



Social Impact Scoping Report

Merino Solar Farm, NSW

5 April 2023

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

Merino Solar Farm Pty Ltd (MSF Pty Ltd, 'The Applicant') is proposing the development of an electricity generating facility (incorporating a solar farm, battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure), referred to as the Merino Solar Farm (MSF).

The Project site is located in the Goulburn Mulwaree Council (GMC) Local Government Area (LGA) in the locality of Tirrannville. The Project site is divided into two areas identified as the 'northern site' and 'southern site'. The combined area of the site is approximately 760 hectares, and both portions are accessible from Braidwood Road. The northern portion can also be accessed from Windellama Road and Gundry Lane and the southern portion can also be accessed via Painters Lane.

The MSF will require a construction period of approximately 12 to 18 months from site establishment to commissioning, with a peak workforce of approximately 200-300 construction staff. A detailed description of the Project is presented in Chapter 3 of the Scoping Report (Premise, 2023)

The Project is considered a State Significant Development (SSD) under Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and the *State Environmental Planning Policy* (Planning Systems 2021; Planning Systems SEPP).

AAP Consulting Pty Ltd has prepared this Social Impact Scoping Report for the MSF on behalf of The Applicant. It documents the processes and outcomes of the scoping phase of the social impact assessment and has been prepared with consideration of the DPE Social Impact Assessment Guideline (DPE, 2023).

1.2 Structure of this Report

The structure of this report is influenced by the SIA Guideline requirements and is outlined below.

Table 1.1 Structure of this report

Chapter	Description
Chapter 1	Introduces the Project and structure of this report
Chapter 2	Describes the social locality
Chapter 3	Establishes the social baseline
Chapter 4	Initial evaluation of the likely social impacts for different groups in the social locality
Chapter 5	Provides a framework for the approach to SIA in the assessment phase

2 Social Locality

2.1 Preliminary Identification of Social Locality

This report considers social impacts in the 'social locality'. There is no prescribed meaning or fixed, predefined geographic boundary to a Project's social locality; rather, the social locality has been construed based on the Project's nature and impacts.

A number of factors have been considered in determining the social locality, including the nature and scale of the Project and its associated activities, the characteristics of surrounding communities and the potentially affected built or natural features nearby that have social value or importance.

Cumulative impacts that may impact affected communities because of other projects or operations near the Project site and any relevant social, cultural, and demographic trends or social change processes occurring now or in the past have also been considered.

The broader (indirect) area of social influence on communities impacted by future incoming workforces, business opportunities, construction access and transport routes will also be considered.

A preliminary social baseline profile has been developed for the Project's social locality, which is defined as:

- Private property owners and any associated dwellings for the Project footprint, including ancillary facilities.
- Adjacent property and neighbours, inclusive of the suburbs and localities (SAL) that host or are adjacent to the Project as per the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) statistical areas of Tirrnaville and Brisbane Grove (the SAL in which the Project is located), Gundry and Boxers Creek (adjacent or nearby SALs)
- The host LGA of Goulburn-Mulwaree

The social locality may extend beyond these boundaries as the Project planning progresses to include haulage routes, places of residence for future construction and operational workforce and their primary dependents, and where materials may be sourced for the Project. The social locality will be further refined as required during the assessment phase.

2.2 Stakeholder Identification

Social impact assessment involves the participation and collaboration of people interested in or affected by a project. As Burdge (2004) outlines, stakeholders may be affected groups or individuals that:

- Live, work, or recreate near the Project
- Have an interest in the proposed action or change
- Use or value a resource associated with the Project
- Are affected by the Project, e.g. may be required to relocate because of the Project.

A stakeholder identification process was undertaken during the scoping phase to identify people who may be interested in the Project or those directly and indirectly affected. This process included identifying potentially vulnerable or marginalised groups within the community and included, but not limited to:

- neighbouring landholders
- the wider community
- special interest groups
- infrastructure and service providers
- Goulburn Mulwaree Council
- State agencies (NSW Department of Planning and Environment and NSW Department of Industry and Regional Development)
- State and Federal Elected representatives.

The engagement with these groups during the scoping phase, along with the proposed engagement during the EIS phase is further explored in section 4.4 and chapter 5. It is noted that stakeholder will be refined throughout the assessment process to reflect the direct and indirect social impacts arising as the Project and EIS progress.

3 Preliminary Social Baseline

This chapter presents the social baseline for the Project and describes the social context without the Project. It documents the existing social environment, conditions and trends relevant to the Project and defines characteristics of the communities within the Project's social locality, including any vulnerable groups.

The social baseline considers any built or natural features on or near the Project that could be affected and the intangible values that people may associate with these features. Examples may include a sense of place or belonging and the relevant social, cultural, and demographic trends or social change processes occurring now or in the past, near the Project and in the broader region.

The social baseline also provides a point of comparison – it can be used as a reference against which to measure the project's impacts as it develops and/or to determine the adequacy or otherwise of existing facilities (Vanclay *et al.*, 2015).

A summary of the social baseline is provided in the body of this report as an overview of the existing environment.

3.1 Development Context

3.1.1 National and International Context

The year 2022 saw electricity prices in NSW and Australia significantly rise. In May 2022, the NSW short-term wholesale price of electricity was reportedly 80% higher than in 2021, while National wholesale energy prices increased 140% in 12 months. The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) also announced an 18.3% increase in benchmark electricity price which will take effect in July 2022 and is expected to increase the price even further.

In June 2022, for the first time since its establishment, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) suspended wholesale spot market trading on the East Coast of Australia to ensure a reliable supply. Price caps, implemented by AEMO to limit rising electricity costs, resulted in unprofitable conditions for electricity generators. Consequently, electricity generators withdrew from the energy market, reducing supply during notably high demand. This high-demand and energy production cost nexus has highlighted vulnerabilities within the East Coast energy market.

The instability and restriction of global supply chains have increased market prices for fossil fuels, notably in Australia. As a result, renewable energy and energy storage have been identified as appropriate measures to reduce energy prices and the State and National vulnerabilities to global instability.

The cost of living has also continued to increase, with electricity being one of many rising household costs (alongside petrol, interest rates, housing, HECS debt indexation and food). Of particular note, on the 8th of March 2023, the RBA increased the official cash rate by 0.25% to 3.60%. This is the tenth increase to the cash rate since May 2022 (ASX, 2023) and is the most aggressive rate rise since 1994. Paired with limited wage growth across the State, the cost of living is rising faster than wages, increasing pressure on households.

3.1.2 Renewable Energy in NSW

New South Wales is currently undergoing an energy sector transformation. The National Energy Market (NEM) (managed by the AEMO) is transitioning from a system dominated by a small number of large coal-fired generators to one of diverse renewable and distributed energy generation and storage.

The Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap is the NSW Government's plan to transform the electricity system into one that is cheap, clean and reliable. The roadmap emphasises the need for NSW to transition to renewable energy and aims to replace NSW's ageing coal-fired power stations with a coordinated portfolio of energy generation, storage and network investments. The roadmap is expected to help reduce NSW electricity emissions by 90 million tonnes by 2030 and to support NSW in delivering on its net zero ambitions by 2050 (NSW Energy, 2020).

The Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030 is the foundation for NSW's action on climate change and goal to reach net zero emissions by 2050 (DPIE, 2020). It outlines the NSW Government's plan to grow the economy, create jobs and reduce emissions over the next decade. The NSW Government supports the development of a sustainable solar energy industry and states that 'solar energy will help reduce reliance on fossil fuels, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and deliver a reliable and affordable energy supply to the people of NSW'.

Overall, the reliability of the NSW electricity supply is highly strained, while consumer electricity and general living costs are rising, increasing pressure on businesses and households. It is projected by the Applicant that the Project will contribute to meeting Australia's commitments through the generation of renewable energy and the resultant annual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

3.2 Community Plans and Strategies

The Project is located within the South East Tablelands of NSW, in the Goulburn Mulwaree LGA. Regional plans reflecting the community's aspirations have been developed by the NSW Government and local authorities. These plans are outlined below.

3.2.1 Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2041

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment's South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2041 is a 20-year blueprint for the future of the South East and Tablelands region and the overarching strategic planning framework (DPE, 2022).

The vision outlined in the plan is that by 2041, the South East and Tablelands will be recognised as a region of collaboration and innovation, demonstrated through increased investment in tourism, renewable energy generation, sustainable agriculture and smart manufacturing. There are five overarching themes within the Plan, including:

- recognising Country, people and place
- enhancing sustainable and resilient environments
- leveraging diverse economic identities
- planning fit-for-purpose housing and services
- supporting a connected and active region

Renewable energy is identified as a priority growth sector for the region to diversify the economy. The region aims to be a hub of renewable energy excellence taking advantage of the established network of high-voltage transmission lines that traverse the region.

3.2.2 Goulburn Mulwaree Community Strategic Plan – Towards 2042

The Goulburn Mulwaree Community Strategic Plan – Towards 2042 was developed by Goulburn Mulwaree in 2022 following community consultation (Goulburn Mulwaree Council, 2022). The community identified focus areas over the next decade, including improved infrastructure (roads and parking), economic growth (employment) and reduced environmental impact. Creating employment opportunities to support a growing population was identified as a key challenge for the community, specifically for young people.

The plan consists of five themes and strategic objectives, including:

- Our community – a network of vibrant, inclusive and diverse communities that value a cooperative spirit, self-sufficiency and rural lifestyle
- Our economy – appreciation of the range of rural landscapes and habitats and act as custodians of the natural environment for future generations
- Our environment – embracing sustainable living and value and conserve the natural environment
- Our infrastructure – a well-serviced community that is connected to built, social and communications infrastructure
- Our civic leadership – leaders that operate ethically, implement good governance and empower residents to actively participate.

The elements of the Community Strategic Plan addressed by the Project are summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Relationship of the Project to the Goulburn Mulwaree Community Strategic Plan

Plan Reference	Community Strategic Plan element	Relevance of the project to element
Goal C – Our environment	C.4 Investigate and implement approaches to reduce our carbon footprint	The Project has the potential to directly contribute to the achievement of this element.
	C.6 Work with the community, businesses, government and community support services to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change and adopt environmentally sustainable practices.	The Project has the potential to directly contribute to the achievement of this element.

3.3 Community Profile

Population and Demographics

The Project sits in the Southern Tablelands in the Goulburn Mulwaree Shire LGA, about 7 km south of Goulburn in the locality of Tirrannaville. The Goulburn Mulwaree LGA includes the larger township of Goulburn and smaller townships and villages of Marulan, Tarago, Towrang and other villages.

The LGA is home to 32,053 people, representing an increase of 2,444 persons since 2016 (ABS, 2021). Turrillville is a small suburb of 235 people living predominantly on large rural holdings and has an ageing population with a median age of 52 years.

Traditionally, the region was known as a meeting place for several Aboriginal groups, including Mulwaree, Tarlo, Burra Burra, Wollondilly, Wiradjuri, Gundungurra, Dharrook, Tharawal, Lachlan, Pajong, Parramarragoo, Cookmal and Gnunawal (Aboriginal Housing Office, 2022). Aboriginal residents account for approximately 5.1% of the Goulburn Mulwaree LGA (ABS, 2021).

In 2021, the largest age group in the Goulburn Mulwaree Council area was 55 to 59-year-olds. The group that changed the most since 2016 was 70 to 74-year-olds, increasing by 344 people. Analysis of the age groups of the LGA in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows a similar age profile. (REMPAN, 2021).

Working Population

The size of Goulburn Mulwaree Council area's labour force in 2021 was 14,989, of which 4,525 were employed part-time and 8,798 were full-time workers. A comparison of employment status (as a percentage of the labour force) in the Goulburn Mulwaree Council area compared to Regional NSW in 2021 shows similar proportions of people in employment between regions and a similar proportion of unemployed (REMPAN, 2021). Overall, 95.7% of the labour force was employed, and 4.3% were unemployed, compared with 95.4% and 4.6%, respectively, for Regional NSW.

Analysis of the labour force participation rate of the population in the Goulburn Mulwaree Council area in 2021 shows a higher proportion in the labour force (57.1%) compared with Regional NSW (56.4%; REMPLAN, 2021).

The primary industries of employment held by the local workers in the LGA in 2021 were health care and social assistance (16.9%), construction (12.6%), retail trade (10%) and public administration and safety (9.8%; ABS, 2021). In combination, these four industries accounted for almost 50% of the working population. Analysis of the employment status (as a percentage of the labour force) in the region compared to NSW shows that unemployment levels in the LGA are high at 7.4% compared to 4.6% in NSW (Australian Government, 2021).

In terms of employment opportunities, NSW Farmers is concerned about the impact of COVID-19 and other cumulative effects on the available labour force. They claim that the last two years had 'emptied out the supply line' of workers who were already under stress in regional NSW because of the prolonged years of drought (Townsend, 2022). The suggested causes of this shortfall are COVID-19 when the seasonal workers evacuated when the borders closed, the breaking of the drought and competition with the trade sector, mining and transport.

The Goulburn Mulwaree Council considers one of its distinct competitive advantages to be its central location to Canberra and Sydney and strong transport links (Goulburn Mulwaree Council, 2022). Located two hours from Sydney, an hour from Canberra and just under four hours from the Snowy Mountains, Goulburn is centrally located just off the Hume Highway. This is also relevant to resident's place of work. In 2021, 2,686 (18.8%) working residents of the Goulburn Mulwaree Council area travelled outside the area to work (ABS, 2021).

Infrastructure

The Goulburn Mulwaree Council area is predominantly rural. Goulburn is the largest centre, with several small villages, including Bungonia, Lake Bathurst, Marulan, Tallong and Tarago. The land is used largely for agriculture, particularly sheep grazing, with some cattle grazing and boutique industries.

The primary healthcare facility in the LGA is Goulburn Hospital. The area also has numerous aged care facilities and small general practices. The main retail areas are the Goulburn Central Business District, Goulburn Square Shopping Centre and Goulburn MarketPlace, with a smaller centre at Bradfordville Shopping Centre.

Goulburn Mulwaree is home to key public administration and safety services, including the NSW Police Force Academy and the Goulburn Correctional Centre.

There are also a number of education facilities, including TAFE NSW Illawarra (Goulburn Campus) and schools, including Turranna Public School on Braidwood Road, Turrannaville.

The main industrial areas are located in the southwest, south and northeast of the locality of Goulburn. Tourism is an important industry for Goulburn Mulwaree, with a range of attractions, including Morton National Park, numerous nature reserves and parks, and various museums, heritage places and accommodation places.

There is also an airport located 7 km south of Goulburn (near the Proposal site). The Goulburn Airport is a general aviation airport located along Windellama Road.

No recorded sites of Aboriginal heritage significance are located within the Project area; however, searches reveal six known sites of significance within 10 km of the Project area (Premise, 2023). There are also several non-aboriginal significant heritage items in proximity to the site, including:

- Pelican Homestead and Shearing Shed at 4840 Braidwood Road
- Turranna Public School at 4986 Braidwood Road
- Turranna homestead, gardens, Gibson family cemetery and veterans' allotments at 4971–5071 Braidwood Road
- St Andrew's Anglican Church and Cemetery at 13 Turranna Lane.

In addition to the above infrastructure, it is also noted that a single mining exploration licence applies to the site, EL9048, held by Aurum Metals Pty Ltd until the 15th of February 2026 unless renewed prior.

Vulnerabilities

The Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission notes that vulnerable people can include children and seniors, people with impaired intellectual or physical functioning, people from a low socioeconomic background, people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, people who are not native speakers of the local language, people with low levels of literacy or education, people subject to modern slavery, which involves human exploitation and control, such as forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, and child labour.

In terms of vulnerability, this assessment has reviewed the Socioeconomic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). This is a suite of indexes that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has created from social and economic census information. Specifically, this assessment looks at the Index of Relative Socioeconomic

Disadvantage (IRSD), a general socioeconomic index that summarises a range of information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area. The SEIFA score for Goulburn Mulwaree Council in 2016 was 960. Across Australia’s local government areas, SEIFA scores range from 188 (most disadvantaged) to 1186 (least disadvantaged). This score reflects several indicators, including the lower median household incomes, age of the population, higher than average health conditions, lower level of educational attainment and higher numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, compared to the NSW average. Table 3.2 shows some of the indicators of vulnerability for the Goulburn Mulwaree LGA in comparison with areas that have higher SEIFA scores and are considered less disadvantaged.

Table 3.2 Indicators of vulnerability

Indicator	Goulburn Mulwaree LGA (2016 SEIFA Score: 960)	Ku-ring-gai (2016 SEIFA Score: 1121)	Snowy Monaro (2016 SEIFA Score: 1008)	NSW
People under the age of 18 (%)	21.5	24.2	20.0	21.7
People over the age of 60 (%)	27.4	24.9	27.2	23.5
People with one or more long-term health conditions ¹ (%)	21.2	17	19.5	18.3
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (%)	5.1	0.2	3.1	3.4
People who speak a language other than English ² (%)	7.9	37.7	8.6	29.5
Level of highest educational attainment - Year 9 or below (%)	10%	3.5	7.2	7.4
Median weekly household income (\$)	\$1,466	\$3038	1593	\$1,829

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing 2016 and 2021*

3.4 Social Baseline Summary

This baseline presents some of the strengths and challenges facing communities in the locality and has been used, where possible, to assess the social impacts of the Project.

Key characteristics of the social locality to be considered in the scoping of social impacts include:

- a rural community with an ageing population

1 Selected long-term health conditions include arthritis, asthma, cancer (including remission), dementia (including Alzheimer's), diabetes (excluding gestational diabetes), heart disease (including heart attack or angina), kidney disease, lung condition (including COPD or emphysema), mental health condition (including depression or anxiety) and stroke. Other long-term health conditions are not included in this count.

2 The top responses in the Goulburn Mulwaree LGA for language used at home, other than English was Nepali (0.5%), Mandarin (0.5%), Greek (0.4%), Arabic (0.3%) and Malayalam (0.3%).

- notable economic growth and steady reliance on rural-based industries
- a mix of urban and rural communities with strong labour participation rates
- strong transport links to Canberra and Sydney

Strengths, opportunities and challenges of the social locality include:

- developing a greater number of diverse employment and training services/opportunities for local people, which will in turn enhance the regional economy
- balancing land use priorities in acknowledgement of the strong history of agriculture in the region
- improved access to aged care services and healthcare
- conservation of heritage and environment.

4 Scoping of Likely Social Impacts

4.1 Scoping Methodology

The scoping of likely social impacts resulting from the Project has been guided by the SIA Guideline and with reference to the social impact categories presented in Table 4.1 below. The scoping of likely social impacts included:

- gaining an understanding of the Project’s social locality and considering the characteristic of the communities within the social locality (the social baseline; Chapters 2 and 3)
- identifying likely social impacts for different groups in the social locality (this chapter).

The initial scoping of likely social impacts was informed by:

- understanding the Project context and activities
- reviewing the outcomes of consultation activities conducted by the Applicant to date
- reviewing the existing environment and outcomes of preliminary assessments completed as part of the Scoping Report for the Project
- considering community opinions and sentiments towards the Project activities both primary and secondary research methods including desktop research and review of other comparative projects, including the proposed Gundry Solar Farm, the social commentary of comparative projects and issues in the social locality and primary data collection carried out by AAP using targeted interviews.

Table 4.1 Social impact categories (SIA Guideline)

Categories	Definition
Way of life	How people live, get around, work, play, and interact each day.
Community	Community composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, and people’s sense of place.
Accessibility	How people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private or not-for-profit organisation.
Culture	Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings.
Health and well-being	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	Ecosystem services such as shade, pollution control, and erosion control, public safety and security. Access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity.
Livelihoods	People’s capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business.

Categories	Definition
Decision-making systems	Including the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives and have access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms.

4.2 Determining the Complexity of Phase 2 SIA Report

The approach used to determine the level of assessment required for an identified social impact has been completed in accordance with the SIA Guidelines following the completion of the SIA Scoping Tool. A key objective of the SIA scoping phase is to identify the level of assessment required for each impact in the assessment phase. The level of assessment determines the extent of effort and data required to assess the impact. The levels of assessment and the indicative data requirements are shown in Table 4.2

Table 4.2 Level of assessment (DPE, 2021)

Level of Assessment	Secondary Data	Primary Data	
		Consultation	Research
Detailed: the project may result in significant social impacts, including cumulative impacts.	Required	Broad consultation	Targeted research
Standard: the project is unlikely to result in significant social impacts, including cumulative impacts.	Required	Targeted consultation	Potentially targeted research
Minor: the project may result in minor social impacts.	Required	Limited – if required (e.g. local Council)	Not required
Not relevant: The project will have no social impact, or the social impacts of the project will be negligible.	N/A		

The scoped social impacts and their required level of assessment are outlined in Table 4.5.

4.3 Other Renewable Projects in or Near the Locality

In this SIA Scoping Report, cumulative impacts refer to the combined effect of impacts from several activities on a particular value or receiver. According to the SIA Guideline, cumulative impacts can take three forms. They can be:

- **Spatial impacts:** occurring over the same area, such as trucks from multiple operations, which may produce a cumulative noise impact along a common haulage route
- **Temporal:** vary over time, such as the construction of multiple large projects over the same timeframe, which may produce a spike in temporary work in an area, creating a cumulative shortage of accommodation
- **Linked impact:** involve more complex interactions – one impact may trigger another.

The nearest known state-significant solar development to the subject site is the Gundry Solar Farm, located approximately 6km to the east of the Project and proposed to be accessed from Windellama Road off the Hume Highway, at 961 Windellama Road.

To build an understanding of potential community perceptions of the Project and to inform the assessment approach for the SIA, a select number of comparable projects in the region have been reviewed to identify how communities have responded to these proposed developments. A review of scoping reports, response to submissions and media has been undertaken, and the key community sentiments towards these projects are presented in Table 5.1.

4.4 Engagement Outcomes

4.4.1 Broader project engagement

As noted in section 5 of the Scoping Report, the Applicant has undertaken a number of engagement activities during the scoping phase of the project. The outcomes of these activities have been used to further inform the scoping of likely social impacts and community sentiments from the broader project engagement are summarised Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Summary of sentiment resulting from a review of nearby projects and scoping engagement.

Nearby Projects and project Specific Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use compatibility: the suitability of the land for renewable energy, including the loss of prime agricultural land. • Health: the potential impact on the health of those living near the projects due to exposure to electromagnetic radiation. • Visual impact: changes to the visual landscape, something that people value and degradation of the rural landscape. • Impacts on biodiversity: including threatened species and the natural environment. • Traffic impacts: including an increase in heavy vehicle traffic that will discourage visitors to the region and impact on all of those along the haulage and access routes. • Land values: the potential impacts on land values, with no supporting studies. • Economic benefits: increase in business for local service providers and improve economic sustainability for those other recipients of community benefit. • Renewable energy: the validity of solar and wind as an economic and efficient source to meet the needs of the energy market in Australia. • Safety: increase fire risk for neighbours resulting from solar panels and battery fires.

4.4.2 SIA Engagement

While the SIA has used outcomes of the broader project engagement to inform the scoping of likely social impacts, additional targeted engagement was also carried out to further inform the understanding of the potential impacts of the project. The engagement approach, the purpose of engagement and summary of outcomes is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 SIA scoping phase engagement

Audience and purpose	Summary of feedback and sentiment
Method: Targeted interviews	
Stakeholder: Landholders directly adjacent to the Proposal (2 total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely negative sentiment and not supportive of the Project. Concerned are inclusive of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The visual impacts and changes to their surroundings. landscape.

Audience and purpose	Summary of feedback and sentiment
<p>Purpose of engagement: Purposive sampling to increase understanding of the outcomes of the broader project engagement and deepen understanding about what people value about the area they live in and the likely impacts of the project on them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community benefit and the belief that the community and individual landholders will not be compensated or receive fair and adequate benefits. • Feels that meaningful engagement is required between the Proponent and the community and a sense that the process to date has been rushed. • Amenity impacts (noise and dust) associated with the construction phase, including length of the construction phase. • Health and wellbeing, including the stress associated with uncertainty regarding the Project. • Concerned that the existing flight path of the Goulburn Airport will need to change and will be redirected over their house. • That the ownership models means that the proponent will on-sell the Project after approval, and how this flows on to transparency and trust between the proponent and the community. • Believes the proposed location is poor due to proximity to landowners and town and queried both the economic benefit of the project and the potential impacts on property values. • Concerns that the proposed access road will impact privacy and create additional dust and noise issues.
<p>Goulburn Airport</p> <p>Purpose of engagement: Increase understanding of the potential impacts of the project on nearby infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral sentiment. Noted no concerns about the Project. • Noted that some lights to indicate the solar farm for night flights would be helpful.
<p>Business Groups (Goulburn Group and Goulburn Chamber of Commerce)</p> <p>Purpose of engagement: Increase understanding of the potential impact's opportunities of the project on the broader business community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goulburn Group actively support sustainability and have a positive sentiment towards the Project. They would like to see a fair outcome for the community in terms of the community fund and compensation for landholders. • Believe that improved engagement will foster more Project support. Noted that engagement also needs to focus and emphasis benefits e.g. potential agricultural benefits. • The chamber support solar and renewable projects in general but believe that the combination of the proximity of this Project to residences and community sentiment will make the project untenable. • Some concerns about water run off to other properties and impact to soil nutrients.
<p>Method: online survey</p>	
<p>Stakeholders: Proximal landholders (11 total)</p> <p>Purpose of engagement: an 'opt-in' methodology to collect qualitative feedback about what those living in close proximity to the Project value about the area they live in. Also provided an</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In total 11 proximal landowners provided feedback to the online survey. The survey was distributed during the doorknock and letterbox drop undertaken as part of the broader project engagement. • The rural surroundings, the serenity and the natural landscape features were noted as the things they valued about most living in the area with 'hardworking', 'quiet rural farmers' and 'helpful' common terms used to describe the community. • The project sentiment and likely impacts largely reflected those that were identified during the broader engagement and centered around

Audience and purpose	Summary of feedback and sentiment
<p>opportunity to understand further how people expect the Project to impact them that served to further help inform scoping of likely impacts</p>	<p>how people experienced their surroundings, how it would impact their way of life, their community and their livelihoods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use compatibility, health and wellbeing impacts from both living next to the facility and also the stress and anxiety caused in relation to discussions around both this project and other nearby projects. The visual impacts, the suitability of the site for use as a Solar farm, amenity impacts and distributive equity of any economic benefits were also noted. • Some mitigation measures were suggested including meaningful community engagement and education as to ongoing impacts and how panels/batteries would be recycled - not just a hope/wish to carry out recycling. There was a desire expressed for the Project to 'get to know the neighbors and involve them'. • A further mitigation measures included placing the solar farm away from close communities, have a detailed plan to recycle and decommission solar farms, and placing panels on roof tops of factories instead of on rural lots.

While the scoping engagement wasn't inclusive of all stakeholder groups, including aboriginal people and other community interest groups, it is an important aspect of the data collection that helped to inform the scoping of social impacts (refer to section 4.4.2).

4.5 Scoped Likely Social Impacts

The scoping phase determined a number of social impacts that required further investigation during the EIS phase. Table 4.5 summarises these impacts and demonstrates the interrelationships between scoped impacts and the social impact categories.

Table 4.5 Scoped likely social impacts

Impact to People	Social Impact Category	Affected People	Impact Type	Level of Assessment
Project activity: project scoping and site justification				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of the land for the production and storage of solar energy limiting future developments in the locality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Holder of mining exploration license held on the site (EL9048) Community within the social locality 	Negative	Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commentary about changes to land use affecting the value of surrounding properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearby property owners 	Negative	Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress and uncertainty arising from the proposed changes in land use and potential land use conflicts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and well-being Livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality, including those with vulnerabilities (i.e. the elderly or suffering from health conditions) Holder of mining exploration license held on the site (EL9048) 	Negative	Minor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The validity of solar and wind as an economic and efficient resource to meet the needs of the Australian energy market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision-making systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality 	Negative / Positive	Minor
Project activity: construction				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the land use resulting in potential loss of flora and fauna, changing how people experience their environment and damaging the rural landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality 	Negative	Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likelihood of the project causing intangible harm through cultural and physical loss and tangible harm to items of heritage and cultural significance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Community within the social locality 	Negative	Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to amenity resulting from construction, affecting how people live (i.e., because of construction dust, noise, lighting and headlight glare) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way of life Health and well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality, including those living along the access roads and haulage routes and those with 	Negative	Detailed

Impact to People	Social Impact Category	Affected People	Impact Type	Level of Assessment
		vulnerabilities (i.e. the elderly or suffering from health conditions)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased traffic and temporary disruptions to traffic movements on the local road network causing day to day disruption for people in the locality due to increased travel times or access changes that potentially discourage visitors to the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access Livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality, including those living along the access roads and haulage routes (i.e. Windemella Road, Braidwood Road, Painters Lane, residents) Visitors to the area 	Negative	Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic stimulus to local business owners resulting from the proposal procurement opportunities and increased patronage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local business 	Positive	Standard
Project activity: operation				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the visual landscape, something that people value, including impacts from glint and glare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way of life Surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearby neighbours Those in the visual catchment 	Negative	Detailed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community investment initiatives leading to improved sustainability and enhancing resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality 	Positive	Minor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to land use affecting the availability of land for agricultural purposes. Fear that the presence of the Project will devalue properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Broader community Nearby neighbours 	Negative	Minor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits of intergenerational equity due to solar farms being used as an alternate energy source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality 	Positive	Minor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential for a decline in safety for those living near the Project due to fire risks and other health-related impacts (EMF/dust/road safety etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality, including those with vulnerabilities (i.e. the elderly or suffering from health conditions) Road users 	Negative	Standard
Project activity: Employment of workforce				

Impact to People	Social Impact Category	Affected People	Impact Type	Level of Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced well-being from job opportunities and training, including increased opportunities for vulnerable groups Opportunities for small local businesses to increase services and flow on economic benefits during construction and operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Businesses 	Positive	Minor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to the local population causing a decline in the composition and character of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community within the social locality 	Negative	Minor

5 SIA Research Methodologies and Engagement

5.1 SIA Research Methodologies

The scoping phase has identified several likely social impacts of the Project, which will require additional assessment during the EIS. Technical specialists will carry out several detailed studies and investigations, including (but not limited to) visual impact, cultural heritage, biodiversity, noise and traffic. The SIA consultant will work closely with the specialists assessing the Project's impacts to determine the likely indirect impacts.

In addition, the SIA will use specific research methods to gather qualitative and quantitative information. This will further assist with refining issues, responses to social impacts and proposed management measures. The SIA research methods are further defined in Table 5.1.

The EIS phase will also use engagement as a primary data collection tool. The approach to engagement, including the purpose and the audience is provided in Table 5.2.

Table 5.1 Research methodology for SIA

Research Methods	Description
Primary data collection – targeted interviews	The work of Bradshaw and Stratford (2005) on qualitative research design and rigour is beneficial in designing the semi-structured interview. Their work explains that in qualitative research, the number of people we interview, communities we observe, or texts we read is less important than the quality of who or what we involve in our research and how we conduct it. Their work emphasises that 'purposive' sampling is typical in this type of research and that the sample is not intended to be representative, given that the emphasis is usually on analysing meanings.
Exploratory research	Exploratory research involves familiarising a researcher with a topic to satisfy curiosity and improve understanding. Exploratory research is often conducted in areas of inquiry, where the goals of the research are to scope out the magnitude or extent of a particular phenomenon, problem, or behaviour, to generate some initial ideas (or "hunches") about that phenomenon, or to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study regarding that phenomenon (Bhattacharjee, 2012). For instance, if a community is generally dissatisfied with the operations of a business or government body, exploratory research may be directed at measuring the extent of dissatisfaction or frequency of complaints and their presumed cause. For this assessment, research will include a comparative analysis of similar operations, including reviews of submission reports, social commentary and engagement outcomes.
Desktop analysis based on specialist studies	The term 'desktop analysis' refers to a study carried out primarily through the integration of technical assessments into the SIA rather than physical investigations. For this assessment, several social impacts, including aesthetics and amenity, and cumulative impacts will be mostly assessed in other technical studies in the EIS.

5.2 Participatory Engagement Approach

Primary data will be collected using a participatory and impartial engagement approach and will build upon the engagement carried out by the Applicant as part of the development of the EIS. The engagement will be respectful, inclusive, and meaningful, complementing other SIA research activities. The proposed tools that will be used to achieve the desired SIA consultation outcomes are shown in Table 5.2. The engagement approach will be integrated into the broader EIS program to improve engagement efficiencies and minimise the risk of consultation fatigue.

Table 5.2 SIA engagement approach and timing

Engagement Technique	Level of Participation	Description	Targeted Stakeholders	Led by
Semi-structured interviews	Consulting to collect information and insights	Interviews will be used to further explore the social impacts of the Project and to collect data, evidence, and insights for those stakeholders nearest to the wind farm site. The semi-structured interview format provides a flexible structure that allows the interviewer to create and ask questions about situations as they emerge and the interviewee to digress and express views freely.	Nearby neighbours, including those within the visual catchment, First Nations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, community groups, local business and suppliers.	SIA Consultants
Online forums / face-to-face meetings / walk on country/workshops or focus groups	Consulting to collect information and insights/ collaborating in decision making	Engagement techniques that present opportunities for either consulting to collect information and insights or collaborating in decision-making are used in the social impact assessment to further inform perceived impacts, involve vulnerable or marginalised groups, and encourage collaboration in project design and refinement strategy on key impact areas and future monitoring and management measures. Due to the nature of this particular community, a broad range of engagement methods are recommended. Follow up engagement is also recommended.	Key stakeholder groups specific to relevant impact themes, e.g., those within the visual catchment, those along access and haulage routes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, emergency services, Council and developers of nearby sites.	SIA Consultant / Applicant Project Team

Engagement Technique	Level of Participation	Description	Targeted Stakeholders	Led by
Open days and contact points (e.g., phone, email)	Sharing information	Helping people to understand the role of the social impact assessment and identify affected and interested people, groups, organisations and communities. Provide people with a forum to identify social impacts in relation to the Project. Prompt follow up is encouraged.	Community	Applicant Project Team with SIA consultants in attendance
Fact sheets/newsletters/contact point	Sharing information	Provide input into project information prepared by ENGIE Australia to help people understand the social impact assessment and ways that they can get involved.	Community	Applicant Project Team
Online survey	Consulting to collect information and insights/ collaborating in decision making	The survey will allow engagement with the broader community to inform perceived impacts and encourage collaboration in Project design.	Community	SIA consultants

6 Conclusion

This report documents the process and outcomes of the scoping phase of the SIA undertaken for the Project. Specifically, it has:

- demonstrated an understanding of the Project's social locality
- considered the characteristic of the communities within the social locality (the social baseline)
- identified likely social impacts for different groups in the social locality and the level of assessment required for the assessment phase.

The report has identified key social impacts that require varied levels of assessment as part of the EIS. Future stages of SIA for this Project will analyse and predict the unmitigated and mitigated social impacts and develop strategies to avoid or mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive impacts.

Subsequent phases of the SIA program will include:

- a detailed update of the baseline social profile to ensure that any further baseline data relevant to the impacts identified is obtained
- further validation of the area of social influence and identification of affected communities and vulnerable groups
- collection of primary research data through participatory engagement methodologies to understand the perceptions of the identified stakeholders within the social locality and those indirectly affected by the Project and those with vulnerabilities
- a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of social impacts against existing baseline conditions.

The SIA will seek broader involvement across the stakeholder groupings identified over the subsequent phases of the EIS, including further engagement with the Council, businesses and the community regarding impacts related to community benefits, accommodation and services.

The scoped issues will be further explored and validated during the EIS preparation phase using several research methodologies, including a participatory and impartial engagement approach to inform the SIA. This engagement will build upon the engagement carried out by the Applicant as part of the development of the EIS.

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