared to the NSW average, which may be related to the higher proportion of people over 65 years in the region. Since 2018, there has been a general downward trend in unemployment in most LGAs within the Murray and Western Murray FERs, interrupted by the spike in unemployment caused by the onset of the COVID-19

pandemic in 2020 and the NSW/Victorian border lockdowns, which had a significant impact on the movement of people, goods and services between cross-border communities (DRNSW, 2023a; DRNSW, 2023b).

Many parts of the region are experiencing very tight labour market conditions and acute workforce shortages. The average LGA unemployment rate over 12 months to June 2023 ranged from 1.6% in Balranald Shire and 1.9% in Murray River, to 3.1% in Hay Shire, 3.3% in Swan Hill and 3.9% in Edward River (JSA, 2023).

Regional Aboriginal employment outcomes have improved over the last decade, with the unemployment rate decreasing from 16.8% in 2011 to 10.1% in 2021 in the Murray FER (DRNSW, 2023a), and from 24.4% in 2011 to 15.3% in 2021, in the Western Murray FER (DRNSW, 2023b). In 2021, Edward River LGA (9.3%) and Murray River LGA (7.8%). Aboriginal unemployment rates were lower than the NSW Aboriginal unemployment rate of 9.8%, while Hay LGA (10.9%) and Balranald LGA (12.2%) were slightly higher. However, as these rates are all significantly higher than the NSW unemployment rate of 4.9%, an ongoing focus is needed on maximising opportunities to support economic participation and economic prosperity for Aboriginal communities across the Murray and Western Murray regions.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry sector, centred on cropping and livestock grazing, is the Murray River LGA's largest economic contributor. The sector accounts for 27% of total output (\$450.2 million). It is also the largest employer, supporting an estimated 1,167 jobs (24%). Other important industries are manufacturing, construction, health and community services, professional services, retail trade and accommodation and food services (Remplan, 2023). In 2021, around 40% of Murray River residents were employed in jobs located in Victoria, primarily in Campaspe (32%), Swan Hill (5%), and Gannawarra (2.5%) (Remplan, 2023).

Hay Shire is recognised as a centre for agriculture and has attracted significant long-term foreign investment to the region. The Shire has a diversified agricultural production with dryland (sheep and cattle livestock) and irrigated activities (cotton, rice, fruit and vegetables) both prominent. In 2021, the agricultural industry supported more than 1 in 5 jobs (23%) and nearly 40% of all value added (.idcommunity, 2023a). Other key industries of employment include local and state government administration, and primary education. Diversification into the tourism and hospitality sectors has created a range of employment and business opportunities in the private and government sector (HSC, 2022b).

The agricultural sector also underpins the Edward River LGA's economy. In 2021, the agricultural industry accounted for 16% of employment in the Edward Shire LGA, second to health care and social assistance (17%) (.idcommunity, 2023b). Other key industries of employment include retail, education and training, and construction. Tourism is a growing sector and is an increasingly significant component of the LGA's current and future economic profile (ERC, 2020).

Workers in the South-West have fewer qualifications than in broader NSW, as the agricultural industry is less likely to require formal qualifications (OECC, 2022).

B.6 Health and wellbeing

Levels of individual and community health and wellbeing are closely related to their social environment and circumstances. Factors such as conditions of employment, housing, social services and support, and socioeconomic position are known as the social determinants of health, and are shaped by political, social, and economic forces (AIHW, 2020). In Australia, many health risks and outcomes are worse for regional and rural residents compared to people living in metropolitan areas, with disparities including lower life expectancy, higher rates of hospitalisations, deaths, injury, and chronic and preventable diseases (NRHA, 2023). Multiple factors impact access to healthcare in regional NSW, including workforce challenges, limited infrastructure, and the higher costs of delivering rural and remote health care (AIHW, 2023).

Across the sociality locality, the proportion of residents who reported no long-term health conditions in the 2021 Census were below the NSW average. However, slightly higher proportions of residents in Edward River LGA (10%), the urban centre of Deniliquin (11%) and the Hay township and surrounds (10%) reported having a mental health condition compared to 8% across NSW.

The Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN) Health Needs Assessment 2022-2025 identified that Hay Shire LGA had comparatively higher rates of avoidable deaths in males and from heart disease, premature deaths from external causes, and potential years of lives lost due to road traffic injuries compared to both the MPHN and NSW rates. Health risk factors include higher numbers of males who are smokers (MPHN, 2022a). Murray River LGA had higher rates of avoidable deaths from traffic incidents and potential years of life lost due to road traffic injuries, and higher rates of skin melanomas in females compared to the broader MPHN and NSW. Health risk factors include higher numbers of people who consume alcohol at harmful levels (MPHN, 2022b).

B.7 Land tenure, use and local agricultural values

About 70% of the Murray River LGA area is used for cropping, with livestock grazing dominant on the more marginal dryland areas. Biodiversity is an important feature in Murray River LGA with extensive river red gum forest stands and wetland systems which are of international significance. Around 11% of the LGA is protected in national parks and conservation areas which mainly cover floodplains and remnant forests. Floodwaters from the Murray River, the Edward River and other tributaries pose a threat to urban settlements. Some existing residential areas within Moama, Barham, and Murray Downs have levee systems in place to mitigate flood impact to a certain flood height however these areas are nonetheless at risk of flooding if those levee systems fail or are over topped by extreme flood events, such as the 2022 floods (Wakefield Planning, 2023).

Hay's geography, climate and environment are conducive to a range of agricultural and pastoral activity. The Hay Shire is well known for its Merino sheep and wool industry as well as producing a diverse range of commercial crops such as rice, corn and wheat. It has recently become well known for cotton, with one of the world's largest cotton gins being constructed near the town, and extensive cotton production taking place in the region. Irrigated horticultural land produces lettuce, rockmelon, broccoli, grapes and garlic. Hay is centrally located to transport this produce to markets in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Canberra. The potential to value-add in the horticultural industry is extensive.

B.8 Services and social infrastructure

Social infrastructure encompasses the key services and resources that sustain the liveability of communities, and strongly influences perceived and real quality of life (Australian Urban Observatory, 2021). These extend from health, education and essential services to community support and development resources, and leisure and recreational opportunities. Regional areas often experience social infrastructure gaps, compounded by distance and cost of service provision. Limited public transport options also impact on the ease of access to services.

As noted previously, many of the settlements in the Murray River, Balranald, and Swan Hill LGAs are cross-border, neighbouring communities, separated by the Murray River, but operating together. Consultation indicated that "the population doesn't recognise the state borders - they go where they need for work and services". The Victorian city of Swan Hill, neighbour to the NSW township of Murray Downs, is an important regional centre that services many regional settlements within the western part of the Murray River LGA and has strong ties to Balranald and Moulamein. Swan Hill offers a range of higher order health (hospital, specialist, allied health), education, and regional transport services (bus and train) that are relied upon by Murray River residents. People from Moulamein "go to Swan Hill for everything".

Balranald and Hay, and to a lesser extent, Moulamein and Barham, offer a more limited range of medical, community health, aged care, and allied services. As with many regional communities, it has been difficult to attract and retain healthcare services and workforce (DRNSW, 2023a). The health facilities in Hay are sufficient for the town's size, but there are issues with distance from specialised services (HSC, 2020). The Moulamein Community Health Centre is the only access to any form of health care in the district. The town does not have a GP, ambulance or pharmacist, with residents forced to travel to Swan Hill for basic medical care (Polkinghorne, 2023).

There are 33 Local Health Advisory Committees (LHACs) across the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD). These Committees identify and prioritise various health services, advocate for the local community, provide support to local health services, and promote health literacy and wellbeing. The Hay LHAC has identified improved access to aged care services and supports and addressing obesity as two key priorities (MLHD, 2023).

The Moulamein LHAC has worked to maintain local health services, including the resumption of a visiting GP. However, the LHAC resigned en masse at its annual general meeting on Tuesday 31 October 2023, citing a lack of support from the MLHD and the management of the community health centre (Polkinghorne, 2023).

As part of this program, the Country Universities Centre (CUC) Mallee hub, located in Swan Hill, opened in December 2023, and a pilot campus for a Hay CUC in partnership with the Hay TAFE Connected Learning Centre was proposed in late 2023 (Butcher, 2023).

Services offered in Moulamein include a hotel, a small supermarket, post office, service station, café, bottle shop, bowling club, art gallery and bank. Community facilities comprise a primary school, preschool, retirement village, Council administration office and works depot, and the community hub/business centre. There is a limited but highly valued youth service in Moulamein that delivers a Y-Hub activity on Fridays nights. Consultation revealed that ageing in place is very important to the local Moulamein community and the Edward River Gardens is a highly valued community asset. Despite this, it faces difficulties meeting the needs of the community, and with financing and staffing.

Existing social infrastructure gaps in the Murray region were compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had significant impacts on the community and economy. Multiple state border closures between March 2020 to November 2021 interrupted access to employment, goods and services, including health and education, community ties, and business and industry operations, and significantly impacted day-to-day life (DRNSW, 2023a; DRNSW, 2023b). Many businesses, particularly hospitality and tourism, have struggled to effectively rebuild operational capacity and replace staff who were let go during the pandemic (DRNSW, 2023a). Access was again interrupted during the 2022 floods which saw communities such as Moulamein cut off by floodwaters.

Access to telecommunications is inconsistent across the region. While the regional cities and some parts of the region have established NBN fibre networks, more remote parts have limited access to affordable and reliable digital communication infrastructure or endure mobile phone blackspots. This can limit business growth, the ability to attract skilled workforces and online health and education programs in remote areas. Online health services are essential for different communities, for example, the older populations in smaller centres who require regular, accessible care as they age.

B.9 Community, culture, and values

As outlined within the Archaeological Technical Report (ATR), the Project site is in an area that contains the indeterminate boundaries between the Mutthi Mutthi, Watthi Watthi, Wemba Wemba and Nari Nari language groups (ATR, 2024). It is likely that the boundaries of cultural areas, including language groups, likely incorporated a degree of fluidity prior to the impacts of colonisation, and that the processes of dispossession, have significantly impacted the connections between family and tribal or language groups in addition to

disrupting the connections to land (Barber, 2015, as cited in NGH, 2024). As such it is not unexpected that the identification of boundaries between groups is now difficult and that there may continue to be some dispute within the Aboriginal community about the boundaries of various groups. Key cultural landscape features within the region are highlighted as heat retainer ovens and mounds, modified trees and burials.

The outback town of Hay and surrounding areas are defined by both the traditional agricultural and newer tourist industries that anchor its local economy. The Hay Shire region is characterised by a friendly, generous, and resilient community that welcomes new people, businesses, and innovations. Community members are proud of their homes, gardens, environment and history and heritage (HSC, 2022b).

Safe, healthy, and connected communities, the unique environment, a strong agricultural sector, development of renewable energy, economic prosperity, and job opportunities are important to the local community (HSC, 2022a).

Hay has a vibrant arts and music scene, and a small but growing tourism element built off the back of the attractiveness of the Murrumbidgee River and international attractions such as Shear Outback and The Dunera Museum. Other museums include the heritage-listed Hay Gaol, and Bishops Lodge. The Bidgee Riverside Trail, completed through a partnership between Hay Aboriginal Community Working Party and Hay Shire Council, is a formed walking track that features sculptural artworks representing parts of Hay's history and the Warakirri Murals (RMRA, n.d).

Long running annual events in the Shire include the Hay Pro Rodeo (March), the Hay Show (September) and Hay Races (November), with new annual additions the Hayland Gathering (March), Hay Glow (September), and Rainbow on the Plains Festival (November).

Vibrant, diverse, inclusive, and cohesive communities characterise the Murray River Council region. Growth in the LGA's communities is based on a strong tourism economy and thriving primary industries, underpinned by the region's natural assets. The community values the natural environment, the ability to enjoy the great outdoors, economic growth, recreation and cultural opportunities, and access to medical, health and wellbeing programs (MRC, 2022).

The Murray River region has a heritage connection to early rural Australia and maintains enduring Aboriginal and colonial European heritage. There are 2,750 sites of Aboriginal heritage significance that have been recorded within Murray River LGA. There are also 91 protected heritage places and three heritage conservation areas – the historic Hunt Street and Chanter Street precincts of Moama and the railway tower, water tank and railway precinct of Mathoura (Wakefield Planning, 2023).

Moulamein is the oldest town in the Riverina and is rich in history and culture. Key attractions include the Heritage Village, Mooloomoon Shearing Shed, Old Courthouse, and an art gallery. The Moulamein River Walk, which traces the Edward River and Billabong Creek, holds great cultural significance to the landscape of the Wamba Wamba people. Some points of cultural significance include The Big Tree, The Ring Tree, The Scarred Trees, The Shell Midden and Indigenous plants. Key annual events include the Moulamein Sheepdog Trials (September), Moulamein Races (December).

The Murray River region also hosts a modern food and wine scene that includes a wide variety of wineries, breweries and eateries, and a thriving arts culture. Moama Lights is a key cultural event run annually in July. The Backroads Trail extends over 250km of roads in the Murray River LGA, framed by Echuca, Moama, Barham, Deniliquin, and Mathoura. This interactive trail weaves together the themes of heritage, environment, food, wine, and culture and features 22 attractions, half of which are food and/or wine producers. At the time of writing, the Murray River Council is developing the River Country Art Trail, an outdoor gallery across seven locations including Moulamein. It is also developing a new Arts & Culture Strategy which aims to support the sector across the region and increase the profile of creative industries (MRC, 2023).

Other big annual events that bring thousands of visitors to the region include the Southern 80 Water Ski Race (February), Deni Ute Muster (October), Deni Fest (annually Easter).

Like many places in the Riverina Murray region, local communities across the social locality support and compete in a wide variety of sports. Sporting clubs, particularly football and netball, are key hubs for the communities in Moulamein, Hay, Balranald and Deniliquin. In 2021, rates of volunteer work were substantially higher across the social locality compared to the NSW average (13%), particularly in Moulamein and Balranald (24% and 26% respectively).

Residents described Moulamein as a tight-knit community, with the 2022 floods a prime example of the community supporting and working together. Some families have been there for a very long time. The community is centred around sporting groups, particularly football and netball. While parts of the broader region host large seasonal workforces, this is not the case in Moulamein, although there are some seasonal workers for cropping and grazing.

B.10 Community attitudes towards renewable energy

Much of the available research on community attitudes to wind energy in NSW and in Australia more broadly was undertaken prior to the announcement of the NSW REZ and large transmission infrastructure projects such as Project EnergyConnect and VNI West. A representative survey of 2,000 NSW residents undertaken in 2014 found that 91% of participants supported the use of renewable energy to generate electricity in NSW. While participants generally supported wind farms (81%), levels of support decreased for wind farms sited within their local region (73%), and further decreased when within 1-2km of people's homes (59%) (OEH, 2015).

A similar pattern was revealed in the South West Region of NSW, where 77% of participants supported the use of wind farms in NSW, in their local region (71%), and within 1–2km of where they lived (53%). The main reasons for supporting a wind farm this close to where they lived were benefits to the environment (62%) and lower cost (28%) while most commonly raised concerns were noise (66%), visual impact (35%) and health issues and location suitability (each 20%) (OEH, 2015).

Another 2014 study of community attitudes towards wind farms found that rural communities often had 'underlying cultural or ideological concerns' that included opposition to a 'green' political agenda and being politically neglected by urban centres (Hall, 2014).

A more recent study of community experiences in the Central West Orana REZ and New England REZ noted that wind farms are more contentious than solar farms because the turbines are visible and audible in the distance. The study found that the community members most likely to become discontented are non-associated landholders, particularly immediate neighbours, and other residents who are not benefitting financially but who experience a range of negative impacts including disruptions to social amenity during construction and concerns about property values. This can lead to impacts on community cohesion and antagonism towards non-residential hosting neighbours (Cass, Connor, Heikkinen, & Pearse, 2022).

Community and stakeholder engagement undertaken for this Project revealed a range of attitudes towards renewable energy development that are described in Sections 3 and 5.2.4.

Appendix C Community profile data

Table C-1 Social indicators for selected SALs, UCLs, LGAs and NSW

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Moulamein SAL	Maude SAL	Hay UCL	Balranald UCL	Deniliquin UCL	Swan Hill UCL	Murray River LGA	Hay Shire LGA	Edward River LGA	NSW
Demographics										
Population (n)	489	110	2,208	1,063	6,431	10,869	12,850	2,882	8,456	8,072,163
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population (%)	2.5	8.2	9.3	9.6	5.6	4.3	3.8	8.3	4.8	3.4
Age										
Median age (years)	48	41	49	49	47	38	49	48	46	39
0-14 years (%)	17.2	23.9	15.0	18.3	16.1	19	16.9	16.1	17.4	18.2
65+ years (%)	26.3	14.6	26.1	24.4	26.9	21.2	28.5	23.3	24.9	17.7
Cultural diversity										
Country of birth (Australia) (%)	73.4	80.9	79.7	78.2	82.9	79.8	83.8	80.0	83.9	65.4
English only used at home (%)	77.7	78.2	84.0	79.4	86.8	80.6	89.2	84.0	87.9	67.6
Households - non-English language is used (%)	6.3	8.3	6.1	9.2	4.2	13.7	4.1	5.7	3.7	29.5

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Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Moulamein SAL	Maude SAL	Hay UCL	Balranald UCL	Deniliquin UCL	Swan Hill UCL	Murray River LGA	Hay Shire LGA	Edward River LGA	NSW
Health										
Mental health condition	7.0	8.2	9.6	5.4	10.8	8.6	7.9	8.4	10.0	8.0
No long-term health condition(s) (%)	54.0	61.8	47.2	51.4	48.2	56.0	55.1	50.1	51.0	61.0
Highest level of educational attainment										
Year 12 or equivalent (%)	11.0	16.9	13.8	13.7	10.2	15.0	10.8	13.7	10.4	14.5
Certificate 3-4/Diploma (%)	25.8	33.7	23.5	22.2	26.4	26.9	27.7	24.9	27.4	24.3
Bachelor degree and above (%)	7.3	3.6	7.5	8.5	11.4	13.3	12.4	8.3	12.4	27.8
Households										
Family households (%)	64.2	64.1	61.2	61.1	60.7	65.6	70.5	64.3	64.2	71.2
Couple family with children (%)	28.8	44.0	29.6	33.3	31.9	37.4	36.3	33.6	35.6	44.7
Sole parent family (%)	18.4	19.0	19.6	18.1	16.5	17.5	10.6	16.7	13.8	15.8
Single (or lone) person (%)	35.8						27.5	33.5	33.4	25.0
Median household income (\$/week)	1,116	1,781	1,116	1,166	1,159	1,380	1,260	1,236	1,240	1,829
Housing										
Separate house (%)	93.7	91.7	90.4	89.8	87.6	82.6	89.0	91.4	90.0	65.6

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Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Moulamein SAL	Maude SAL	Hay UCL	Balranald UCL	Deniliquin UCL	Swan Hill UCL	Murray River LGA	Hay Shire LGA	Edward River LGA	NSW
Owned outright (%)	45.0	41.7	41.6	42.6	39.8	34.6	46.5	43.0	40.6	31.5
Owned with a mortgage (%)	23.8	11.1	22.5	22.9	28.2	29.8	27.9	21.7	29.4	32.5
Rented (%)	21.2	8.3	31.1	29.9	28.4	32.2	18.7	26.4	24.8	32.6
Median mortgage repayment (\$/month)	799	325	867	926	1,083	1,300	1,408	894	1,083	2,167
Mortgage households in housing stress (%)	8.9	0.0	5.9	10.6	6.6	7.5	10.3	6.9	8.2	17.3
Median rent (\$/week)	150	462	173	200	230	235	260	175	220	420
Renter households in housing stress (%)	12.5	0.0	22.5	26.8	31.7	23.4	26.7	21.7	30.0	35.5
SEIFA (SAL & LGA)*										
IRSAD decile**	2	8	2/5	2	3	3	7	3	4	n/a
IEO decile**	2	8	1/5	2	3	3	5	3	5	n/a
Employment										
Participation in the labour force										
In the labour force	48.6	66.3	52.2	52.6	52.7	59.5	54.6	55.3	56.2	58.7
Employment status (people who reported being in the labour force, aged 15 years and over)										

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Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Moulamein SAL	Maude SAL	Hay UCL	Balranald UCL	Deniliquin UCL	Swan Hill UCL	Murray River LGA	Hay Shire LGA	Edward River LGA	NSW
Employed full-time (%)	62.4	78.2	56.7	59.4	56.8	58.4	55.8	59.3	59.0	55.2
Employed part-time (%)	28.4	9.1	32.1	30.6	32.4	32.2	33.5	30.4	31.5	29.7
Unemployed (%)	2.1	0.0	4.9	4.6	4.4	3.1	3.1	4.0	3.6	4.9
Voluntary work in last 12 months (%)	23.6	22.8	20.2	25.7	18.5	17.6	18.2	22.2	20.7	13.0
Occupation										
Professionals	3.7	8.2	11.0	12.4	15.9	17.2	14.4	10.3	14.7	25.8
Managers	31.6	46.9	12.8	12.8	11.0	13.5	22.2	19.9	19.3	14.6
Clerical & administrative workers	7.4	16.3	10.1	9.4	11.6	11.2	10.8	10.4	11.3	13.0
Technicians & trades workers	7.4	0.0	17.6	13.5	14.2	13.5	13.6	14.8	12.6	11.9
Labourers	17.4	18.4	18.0	16.7	12.0	15.1	12.6	17.7	12.0	8.2
Community & personal services workers	13.2	6.1	11.0	14.9	15.2	12.9	10.8	9.5	13.1	10.6
Sales workers	4.7	0.0	9.6	5.5	9.6	9.7	7.4	8.6	7.9	8.0
Machinery operators & drivers	8.4	10.2	9.0	13.5	7.2	4.9	6.2	7.5	6.7	6.0

*For the UCLs, the SAL deciles have been provided. The two deciles provided are for the Hay UCL are Hay SAL/Hay South SAL. Data for Maude should be used with caution as the area is not well represented by SA1s.

**IRSAD: Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage; IEO: Index of Education and Occupation; decile 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest)

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Table C-2 Top five industries of employment for selected SALs, UCLs, LGAs and NSW

Indicator (%) ABS 2021 Census	1	2	3	4	5
Moulamein SAL	Sheep farming (12.6)	Local government administration (10.5)	Grain-sheep or grain-beef cattle farming (9.5)	Aged care residential services (7.9)	Pig farming (5.3)
Maude SAL***	Beef cattle farming (24.5)	Sheep farming (14.3)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hay UCL	Supermarket and grocery stores (4.3)	Local government administration (4.1)	Accommodation (3.7)	Primary education (3.3)	Secondary education (3.1)
Balranald UCL	Local Government Administration (9.2)	Other fruit and Tree Nut Growing (5.9)	Combined Primary and Secondary Education (5.5)	Hospital (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (5.3)	Road Freight Transport (3.9)
Deniliquin UCL	Other Social Assistance Services (5.3)	Hospital (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (4.1)	Supermarket and grocery stores (3.8)	Aged Care Residential Services (3.3)	Primary Education (3.1)
Swan Hill UCL	Hospitals (7.1)	Primary Education (3.4)	Supermarket and grocery stores (2.6)	Secondary Education (2.5)	Meat Processing (2.4)
Murray River LGA	Hospital (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (3.7)	Local Government Administration (3.5)	Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming (3.3)	Other Grain Growing (2.9)	Primary Education (2.8)
Hay Shire LGA	Sheep Farming (Specialised) (7.5)	Local Government Administration (4.0)	Primary Education (3.8)	Supermarket and grocery stores (3.4)	State Government Administration (3.1)
Edward River LGA	Other Social Assistance Services (4.5)	Hospital (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (3.7)	Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming (3.3)	Primary Education (3.2)	Supermarket and grocery stores (3.2)
NSW	Hospitals (4.2)	Supermarket and grocery stores (2.5)	Other social assistance services (2.4)	Computer system design and related services (2.4)	Aged care residential services (2.2)

*** Only the top two industries of employment are available for the Maude SAL due to the small population size.

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Table C-3 Selected health statistics for selected LGAs, MPHNS and NSW

Category	Indicator	Measure	Murray River LGA	Hay Shire LGA	Edward River LGA	MPHN	NSW
Health conditions (2016-20)	Avoidable deaths from ischaemic heart disease	ASR per 100,000	43.4	36.1	41.2	26.1	19.6
	Avoidable deaths from transport incidents	ASR per 100,000	16.5	46.7	n/a	10.5	4.5
	Potential years of lives lost – road traffic injuries	ASR per 1,000	4.0	24.7	0.0	3.0	1.3
Risk factors (modelled estimates) (2017-18)	Males who are current smokers	ASR per 100	20.9	28.5	21.9	21.9	17.2
	Number of people who consume alcohol at harmful levels (more than 2 drinks per day)	ASR per 100	23.3 (males 33.8)	25.6 (males 36.4)	20.3 (males 29.5)	20.4 (males 29.7)	15.5 (males 22.7)
Premature death	Premature deaths from external causes	ASR per 100,000	65.9	73.0	49.0	41.1	27.2
(2016-20)	Premature deaths from lung cancer	ASR per 100,000	0.00	42.6	37.7	19.8	19.8

Source: Murrumbidgee PHN Health Needs Assessment 2022-2025; Social Health Atlas of Australia (PHIDU, 2023)

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