



MAYFAIR SOLAR FARM

Response to Submissions
Report – SSD-60074458

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The river is the symbol of the Dreaming and the journey of life. The circles and lines represent people meeting and connections across time and space. When we are working in different places, we can still be connected and work towards the same goal.

Title: Sacred River Dreaming
Artist Hayley Pigram
Darug Nation
Sydney, NSW

Acknowledgement of Country

Urbis acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we operate on.

We recognise that First Nations sovereignty was never ceded and respect First Nations peoples continuing connection to these lands, waterways and ecosystems for over 60,000 years.

We pay our respects to First Nations Elders, past and present.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Response to Submissions Report (**Report**) has been prepared on behalf of Elgin Energy Pty Ltd (**the Applicant**) to address the matters raised by government agencies, Mid-Western Regional Council (**Council**), the community and relevant stakeholder groups during public exhibition of the proposed Mayfair Solar Farm development at 204 Jacksons Lane, Stubbo.

State Significant Development Application (**SSDA**) (SSD-60074458) was lodged with the Department of Planning, Industry and Infrastructure (**DPHI**) in accordance with the Planning Systems SEPP.

DPHI issued a letter to the Applicant on the 29th of January 2025 requesting a response to the issues raised in response to the public exhibition of the SSDA. The following specific matters were identified by DPHI in the Request for Additional Information:

- Traffic impacts
- Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Hazards and,
- Consultation with key stakeholders.

Other matters raised by other agencies, have been addressed throughout this Report and can be found detailed in Section 5.

This Report outlines the minor refinements applied to the proposed solar farm development and responds to all concerns raised within submissions.

Overview of Submissions

The SSDA was on public exhibition between the 6th of December 2024 and the 28th of January 2025. The following government agencies provided comments and recommendations:

- The NSW Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, and the Environment and Water's Biodiversity, Conservation and Science Group (**CPHR**)
- The Australian Government's Civil Aviation Safety Authority (**CASA**)
- NSW Government's Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure – Crown Lands (**Crown Lands NSW**)
- The NSW Government's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – Fisheries (**DPI Fisheries**)
- The NSW Government's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (**DPIRD**)
- The NSW Government's Fire and Rescue Service (**FRNSW**)
- NSW Government's Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure – Hazards (**DPHI - Hazards**)
- The NSW Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, and the Environment's Heritage NSW (**HNSW**)
- The NSW Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, and the Environment and Water's Water Group (**NSW DCCEEW**)
- The NSW Government's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development – NSW Resources (**NSW Resources**)
- NSW Rural Fire Service (**RFS**)
- NSW Government's Transport for New South Wales (**TfNSW**)
- NSW Water (**Water NSW**)

A total of public 84 submissions were received from individual and special interest groups, including:

- Save Our Surroundings Romsey, Barham, Hay, Central West NSW, Riverina and Murrumbidgee branches
- Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance Inc
- CWO REZist Inc.
- Save Gundry Plans Action Group
- Rainforest Reserves Australia

The key issues raised in the submissions can be broadly grouped into the following categories which are identified in the DPHI *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Submissions Report (2021)*:

- The project (e.g. the site, the project area, the physical layout and design, key uses and activities, timing)
- Procedural matters (e.g. level or quality of engagement, compliance with the SEARs, identification of relevant statutory requirements)
- The economic, environmental and social impacts of the project (e.g. amenity, air, biodiversity, heritage)
- The justification and evaluation of the project as a whole (e.g. consistency of project with Government plans, policies or guidelines)
- Issues that are beyond the scope of the project (e.g. broader policy issues) or not relevant to the project.

This Report identifies themes which are mentioned consistently across the submissions, identifies which of the above five categories these best fit under and provides a response to the key themes and issues.

Actions Taken Since Exhibition

Since the SSDA was publicly exhibited, the Applicant has undertaken further consultation with relevant Agencies and Council to discuss the issues raised within their submissions. This has resulted in updates to supporting documentation and the proposal in response to issues raised. Additional assessments have also been prepared to respond to the issues raised and includes:

- Updated Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report
- Updated Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
- Updated Biodiversity Management Plan
- Updated Bushfire Threat Assessment
- Updated Traffic Impact Assessment
- Updated Preliminary Hazards Assessment

Response to Submissions

The Applicant has undertaken refinements and clarifications to the Project scope, in response to the submissions and further stakeholder engagement undertaken. The key changes are summarised as follows:

- Clarification on the construction timeframe for the workforce accommodation camp.
- Refinement of the traffic impact assessment regarding the Oversize and/or Over Mass Vehicle route.
- Refinement of the biodiversity development assessment report including categorisation of plant community types.
- Further archaeological surveys to understand the potential for subsurface materials and refinement of the Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment.
- Clarification on the battery energy storage system layout and distances and, assessment against relevant statutory requirements within the preliminary hazards analysis.
- Refinement of the bushfire threat assessment including an enlargement of the asset protection zone surrounding the battery energy storage system.

Updated Justification and Evaluation

The response to submissions process has resulted in minor design refinements and report clarifications, without material changes to the Project. The Project continues to align with State, Regional and local strategic plans, as well as comply with all relevant National, State and local legislation which must be complied with for a project of this nature.

The Project will provide economic benefits to the local economy in addition to the environmental and social benefits arising from a renewable energy transition. No significant environmental, social and economic impacts will result from the Project. Residual impacts can be minimised, mitigated and/or offset where necessary.

Therefore, having considered the above, the Project continues to be appropriate for the site.

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Reference	Description
ACHA	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment
AEP	Anderson Environment and Planning
AIA	Arboricultural Impact Assessment
BAM	Biodiversity Assessment Method
BAM-C	Biodiversity Assessment Method Calculator
BC Act	<i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW)</i>
BDAR	Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
BSAL	Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land
CEEC	Critically Endangered Ecological Community
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
Council	Mid-western Regional Council
CWOREZ	Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone
CWORP	Central-West and Orana Regional Plan 2041
DP	Deposited Plan
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EP&A Act	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>
EPA Regulation	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021</i>
EPA	New South Wales Environment Protection Authority
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
GP	General Practitioner
ha	Hectares
HIPAP	Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper
IPC	Independent Planning Commission

Reference	Description
kV	Kilovolt
Km	Kilometre
LGA	Local Government Area
LLS	Local Land Services
MRA	MRA Consulting Group
MWRC	Mid-Western Regional Council
MW	Megawatts
MWac	Megawatts, alternating current
NHVR	National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
NIA	Noise Impact Assessment
NPfI	Noise Policy for Industry
NSW	New South Wales
OSOM	Oversize and/or Over Mass Vehicle
PBP	<i>Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019</i>
PCT	Plant Community Type
PCUs	Power Conversion Units
Planning Systems SEPP	<i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021</i>
POEO	Protection of the Environment Operations
PV	Photovoltaic
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
RFS	NSW Rural Fire Service
RNP	NSW Road Noise Policy
SAII	Serious and Irreversible Impacts
SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
Site	Lot 2 in DP 528667 and Lot 2 in DP 734669
SSD	State Significant Development
SSDA	State Significant Development Application

Reference	Description
TfNSW	Transport for New South Wales
TIA	Transport Impact Assessment
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment
WSP	WSP Global Inc.
WMP	Waste Management Plan

2. INTRODUCTION

This Response to Submissions Report (**Report**) has been prepared on behalf of Elgin (**the Applicant**) to address the matters raised by government agencies, Mid-Western Regional Council (**Council**), the community and relevant stakeholder groups during public exhibition of the proposed Mayfair Solar Farm development (**the Project**) at 204 Jacksons Lane, Stubbo

The State Significant Development Application (**SSDA**) was lodged with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (**DPHI**) on the 6th of November 2024 (SSD-60074458). The SSDA was placed on exhibition from the 6th of December 2024 until the 28th of January 2025. During this period, a total of 86 public submissions, and 15 submissions from Government agencies and Council, were received by DPHI during this period.

This Report has been prepared in accordance with the DPHI *State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Submissions Report (Appendix C) July 2021*.

2.1. EXHIBITED PROJECT

The SSDA seeks approval for the construction and operation of the Mayfair Solar Farm located at 204 Jacksons Lane, Stubbo, including:

- Site preparation works including tree removal and earthworks.
- Construction and operation of a solar farm and battery and energy storage system (**BESS**) including:
 - Ground-mounted solar/photovoltaic (**PV**) modules. PV modules would be mounted on single axis tracking systems with a maximum height up to 3.5 metres above ground.
 - A series of power conversion units (**PCU**)/inverters, with underground cabling connecting each PCU to the on-site substation.
 - A BESS with approximately 60MW capacity and 240MWh (four hour) storage. The BESS would be in containerised modules adjacent to the on-site substation.
 - An on-site 33/66kV substation to connect the Project to the distribution network via an existing overhead 66kV powerline.
- Upgrade and sealing of Jacksons Lane from Barney's Reef Road to the Site access (approximately 1km), including replacement of the existing vehicle crossing over Slapdash Creek with a new culvert.
- Temporary removal of the northern traffic island at the intersection of Medley Street and Rouse Street during construction.
- Permanent supporting infrastructure including:
 - Internal access tracks.
 - Security fencing and lighting.
 - Operations and maintenance buildings.
 - Operational vehicle access points.
 - Water tanks.
 - Stormwater retention structures.
 - Landscaping.
- Temporary construction facilities including:
 - Construction compound.
 - Laydown area.
 - Construction materials storage.
 - Site office buildings, amenities.

- Temporary workforce accommodation camp.
- The temporary workforce accommodation camp, with a capacity of up to 150 workers, which will include:
 - Demountable, single-storey, two or four-person demountable air-conditioned buildings.
 - Various single-storey buildings for supporting facilities including kitchen and dining, amenities, laundry, library, gymnasium, site shop, licenced premises, administration and services, a medical room, cold stores, industrial freezers, and storage rooms.
 - Temporary on-site utilities.
 - Covered recreational areas.
 - Workforce Car parking.

As identified in the EIS, the proposed solar array and BESS is to be constructed in a single stage. In response to consultation with agencies and Council, it is clarified that site preparation works, the upgrade to Jacksons Lane and the construction of the temporary workforce accommodation camp will be completed prior to commencing construction of the proposed solar array and BESS.

2.2. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

This Report is supported by the following technical reports and documentation a number of which are unchanged from the submission of the SSDA.

Table 1 Supporting Documentation

Document Title	Consultant	Appendix	Status
SEARs Compliance Table	Urbis	Appendix A	No Change
Detailed Maps and Plans	Urbis	Appendix B	Updated
Statutory Compliance Table	Urbis	Appendix C	No Change
Engagement Summary Table	Urbis	Appendix D	No Change
Mitigation Measures Table	Urbis	Appendix E	No Change
Biodiversity Development Assessment Report	AEP	Appendix F	Updated
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment	Urbis	Appendix G	Updated
Heritage Impact Statement	Urbis	Appendix H	No Change
Agricultural Impact Assessment	Premise	Appendix I	No Change
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Urbis	Appendix J	No Change
Community and Stakeholder Engagement Outcome Report	Urbis	Appendix K	No Change
Noise Impact Assessment	WSP	Appendix L	No Change
Transport Impact Assessment	Urbis	Appendix M	Updated
Hydrology Assessment	Water Technology	Appendix N	No Change

Document Title	Consultant	Appendix	Status
Preliminary Hazard Analysis	Riskcon	Appendix O	Updated
Bushfire Threat Assessment	AEP	Appendix P	Updated
Social and Economic Impact Assessment	Urbis	Appendix Q	No Change
Workforce Accommodation Plan	Accent Environmental	Appendix R	Updated
Waste Management Plan	MRA	Appendix S	No Change
Landowner's Consent	-	Appendix T	No Change
Estimated Development Cost Report	MBM	Appendix U	No Change
Aquatic Ecology Report	AEP	Appendix V	No Change
Arborist Impact Assessment	AEP	Appendix W	No Change
Site Survey	Ryan Geospatial	Appendix X	No Change
Planning Agreement (PA) Letter of Offer to Council	Elgin	Appendix Y	No Change
Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment	Urbis	Appendix Z	New report

3. ANALYSIS OF SUBMISSIONS

This section provides a summary of the submissions received including a breakdown of respondent type, geographic location of the submitter, and issue classification.

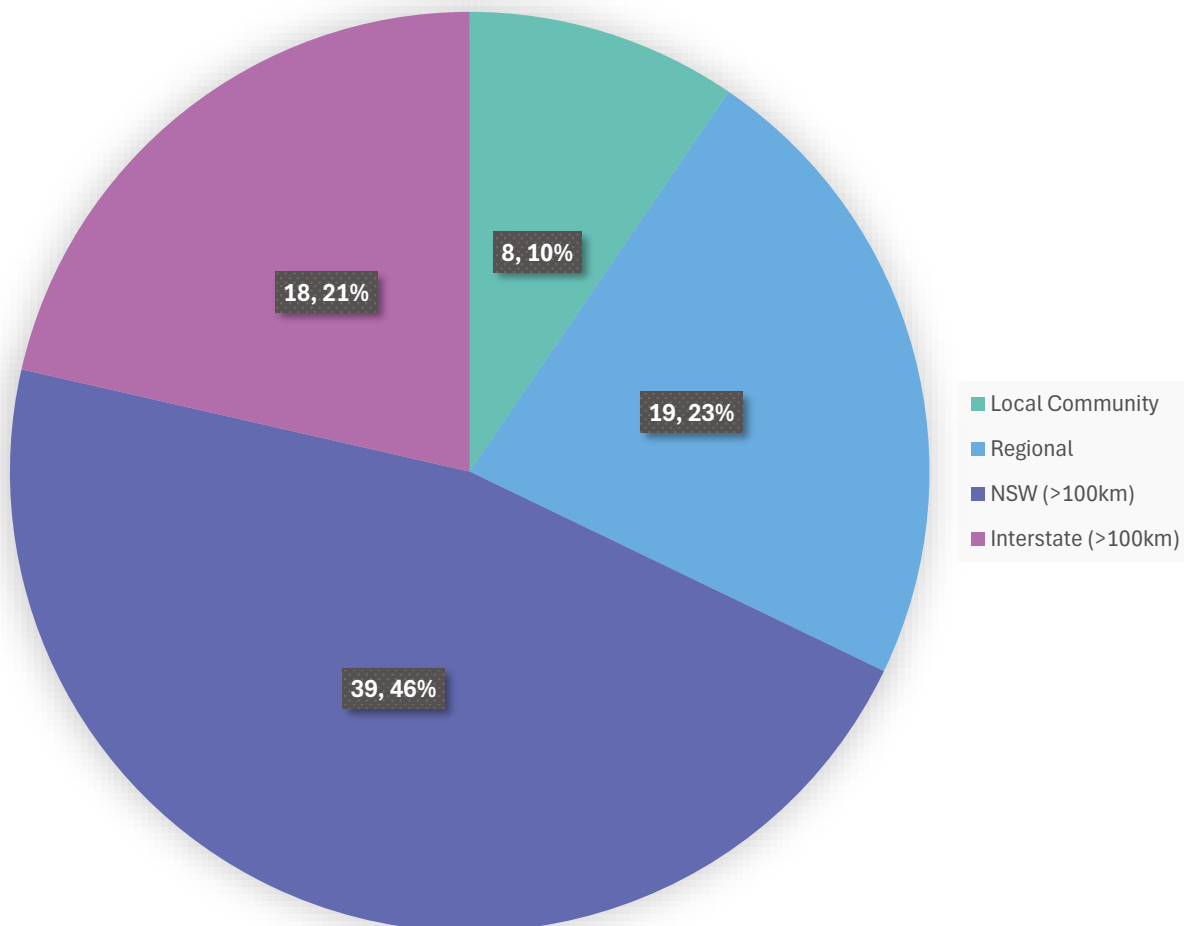
3.1. BREAKDOWN OF SUBMISSIONS

The SSDA was publicly exhibited between 6th of December 2024 until the 28th of January 2025. There were 15 submissions received from Government agencies and Council, and 86 submissions received from special interest groups, members of the local community and individuals. Overall, there were 84 unique registered objectors to the Project based on the submissions received.

All submissions were managed by DPHI, which included registering and uploading the submissions onto the 'Major Projects website' (SSD-60074458).

The public submissions have been categorised by the distance to the Project, as well an identification of the key issues raised, in line with the State *Guidelines Significant Development– Preparing a Submissions Report (2021)*. A breakdown of the community submissions made by distance and issues raised is provided in Table 2. Individual submissions were further analysed for common issues and themes. Further detail is provided in Table 3.

Figure 1 Breakdown of Submission Location of Origin

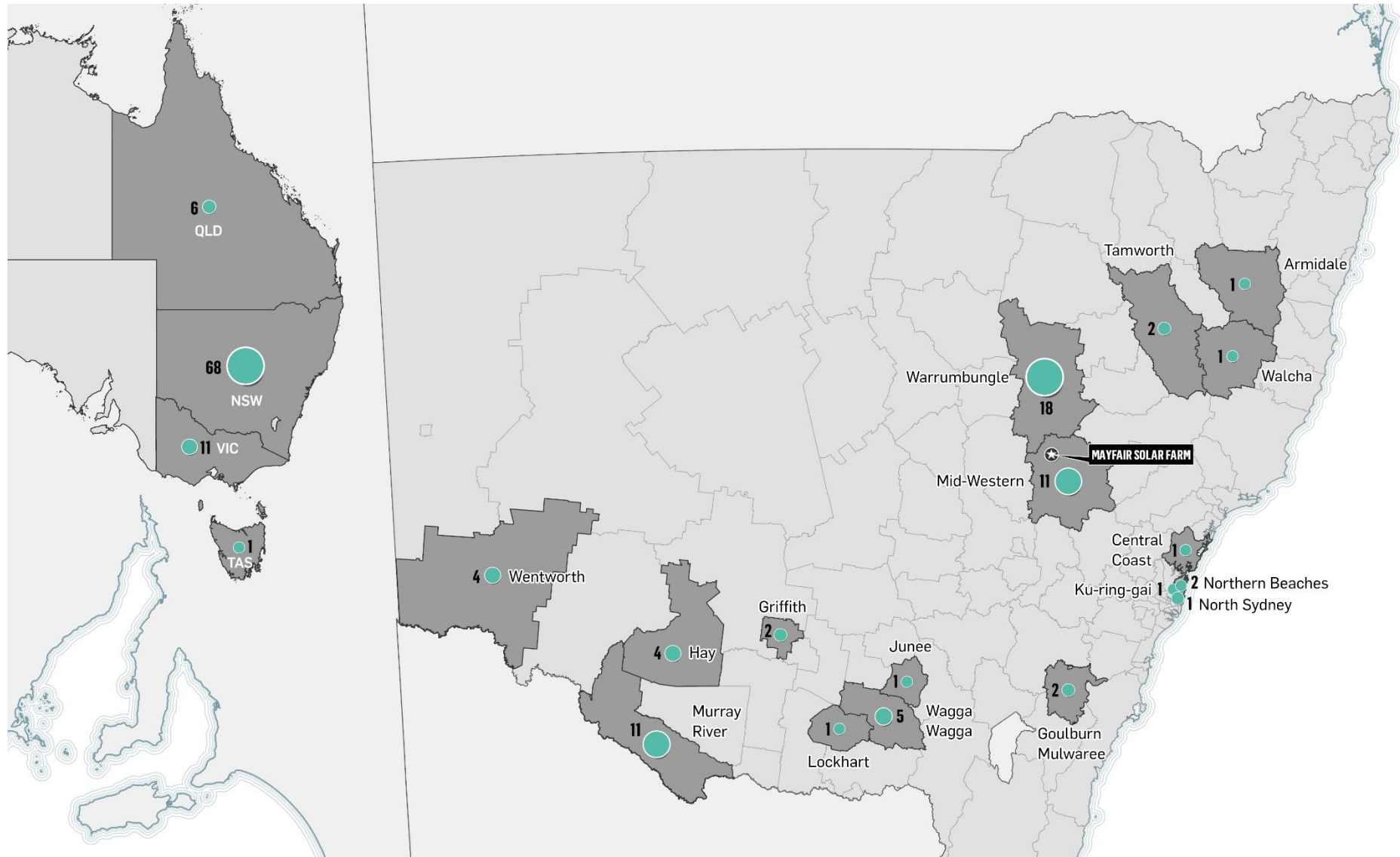


Source: Urbis

Table 2 Breakdown of Community Submissions Received

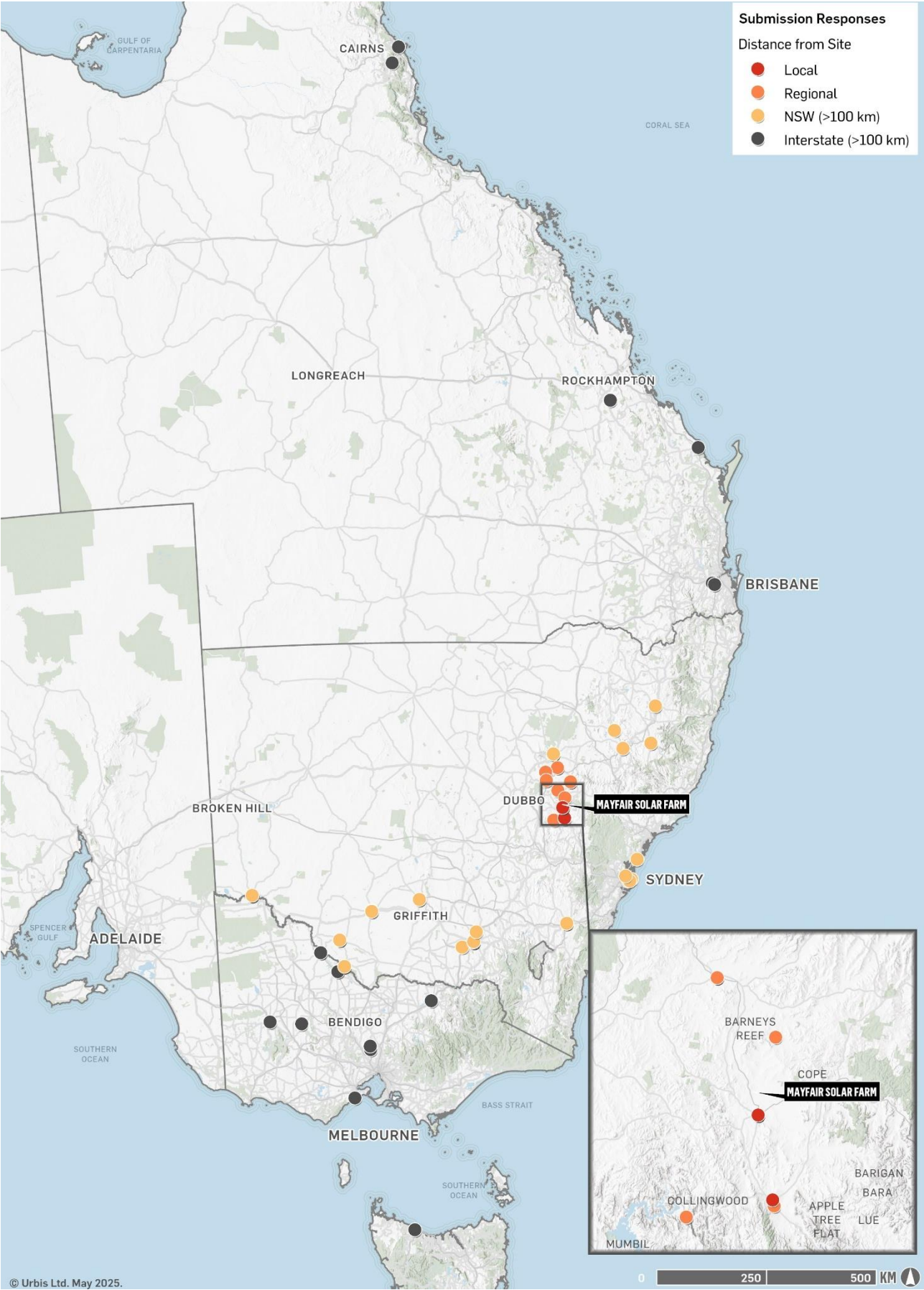
Submitter location	Total submission	The Project	Procedural Matters	Economic, Environmental and Social Impacts	Justification and Evaluation of the Project	Issues Beyond the Scope of the Project
Local <5km	8	6	6	8	8	1
Regional 5km-100km	19	19	3	19	7	4
Other NSW LGAs (>100km)	39	7	3	33	12	9
Interstate (>100km)	18	5	3	18	6	4
TOTAL	84	37	15	78	33	19

Figure 2 Distribution of submissions by State and LGA



Source: Urbis

Figure 3 Submissions by Location



Source: Urbis

3.2. CATEGORISING KEY ISSUES

The issues raised in the submissions have been categorised in Table 3 in accordance with the DPHI *State Significant Development Guidelines*.

Table 3 Categorising Issues Raised

Category of Issue		Mentions	Summary of Matters Raised
The project	Site suitability	12	Too close to neighbours and unsuitability of the site for the Project
	Physical design and layout	0	No comments were received specifically on the configuration and layout of the Project.
	Uses, activities and Public Benefit	12	Clarity on economic contribution to local area, social license
Procedural matters	Assessment Process	13	Inadequate assessment and evaluation of impacts
	Consultation	6	Concerns on the completeness of consultation
Economic, Environmental and Social Impacts	Land, soil and water	48	Loss of agricultural land, chemical run off into water systems, contamination, restoration process during decommissioning
	Biodiversity	28	Habitat destruction, protection of vegetation and importance of waterway
	Visual Impacts	14	Incompleteness of LVIA, high impact on neighbouring properties
	Hazards and Risks	25	Responsibility in the event of a disaster, bushfire, chemical run off into water systems, contamination
	Materials	11	Use of hazardous materials, slave labour in manufacturing
	Cumulative Impacts	11	High number of similar projects in local area
	Traffic	3	Chosen transportation company, negative impact on local amenity from frequency and size of vehicles
	Social	23	Worker accommodation and impact of construction workers, stretching of local infrastructure and disaster relief services
	Economic	15	Employment of locals, loss of income through tourism and farming
	Noise	5	Noise from equipment used in the decommissioning phase

Category of Issue		Mentions	Summary of Matters Raised
	Air Quality	7	Smoke in the event of a fire
	Decommissioning	17	Disposal of waste, restoration of the site to existing condition, habitat destruction
	Rural Communities	14	Specific note of broad rural community impact regarding renewable projects e.g. stress on services
Justification and evaluation of the project	Renewable Energy	18	Disagreement with renewable energy
	Solar	7	Aversion to specifically solar as a form of renewable energy
	ESD Principles	7	Justification in line with these principles, social license
	Alternative Locations	4	Relocation of project closer to cities
Issues beyond the scope of the project or not relevant to the project	International relations	9	International interference and influence
	Political Motivations	9	Perceived political agendas from different groups
	Economics	11	Financial impact on local community, cost to develop Project, lack of community benefit

4. ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE EXHIBITION

Minor design refinements and clarifications have been made to the Project since public exhibition, to address key issues raised within submissions. However, no material changes to the proposed layout have been made during this period.

This section summarises the changes that have been made to the Project since its public exhibition. It also outlines the additional assessment undertaken to respond to the concerns raised with the public agency, organisation and public submissions outlined in **Section 2**.

4.1. FURTHER ENGAGEMENT

Following the public exhibition of the SSDA, the Applicant has undertaken further consultation with the following agencies, with outcomes as summarised in Table 4:

- Mid-Western Regional Council (**Council**)
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (**DPHI**)
- Transport for New South Wales (**TfNSW**)
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (**DCCEEW**) Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation Division (**CPHR**)
- Heritage New South Wales (**HNSW**)

Table 4 Summary of Consultation

Agency	Summary of Consultation
DPHI	Consultation with DPHI occurred on the 26th February 2025 to understand the key issues arising from the preliminary assessment of the Project. The main points of discussion that necessitated further consideration were: ▪ Transport – updating of the Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) in consultation with Council to further expand on the potential impacts within the locality of Gulgong and consideration of haulage routes, including accommodating Oversized/Overmass (OSOM) Vehicles. ▪ Biodiversity – updating of the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) in consultation with CPHR to expand on the assessed presence and absence of Plant Community Types (PCTs) and Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) on site. ▪ Planning pathway – Confirmation that all planning submissions will be addressed in accordance with the IPC guidelines.
Council	Consultation with Council occurred on the 25th February 2025 and the 27th May 2025, to understand the key issues arising from the traffic generation and its cumulative impacts on the local road network. Clarification was requested on the identified haulage route along Cope Road-Ulan Road and whether Black Lead Lane was considered as a potential haulage route. Further evaluation confirmed that an alternative route to the proposed Cope Road-Ulan Road route in the EIS would exacerbate the cumulative impacts from other large-scale renewable energy projects. Therefore, the preferred Cope-Rouse-Medley Road route remains the preferred and proposed haulage route. Further information is provided in the updated TIA.
CPHR	Consultation with CPHR occurred on the 17th March 2025 with representatives of CPHR and DPHI to understand the extent of further assessment required as part of their submission. Discussions involved the interpretation of dominant species and the allocation of vegetation to appropriate PCTs; the level of clarification required to determine whether exotic dominant grassland areas meet TEC classification; and addressing the extent and resolution of vegetation within the 1,500m buffer and approaches for unassessed grassland areas. The BDAR has been updated in response to CPHR comments.

TfNSW	Consultation with TfNSW occurred on the 24th March 2025 to validate the approach for further assessment in response to the agency's submission during the exhibition period. There was an agreement on the methodology and approach, as well as the consideration of TfNSW assets that could be impacted by the Project. Several road points along the proposed haulage route were identified for further assessment, as well as potential cumulative impacts with other infrastructure projects. The TIA has been updated to provide additional information.
HNSW	Consultation with HNSW occurred on the 12th February 2025 and the 28th March 2025. The discussion involved the approach of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) and the extent of test excavations during the impact assessment phase. As part of the discussions, it was concluded that while additional test excavations may be included as part of the post-approval process, further surveys will need to occur at this stage in coordination and consultation with the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) of the area. In response, further consultation with the RAPs (from the 1st of May to the 29th of May 2025) was undertaken along with additional site survey to ensure the ACHAR addresses all of HNSW's comments.

4.2. REFINEMENTS TO THE PROJECT

The following table summarises the Project refinements and clarifications proposed in response to submissions made and further engagement with DPHI.

These refinements and clarifications fit within the limits set by the Project description and assessment in the EIS publicly exhibited. These refinements do not change what the scope of development under the SSDA, and therefore an amendment to the proposal is not required.

Table 5 Project Refinements and Clarifications

Raised Issue	Refinement/Clarification	Appendix
Interim Workforce Accommodation Plan	Clarification on the timeframe for the construction of the workforce accommodation camp itself. It is estimated that this will require approximately eight weeks at the beginning of the development and 20 workers. These workers will require accommodation outside the camp. The option of housing these contractors in a nearby temporary workers' camp will be investigated should there be one available with sufficient capacity, to preserve short-term accommodation. However, if this option cannot be realised, then the camp construction contractors will likely seek local accommodation for a limited time until sufficient beds at the workers' camp are commissioned	Appendix R
Traffic Impact Assessment	Refinement of the TIA in relation to the OSOM vehicle route, which included undertaking further swept path analysis in areas where vehicles could leave the pavement. Moreover, the TIA also includes an overhead assessment, including a table with tolerances under bridges, for crossings along the route. Further refinements to the route selection were confirmed with TfNSW, including the need to avoid the Pacific Highway at Hexham and the recommendation to use the Inner City Bypass, with the caveat that the bypass has a 5.25m height clearance and the OSOM vehicles would need to be lowered. The temporary removal of a traffic island and giveway sign at the intersection of Medley Street and Rouse Street during construction was	Appendix M

	included in the TIA publicly exhibited. This has now been clarified with TFNSW and Council and made clearer in the project description.	
Biodiversity Development Assessment Report	The BDAR has been revised in response to CPHR's submission to address the categorisation of PCTs on site, their eligibility as a TEC and their effect on land categorisation under the <i>Local Land Services Act 2013 (LLS Act)</i> . Further information is contained in Section 4 of this report. This clarification has had no effect on the Project scope or mitigation measures.	Appendix F
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment	The ACHA has been revised in response to HNSW's submission and in consultation with the RAPs. This relates to clarifications based on further surveying to evaluate the potential of subsurface archaeological materials in a small portion of the site and provide greater certainty on the potential impacts pre-approval. The further assessment did not identify any additional impacts or requirement for additional mitigation measures beyond that previously exhibited.	Appendix G
BESS Layout Plan	To address comments from DPHI Industry Assessments, a BESS Layout Plan has been prepared, to clarify the exact number of proposed BESS units and appropriate separation distances in accordance with the UL9540A for the indicative provider. These details are consistent with the development description previously exhibited.	Appendix B
Preliminary Hazards Analysis	The PHA has been updated in response to DPHI's Industrial Assessments team comments. These refinements include clarification of the BESS layout and separation distances between battery modules, as well as assessment against the relevant technical and statutory requirements. The clarifications have not identified any additional impacts or requirement for additional mitigation measures beyond previously exhibited.	Appendix O
Bushfire Threat Assessment	The BTA has been updated in response to DPHI's Industrial Assessments team comments. This has resulted in an increase of the APZ surrounding the BESS compound to 16 metres, aligning with the requirements for a Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) 19. The clarifications have not identified any additional impacts or requirement for additional mitigation measures beyond previously exhibited.	Appendix P

4.3. ADDITIONAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Additional assessments have been prepared to respond to the issues raised within the submissions. These include:

- Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (**LUCRA**) – Prepared in response to submission from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (**DPIRD**) and DPHI, the LUCRA assesses potential conflicts with surrounding land uses and stakeholders. The LUCRA identifies that there are no significant land use conflicts and that any potential impacts identified can be addressed through proposed mitigation measures.
- OSOM Route Assessment – Prepared to accompany the TIA report in response to comments from TFNSW. The OSOM Route assessment addresses oversized/overmass vehicle movements, identifies any potential conflicts or impacts, and identifies mitigation measures.
- Updated Archaeological Site Survey – Undertaken with consultation with RAPs to address an area previously unavailable to survey. This has been documented in the updated ACHA.

The findings and recommendations of the additional assessments are discussed in detail within **Section 4** of this Report.

5. RESPONSES TO AGENCY AND COUNCIL SUBMISSIONS

Submissions were received from a total of 15 government agencies and Council. This section responds to the submissions and provides further information to support the assessment of the Project.

5.1. DECCW - CONSERVATION PROGRAMS, HERITAGE AND REGULATION

5.1.1. Landscape and Context Factors

5.1.1.1. PCT Allocation and Mapping

The submission from CPHR identifies that that 'some allocation and conclusions regarding the presence of threatened ecological communities' within the extent of the Project development footprint, may be incorrect.

CPHR considered that there was potential for the Box Gum Woodland to occur within the development footprint (specifically along Jacksons Lane). If present, then CEECs are designated as Category 2 – Regulated land regardless of any 'low conservation value' results as per the *Determining native vegetation land categorisation for application in the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme* (2023). As such, the following requests were made as part of the agency's submission:

- *A map and spatial files are to be provided for the area assessed as conforming to the Box Gum Woodland CEEC and, the final land categorisation for the site following designation of the CEEC as Category 2 – Regulated land.*
- *Provide updates to the BAM assessment as required, including the revision of the BDAR to meet the requirements of section 9.1 of the BAM for entities likely to be at risk of SAIL.*

In response, AEP reviewed and updated the BDAR (**Appendix F**) as follows:

- Following review of the plot data, abiotic factors and PCT classification, AEP have mapped areas of vegetation not dominated by *E. conica* as PCT 281, which is associated with the Box Gum Woodland TEC. The four scattered trees proposed to be impacted have been mapped as PCT 281.
- The occurrence of *Angophora floribunda* in Plot 1 (near to Jacksons Lane) is acknowledged. However, its presence is not considered sufficient to reclassify the vegetation from PCT 201. The broader structural and floristic characteristics of the area, particularly the dominance of *Eucalyptus conica* along assessed areas of Jacksons Lane support the current classification.

Given the site's degraded condition and the difficulty in delineating clear vegetation boundaries in such degraded landscapes, the assignment of PCT 201 is considered appropriate. Additionally, Plot 1 was undertaken in an area outside the development footprint and is not proposed for impact. Further justification is provided in the updated BDAR.

- PCT determinations have been reviewed, with Plots 4 and 5 re-assigned to PCT 281. These areas are located outside the site and are not proposed to be impacted by the Project. Plot 3, situated on the bank of Slapdash Creek, contained water-tolerant species such as *Phragmites australis* and aligns with SVTM mapping as PCT 78, a riparian community typically found along regularly inundated watercourses. Given the landscape position, this classification is considered appropriate.

Plot 2 was reviewed for potential reallocation. However, *Eucalyptus conica* remains present at 12% Projected Foliage Cover (PFC) and is reasonably considered co-dominant with *Eucalyptus melliodora*, recorded at 20% PFC. As with the other plots, Plot 2 is located outside the site, and the vegetation zones it represents are not proposed to be impacted.

- An assessment against the NSW Scientific Committee Final Determination listing criteria for Box Gum Woodland and an SAIL assessment has been undertaken in the updated BDAR. Exotic dominant grasslands were assessed against the listing criteria for Box Gum Woodland and it was determined that the grassland areas do not meet the relevant listing criteria due to the low native species richness, absence of key diagnostic species, and dominance of exotic grasses and weeds.

5.1.1.2. Vegetation Cover

CPHR considered that the native vegetation cover percentage within the assessment area has been underestimated, as some areas of woody native vegetation had not been included within the native vegetation extent calculations and mapping. If reassessment of the native vegetation percent cover within

the buffer area results in an increase in the cover class applied to the Project, there may be a change to the predicted threatened species list within the BAM-C

AEP prepared refined mapping of native vegetation extent, and it has increased from 11% to 11.89%. As a conservative approach, AEP set the Native Vegetation Extent (**NVE**) score within the BAM-C as 100%. While no additional candidate species were introduced, additional ecosystem credit species have been added to the updated BDAR in response to the refined mapping.

5.1.1.3. Threatened Species Survey

CPHR noted that the feasibility of the streamlined assessment module needs to be reviewed to identify if there are changes to land category designation.

As previously stated in Section 5.1.1.1, there have been no changes to the land category designation following assessment against the listing criteria for Box Gum Woodland. As such, further review to the targeted survey effort is not warranted and the streamlined assessment module remains valid.

5.1.1.4. SAI Assessment

CPHR noted that revisions of the SAI assessment may be required following the review of PCT allocations and consideration of Box Gum Woodland CEEC. Further it was noted that the proposed re-vegetation should not be included in the Serious and Irreversible Impacts (**SAII**) Assessment, as it is not considered a mitigation measure.

Box Gum Woodland has been included in the BDAR and an evaluation against the SAI principles has been undertaken. Box Gum Woodland and Fuzzy Box Woodland are considered present and aligned with the PCTs onsite; these are listed as SAIs under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2017 (BC Act)*. Most of the impacts on these TECs are associated with the unavoidable removal due to the road upgrades required on Jacksons Lane, where a careful design has been implemented to further avoid the trees with higher retention value as per the Arboricultural Impact Assessment presented in the EIS.

Further mitigation measures include establishing buffer zones around sensitive habitats and managing areas under a Biodiversity Management Plan to restore degraded riparian habitats and increase the extent of Fuzzy Box Woodland and Box Gum Woodland. Prescriptive measures during construction will also be implemented to prevent the propagation of invasive species. Additional recommendations in the Aquatic Ecology Report aim to retain and subsequently improve hydrological and riparian vegetation function during construction works.

5.1.2. Revisions

5.1.2.1. Mapping

Minor updates to the biodiversity mapping are required to support the assessment of the Project. This relates to:

- Figure 2 Location Map in the BDAR has been updated to include Local Government Boundaries in accordance with s3.1.2(b) of the BAM.
- Figure 15 in the BDAR has been updated to also map 'PCT201 degraded', in addition to areas of 'scattered trees' and 'PCT 201 moderate' as SAI entities.
- A spatial data showing all proposed infrastructure is provided, to allow confirmation of the extent of impacts.

These figures have been updated as part of the updated BDAR. A Spatial dataset will be provided upon submission of the BDAR.

5.1.2.2. Mitigation Measures

CPHR considers that some information deficiencies have been identified in the mitigation measures proposed in the BDAR. For example, CPHR considers that salvage hollows and reuse in the proposed rehabilitation/enhancement areas should be included as mitigation measures. Additionally, the rehabilitation areas of Fuzzy Box Woodland EEC as described in the BDAR, has not been included as a mitigation measure.

Noting the above, CPHR recommended that additional mitigation measures be considered for inclusion in the BDAR, such as no vegetation removal during Spring, to avoid the main breeding period for hollow-dependent fauna.

The relevant sections of the BDAR have been updated, and consideration has been given to these recommendations. The recommended mitigation measure of no vegetation removal during Spring is not supported as it would result in significant impact on constructability of the Project. As a compromise, the Applicant would accept a condition of consent that requires re-clearing surveys be conducted when any removal of vegetation is required to be undertaken in Spring, to ensure no impacts on local fauna arise as a result of the Project.

5.1.2.3. Plot Data

CPHR identified a number of discrepancies in the plot data and BAM-C cases which need resolving to ensure credits are accurately calculated. An audit of the plot data and updates to the BAM-C and Appendix F of the BDAR was required, to address the following

- A copy of the BAM import spreadsheet should be provided in **Appendix F**, as well as the growth form allocated to each species.
- Raw data sheets should be revised to include the number of hollow bearing trees.
- Discrepancies in the raw plot data provided in Appendix F and in the BAM-C case 00047705 must be rectified.
- The occurrence of *Eucalyptus Molucana* and *Casuarina glauca* should be re-examined, as these species often do not occur in the Study Area. The Biodiversity Risk Weighting in the BDAR should therefore be updated from 1.5 to 2.0.

AEP has updated the following information:

- Hollow bearing tree assessment is detailed in the updated BDAR.
- The raw datasheet has been updated to reflect the number of hollow-bearing trees identified in the BAM plot.
- *Eucalyptus molucana* has been reclassified as *Eucalyptus melliodora* and *Casuarina glauca* has been reclassified to *Casuarina cunninghamiana subspecies Cunninghhamiana*. Consequently, the Biodiversity Risk Weighting has been updated.

5.1.3. Revised BDAR

The final recommendation from CPHR is to ensure the revised BDAR is submitted to the consent authority within 14 days of the certification in accordance with section 62.5 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

The Applicant notes this requirement and will submit the revised BDAR as required to achieve compliance.

5.2. CIVIL AVIATION SAFETY AUTHORITY (CASA)

The Applicant notes CASA's comment:

CASA has no objections to the proposed Mayfair Solar Farm. CASA has no recommendations or recommended conditions.

5.3. CROWN LANDS NSW

Crown Lands NSW noted previous advice that there is a Crown Road adjoining the Project area.

Consultation with Crown Lands NSW and the Council during the preparation of the EIS identified that Jacksons Lane (which adjoins the site and inclusive of the existing culvert over Slapdash Creek) is a Council road reserve rather than Crown Road. As such, there are no proposed impacts on Crown Land.

Notwithstanding, Slapdash Creek is Crown Land and adjacent to proposed works. As such, it is recognised that Crown Lands NSW is a relevant stakeholder to be consulted with during construction activities.

5.4. DPI FISHERIES

DPI Fisheries raised no objection to the Project and commented that the aquatic ecology report is a comprehensive assessment of the likelihood of risks as a result of this Project.

It is recommended by DPI Fisheries to include the following as conditions, should approval be granted:

- Construction of waterway crossings are in accordance with the DPI Fisheries Guideline documents: *Policy and Guidelines for Fish Habitat Conservation and Management* (Update 2013), and *Why Do Fish Need to Cross the Road? Fish Passage Requirements for Waterway Crossings* (DPI 2003).
- The use of terrestrial buffer zones around riparian areas as per the *Policy and Guidelines for Fish Habitat Conservation and Management* (Update 2013). The Department anticipates that adequate riparian buffer zones will be maintained adjacent to Slapdash Creek as part of this Project.

The Applicant notes the above recommendations provided by DPI Fisheries and will accept them as conditions of consent.

5.5. DPIRD

DPIRD highlights that the continued availability of agricultural land for food and fibre production for current and future generations is a crucial consideration in ESD decision-making. DPIRD notes that this aspect may not have been as extensively considered by the Applicant as other ESD principles.

The Project will not preclude the continuity of agricultural practices, as it is proposed that sheep grazing continue as part of the operational phase of the Project both to support ongoing agricultural practices and also as a core land management measure. Although the proposed grazing will yield less income due to a reduction in the number of sheep, the Agricultural Impact Assessment (**AIA**) included in the EIS did not conclude that the Project would entail a significant impact on the future agricultural productivity of the land.

According to the most recent Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (**ABARES**) estimation, approximately 55% of all Australian land is currently used for agriculture (approximately 426 million hectares, excluding timber production). According to the Climate Council of Australia, the renewable energy transition would require approximately 1,200 sqm (or 120,000 ha), which represents 0.02% of all Australian land and 0.028% of all Australian agricultural land. Therefore, it is not considered that the continued availability of agricultural land is significantly impacted by renewable energy projects.

Moreover, subject to the proposed mitigation measures and management plans, it is considered that the productivity of the land will not be adversely impacted by the Project and that the agricultural resources will remain available for future generations.

5.5.1. Agrisolar and Ground Cover Management

DPIRD requests that further information be provided surrounding the agrisolar arrangements as part of the construction and operational environmental management plans. This information should provide further information on the following:

- *Existing infrastructure on-site and/or to be installed to support sheep grazing or, the proposed layout of fencing, watering points, laneways, yards, loading ramps, shearing sheds etc, on the property to manage sheep. The term animal husbandry also needs to be defined.*
- *Development of a Grazing Management Plan to detail appropriate grazing and biosecurity approaches to the site and adjoining land including weed and pest control measures which are specific to sheep. This plan should be developed in consultation with NSW Local Land Services.*
- *A minimum of 70% of groundcover should be maintained at a minimum of 70% to prevent soil erosion. The abovementioned Grazing Management Plan should detail these measures and management practices which will re-establish vegetation and grazing on the land post-construction and in operational phases.*
- *A baseline measurement of agricultural productivity (including carrying capacity, stock numbers from current farm records etc.), prevailing climatic conditions and, a land and soil capability assessment are established and reported annually in line with a 70% groundcover target to determine the efficacy of land*

management and rehabilitation objectives. This metric is established for the purpose of monitoring groundcover management.

As discussed in the EIS and the AIA, potential impacts on the land from agrisolar arrangements have been considered, including the management of soil erosion and groundcover and mitigating any potential impacts of agrisolar activities, including grazing.

Construction activities will be managed through the implementation of a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan that will include comprehensive measures to avoid soil loss and erosion on site. In areas where disturbance cannot be avoided, revegetation will be undertaken and managed in accordance with the proposed Biodiversity Management Plan (**BMP**).

Prior to the operational phase and once detailed design is finalised, a Grazing Management Plan (**GMP**) will be prepared in consultation with DPIRD and the landowners, which will include measures to manage groundcover, avoid over grazing and surface soil compaction. The Applicant supports the above are required as conditions of consent prior to operation.

5.5.2. Biosecurity

DPIRD requires the development and implementation of an Agricultural Biosecurity Management Plan. This plan is to focus on pedestrian and vehicle movements during construction and operation, which may affect the distribution of weeds and pests, and therefore potentially impeding upon agricultural productivity within the site and surrounding locality. In creating this plan, the Biosecurity Risk Management in Land Use Planning and Development Guide are to be referred to.

A Weed and Pest Control Management Plan will be developed in consultation with DPIRD and Council and will include measures to prevent weed introduction and propagation during construction, hygienic standards to adhere during construction and operation, and monitoring and auditing measures to ensure that no biosecurity risk arises from the Project.

The Applicant supports these measures and would accept them as conditions of consent to be satisfied prior to construction commencing.

5.5.3. Decommissioning and rehabilitation

DPIRD considers that to preserve the site and the Applicant's commitment to agricultural land preservation as outlined in the EIS, a proportionate and reasonable mitigation measure to remove all underground infrastructure to a depth that permits the re-establishment of livestock grazing on improved pastures and cropping at the end of project life. This would include the removal of all solar-related structures and ancillary infrastructure from the site to a minimum depth of 500mm and returning the site to pre-existing use and land soil capability class, to fulfill the commitment in the EIS.

The Applicant supports a relevant condition of consent requiring a Decommissioning Management Plan (**DMP**) to be prepared 12 months prior to planned decommissioning, which will highlight all ancillary infrastructure removal and rehabilitation measures required to restore the land to its pre-existing conditions.

5.6. FIRE AND RESCUE NSW (FRNSW)

FRNSW identified that the proposed BESS facilities present special problems when fighting fires and therefore, suitable additional provisions are likely to be required in accordance with E1D17 and E2D21 of the National Construction Code 2022. As such, the following recommendations have been provided:

- A fire safety study is to be developed in accordance with the requirements of the Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No.2 and submitted to FRNSW for review. This is to occur before the construction phase and is to be consistent with the FRNSW Fire Safety Guideline Technical Information – Large scale external lithium-ion battery energy storage systems – Fire Safety considerations.

The fire safety study will be used to inform the design and as such, FRNSW would like the study to be developed to the satisfaction of FRNSW, prior to any further submission being made to FRNSW. This compliance includes an Initial Fire Safety Report and/or Performance Based Design Brief/ Fire Engineering Brief Questionnaire.

- An Emergency Plan is to be developed for the site in accordance with HIPAP No.1, prior to occupation or commissioning.

- An Emergency Services Information Package is to be developed for the site in accordance with the FRNSW fire safety guideline – Emergency services information package and tactical fire plan, prior to occupation or commissioning.
- An emergency responder's induction package is to be developed for the site in consultation with, and to the satisfaction of FRNSE, prior to occupation or commissioning. The package should be in a format which can be readily shared across agencies, with the purpose to inform first responders of site-specific safety measures and features to ensure they can carry-out their duties effectively.

The Applicant notes the above recommendations provided by FRNSW and will comply with the recommended conditions of consent.

5.7. DPHI – INDUSTRY ASSESSMENTS

DPHI was satisfied the Project is not considered 'potentially hazardous' for dangerous goods under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Resilience and Hazards) 2021* and therefore, a PHA is not required for the hazardous material stores on-site.

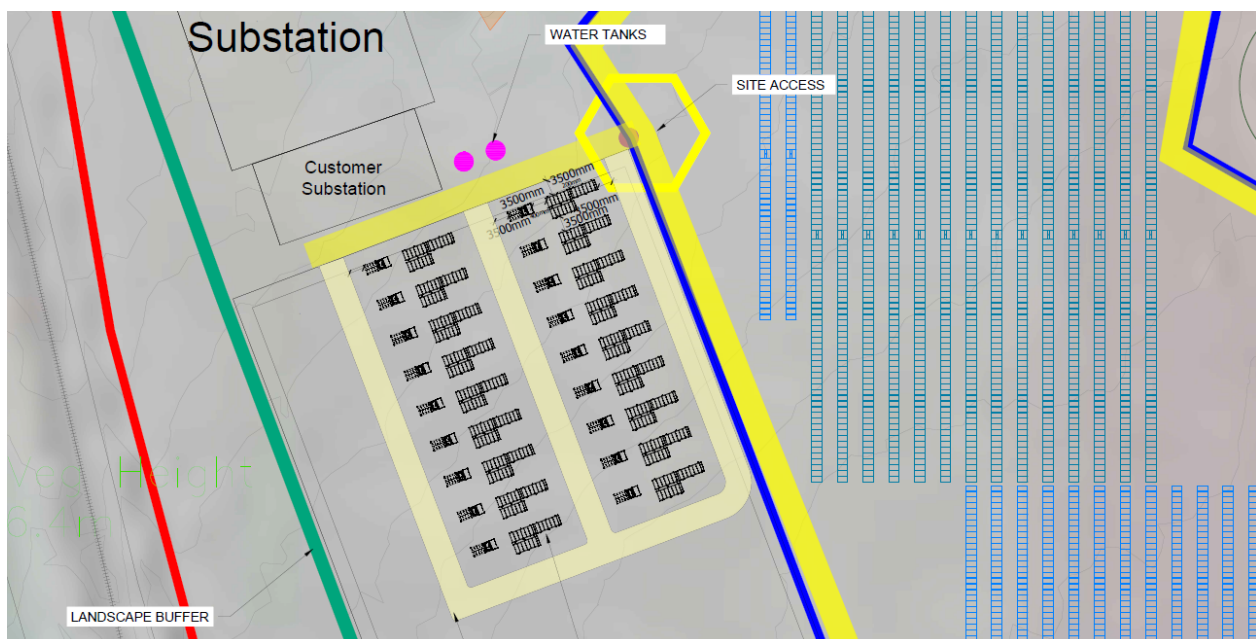
DPHI requested verification that the areas designated for the BESS are sufficient, especially in terms of separation distances between equipment. Therefore, further information on the separation distances used and justification for these distances is required.

It was noted that in the Bushfire Threat Assessment (**BTA**), an APZ of 11 metres is required to ensure a Bushfire Attack Level (**BAL**) of 29KW/m² would not be experienced at the temporary workforce accommodation. Given this, clarification and justification of the APZ distances for the BESS with consideration of *The Department's Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No. 4, 'Risk Criteria for Land Use Safety Planning'* was requested.

In response to this submission, the APZ to the BESS has been increased to 16 metres, in order to achieve the appropriate BAL. This has been identified in the updated BTA.

The BESS Layout Plan has been prepared and added to Appendix B of the EIS, to include the exact number of proposed BESS units and appropriate separation distances in accordance with the UL9540A for the indicative provider. It should be noted however, that a final specification will be subject to detailed design and procurement. Nevertheless, the test report and specifications are industry-standard, and it is not expected that these provisions will vary significantly. It is anticipated that a Fire Safety Report for the final design specifications will be completed prior to commencing construction and will be incorporated into the Construction Management Plan and Operational Management Plan.

Figure 4 BESS Layout Plan



Source: Urbis

5.8. HNSW ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

5.8.1. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

HNSW identified that the images in the ACHA needed greater clarity to improve legibility and enable better understanding of the site layout and Project composition

HNSW recommend that sites Mayfair IF1, Mayfair IF2, Mayfair IF3, Mayfair AS1, Mayfair AS2 and Mayfair AS3 be registered with the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) as per section 89A of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* and that Aboriginal Site Impact Recording Forms should be submitted where relevant, following community collection or excavation. The Applicant will inform the consultant team to undertake the relevant registrations.

The ACHAR has been updated in response to HNSW comments.

5.8.2. Archaeological Assessment

HNSW commented that the 24% of the development footprint that was unable to be surveyed for Aboriginal Heritage as part of the original ACHAR, should be surveyed prior to project approval, and any test excavations as additional areas requiring archaeological investigation be identified. This timeline is proposed as it allows for adequate consideration and mitigation of Aboriginal objects, sites and/or values. In this process, an excavation and community collection methodology should be prepared to guide these works and should be developed in consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties and Heritage NSW and, in accordance with Heritage NSW guidelines and codes of practice.

In response to HNSW comments, Urbis consulted with HNSW and the RAPs and undertook additional site survey for land that was previously unable to be completed due to low visibility. The additional site survey did not identify any potential archaeological artefacts or features, and this has been detailed in the updated ACHAR.

The requirement for test excavation prior to project approval was also discussed with HNSW. Through this discussion, it was confirmed that under strict conditions, testing could be undertaken as a condition of consent, and this would be a suitable method to reduce unnecessary impact on parts of the site which do not need to be disturbed. In addition, HNSW noted that test excavation methodology should include flexibility regarding the testing program. This is further detailed in the updated ACHAR.

5.8.3. Impact Assessment

HNSW identify that the Project layout details proposed internal roads, inverters and site fencing and an upgrade of Jackson Lane. However, these have not been considered from an aboriginal cultural heritage perspective in the impact assessment section of the EIS. As such, it was recommended that the impact assessment and any required mitigation measures are updated to consider any potential impact of these works on Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Further it was identified that, any changes to the impact areas following the finalisation of the Project design, will need to be considered in the Aboriginal cultural heritage management plan (**ACHMP**) and testing methodology. This documentation should consider additional testing of any amended areas of impact and/or the potential micro-siting to avoid impact to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The amended ACHA, explicitly mentions that the assessment of potential impacts includes ancillary works such as internal roads, fencing and inverters.

Prior to construction commencing the ACHMP will be prepared by a suitably qualified archaeologist in consultation with the RAPs and reviewed by HNSW. This management plan will include any changes to the Project design and micro-siting used as a mitigation technique to avoid Aboriginal cultural heritage.

5.9. HNSW

The Applicant notes HNSW's comment:

The subject site is not listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR), nor is it in the immediate vicinity of any SHR items. Further, the site does not contain any known historical archaeological relics. Therefore, no heritage comments are required. The Department does not need to refer subsequent stages of this proposal to the Heritage Council of NSW.

5.10. MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

5.10.1. Workforce and Accommodation

5.10.1.1. Timeline

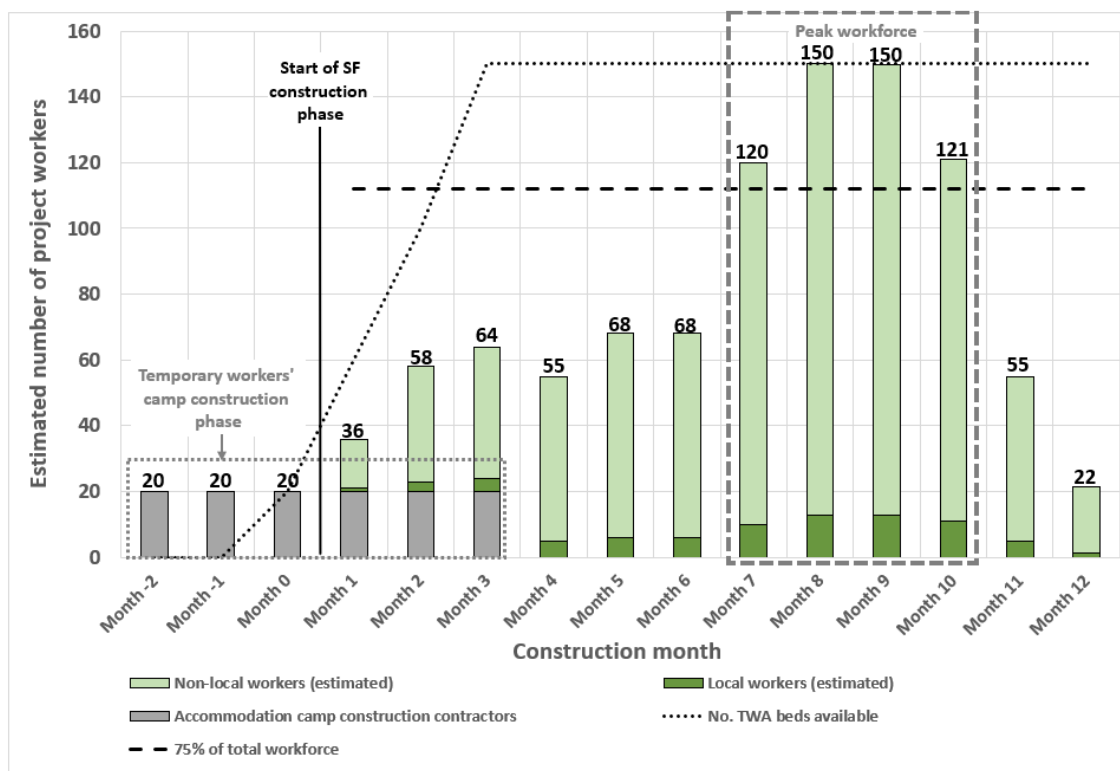
The Council supports of the temporary workforce accommodation camp being constructed on the site. However, they object to the accommodation being built in tandem with the construction of the solar farm. It was recommended that the accommodation camp is built prior to the construction phase so as not to create an impact on the local area.

In response, further assessment within the Workforce Accommodation Plan has been undertaken. The accommodation camp construction contract will be awarded to a contractor specialising in the provision of temporary worker camps and would likely require 20 specialist personnel. The construction of the camp is expected to commence three months prior to commencing construction of the solar farm. However, it will take approximately six months for the full scale of the camp to be constructed as it will scale as the number of workers are required on site.

It has been estimated that approximately 20 construction workers will likely require local short-term accommodation (or alternative TWA camps if available) for a limited time (approximately eight weeks) to commence construction of the temporary workers' accommodation (TWA) camp. These construction workers will then transition into the TWA once accommodation is available.

Figure 5 shows the number of project workers against the project's timeline, together with the anticipated on-site accommodation capacity and shows that accommodation will become available from month zero and that all project workers (TWA camp construction and solar farm construction workers) will be accommodated on-site.

Figure 5 Number of project workers and on-site accommodation beds.



5.10.1.2. Cumulative Impact

Council identifies a lack of completeness in the Interim workforce and accommodation plan in relation to Hotels and Motels being available for construction workers. Council advised that these accommodation types are also used as tourist accommodation. As such, Council does not support the use of existing visitor accommodation for the construction workforce and would like consideration of the cumulative impact of other State Significant Projects occurring the area, to be considered to minimise such impact.

Council also recommended that the summary of potential cumulative impacts be amended as from Council's understanding, the Bellambi Heights BESS will start roadworks mid-2025, the CWO REZ Transmission line will start roadworks late January 2025, Wollar BESS will start works 2026 and Birriwa Solar Farm in 2026 as well as other potential SSD's.

Additionally, Council does not support "park and ride" type purposes on public land as there is insufficient car parking available in the region, and no public car parks or road infrastructure is to be used for this purpose. Council requests further information on the shuttle bus system proposed.

The above comments are accepted and have been addressed in the updated Workforce Accommodation Plan. In summary:

- The Project does not propose the use of a shuttle bus system. Refer to the TIA for assessment of construction vehicle movements.
- The Workforce Accommodation Plan has been updated to consider the additional detail provided by Council, and the conclusion remains that the proposed temporary workforce accommodation camp is an appropriate mitigation measure to avoid cumulative impacts on local housing and short-term accommodation.

5.10.2. Water and Wastewater

The Council advised that water carting from Mid-Western Regional water sources (both potable and non-potable) is currently under review with consideration of the potential cumulative impact that SSD project demands may have on existing Council source water allocations as well as infrastructure capacity. Council provides potable water supply to the urban communities within the local government area and does not commit to a Level of Service suitable for water carting outside of the urban areas. As such, should commercial water carters seek approval to cart water to specific SSD projects, at the time of application (Section 68 of the Local Government Act), Council will consider the ability to supply while maintaining security of water supply for the existing urban communities.

Council also advises that liquid waste cannot be received at Gulgong Sewage Treatment Plant (**STP**). The only sewage treatment Plant with a tankered waste receival facility in the Mid-Western LGA is Mudgee STP. The Mudgee STP has limited capacity to receive liquid waste via truck and as such it is suggested that commercial waste carting businesses be consulted to establish the frequency of potential servicing during design of onsite sewage management.

In response, the Applicant acknowledges the above comments and is committed to solutions that prevent any potential impact on water security in the region. The Applicant has engaged with several potable water and waste water management contractors and has confirmed there is suitable capacity through these providers. Notwithstanding, the Applicant will continue ongoing consultation with Council to review the water and waste water management strategy prior to commencing construction.

5.10.3. Waste

Council advised that none of its operated waste facilities in the Mid-Western Region are capable or appropriate for the handling of the disposal of landfill waste and are unlikely to accept this waste. Council's waste facilities accept residential waste which is then transported to Mudgee waste facility. These facilities will not be suitable for waste from any renewable energy project.

As a result, Council would be willing to discuss the opportunities for recycling waste products generated by the Project and request further information in the waste management plan to provide specific detail on waste management practices, as currently it is quite general in nature. This is to be completed prior to construction.

The Applicant notes this comment, and a comprehensive construction waste management plan will be prepared prior to construction in consultation with Council, with details from selected contractors on waste routes and disposal locations.

5.10.4. Community Participation During Construction and Operation

Council states their appreciation of the engagement outcomes report and requests further details on its proposed communications plan. This should identify mechanisms by which the community can provide feedback during construction and operation phases and include the Applicant's approach to dealing with complaints or compliance issues.

The communication channels established during previous engagement remain active and monitored, allowing the community to raise any concerns via email or phone. The community will be provided further information leading up to construction and additional measures will be documented in a Construction Environmental Management Plan that will be prepared prior to construction commencing, including a grievance mechanism so the local community can raise concerns, and the Project team can readily identify any issues, respond to compliance issues and continue to monitor the community response during construction and operation. The Applicant supports a condition of consent requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan to be prepared prior to commencing construction, should the Project be approved.

5.10.5. Traffic, Transport and Accessibility

Council objected to the Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) for not adequately addressing the impact on local roads and residents on Rouse Street and Barneys Reef Road. Council requested updated traffic counts for Rouse Street and a cumulative traffic impact assessment considering potential overlapping construction periods. They also sought clarification on the proposed haulage route, particularly the suitability of Black Lead Lane for heavy vehicles, and requested that all road upgrades align with Austroads Guidelines.

In response, the Applicant met with the Council in May 2025 to discuss Council's concerns. The Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix M) has been updated, including:

- A detailed assessment of the impact on local roads has been completed, including for Rouse Street and Barneys Reef Road. The assessment considers the existing traffic volumes, projected construction traffic, and the potential impact on residents. The TIA now includes comparative traffic counts and a thorough analysis of the expected increase in heavy vehicle movements. Mitigation measures, such as scheduling deliveries outside peak hours and implementing traffic control measures, have been proposed to minimise the impact on local residents.
- A cumulative traffic impact assessment has been completed, which considers other large-scale renewable energy projects in the vicinity. The assessment identifies potential overlapping construction periods and evaluates the combined impact on local roads, including Rouse Street and Barneys Reef Road. The analysis confirms that the proposed haulage routes for the Mayfair Solar Farm will not significantly overlap with those of other projects, thereby minimising cumulative impacts. Detailed traffic generation numbers and distribution patterns have been provided to support this conclusion.
- The TIA now includes updated traffic counts for Rouse Street, reflecting current conditions. The analysis considers the intensification of heavy vehicle movements during the construction phase and evaluates the potential impact on the residential area. Mitigation measures, such as temporary traffic control and community consultation, have been proposed to address any concerns and ensure the safety and well-being of residents.
- Clarification that the Ulan Road-Cope Road-Rouse Street route is the proposed haulage route. The identification of Black Lead Lane as the proposed haulage route in a figure in the exhibited TIA was incorrect. Notwithstanding, following the discussion with Council it was agreed that greater information should be provided to demonstrate that all potential routes have been considered in relation to cumulative impacts on the local road network. The assessment now includes assessment of alternative routes that are suitable for heavy vehicle movements and have been pre-approved for B-Doubles. The assessment concludes that the Ulan Road-Cope Road-Rouse Street route remains the most suitable option, due to being a B-double approved road and that the Black Lead Lane route option would be unsuitable due to its cumulative impacts and prior feedback from residents on Black Lead Lane to any road upgrades.
- The TIA now includes a comprehensive road safety assessment for the proposed haulage routes, focusing on Rouse Street, Barneys Reef Road, and Jacksons Lane. The assessment identifies necessary upgrades to Jacksons Lane, including widening, sealing, and improving the intersection with Barneys Reef Road. These upgrades will be designed in accordance with Austroads Guidelines for road design to ensure safety and compliance with relevant standards.
- In addition, swept path assessment has been completed for local roads in relation to B-double and OSOM vehicle movements. All intersections are suitable for the proposed vehicle movements. However, a key mitigation measure is identified in the updated TIA to support B-double and OSOM vehicle movements through the intersection of Medley Street and Rouse Street. It is proposed that during construction, the existing traffic island and give-way sign on the northern side of the intersection will require removal during construction and will be reinstated following construction. Further, a second give-

way sign on the north-eastern side of the intersection will require removal during the proposed OSOM vehicle movement. This sign can be immediately reinstated following the proposed OSOM vehicle movement.

5.10.6. Decommissioning

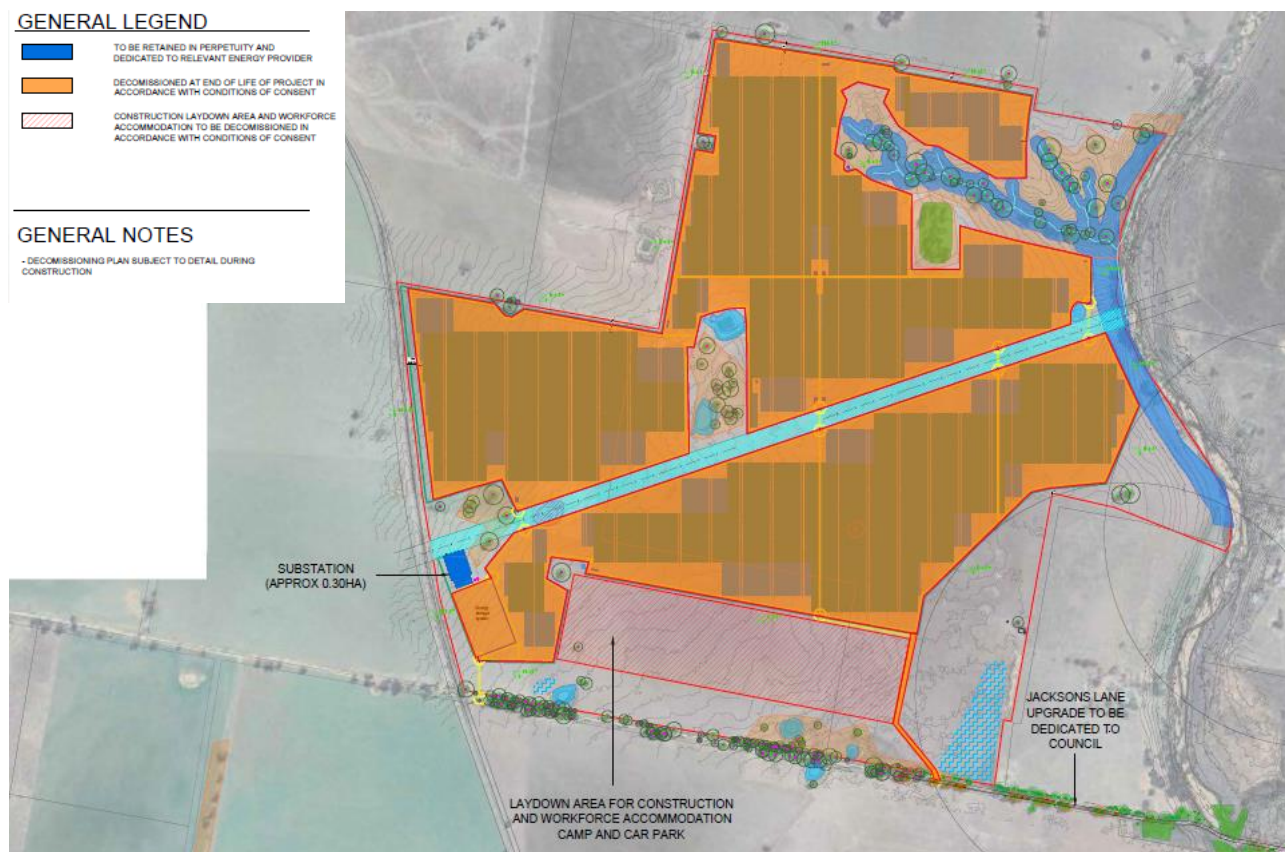
Council has requested that a Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan be prepared in consultation with Council prior to consent and ideally, should be updated every 5 - 7 years to keep up with any changes.

The Applicant notes the comment from Council. However, due to logistical, construction and waste management considerations, it is impractical to devise a comprehensive Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan prior to consent. Particularly as industry standards, upgrades and surrounding industrial and supply chains may vary significantly within the next 40 years. As such, the Applicant cannot commit to preparing a Decommissioning Plan prior to consent being granted.

Notwithstanding, the Applicant is strongly committed to preparing a Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Management Plan and commercial agreements with the landowner ensure this requirement. In lieu of preparing a Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Management Plan prior to approval, an Indicative Decommissioning Plan is provided to indicate the areas of the Project that will be retained in perpetuity versus areas that will be rehabilitated following construction, and at the end of operation of the Project.

It is proposed that details on the decommissioning of the construction laydown area and workforce accommodation camp are integrated into the Construction Environmental Management Plan to be prepared prior to commencing construction. However, the Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Management Plan for the overall Project is prepared three years prior to the estimated cessation of operations in consultation with Council and other relevant government agencies.

Figure 6 Indicative Decommissioning Plan



Source: Urbis

5.10.7. Services

Council observes that the additional demand for health care arising from the workforce could impact upon the current services available. There is very little availability of health services in the region and therefore, it is a priority to consider a plan for supporting the community and employee's health needs.

Arising from this, Council recommends a series of mitigation measures, including the accommodation of one on-site nurse to attend to minor medical issues, worker briefings and visual aids regarding the issue of limited local medical and health facilities, implementation of a medical centre and 24-hour nurse practitioner who can prescribe medications in the workers camp and, to consider a “shared doctor”. It is also recommended that telehealth services are implemented for workers to access GP’s and medical services.

The Applicant shares the same objective of ensuring the well-being of onsite workers without impacting on local health services. The provision of health services to support onsite workers will be documented in the Construction Environmental Management Plan prior to commencing construction. This is anticipated to include details on the provision of telehealth services and on-site medical services, with potential for shared arrangements with surrounding applicants for similar projects where feasible.

5.10.8. Visual Screening

The Council recommends that a comprehensive native vegetation and landscaping plan is established so as to ensure the natural environment is maximised. A multi-level screening planting strategy would be an integral part of the Project to protect the visual amenity within the region. The plan should make mention of species choice, vegetation management plans and timelines of planting and visual impact.

The Applicant is committed to preparing a comprehensive Landscape Management Plan, based on the recommendations of the Visual Impact Assessment. The Landscape Management Plan will be prepared with a program to ensure establishment, monitoring and maintenance of the proposed landscape buffers so that effective screening can be achieved within 3 years of commencing construction. The final Landscape Management Plan will be prepared in consultation with Council to ensure the proposed maintenance measures and planting palette are to Council’s satisfaction.

5.10.9. Cumulative Impacts

Prior to approval of the Project, Council would like further consideration to be given to the cumulative impacts of other State Significant Projects in the region.

The Applicant notes that a Cumulative Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the EIS, with information being sought to date about a different range of SSD Projects, both proposed and in operation. The EIS has derived information from the BDAR, TIA, Noise Impact Assessment (**NIA**), AIA, and SEIA to quantify and assess the risk to the local amenity. In addition, a LUCRA has been prepared to understand Land Use Conflict with other stakeholders.

As the potential for cumulative impacts is moderate, several mitigation measures are being proposed to decrease its effects, such as:

- A Construction Environmental Management Plan with comprehensive management measures for all assessed environmental risks.
- A Traffic Management Plan, to be developed in consultation with and to the satisfaction of Council and TfNSW, will be prepared with measures to control traffic flow and minimise impacts onto the local road network.
- A Biodiversity Management Plan will be prepared with measures to regenerate several areas within the site to ensure the continuity of local biodiversity.
- A Landscape Management Plan to ensure visual impacts are minimised both locally and in the wider regional context.
- A Workforce Accommodation Plan, which will be refined prior to construction to ensure workers' Code of Conduct, service needs, and other amenity requirements do not interfere with the local economy and housing.
- A Rehabilitation Plan will be prepared prior to decommissioning and in consultation with Council and DPIRD to ensure that the land is restored appropriately and its agricultural productivity is not affected.

The Applicant is confident that the assessment undertaken to date has identified all potential impacts based on the known status of State Significant Projects in the region, and appropriate mitigation measures have been proposed to avoid or reduce potential impacts on the local community.

5.11. NSW DCCEE

5.11.1. Water supply, take and licensing

5.11.1.1. Pre-determination

NSW DCCEE identified that insufficient information has been provided to confirm potential groundwater inflow volumes. NSW DCCEE requests further detail on the accuracy of historic data and analysis on inflows during construction and ongoing operation of the site, to verify that groundwater will not be encountered. Maximum potential inflow volumes was requested to demonstrate the ability to acquire sufficient water entitlement unless an exemption applies. In addition to the above, NSW DCCEE requests further information to understand the site water demands for construction and operation phases of the Project.

In response, the Applicant notes that they have been in contact with several independent contractors who have confirmed that their water licence can cover approximately 30,000L and covers the proposed construction period. Due to the sensitivity of the ongoing commercial conversations, the Applicant is unable to provide further details prior to the consent being granted.

5.11.1.2. Post-approval

Post-approval, the NSW DCCEE recommends that a water access licence be obtained to account for the maximum predicted water take for construction and operation activities unless an exemption applies under the *Water Management (General) Regulation 2018*. If the water is less than or equal to 3ML per water year and subject to the development meeting other requirements, an exemption may be available under Clause 7 of Schedule 4.

The Applicant clarifies that no groundwater extraction is proposed. As such, no water access licence is considered required.

5.11.2. Groundwater impacts and dewatering requirements

NSW DCCEE identified the EIS did not provide a volumetric quantification of groundwater take, nor did it not provide an assessment of impacts to ground water due to construction or operation of the Project and therefore recommends an estimate take volume is provided in the pre-determination stage.

If the take of ground water is found to be greater than 3 ML per year, the Applicant must assess the impacts due to the aquifer interference activities in accordance with the NSW Aquifer Interference Policy and framework.

The Applicant clarifies that no groundwater extraction is proposed.

5.11.3. Works on waterfront land

In the post-approval stage, NSW DCCEE has recommended that all works within waterfront land are designed and constructed in accordance with the *Guidelines for Controlled Activities on Waterfront Land*. Additionally, any revegetation must consider the guideline for vegetation management plans; outlets must consider the guideline for outlet structures and the proposed culvert must consider the guidelines for watercourse crossings. The proposed culvert must account for the third order watercourse which connects to Slapdash Creek. This is to ensure the watercourse, and its riparian values are maintained.

The Applicant notes this comment and is committed to adhere to the *Guidelines for Controlled Activities on Waterfront Land* for any work near Slapdash Creek and for the culvert's final design.

5.12. NSW RESOURCES

NSW Resources has reviewed the information supplied and notes the Project intersects with Exploration Licence 8405 held by Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd under the Mining Act 1992.

NSW Resources recommends that the Applicant conduct ongoing consultation with the holder of EL8405 to determine their interest in the area, planned exploration activities and any plans for future mining or extraction in the Mayfair Solar Farm Project area.

Consultation has been undertaken with the Bowdens Silver Pty Ltd to understand their interest in the geological exploration and exploitation of the site. Bowdens Silver has shown interest in undertaking

preliminary surveys in the area, albeit expressing limited probability of mining potential. To date, the exploration licence holder has not sought any further action.

5.13. RFS

After a review of the relevant information, RFS provided general information, noting necessary compliance with the requirements of the *Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019* guide.

The Applicant notes the above has been complied with in the Bushfire Threat Assessment conducted as part of the SSDA.

5.14. TFNSW

TFNSW requested further information to demonstrate that the Project has mitigated traffic safety, efficiency and risks to TFNSW assets on the State road network. The key issues comprise of a Concept Route Analysis for Oversized/Overmass (OSOM) vehicles, and further Traffic Generation assessment on the road network.

To facilitate responding to TFNSW's comments, a meeting was held with TFNSW on 21st March 2025. Key matters discussed included:

- Several renewable projects are planned within the Central-West Orana Renewable energy zones (surrounding the Gulgong area), and TFNSW advised that it is in the process of defining haulage routes for these projects, including the Port to REZ route upgrade.
- It was agreed that concept assessment is meant to be a high-level desktop study, with a more detailed assessment to be undertaken at a later stage.
- TFNSW recommended referring to recently approved developments, including Birriwa Solar and Battery Project, and Bellambi Heights Battery Energy Storage Project, as guidance for the level of detail required in assessments.
- Hexham Straight was outlined as a potential route constraint due to height limits, and an alternative route should be considered. It was noted that the Port to REZ upgrade timeline does not align with the project's construction, but an alternative route should still be considered.
- The OSOM vehicle proposed for this project was identified as being below the high-risk threshold for length and width, and therefore swept path analysis along the classified road network was agreed to not be required. However, it was advised that swept path analysis be undertaken at intersections of classified and not classified roads.

5.14.1. Concept Route Analysis

TFNSW requested a concept route analysis for high-risk Oversize Overmass (OSOM) vehicles associated with the Mayfair Solar Farm project. This analysis aims to ensure that the proposed routes for OSOM vehicles are suitable and that any potential constraints are identified and mitigated. The following sections provide a comprehensive assessment of the proposed routes, including a swept path analysis and identification of necessary temporary modifications or traffic control measures. Based on the meeting with TFNSW it was agreed that the concept route analysis could be undertaken at desktop level and a fully detailed route analysis can be completed prior to commencing construction, subject to a condition of consent.

In response, a Concept Route Assessment report has been prepared and is appended to the updated TIA. The proposed route for OSOM vehicles transporting the transformer and other large components to the Mayfair Solar Farm site has been carefully evaluated. The route from the Port of Newcastle to the site includes the following key segments:

- Newcastle Link Road (A15)
- Hunter Expressway / New England Highway (M15)
- Golden Highway
- Ulan Road
- Cope Road

- Rouse Street
- Medley Street
- Barneys Reef Road
- Jacksons Lane

The assessment considered the suitability of these roads for OSOM vehicle movements, including road width, surface condition, and any potential obstacles. The analysis confirmed that the selected route is appropriate for the safe and efficient transport of OSOM vehicles, with minimal impact on the surrounding road network. The assessment clarifies that the route will utilise the Port to Renewable Energy Zone road upgrade program from Newcastle to the Golden Highway for the OSOM vehicle movements. In addition, the Concept Route Assessment has utilised data and assessment accepted by TFNSW for the approved projects at Bellambi Heights BESS and Birriwa Solar Farm.

Specific to the proposed Project, a swept path analysis was conducted for key intersections and road segments along the proposed route between the Golden Highway and the Site, to ensure that OSOM vehicles can navigate safely. The intersections assessed include:

- Rouse Street / Medley Street
- Station Street / Rouse Street
- Cope Road / Main Street
- Ulan Road / Main Street
- Barneys Reef Road / Jacksons Lane

The analysis identified that the existing traffic separation island and give-way sign at the Rouse Street / Medley Street intersection will need to be temporarily removed to accommodate the turning movements of B-double vehicles during construction. Additionally, minor adjustments may be required at other intersections to ensure safe passage but this will require detailed design consideration prior to commencing construction.

To facilitate the safe movement of OSOM vehicles, the following temporary modifications and traffic control measures are proposed:

- In addition to the temporary removal of the median island and give-way sign at the Rouse Street / Medley Street intersection for B-double movement during construction, a second give-way sign on the north-eastern side of the intersection will require temporary removal during the OSOM vehicle movement. This give-way sign will be immediately reinstated following the OSOM vehicle movement. The details on the removal and replacement of this infrastructure will be addressed prior to commencing construction in a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan and Detailed OSOM Transport Management Plan.
- Implementation of short-duration traffic control measures at key intersections to manage the movement of OSOM vehicles.
- Scheduling OSOM vehicle movements outside of peak traffic hours to minimise disruption to the local community.
- Coordination with local authorities and stakeholders to ensure that all necessary permits and approvals are obtained.

These measures will be detailed in the Construction Traffic Management Plan (**CTMP**) to ensure that the transport of OSOM vehicles is conducted safely and efficiently, with minimal impact on the surrounding road network and community.

5.14.2. Traffic Generation

TFNSW requested the TIA be updated to provide further information on traffic generation and distribution which will arise as a result of this Project, including traffic generation to be shown diagrammatically and applied to the road network to assess the impact of the increased traffic on the state road network.

In response, the TIA has been updated as follows:

- The Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) has been updated to provide a comprehensive assessment of project-related traffic volumes for each stage of the Mayfair Solar Farm project, including pre-

construction, construction, operation, and decommissioning. The assessment identifies peak periods for traffic volumes to ensure that the impact on the surrounding road network is thoroughly evaluated.

- During the peak construction phase, the development is expected to generate up to 30 two-way light vehicle trips daily, with 15 one-way trips in each AM and PM peak. Heavy vehicle movements include 13 medium and heavy rigid vehicles (MRV/HRV) and articulated vehicles (AV), and 47 B-Double two-way trips per day, evenly spread across an 11-hour workday.
- The TIA includes an analysis of the directional splits of construction traffic on the road network. This analysis confirms the directions from which construction traffic will be coming to the site. Light vehicle movements are expected to primarily originate from urban and regional centres such as Newcastle, Sydney, Mudgee, and Dubbo. Heavy vehicle deliveries will follow designated haulage routes from the Port of Newcastle and Sydney.
- Up-to-date traffic counts have been conducted for key roads and intersections, including the Golden Highway, Ulan Road, Cope Road, Rouse Street, Medley Street, and Barneys Reef Road. These counts provide a clear understanding of existing background traffic conditions and serve as a baseline for assessing the impact of the proposed development.
- Background traffic growth has been applied to the traffic counts to project future traffic conditions for the year of peak construction. An annual growth rate of 1.5% has been used to account for general background growth expected by 2028. This projection ensures that the assessment considers future traffic conditions in the absence of the proposed development.
- The TIA includes an analysis of the project traffic added to each impacted state road intersection. This analysis assesses the impact on intersection performance and road safety. The intersections assessed include:
 - Golden Highway / Ulan Road
 - Station Street / Rouse Street
 - Medley Street / Rouse Street
 - Castlereagh Highway / Old Mill Road
 - Cope Road / Black Lead Lane
 - Golden Highway / Merotherie Road
 - Barneys Reef Road / Jacksons Lane
- The analysis demonstrates that the development is not expected to generate traffic volumes that would significantly impact the surrounding road network. Mitigation measures, such as temporary traffic control and scheduling deliveries outside peak hours, have been proposed to manage any potential impacts.
- By addressing the requirements and recommendations provided by TFNSW, the Mayfair Solar Farm project is committed to ensuring that all transport and traffic-related impacts are thoroughly assessed and appropriately managed. The comprehensive analysis of traffic generation and distribution confirms that the Project will have minimal impact on the surrounding road network and community.

5.15. WATER NSW

The Applicant notes:

Water NSW has no objections, recommendations or recommended conditions as the project is not located near any WaterNSW land or assets.

6. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

As outlined in Section 2, a total of 15 organisations and 84 individual community members lodged submissions relating to the Project.

A majority of community submissions contained similar and consistent themes, which have been categorised in the five categories identified by the Department of Planning Housing and *Infrastructure in the State Significant Development Guidelines – Preparing a Submissions Report*.

Each theme is explained below, and a specific design response is provided under the corresponding sections as followed below.

6.1. THE PROJECT

A total of 33 submissions relate to the Project itself, including relating to site suitability and site selection, the project design and the proposed use and public benefit.

6.1.1. Site Suitability

A total of nine objections relate to the site suitability and consideration of the objectives of the RU1 – Primary Production zone.

The site suitability has been carefully considered during the scoping phase in response to the due diligence assessment to inform the selection of sites. This includes the consideration of multi-criteria assessment to identify sites with high suitability and minimal constraints. Several other sites were considered, however were considered unsuitable due to not satisfying criteria including:

- Topography
- Biodiversity density and quality
- Flooding
- BSAL
- Land size available
- Proximity to existing electricity network with available capacity
- Proximity to dwellings and sensitive receivers
- Suitable site access.

The site of the proposed Project is deemed to be suitable for the proposed development due to satisfying the above criteria. In particular:

- The site is zoned RU1 – Primary Production and the proposed land use is permissible with consent as a prescribed non-residential zone under Part 2.3, Division 4 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021*.
- The site is generally unconstrained by environmental factors, meaning the Project has minimal impacts on biodiversity, water, soil characteristics.
- The Project has limited surrounding sensitive receivers adjoining the site, with visual, noise and air quality being managed to mitigate impacts on sensitive receivers. This includes measures which have been resolved through consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- The site has suitable access and the proposed upgrades to Jackson Lane will improve access for local residents.
- The site has existing electricity transmission infrastructure traversing the site, meaning there is no requirement for additional transmission infrastructure to be constructed, or encroach on surrounding land.
- Proposed measures to retain grazing on site during operation supports ongoing agricultural activity in the area.

- The Project is a direct response to the NSW Government's commitment to the renewable energy transition. The site is strategically located within the CWO REZ in an area with identified renewable energy source potential. The Project will contribute to the implementation of the NSW Electricity Strategy, which seeks to establish a reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity future for NSW.

As such, it is considered that the site is appropriately suitable for the Project.

6.1.2. Physical Layout and Design

No objections provided comment on the physical layout and proposed design of the Project.

6.1.3. Uses, Activities and Public Benefit

A total of eight objections relate to the uses, activities and proposed public benefit. Most of these submissions argue that the community has not been appropriately informed about the proposed benefit-sharing scheme.

The Applicant confirms that consultation with the community was undertaken in 2024 on community needs to inform the Social and Economic Impact Assessment and the outcomes of this report were discussed with Council. Consultation with Council was also undertaken to establish the appropriate measures for the proposed benefit-sharing scheme, through a Planning Agreement to be entered into between the Applicant and Council. The Planning Agreement has been drafted in accordance with the NSW Government Benefit Sharing Guideline with a rate of \$850 per megawatt per annum for the operational life of the Project.

In accordance with the Benefit Sharing Guidelines, these funds are intended to provide Council with the necessary funding to enhance and improve community infrastructure within the LGA. Although the Applicant can indicate certain ways in which funds could be utilised, it is ultimately Council's decision and responsibility to allocate and pool benefit-sharing scheme funds received from this Project, and others in the area, as they see fit in accordance with the Mid-Western Regional Community Strategic Plan. The Applicant understands that Council continues to consult with the community on social infrastructure needs and also reports frequently on where funds are being allocated.

It is intended that the Planning Agreement with Council will be executed following consent should it be granted.

6.2. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A total of 11 submissions relate to the procedural matters that form part of the Project's process. These processes include the engagement of the community and agencies, as well as the assessment process undertaken for the site as part of the application, as well as the assessment process undertaken by DPHI.

6.2.1. Assessment Process

Nine public submissions have raised that they do not feel the assessment process undertaken for the Project is sufficient. Some of these objections are concerned that the EIS does not accurately address the risks associated with environmental and social impacts whereas other are primarily concerned with the actual process of assessment undertaken by government and associated policies around renewable energy more broadly.

An independent cohort of subject matter experts has undertaken environmental studies in accordance with SEARs issued by the Secretary. These assessments have been produced by suitable qualified and experienced professionals and have been thoroughly reviewed as part of a detailed quality-control process.

The final EIS package has been reviewed by a Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner (**REAP**) recognised by the NSW Government to ensure that, to the best of the team's ability, the assessment process has been undertaken duly and considering all relevant statutory and strategic frameworks.

6.2.2. Adequacy of Engagement

Five public submissions raise concerns around the Project as they believe adequate consultation was not conducted, with one community member stating they are "unhappy that there is no opportunity for open debate" and another stating "the people who will be most affected have no say in this".

The Applicant recognises the importance of stakeholder engagement to the success of the Project and has been liaising with stakeholders since the envisioning of the scoping phase. Consultation during the

preparation of the EIS occurred between April 2023 and June 2024, which involved different stakeholders and actions, as detailed in the Engagement Outcomes Report submitted with the EIS. As outlined in the *Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects*, DPHI defines stakeholders as community, relevant agencies, landowners and land users and stakeholders involved in prospective resource developments. Community consultation has involved:

- **Government Stakeholders**

- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI).
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.
- Publicly elected officials.
- Mid-Western Regional Council (Council Officers and Councillors).

- **Relevant Agencies**

- Transport for NSW.

- **Aboriginal Stakeholders**

- Mudgee Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- Registered Aboriginal Parties.

- **Community**

- Adjacent neighbours.
- Surrounding community.
- Community groups: Watershed Landcare, Gulgong Chamber of Commerce, Gulgong Community Group and Gulgong Heritage Building Managers and Heritage Groups.
- Community Facebook groups: Gulgong Community Group, Gulgong Show Society Inc and Gulgong Community Action Group.
- Mining exploration licence holder.

Engagement activities throughout the consultation process included:

- The letterbox and email distribution of a community newsletter on the week commencing 15 April 2024
- Targeted consultation with adjoining landowners throughout the preparation of the EIS
- A project-specific website that was live since the preparation of the Scoping Report in 2023
- A community webinar was recorded and uploaded onto the project website on the 1st April 2024.
- A community pop-up session was held in front of the Gulgong IGA on 4 May 2024. Prior to the community pop-up session being held, notifications of the session were issued to 1,900 local residents in the Gulgong area. 18 community members attended the session and provided feedback.
- Stakeholder briefings with State and Local authorities and publicly elected officials were completed throughout 2024.
- A contact email and phone line was available throughout the duration of the planning process. These contact details were distributed in all notifications, newsletters and community sessions, and also available on the project website.

The above engagement activities are detailed in the exhibited Engagement Outcomes Report in Appendix K of the EIS. The Applicant considers the engagement activities completed allowed enough public forum and within a reasonable timeframe to be able to provide meaningful feedback that could be considered during the assessment process.

6.3. ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

A total of 73 submissions relate to the economic, environmental and social impacts of the Project.

6.3.1. Land, Soil and Water

Concerns relating to land and soil within the site and surrounding areas were highlighted in 48 submissions. These concerns primarily focus on the loss of agricultural land and the potential social and economic impacts. Additionally, a majority of the submissions raised issues regarding the chemicals and materials used in the Project and their potential long-term impact on the land's arability.

As part of the EIS, a detailed Agricultural Impact Assessment, including a soil survey, was completed. Based on available mapping and soil verification, the site was identified as having 'moderately low' inherent soil fertility. The AIA also determined that the site's Erosion Risk Rating is 'Very Low,' indicating that soil loss would be negligible following the implementation of proposed mitigation measures during construction and the suitable establishment of groundcover during operation.

The Applicant acknowledges community concerns raised around chemicals and materials being used in the Project. However, despite concerns suggesting that solar panels are toxic, it is noted that modern crystalline silicon solar panels that will be utilised for this Project, do not contain toxic materials. It is likely that this misconception stems from the now obsolete thin-film (Cadmium telluride – CdTe) solar panels, which did contain trace amounts of cadmium and telluride. However, these trace amounts are securely encapsulated within the layers of the panels and cannot leach out unless the panels are broken into fragments.

There is no substantial evidence indicating that the leaching of toxic elements from solar panels during their operational phase poses an environmental risk in Australia or internationally. For instance, a 2019 study published in the Journal of Natural Resources and Development analysed soil samples from beneath operational crystalline silicon photovoltaic modules and adjacent module-free areas. The study found that, although there were differences in element concentrations between the two sample locations, no elements were present in concentrations that would endanger nearby ecosystems. The authors concluded that photovoltaic systems remain a cleaner alternative to traditional energy sources, such as coal, particularly during their operational phase (Robinson and Meindl, 2019).

While certain materials used in the manufacture of PV modules are considered toxic, the leaching of these elements from intact PV panels is unlikely due to their encapsulation in multiple protective layers. During the manufacturing process, PV cells are typically encased in a clear hardened resin, with strengthened glass protecting the front side and a polymer back side. The completed panel is further safeguarded by an aluminium frame, which protects it from environmental factors such as extreme temperatures, rainfall, hail, and humidity (Clean Energy Reviews, 2020). This robust design ensures the durability and safety of modern solar panels.

The Applicant is committed to ensure that maintenance and upgrading activities during operation ensure that the PV panels and all supporting infrastructure are kept structurally sound, adhere to the Australian standard AS/NZS 5033 for photovoltaic modules and related international standards and they are tested for structural deficiencies prior to installation. The Operational Management Plan (OPM) will include clear provisions for routine safety checks to ensure structural integrity and optimal performance during the operational phase, along with measures related to soil and sediment management on the site. Moreover, a water quality monitoring system will be adapted on a quinquennial base to ensure no leachate is occurring on site from any sources.

6.3.2. Biodiversity

Another key theme raised regarding the Project's environmental impact is the potential loss of biodiversity due to land clearing. A total of 24 submissions mentioned the clearing of vegetation and subsequent concerns of habitat loss and irreversible ecosystem changes.

As highlighted throughout the EIS, the avoidance of impacts to areas with high ecological value has been a key consideration since the Project's inception and site selection throughout the Project design. This has been achieved by achieving a Project layout that is contained within land that has been historically cleared for agricultural production. As a result, the impact area on the local biodiversity values has been reduced to only 1.75 hectares of native vegetation, or approximately 0.7% of the site area. The majority of the impact (1.6ha) is associated with the unavoidable vegetation removal of Fuzzy Box Woodland along Jacksons Lane, due to the required road upgrades. Careful design has been implemented to further avoid the trees with

higher retention value as per the Arboricultural Impact Assessment presented in the EIS. The remaining 0.15ha of impact area is the removal of four scattered Box Gum Woodland trees within the site.

Further mitigation measures include the establishment of buffer zones around sensitive habitats, areas under management under a Biodiversity Management Plan with the aim of restoring degraded riparian habitats and increasing the extent of Fuzzy Box Woodland and Box Gum Woodland, and prescriptive measures during construction to avoid the propagation of invasive species. Further recommendations are provided in the Aquatic Ecology Report to ensure that hydrological and riparian vegetation function is retained during construction works and subsequently improved.

6.3.3. Visual Impacts

Submissions highlighting visual impact concerns primarily focused on the loss of rural landscape, such as the industrialisation of these areas during both the operational and decommissioning phases. In addition, there were concerns the visual impact assessment did not fully consider the effects on neighbouring properties.

A comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the EIS to understand the effects of the Project on the local scenic quality and the visual impacts of the Project on the local community, and particularly neighbouring properties. Through consultation with neighbouring landowners, a 500m setback buffer from the nearest neighbouring property was incorporated into the Project layout as a key mitigation measure for visual impact.

The LVIA follows the legislative requirements and methodology as set out in Technical Supplement – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline, August 2022, Department of Planning & Environment NSW ('the technical supplement').

The LVIA also relies on the guidance as set out in:

- Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), Third Edition, Landscape Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013).
- Guidance Note for Landscape and Visual Assessment, Australian Institute of Landscape Architect (AILA), (2018).

The methodology used to assess the Project is further enhanced with the application of a methodology that is based on a combination of widely accepted concepts and terms used in LVIA and VIA in NSW. The method considers other relevant factors such as visual compatibility with both the existing and wider visual context and the strategic planning context for the Site.

The Project has undertaken an extensive assessment and consideration of the local landscape, viewshed for the sensitivity of receivers, and evaluated 3D photomontages from nearby sensitive receptors. The analysis demonstrated that, following implementation of the proposed Landscape Strategy (appended in the exhibited Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix J of the EIS), the amelioration can achieve the full mitigation of residual visual impacts on all sensitive receptors of the locality, regardless of their location.

6.3.4. Hazards and Risks

Hazards and risks emerged as a recurring theme throughout the submissions. The primary concerns centred on the risk of bushfires, highlighting the potential impact on neighbouring properties and the strain on local emergency services. Additionally, people were concerned about who would be responsible for cleaning up or preventing a disaster if it occurred.

A Preliminary Hazards Analysis (**PHA**) and a Bushfire Threat Assessment (**BTA**) have been prepared as part of the EIS by suitably qualified professionals. The BTA has been prepared in accordance with *Planning for Bushfire Protection* (PBP 2019) and ensuring that all project components have adequately addressed all provisions for the safe operation of the Project. The APZ provided for the BESS compound has also been expanded as a refinement to the Project layout based on the submission prepared by DPHI.

The combined conclusions between the PHA and BTA reports informed that by developing and implementing suitable bushfire management measures, along with identified hazard safeguards and controls, the potential bushfire risk associated with the Project can be effectively managed. Other potential hazards identified by the PHA have been evaluated, and it has been concluded that the safety systems in place and the nature of the Project will not exceed any unacceptable risk criteria.

The Applicant is also dedicated to developing and documenting site-specific plans and procedures to manage the residual risk during operation, should approval be granted. This will be documented through a Fire Safety Study and an Emergency Plan in consultation with FRNSW and RFS as required prior to commencing construction.

6.3.5. Traffic

Traffic impacts were raised specifically by three submissions, with concerns primarily focussed on increased traffic volumes and impact on local amenity from frequency and size of vehicles. The community's concerns regarding increased traffic volumes and their potential impact on local roads and daily life are fully appreciated. The updated TIA ensures that these concerns are addressed by providing a detailed analysis of traffic volumes at each stage of the project.

The updated TIA provides further assessment completed in consultation with Council and TfNSW to address the same issues raised by the community, including traffic volumes, road safety, and cumulative impacts on the local road network and local community. To clarify, it is noted that there are no Guidelines or Statutory Documents that provide specific guidance or thresholds for energy projects. However, the following Guidelines have been used as they provide the closest reference points for assessment.

1. **According to the Austroads Guide to Traffic Management Part 12: Integrated Transport Assessments 2021 , Section 4.3 (AGTM),**

A rural development (e.g. involving an extractive industry) may produce a significant increase in the proportion of heavy vehicles using the access road(s), as well as a significant increase in total traffic volume. An increase of 5% or 10% in traffic volume may be sufficient to warrant an assessment.

2. **The Austroads Guide to Traffic Management Part 12: Integrated Transport Assessments 2021 , Section 5.1 (AGTM),** determines the level of traffic assessment required based on the likely traffic impact. Based on this guide, an increase of 10-100 vehicles trips in the subdivision or developments peak hour is considered "moderate" impact. It is important to highlight that this guideline assumes permanent operational traffic growth, whereas the traffic associated with the Mayfair Solar Farm is temporary and limited only during construction phase.

3. **The Transport for NSW (TfNSW) Guide to Transport Impact Assessment 2024, Version 1.1 (GTIA)** refers to **Columns 2 and 3 of Schedule 3 in the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021**, which indicates that where a development has access to a classified road or a road that connects to a classified road, a detailed Traffic Impact Assessment is generally required if the development generates more than 50 vehicle trips per hour.

Potential impacts on the local road network near Gulgong from construction vehicles have been considered, including heavy vehicles such as B-doubles that will be used to transport materials to site along the identified haulage route. The below table presents a summary of existing midblock traffic volumes, projected 2028 background traffic growth, proposed construction-related traffic, and total future traffic during the peak construction period for key intersections along the designated haulage routes.

The table compares light vehicles (LV) and heavy vehicles (HV) during the AM and PM peak periods. The 'Proposed Traffic' columns show additional trips generated by the project, which are added to the 2028 background traffic to calculate total future volumes. The 'Future Heavy Vehicle %' column highlights the projected change in the proportion of heavy vehicles during construction.

Table 6 Haulage Route – Midblock volumes analysis

Key nearby Intersections along the Haulage Routes	Vehicle Type	Existing Traffic				2028 Background Traffic				Proposed Traffic		Future Total Traffic			
		Total Midblock volumes		Heavy Vehicle %		Total Midblock volumes		Heavy Vehicle %		Peak Development		Total Traffic during Peak Construction		Future Heavy Vehicle %	
		AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Rouse Street - Medley Street	LV	150	177	18%	10%	157	185	18%	10%	15	15	172	200	23%	13%
	HV	32	20			33	21			18	10	51	31		
Station Street - Rouse Street	LV	255	327	11%	5%	267	342	11%	6%	5	5	272	347	15%	8%
	HV	32	19			33	20			16	10	49	30		
Cope Street - Black Lead Lane	LV	139	184	11%	6%	145	192	11%	6%	0	0	145	192	19%	10%
	HV	17	11			18	12			16	10	34	22		
Golden Highway - Ulan Road	LV	104	128	34%	25%	109	134	34%	25%	0	0	109	134	39%	29%
	HV	53	42			55	44			16	10	71	54		

The above table shows that at the closest intersection to the project, Rouse Street – Medley Street, the heavy vehicle proportion is expected to rise from 18% to 23% in the AM peak and from 10% to 13% in the PM peak. The results indicate that residents along the identified haulage route will experience only a modest

increase in total midblock volume construction traffic. At other intersections, the increases are minor and remain well within the capacity of the surrounding local and regional road network.

Further, the traffic assessment on construction traffic volumes has concluded the construction vehicle movement is expected to have only a moderate and temporary impact on the surrounding road network and community, and is therefore considered acceptable, based on the following:

- The construction activities for the proposed development are expected to generate 33 extra vehicle trips (15 light vehicles and 18 heavy vehicles) during the AM peak hour and 25 vehicle trips (15 light vehicles and 10 heavy vehicles) during the PM peak hour at the Rouse Street- Medley Street intersection. This equates to approximately one vehicle every two minutes. Majority of these heavy vehicle will be B-doubles, with about 12 trips in AM and 8 during PM. It should be noted that these peak movements are expected to occur during peak construction period only of approximately four months and therefore will not result in a long term or permanent impact.
- Worker traffic (light vehicles) is expected to have minimal overlap with peak traffic periods, as most workers will likely travel to and from the site outside the typical peak hours. However, for the purpose of a conservative assessment, the peak-hour impacts have been calculated assuming that workers will arrive during peak hour.
- In accordance with Section 5.1 from AGTM, an increase of 10-100 vehicles trips in the subdivision or developments peak hour is considered “moderate” impact. As noted above, the expected traffic increase of 33 trips during AM and 25 during PM along the Haulage Route (Cope Road, Rouse Street, Medley Street, and Barneys Reef Road) is considered “moderate” in terms of additional vehicle volumes.
- In accordance with the GTIA, a detailed traffic assessment is generally required when a development generates more than 50 additional vehicle trips per hour. As outlined above, the proposed construction activities are expected to generate approximately 33 additional trips during the AM peak hour and 25 additional trips during the PM peak hour, which remain below this threshold.
- During the peak construction period, the combined background traffic and construction traffic is expected to result in an increase in heavy vehicle movements of approximately 5% during the AM peak and 3% during the PM peak at the Rouse Street – Medley Street intersection. This equates to about 18 additional heavy vehicles in the AM peak hour and 10 additional heavy vehicles in the PM peak hour. These increases remain below the threshold specified in AGTM Section 4.3, which indicates when a more detailed assessment may be required. Given that the additional traffic is temporary and the AGTM thresholds primarily relate to permanent operational traffic, the construction traffic is not considered to generate significant or adverse impact and further detailed assessment is not considered necessary in this instance.

In addition to assessing construction vehicle movements, the following provides consideration and justification for the suitability of the proposed haulage route:

- The proposed haulage route along Cope Road, Rouse Street, Medley Street and Barneys Reef Road are considered the most suitable as these roads form part of an existing designated B-double route as identified by Transport for NSW and are approved for heavy vehicle movements required for this project.
- A cumulative traffic impact assessment has been conducted, considering other large-scale renewable energy projects in the vicinity. The assessment identifies potential overlapping construction periods and evaluates the combined impact on local roads. The analysis confirms that the proposed haulage routes for the Mayfair Solar Farm will not significantly overlap with those of other projects, thereby minimising cumulative impacts and the proposed haulage route has been selected to avoid cumulative impact on the use of local roads. Detailed traffic generation numbers and distribution patterns have been provided to support this conclusion.
- The haulage route has been selected in consultation with Mid-Western Regional Council, with consideration of alternative routes and the potential cumulative impacts from surrounding developments. A key approach and consideration of the transport assessment was to avoid overlapping cumulative impacts with other developments that are using alternative routes, and to utilise existing designated B-double routes. This ensures that heavy vehicle movements are restricted to roads designed and approved for such use, avoiding impacts on local and residential roads not intended for B-double operations.
- Based on all of the above, the selected haulage route is considered the most appropriate option and is acceptable for the expected construction traffic.

The Project considered mitigation options to further manage the potential construction-related impacts on the road network and local community, as follows:

- An option to spread haulage trips over a longer period was considered to reduce the number of heavy vehicles per day. However, it was determined that this would have minimal benefit and would result in extending the exposure. The preferred approach is to concentrate haulage within a shorter construction window, which limits the overall duration of community impacts while keeping daily traffic volumes within acceptable levels.
- As detailed in Section 5.7.7 of the TIA, haulage vehicle movements will be scheduled to avoid school bus operating times to prevent conflicts with school related movements. In addition, no haulage activities will occur on Sundays, further reducing the impact on the local community during weekends.
- Mitigation measures, such as scheduling deliveries outside peak hours and implementing traffic control measures, have been proposed to minimise the impact on local residents. Necessary upgrades to Jacksons Lane, including widening, sealing, and improving the intersection with Barneys Reef Road, will be designed in accordance with Austroads Guidelines for road design to ensure safety and compliance with relevant standards.
- The Applicant is committed to minimising disruption to the daily lives of residents. The CTMP will include measures to ensure that construction activities do not interfere with local access to properties and amenities, and measures to avoid overlap with school bus service times. Community consultation will continue so as to address any concerns and keep residents informed about construction schedules, road closures, and traffic diversions. This will include mechanisms for the community to raise and concerns via email and phone.

To conclude, this assessment has evaluated the potential impacts on the road network and community during the construction period in response to community concerns. It finds that the construction vehicle movements for the proposed development fall within acceptable levels, resulting in moderate, short-term impacts on the community. These impacts are deemed reasonable and acceptable, as the proposed development identifies a haulage route that will utilise an existing designated B-double route, making it suitable for the proposed movements. Additionally, the proposed development will not result in a significant increase in traffic volume along the haulage route during construction.

Extensive consultation with Mid-Western Regional Council and Transport for NSW has confirmed that the selected haulage route is the most appropriate option, avoiding cumulative impacts on alternative routes currently approved for other projects. With the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the TIA, the proposed development is considered acceptable for approval from a traffic impact perspective.

6.3.6. Socio-economic

The social impacts of the proposed solar farm were of moderate concern to the public with a total of 20 submissions explicitly stating this as a concern. Submissions indicate concern that social licence was not addressed well enough. The key concerns which form part of this theme are as follows:

- The Project causing a rift between the community members, resulting in lower cohesion.
- The health and safety of neighbouring properties.
- The loss of economic income arising from a loss of agricultural land resulting in a negative mental health impact on farmers.
- Emergency and medical services which are already insufficient in serving the local community being strained during the construction and decommissioning phases with the addition of workers.
- Concern the RFS is not of a suitable scale to respond to a fire emergency, should it occur on the Project Site.
- Local social and economic benefit of the Project not clear or explicit.
- The potential for negative economic implications were mentioned in the public submissions a total of 12 times. Within this, the primary concern was the loss of productivity of the land for farming practices, and the potential loss of economic value arising from this and its flow on effects.
- A secondary concern raised is the loss of income from tourism as a result of the visual impact of the solar farm.

The community's concerns are noted and the following has been addressed:

- Elgin is committed to ongoing, transparent communication and engagement with all stakeholders to support ongoing community cohesion. The Applicant is committed to continuing open dialogue and providing accurate information during construction and operation of the Project. This will include documentation of mechanisms for raising concerns, which will be documented in a CEMP prior to commencing construction, in accordance with a suitable condition of consent. In addition, the proposed community benefit sharing scheme is to be governed through a planning agreement with Council, meaning that Council will have control over community funds being fairly spent for the community, rather than funds being diverted to specific community groups or members. This approach is taken to avoid any particular community groups or members gaining advantage above others, which may have potential to cause conflicts between community members.
- The health and safety of neighbouring properties are paramount. The project includes comprehensive safety measures, such as a Bushfire Emergency Management Plan and a Preliminary Hazard Analysis, to mitigate risks associated with fire and other hazards. These plans will be developed in consultation with local emergency services to ensure they are robust and effective. Furthermore, the project site will be equipped with necessary safety infrastructure, including firebreaks and emergency access routes. These will be documented further during detailed design prior to commencing construction and will be incorporated into the CEMP and OMP for the Project.
- The loss of agricultural land and its economic implications are mitigated through the Project incorporating agrivoltaics, allowing for sheep grazing under the solar panels, thereby maintaining a level of agricultural productivity on the land. This approach aims to minimise the economic impact on farmers and support their livelihoods. The Agricultural Impact Assessment considered the economic impact on the farming activity of the land during the operation of the solar farm. It was identified that the projected annual agricultural production value post-development is \$4,480.56, compared to the current value of \$19,947.66. However, the impact on farmers on the land will be offset by income generated by the Project.
- The influx of workers during the construction and decommissioning phases may strain local emergency and medical services if not managed. To mitigate this, the Project includes the establishment of a temporary workers' accommodation camp with onsite medical facilities and a qualified medical professional. This will avoid the construction workforce causing burden on local services.
- Moreover, as previously discussed, the Workforce Accommodation Plan has been prepared having regard to the local social context and economy of scale. It is considered that in conjunction with a strict code of conduct, the presence of the workforce camp onsite will have a low impact on the services and social cohesion of the surrounding community. The Workforce Accommodation Plan will be constantly monitored and reviewed to ensure it stays up to date with local experience and that the workers do not interfere with the local and regional amenities during construction.
- Concerns about the RFS's capacity to respond to a fire emergency on the project site are acknowledged. The project will include fire safety measures such as a 10m non-vegetated area around the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and upgraded access routes for fire-fighting vehicles. Elgin will work closely with the RFS to ensure they are adequately prepared and equipped to handle any potential fire emergencies. Notwithstanding, any emergencies associated with solar farms and associated infrastructure are typically addressed by NSW Fire and Rescue.
- The local social and economic benefits of the project are significant. The construction phase is expected to generate 169 direct jobs and 426 indirect jobs, providing a substantial boost to the local economy. Once operational, the solar farm will support ongoing employment and contribute to the region's renewable energy capacity.
- It is appreciated that the community are interested in the benefit sharing scheme and how the local community will reap the benefits of the project. The Project will contribute significant benefit-sharing payments during its operation, providing more than \$2 million over the life of the Project in benefit-sharing funding that will directly contribute to the improvement of social infrastructure to benefit the community locally and in the region. As such, the Project includes benefits for the whole community, not just the associated landholders. The Applicant highlights that the benefit-sharing fund will be managed by Council, and whilst suggestions on how funds may be spent, it will ultimately be at Council's discretion.
- The visual impact of the solar farm and its potential effect on tourism has been considered. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix J of the EIS) completed a visual catchment of the

Project and confirmed the site is not visible from any prominent or significant locations that could impact on Gulgong or areas of significance. The Project includes landscaping and screening measures to minimise visual impacts that mitigates potential landscape impacts. By maintaining the area's aesthetic appeal, it is considered that the area's attractiveness to tourists will be preserved. Furthermore, the Project will explore opportunities to promote renewable energy tourism, such as educational tours of the solar farm, which could enhance the region's tourism offering.

6.3.7. Noise

Noise-related concerns were also highlighted in the submissions. One submission mentioned concerns about noise from heavy machinery during the decommissioning phase. Another submission raised issues about operational noise and the potential long-term health impacts from continuous artificial noise.

A Noise Impact Assessment (**NIA**) has been undertaken by WSP as part of the EIS and in accordance with the *Interim Construction Noise Guideline* (ICNG, 2009) and Noise Policy for Industry (NPfI, 2017) for construction and operation noise levels respectively.

The assessment of construction noise, which can be expected to be of similar level during decommissioning, indicates that noise exceedances are predicted to occur at up to the three nearest properties during standard hours work, primarily during earthworks. However, it is noted that given the large size of the site, these exceedances will not occur continuously, and noise levels are generally expected to be below the predicted levels.

Prior to construction commencing, a Construction Noise Management Plan will be prepared and implemented during construction phase to achieve compliant noise levels on nearby sensitive receptors. These measures will include but not be limited to:

- Avoiding using noisy plant simultaneously and/or close together, adjacent to sensitive receivers.
- Orienting equipment away from sensitive receivers.
- Carrying out loading and unloading away from sensitive receivers.
- Using noise source controls, such as the use of residential class mufflers, to reduce noise from all plant and equipment including bulldozers, cranes, graders, excavators and trucks.

The predicted operational noise levels have been found to meet all the acceptable criteria for all nearby sensitive receivers. Nevertheless, a complaints procedure will be implemented during the operational phase. Should significant complaints be received during this phase, a monitoring schedule will be implemented to ensure that no Noise Trigger Levels are being met at all times and that further mitigation measures are adopted should they be deemed necessary.

6.3.8. Air Quality

A small number of submissions expressed concern about poor air quality, particularly in the event of a fire. Additionally, there were concerns raised about the potential release of dust and pollutants during the decommissioning phase.

Prior to construction, a comprehensive Construction Environmental Management Plan (**CEMP**) will be prepared and will be implemented during construction. The CEMP will include measures to prevent and mitigate residual air quality impacts regarding dust generation from vehicle movements and other sources. Some of the proposed measures will include:

- All equipment is to comply with the POEO (Clean Air) Regulation Standards of Concentration.
- All machinery is to be maintained and be in good working order.
- Vehicles and equipment are to be inspected prior to use daily.
- Heavy Vehicles are to be limited to 20km/h in any unsealed areas.
- Truck loads are to be covered upon entering and exiting the site.
- Water tankers are to be used to control dust during intensive operations.
- Truck wheel washes or other dust removal measures will be undertaken after intensive site preparation works.

- Stockpiles to be covered or grass-seeded if left unused for an extended period.

Upon the implementation of the CEMP, it is considered that the residual air quality impacts on the local community will be negligible, given the distance and size of the Project.

6.3.9. Decommissioning

The decommissioning phase of the Project is of moderate concern to the public (approximately 17 submissions). The primary concern with this theme, is whether the land will be returned to its original arable condition including the removal of underground cabling, as well as other environmental impacts. A second reoccurring concern was the disruption of vehicles and workers required to undertake the decommissioning phase on the local area.

The Applicant is committed to the appropriate decommissioning and rehabilitation of the Site following the Project ceasing operation. This commitment is informed by commercial agreements of the lease of the site and as discussed in Section 5.5.3, a Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan will be prepared in consultation with Council as the Project nears its end of life.

6.3.10. Cumulative Impacts

A few submissions raised concerns about the cumulative impact on the local rural community from having multiple large-scale solar farm projects concentrated in one area. They are worried that the combined effects of these projects could significantly alter the character and dynamics of their community.

The cumulative impacts of the Project were assessed in Section 6.4 of the EIS, in accordance with the *Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects* (DPIE, 2022). The assessment considered the incremental impacts; combined incremental impacts, and cumulative impacts specific from the project and any combined incremental impacts that may coincide with other renewable energy projects in the area. The combined incremental impacts assessment considered potential overlap and cumulative impacts related to access, amenity and housing, for 28 projects in the area. Based on the information publicly available, it was determined that there was low potential overlap or cumulative impact for 26 projects due to:

- already being under construction/ operational or at different stages of planning process meaning overlap of construction timing is unlikely.
- not physically overlapping due to separate visual catchments, or using alternative traffic routes.

The combined incremental impacts assessment identified two projects with medium potential for cumulative impact: Mavis Solar Farm and Tallawong Solar Farm. There is no public information on Mavis Solar Farm, and no application has been submitted at the time of writing. Tallawong Solar Farm is currently under assessment with DPHI. The cumulative impacts of overlapping with Tallawong Solar Farm have been carefully considered, focusing on key matters:

- **Traffic access** – The TIA considered the proposed haulage route for Tallawong Solar Farm, which uses the Golden Highway and Castlereagh Highway to the west of Mayfair Solar Farm. The Mayfair Solar Farm Project will use a different haulage route along Ulan Road and Cope Road from the east. The TIA also assessed potential traffic changes on the road network, including factoring in 2028 background traffic growth. The assessment concluded that the proposed Project is not expected to significantly overlap with surrounding renewable energy developments. During construction, there will be up to 33 vehicles during the AM peak hours and 25 vehicles during the PM peak hours at the closest intersection, equating to approximately one vehicle every two minutes. Therefore, the impact on the surrounding road network is minimal.
- **Amenity** – The EIS considered visual and acoustic cumulative impacts with Tallawong Solar Farm. It concluded that the two projects do not share viewshed catchment areas, resulting in no incremental or combined incremental visual impact. The projects are sufficiently separated to avoid any combined cumulative acoustic impact. The Project proposes landscaping buffer planting and acoustic measures to mitigate any potential impacts, further supporting the conclusion that there will be no cumulative impacts on amenity.
- **Housing** – The Project seriously considers the region's existing housing challenges and aims to avoid cumulative impacts on local housing supply and short-term accommodation during construction. To mitigate potential impacts, a Workforce Accommodation Plan proposes an onsite temporary workforce

accommodation camp. This will ensure that the 150 workers onsite at the peak of construction are accommodated on site, with no demand on local housing or short-term accommodation.

With further consideration of minimising any potential cumulative impacts generated by the proposed Project, a range of management plans are proposed to be prepared prior to construction and will be implemented during construction. These include:

- Biodiversity Management Plan
- Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Grazing Management Plan
- Weed and Pest Control Management Plan
- Decommissioning Management Plan
- Emergency Plan
- Operational Management Plan
- Construction Noise Management Plan
- Workforce Accommodation Plan
- Waste Management Plan
- Landscape Management Plan
- Traffic Management Plan
- Detailed OSOM Transport Management Plan

6.4. JUSTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT AS A WHOLE

A total of 28 submissions relate to the justification and evaluation of the Project.

6.4.1. Renewable Energy

In total, 18 submissions were noted to not support renewable energy overall, rather than an apprehensiveness to this proposal specially. Comments were generally related to the following issues:

- Potential environmental impacts
- General issue with the materials used in the elements of solar farms and renewable energy infrastructure
- Disagreement/ denial of renewable energy as an energy option
- The denial of the need for renewable energy or climate change generally

The NSW Government has developed its NSW Climate Change Policy Framework, which aims to deliver net zero emissions by 2050, and a State that is more resilient and responsive to climate change. The Paris Agreement and the NSW climate change policy framework have been shaped by extensive research spanning several decades, highlighting that transitioning to renewable energy will help lower greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power and mitigate climate change impacts.

The Project directly addresses the NSW Government's commitment to renewable energy transition. Strategically situated within the CWO REZ, the site will support the NSW Electricity Strategy, aiming to create a reliable, affordable, and sustainable electricity future for NSW. The Project further achieves strategic outcomes of utilising existing transmission network infrastructure.

Moreover, the NSW Electricity Strategy recognises that solar (both large-scale and rooftop) and wind technologies produce low-cost, emission-free electricity. However, their ability to dispatch electricity depends on weather and time of day. According to the NSW Electricity Strategy, renewables are now the most cost-effective new electricity generation option. A mix of wind and solar, supported by gas, batteries, and pumped hydro, is expected to be the most economical and reliable electricity solution for the State. Together, these energy generation and storage methods will provide sufficient dispatchable capacity to meet NSW's peak demand and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As such, the Project is directly aligned with the strategic vision of the NSW government, and other considerations regarding renewable energy as a whole are beyond the impact assessment of the Project.

6.4.2. ESD Principles

The Project received seven public submissions raising concerns they are not satisfied with the Project's justification and alignment with Ecologically Sustainable Development (**ESD**) principles, noting an inadequate discussion around the environmental impacts and loss of agricultural land and, minimal social licence.

ESD principles have been duly considered in the EIS, with weighted value based on the impacts and net positive outcomes from the Project. As such, the ESD principles in accordance with Clause 193 of the EPA Regulations 2021 have been considered as outlined below

▪ **Natural Environment:**

- Precautionary principle: the precautionary principle relates to uncertainty around potential environmental impacts and where a threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage exists, lack of scientific certainty should not be a reason for preventing measures to prevent environmental degradation. The Project has evaluated measures to avoid environmental impacts where possible and mitigate them if unavoidable; a comprehensive assessment of all the risk-weighted consequences has been undertaken for each environmental impact for all feasible options.
- Intergenerational equity: the needs of future generations are considered in decision making and that environmental values are maintained or improved for the benefit of future generations. The Project will ensure intergenerational equity is maintained across society by providing a sustainable source of energy that helps decarbonise and mitigate the future impacts of climate change.

Although the Project will temporarily and partially utilise agricultural land, it is considered to provide a net positive intergenerational equity. This Project directly address the effects of climate change, which, if unmitigated, will significantly impact future generations, including land resources and productivity. Furthermore, the Project will not compromise the long-term productivity of agricultural land, as agricultural grazing will continue during its operation. Evidence also indicates that solar farms can assist with the revitalisation of land through lower temperatures and increasing soil moisture under solar panels due to the shade they provide. Upon decommissioning, the site will support continued agricultural activity, allowing future generations to utilise it for agricultural purposes once the Project's lifespan concludes.

- Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity: the Project has been designed to avoid the most important on-site natural values where possible and mitigate and minimise other impacts where unavoidable. Avoidance of impacts includes retaining valuable areas of high biodiversity for conservation, as well as construction measures to ensure no residual impacts are produced on retained native vegetation, such as tree protection zones and protective fencing. The Project also includes the rehabilitation of impacted riparian sections of Slapdash Creek to protect its ecological integrity.
 - Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms: the holistic consideration of environmental resources that may be affected because of the Project have been considered, including environmental and agricultural. It has been concluded that neither the ecological services of the region nor the agricultural value of the land will be significantly or permanently affected by the Project. It is considered that the economic prospects from the Project will result in a net positive outcome for the region.
- **Social**: Potential social impacts of the Project are considered in the EIS. It is considered that all feasible options have been included as part of the Project design, such as workforce accommodation and services, to avoid any stress on local resources and the cumulative impacts with other projects onto the socio-economic fabric of the region as much as possible. Further consideration to the workforce accommodation camp installation has been undertaken and its construction will commence prior to other components to further reduce any socio-economic impacts on the local area.
 - **Economic**: The Project considered the potential economic impacts of the Project as outlined in the EIS. It is considered that the Project will result in a net positive economic outcome for the region, including the generation of employment for the community during construction and operation. Other land uses, such

as surrounding agricultural activities, will not be impacted by the Project, and agricultural activities may be able to continue on the land in the form of sheep grazing.

6.4.3. Alternative Locations

A number of members of the public have specifically mentioned they are frustrated that rural communities are affected by renewable energy projects, but they benefit more people than those that live in these areas. As such, there have been multiple suggestions which urge the Applicant to look at alternative locations, from sites further from the town centre and other LGAs, to moving projects closer to urban areas.

The Applicant undertakes a detailed site suitability analysis and due diligence assessment to inform the selection of sites. This includes the use of GIS software and multi-criteria assessment (in accordance with the Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline) to identify sites with high solar irradiance and minimal physical and environmental constraints. Several other sites were considered, however were considered unsuitable due to not satisfying criteria including:

- Topography.
- Biodiversity density and quality.
- Flooding.
- BSAL Land.
- Land size available.
- Proximity to existing electricity network with available capacity.
- Proximity to dwellings and sensitive receivers.
- Suitable site access.

The Project site was selected due to meeting the above criteria and allowing for a balanced approach to managing any identified potential constraints.

Although alternative footprints and locations were initially considered, these were not deemed feasible options due to significant property, environmental or economic constraints which left no feasible alternatives to the Project.

6.5. ISSUES BEYOND PROJECT SCOPE OR NOT RELEVANT

A total of 21 submissions raised issues which are not relevant to the Project and are outside the scope of the Project. These concerns primarily pertain to ideas of international interference with the Project, representatives having economic stakes in development and, use of public funds to pay for the Project.

A large number of the submissions which raised concerns in this category also have been identified as having an aversion to renewable energy overall.

6.5.1. International Relations

Public submissions have given mention to other country's renewable energy projects and international politics within their submissions. While international actions to support or oppose renewable energy affect the local community from global climate change perspective, they are outside the scope of the Project's assessment.

The Applicant is committed to complying with all the Commonwealth and State statutory requirements to ensure the appropriate procurement of the materials, workforce and other project components and in accordance with the suitable Australian and international standards.

6.5.2. Political Implications

Several public submissions make explicit mention of different political ideologies that are implied as the Project's agenda.

The Applicant does not maintain any political support and this issue is noted as outside the scope of the Project assessment.

7. UPDATED PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Having considered the relevant matters raised, only minor design refinements and report clarifications have been made to the Project since public exhibition. As such, no material changes to the proposed development layout have been required.

However, in response to submissions from agencies, Council and the public; further clarification and detail on the Project has been provided. In addition to updated ACHA, BDAR and BTA reports, the key updates are as follows:

- Clarification on the construction timeframe for the workforce accommodation camp.
- Refinement of the traffic impact assessment regarding the Oversize and/or Over Mass Vehicle route and clarification on temporary works within Medley Street during construction.
- Refinement of the biodiversity development assessment report including categorisation of plant community types.
- Further archaeological surveys to assess the potential for subsurface materials and refinement of the ACHA.
- Clarification on the battery energy storage system layout and distances and, assessment against relevant statutory requirements within the preliminary hazards analysis.
- Refinement of the bushfire threat assessment including an enlargement of the asset protection zone surrounding the battery energy storage system.

The above clarifications ensure consistency and detail is reflected across all aspects of the Project and that best practice is undertaken in the design, construction, operation and decommissioning.

The Project will continue to support the delivery of a sustainable supply of power and battery storage to benefit local and regional communities with reliable and cost-effective power. The Project assists in delivering the objectives outlined in the NSW Electricity Strategy and Climate Change Act. Additionally, the Project is consistent with the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

Renewable energy is one of the fundamental pillars in achieving the transition from fossil fuels, establishing energy independence and security, and achieving Net Zero. This is in line with the international and national need for a decarbonised economy and the Paris Agreement signatory targets as a key step in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Regionally, the Project aligns with both the CWORP and the Mid-Western Region Community Plan: Towards 2040. Particularly, the Project supports Objective 2 of the CWORP 2041, to support the State's transition to its Net Zero 2050 objective. The Central-West Orana region is one of the Renewable Energy Zones across NSW and is expected to attract \$5.2 billion in investment by 2030.

The Project is located within the CWOREZ on a site with suitable road access and access to a regional road network connecting to both the Newcastle and Sydney Ports, suitable for the identified construction vehicles required. Additionally, the presence of a 66kV line traversing the Site capitalises on existing infrastructure to firm renewable energy capacity as early as possible, precluding the need to construct new electricity transmission infrastructure or for the Project to depend on the construction of the EnergyCo 550kV transmission line upgrade.

The Project will provide flow-on benefits to the local community, with contribution to the local economy through direct employment and indirect employment during construction and operation. Further, the Planning Agreement to support the benefit-sharing contributions to the Mid-Western Regional Council will provide significant funding to improve local services and infrastructure that will benefit the community.

No significant environmental, social and economic impacts will result from the Project. Residual impacts can be minimised, mitigated and/or offset where necessary.

Therefore, having considered the above, the proposed development continues to be appropriate for the site. As such, approval is recommended, subject to appropriate conditions of consent.

8. DISCLAIMER

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This report has been prepared with due care and diligence by Urbis and the statements and opinions given by Urbis in this report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading, subject to the limitations above.

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