Prepared for AE BESS 4 Pty Ltd as Trustee for AE BESS 4 Unit Trust

Social Impact Assessment

Deniliquin BESS

Edward River Council, NSW

November 2024

Project Number: 240334

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment (NSW)
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (NSW)
DPI	Department of Primary Industries (NSW)
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EP&A	Environmental Planning and Assessment (Act)
FTE	Full-time equivalent
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
IPP	Industry Participation Plan
IRSAD	Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage
km	kilometres
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LGA	Local Government Area
NVIA	Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
m	metres
NSW	New South Wales
NSW RFS	Rural Fire Service (NSW)
PHA	Preliminary Hazard Analysis
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
SEARS	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SF	Solar farm
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SSD	State Significant Development
SSP	State Significant Projects

TIA	Traffic Impact Assessment
ERC	Edward River Council
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment
WF	Wind farm

Executive Summary

Avenis Energy, on behalf of AE BESS 4 Pty Ltd as Trustee for AE BESS 4 Unit Trust, proposes to build a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) in Deniliquin, New South Wales (NSW), with a capacity of approximately 120MW or 480MWh (4 hours) to store and supply electricity to the national electricity market during peak periods. The proposed Deniliquin BESS (the Project) would be located 29 km south of the nominated South West Renewable Energy Zone. The Project would be adjacent to the 132 kV Deniliquin substation, which is 8 kilometres (km) east-southeast of Deniliquin within the Edward River Council Local Government Area.

The Project, with a Development Footprint of 4.75 hectares (ha), would involve constructing, operating, and decommissioning the 120 MW BESS. Construction is anticipated to take 12 months, with 6 months of peak construction. During peak construction, the Project is anticipated to create approximately 80-90 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and once operational, 1-2 FTE jobs. The expected operational life of the BESS is 35 years.

This SIA has been prepared to form part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and responds directly to the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued for this Project by the NSW Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment (DPIE) on 19 July 2024. This SIA has been prepared to comply with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (DPHI) *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (SSP) applied to all State Significant Developments.

The SIA aims to identify, predict, and evaluate the likely social impacts and benefits arising from the Project and propose appropriate responses to mitigate and manage negative impacts and enhance positive benefits. This SIA builds on the preliminary SIA undertaken during the Project's Scoping process.

This SIA was informed through three broad methodologies: two stages of community engagement undertaken by the Project engagement team during the Scoping and the EIS phase of the Project. The second method involved a community survey undertaken as part of the engagement process and, finally, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders relevant to the Project.

The locality of Deniliquin was home to 7,432 people at the time of the 2021 Census. Deniliquin's unemployment rate was lower at 3.9% compared to the state average of 4.9% in 2021. Additionally, Deniliquin is losing population at around 68 residents per year (0.8%). In contrast, the rest of NSW is gaining population at an average rate of 1.1%. However, between 2023 and 2050, Deniliquin's population is expected to almost double through efforts to foster population growth, expand housing options, activate new industries, create sustainable employment opportunities, and stimulate economic activity

The perceived and potential social impacts identified by the stakeholders through the consultation process, surveys and interviews were thematically grouped within the eight broad impact categories as defined in the SIA guideline. The impacts were then assessed for impact significance, after which proposed mitigation measures were applied to determine the residual impacts.

A total of 22 social impacts were identified, 6 of which were potential positive benefits of the Project. These benefits included increased employment and business opportunities and increased community investments. However, the consultation process revealed that no adequate workforce was available within the region. This could mean that the Project would need to employ people outside the region, which could increase the influx of people in Deniliquin.

The influx of people in Deniliquin could benefit local businesses by increasing procurement activities and benefitting the rental market. However, it could have an associated impact on social infrastructure, such as health services, and increase accommodation pressure, which could disrupt social cohesion in the community. The disruption in social cohesion could potentially affect the social acceptability of the Project in

the community. Another area that could influence the social acceptability of the Project is the increase of community involvement throughout the Project's development. For instance, a perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making was identified as one of the potential negative impacts. The communities identified several strategies to keep them involved throughout the development of the Project. Some of the strategies included regularly updating the community through emails or print media. However, most (~40%) chose their preferred method of obtaining information about the Project from the Project's webpage, indicating the importance of keeping the webpage of the Project updated.

Three broad enhancement and mitigation measures were identified to maximise the benefits and minimise the impacts of the Project. The SIA recommends continued consultation with the communities, development of accommodation and employment strategy and finally, the institution of a community benefits-sharing program in close consultation with the council and the community.

1. Introduction

NGH has been engaged by Avenis Energy (Avenis) on behalf of AE BESS 4 Pty Ltd as Trustee for AE BESS 4 Unit Trust (the Applicant) to complete a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the Deniliquin Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (the Project). This SIA has been prepared to form part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Project was declared a State Significant Development as defined under Part 4 of the New South Wales (NSW) *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). Avenis Energy is seeking approval under the EP&A Act and Schedule 2 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 to construct and operate the Project.

This SIA responds directly to the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued for this Project by the NSW Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment (DPIE) on 19 July 2024, which state the following is required:

> Social impact – including an assessment of the social impacts in accordance with *Social Impact Assessment Guideline* (DPIE, 2023a).

1.1. Project description

The proposed Deniliquin BESS would be adjacent to the nearby 132 kV Deniliquin substation, which is situated 8 kilometres (km) east-southeast of Deniliquin within the Edward River Council Local Government Area (LGA). The Project site is 29 km south of the nominated South West Renewable Energy Zone.

The Project, with a Development Footprint of 4.75 hectares (ha), would involve the construction, operation and decommissioning of a BESS with a capacity of approximately 120MW or 480MWh (4 hours) to store and supply electricity to the national electricity market during peak periods. The Project is expected to facilitate increased renewable penetration in NSW and improve network stability in times of peak demand.

The Project's construction is anticipated to take 12 months in total, with 6 months of peak construction. During peak construction, the Project is anticipated to create approximately 80-90 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and once operational, 1-2 FTE jobs. The expected operational life of the BESS is 35 years, with BESS refurbishment required at 20 years.

When the Project lifespan is reached, an upgrade of the BESS could be undertaken and consequently either request an extension or lodge a new development application (DA) with a more current technology. Alternatively, the Project would be dismantled and repurposed where possible. The decommission would be undertaken with the objective of maximising recycling options and returning the disturbed area to close to its original state, ensuring that the area remains suitable for continued agricultural use, should it be required.

There are approximately 24 non-associated receivers within 4 km of the BESS Project site – this includes both industrial and residential addresses. Additionally, within the 1 km of the proposed site, there are three sensitive receivers. The proximity and the direction of the sensitive receivers from the Project Site is described in Project's Community and Strategy Engagement Strategy, Deniliquin BESS EIS (p. 12). Figure 1-1 shows the Project's social locality.

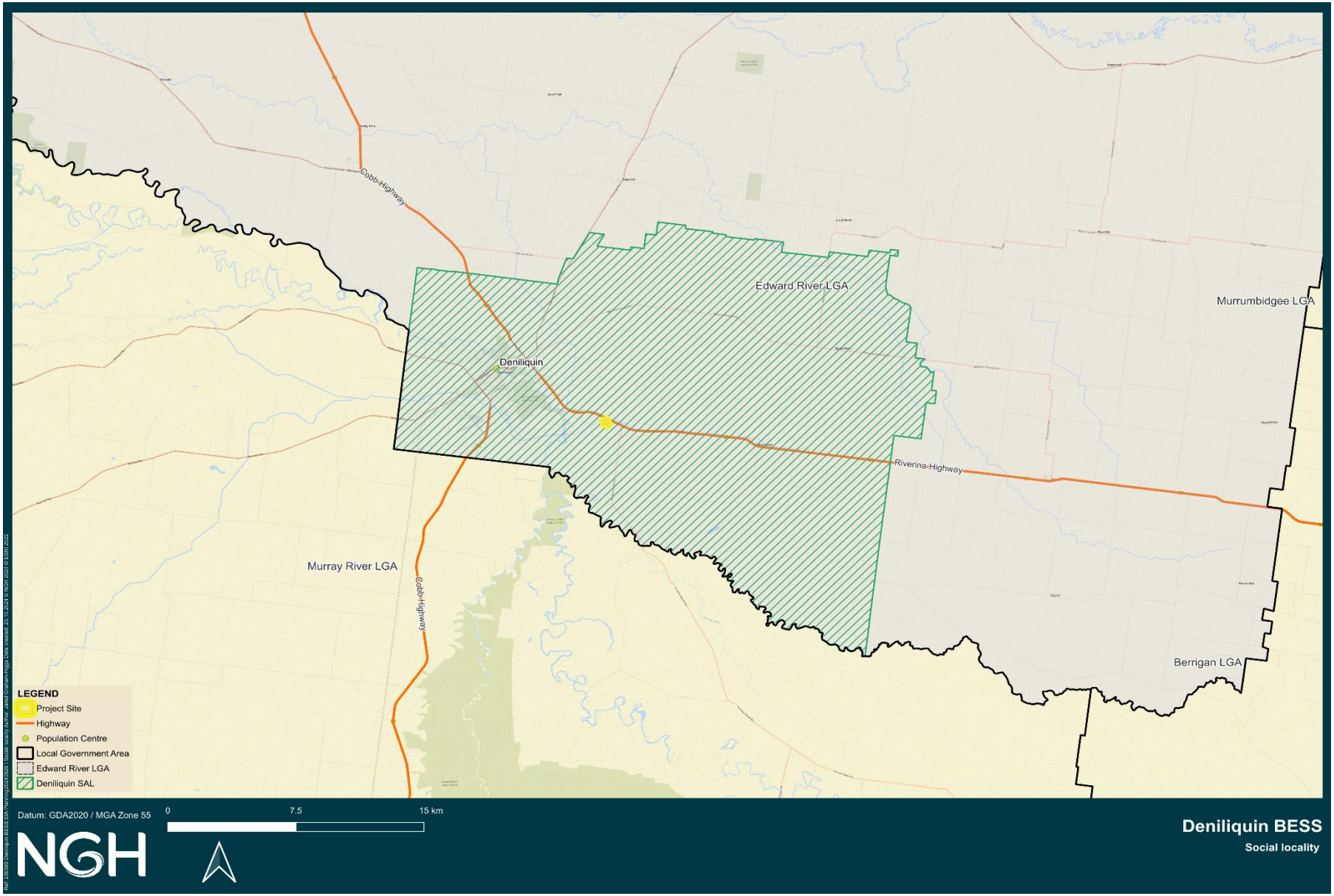

Figure 1-1 Project social locality

2. Methodology

The approach to conducting this SIA reflects current industry best practices that are reflected in the NSW SIA guidelines (DPIE, 2023a) and Technical Supplement (DPIE, 2023b). This section outlines the methodology used to assess the social impacts in relation to the proposed Project.

Purpose

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

A SIA 'is a process of analysing, monitoring and managing social consequences, both positives and negatives, of planned interventions (policy, plan, program, Project) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions' (Vanclay, 2003, p.5). As such, this assessment aims to identify, predict, and evaluate the likely social impacts and benefits arising from the Project, and to propose appropriate responses to mitigate and manage negative impacts and enhance positive benefits.

Defining social impacts

'Social impacts' can be defined as the consequences that people experience when a new Project brings change. For the purposes of the SIA, 'people' are classed as individuals, households, groups, communities, or organisations. Impacts can be positive (e.g., increased employment and retail trade) or negative (e.g. creating strains on local housing markets or social infrastructure). Impacts can also be cumulative (e.g. concurring Projects creating pressures on social infrastructure or health impacts from dust and noise) which is assessed as part of the SIA. Impacts can be positive (e.g., increased employment and retail trade) or negative (e.g. creating strains on local housing markets or social infrastructure). Impacts can also be cumulative (e.g. concurring Projects creating pressures on social infrastructure or health impacts from dust and noise) which is assessed as part of the SIA.

The SIA Guideline groups social impacts into eight categories, as shown below in Table 2-1. These categories form the frame that allows for a thorough identification of potential social impacts across the range of the social domain (i.e., across all the social categories) for each of the different Project activities, in the Project's initial social impact Scoping stage (which was undertaken as part of the Scoping Report prepared by the Applicant). This SIA considers the findings of several other technical specialists' studies and is informed by stakeholder and community engagement activities.

Table 2-1: Social impact categories (DPIEa, 2023, p.19)

Way of life	including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, and how they interact each day
Community	including composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, resilience, and people's sense of place
Accessibility	including how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private, or not-for-profit organisation

Culture	both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, practices, obligations, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings
Health and wellbeing	including physical and mental health especially for people vulnerable to social exclusion or substantial change, psychological stress resulting from financial or other pressures, access to open space and effects on public health
Surroundings	including ecosystem services such as shade, pollution control, erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity
Livelihoods	including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business
Decision-making systems	including the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives (procedural fairness), can make informed decisions, and have access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms

Social impact assessment process

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

An overview of the key SIA stages is presented in Figure 2-2. The SIA is informed by following methods:

- Community consultation and engagement sessions undertaken by the Project's engagement team
- Community survey
- Semi-structured interviews of key stakeholders.

The findings from all these three methods complemented each other to determine the impact significance through assessing the likelihood of impact and their magnitude.

An overview of the key SIA stages is presented in Figure 2-2 below. Additional information on the methodology and approach for each stage is provided within the report.

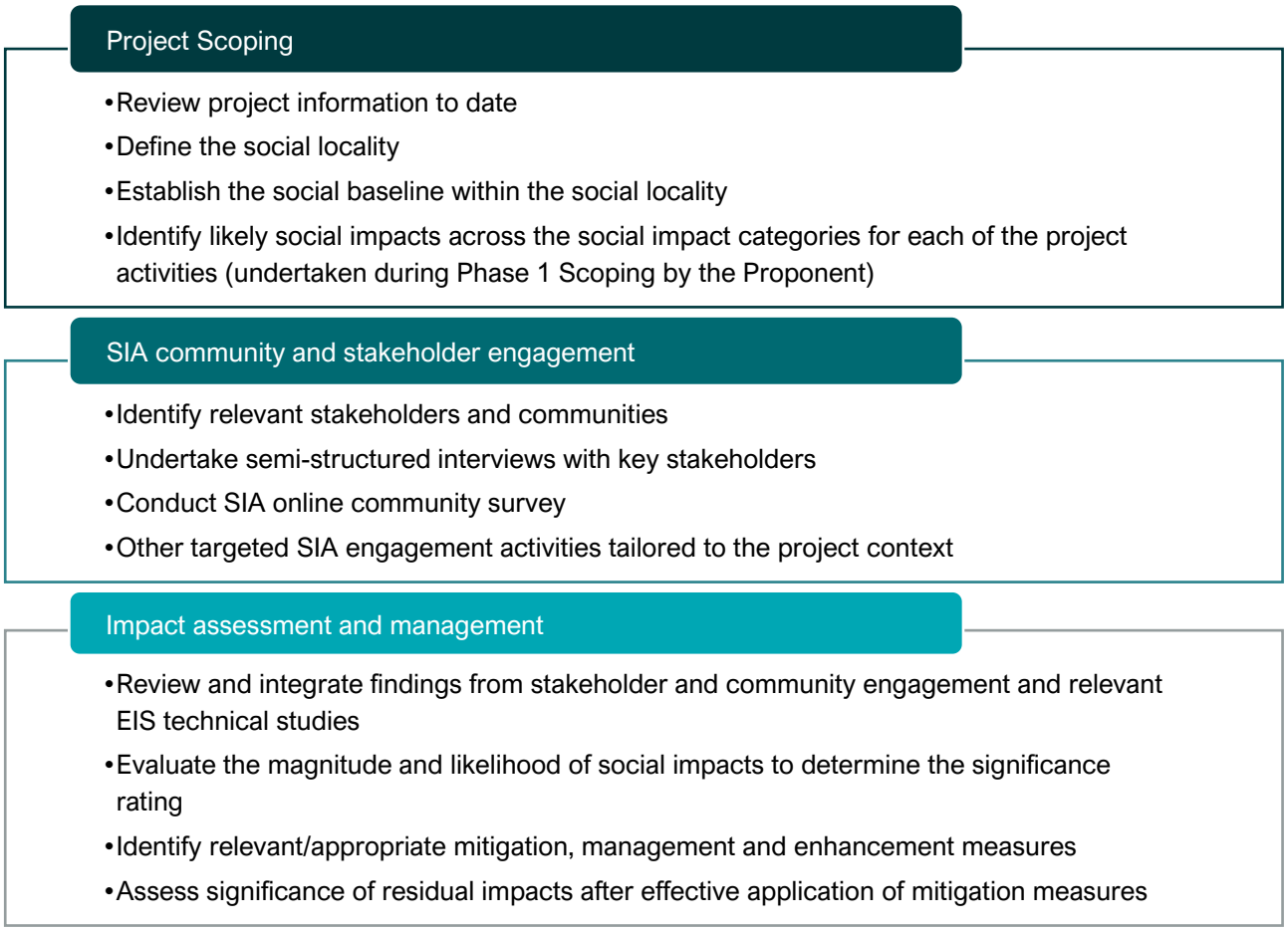

Figure 2-2: Overview of SIA methodology

2.1. Community consultation and engagement

To determine community views on the magnitude and likelihood of potential social impacts resulting from the Project, both positive and negative, two streams of engagement (i.e. Project-wide engagement and SIA targeted engagement) were undertaken in an integrated way. Findings from both, as well as previous engagements undertaken by the Applicant to inform the Scoping Report, have informed this SIA.

Two stages of community consultation and engagement were undertaken by the Project's engagement team, the findings of which were incorporated within the broader impacts categories of the SIA. The detail engagement process that was involved for the Project are reflected in the Project's engagement report as well as Chapter 5 of the EIS report of the Project.

During the Project's Scoping consultation, four people, over two days attended the community drop-in session. Further, the Project's engagement team consulted with members of the Edward River Council (ERC), tourism stakeholders, Deniliquin LALC, Murray Irrigation Board of Directors, business community representatives and three community members by the Project's Engagement team. While the findings from these consultations were reflected in the Project's Scoping Report, where relevant, the data were extracted to develop this SIA report.

Similarly, during the Project's EIS phase, 16 people attended the community drop-in consultation over two days. Additionally, targeted consultation with two stakeholders: Edward River Council and the Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre were conducted to gain a broader understanding of community's expectations and attitudes towards the Project.

2.2. Community survey

The Project's engagement team administered an online survey in SurveyMonkey during the Scoping as well as EIS phase. While the EIS phase did not receive as respondents, there were 29 respondents who completed the survey during the Scoping period, the data of which informed the SIA.

The online survey was conducted to understand respondents' general attitudes toward the Project and to identify the attributes that the community values most. Further, the survey attempts to identify the important social and economic factors, amenities and to develop a broader understanding of where the community investments could be prioritised. Finally, the survey tries to identify preferred engagement strategies of the community should the Project progress through to construction and operation phases.

2.3. Semi-structured interviews

Based on the stakeholder mapping that the Project's engagement team carried out, a targeted stakeholders were approached for a semi-structured interview. A total of four stakeholders were interviewed to determine an in depth understanding of the perceived potential social impacts of the Project.

In addition to identifying the impacts, efforts were also made to develop clear understanding of the mitigation measures for each identified impact. The interview data was transcribed, and then thematic analysis performed to categorise impacts within the broad eight impact categories as required by the SIA guidelines.

2.4. Determination of impact significance

Building on the preliminary SIA undertaken during the S Scoping phase of the Project, the social impacts for each Project activity were evaluated across the social impact categories described in Table 2-1.

The evaluation involved a further review of relevant inputs, e.g., relevant EIS technical reports, stakeholder and community engagement findings, and comparative studies. The likely significance of each potential impact was determined, based on its predicted magnitude and likelihood as defined in the SIA Guideline (Table 2-3, Table 2-4, and Table 2-5).

Table 2-3: Defining likelihood levels of social impacts

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

Source: (DPIE, 2023b, p. 12)

In impact evaluation, both positive and negative impacts are considered. Each potential social impacts were assessed by its potential impacts on people, through consideration of whether previous investigation of the impact has been undertaken, the potential for cumulative impacts, and the consideration of possible mitigation or enhancement measures to reduce negative impacts and enhance positive impacts.

Table 2-4: Defining magnitude levels for social impacts

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

Source: (DPIE, 2023b, p. 13)

In order to determine the social impact significance, the social significance matrix was used to evaluate social impacts (Table 2-5), considers both the magnitude of the potential social impact (minimal, minor, moderate, major and transformational) and the likelihood of the impact occurring (very unlikely, unlikely, possible, likely and almost certain) to determine an overall evaluation of impact as 'low', 'medium', 'high' or 'very high'.

Table 2-5: Social impact significance matrix

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

Source: (DPIE, 2023b, p. 13)

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

2.5. Defining social locality and social baseline

Social locality

The social locality, or sphere of influence, establishes the boundaries for assessing the social impacts of a Project. These boundaries are determined by several factors, including the nature and scale of the Project, the characteristics of the affected communities, and how various stakeholder groups may reasonably perceive or experience both positive and negative impacts (DPIE, 2023a, p. 16). Affected populations can include both 'communities of place' and 'communities of interest'.

A social baseline profile for the social locality was developed to describe the existing social context and establish a benchmark against which potential social impacts can be assessed. The social baseline was informed by both primary and secondary data sources.

Social locality encompasses:

- Host and adjacent/near neighbour properties
- Localities/townships likely to experience construction-related workforce, procurement, and traffic impacts and/or benefits from the Project: Edward River LGA and Deniliquin Suburb and Locality (SAL) (i.e. the Deniliquin urban area).
    - Major towns/cities providing core services to these localities/townships: Deniliquin
    - Existing travel networks, main transportation corridors, and regional infrastructure and service hubs.

These localities are considered of high importance to the Project and are included as key localities in the Project's social locality. However, the extent of influence of a Project, its impacts and associations may change as the Projects and communities develop and evolve over time. Consequently, the social locality may be adapted, minimised or extended at subsequent stages of Project planning and assessment, to include locations where construction workforces may be based and where suppliers and/or materials may be sourced for the Project.

For this Project, the social locality has been identified by pinpointing the primary populated communities where people live, work, and visit. This assessment also considers the existing travel networks connecting these communities, along with the nature and scale of potential impacts from the development.

The specific areas and communities of interest that make up the social locality for this Project are detailed below.

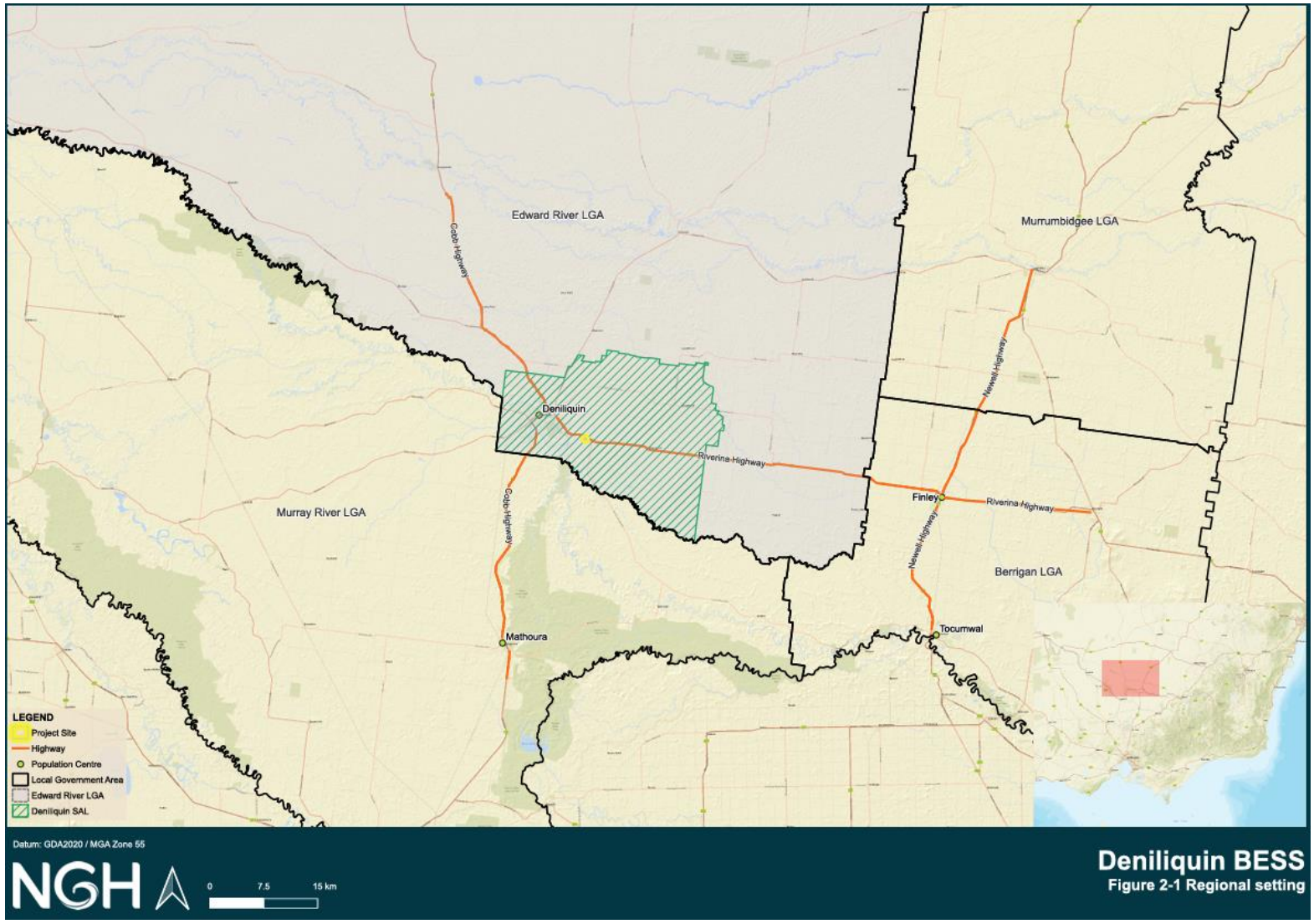

Figure 2--2 Regional setting map

Social Baseline

The social baseline information forms an important aspect of the SIA, as it provides a snapshot of existing social conditions within the social locality, establishing a base from which social impacts associated with the Project may be identified and predicted.

The development of a social baseline gathers knowledge from both primary and secondary data sources to increase understanding of the existing social environment in which a Project is proposed, and of the potentially affected communities. A broad overview of the sources that were consulted to undertake desktop analysis to develop social baseline is presented in Table 2-6.

Table 2-6: Social baseline data sources

Activity	Task/source
Desktop research and data collection	• Review of the Project's Scoping Report • Review of relevant community service providers and local community organisations websites, including Regional Council, local Chamber of Commerce • Social infrastructure and stakeholder mapping • Identification of relevant key Projects/developments in the LGA and broader region.

Data analysis	• Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021/2016 Census and other relevant socio-economic data), including:
	  ○ Population and demographic indicators
	  ○ Business, industry, employment, and income indicators
	  ○ Housing and accommodation characteristics
	• DPE population forecasts
	• Infrastructure, service, transport, and community features.

Literature and strategic planning review	• Review of publicly available research/SIAs on comparable infrastructure Projects
	• Review of relevant public policies, plans and strategies, including:
	  ○ Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041
	  ○ Edward River Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement.

Stakeholder and community engagement review	• Review of previous engagement outcomes undertaken by the Applicant & NGH.

2.6. Stakeholder mapping

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

Identified stakeholders included groups and individuals that live, work, or engage in recreation near the Project; use or value a resource associated with the Project; and/or have an interest in the various aspects of the Project. Additional stakeholders were identified through snowball sampling as the SIA engagement progressed. The list of stakeholders identified as in scope for SIA consultation is shown in Table 2-7.

Table 2-7: Stakeholder mapping undertaken for the Project

Stakeholder category	Organisation	Outcome
First Nations	1. Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre Aboriginal Corporation 2. Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council 3. Aboriginal Housing Service – Deniliquin.	1. Engagement team from NGH met with the Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre.
Industry	1. Deniliquin Business Chamber 2. Regional Development Australia – Murray 3. Murray Construction 4. Mathoura Chamber of Commerce and Citizens 5. Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation	1. Interviewed representatives from Rural Development Australia – Murray.
Regulators and Elected Members	1. NSW Department of Primary Industries 2. NSW office of water 3. Edward River Council LGA 4. Murray Local Land Services.	1. Engagement team from NGH met with representative of: a. Murray Irrigation b. Edward River Council LGA c. Edward River Council Tourism.
Service Deliverers	1. Murray Mallee Training Company 2. Eworks Employment Solutions 3. Subway Employment and Training 4. Deniliquin Community Health Centre 5. Department of Education and Communities 6. TAFE Deniliquin 7. Schools in Deniliquin 8. Deniliquin RFS.	1. Interviewed two representatives from TAFE Deniliquin 2. Interviewed a representative from Deniliquin RFS.

Stakeholder category	Organisation	Outcome
NGOs and Interest Groups	1. Deniliquin Men's Shed 2. Rotary Club 3. Lions Club 4. Probus Club 5. Murray Landcare Collective 6. Deniliquin Lagoons Kolety Lagoons Landcare Group.	1. Interviewed a Deniliquin Rotary Club representative.
Vulnerable Groups	1. Intereach Neighbourhood Centre	
Impacted Landholders		1. Avenis engaged with two sensitive near-neighbours.

The stakeholders consulted by the Project's engagement team and the outcomes are reflected in detail in the Project EIS's chapter 5.

3. Social baseline

All population and demographic data presented in this section are from the ABS (2021a), unless otherwise stated. A detailed demographic and industry dataset relating to the social locality is presented in Appendix B.

3.1. Regional and local setting

3.1.1. Overview

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic and environmental dynamics of the Riverina region. It begins by examining the broader regional context, then shifts focus to the Edward River Local Government Area (LGA) and concludes with a detailed look at the town of Deniliquin. Table 3-1 provides comparative data of the key statistics between the broader locality and Deniliquin. The information of each locality is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Table 3-1: Key statistics of the Riverina region, Edward River LGA, and Deniliquin

Key Statistics:	Locality		
	Riverina	**Edward River LGA**	**Deniliquin (SAL)**
Area	80,545 sq km	8,881 sq km	143.2 sq km
Population	163,656	8,456	7,432
Median weekly household income	$1,480	$1,240	$1,221
Unemployment rate	3.8%	3.6%	3.9%
Indigenous population	6.6%	4.8%	5.3%

3.1.2. Riverina Region

The Riverina is an agricultural region of south-western New South Wales (NSW), extending from the Snowy Mountains' foothills northwest through the Murrumbidgee River catchment area to the flat, dry inland plains of Hay and Carrathool. The population of Riverina is anticipated to grow by 14.5% in 2036 compared to NSW's 25%.

The Murrumbidgee River runs through the Riverina region and delivers water to major food-producing areas of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) and Coleambally Irrigation Area (CIA). These irrigation areas provide over one-quarter of all NSW's fruit and vegetable production and are also one of Australia's largest exporters of bulk wines.

The region is home to the Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita and Yorta Yorta peoples for millennia. The region encompasses the following council areas: Albury,

Berrigan, Bland, Carrathool, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Gundagai, Edward River, Federation, Greater Hume, Griffith, Hay, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Snowy Valleys, Temora, and Wagga Wagga (DPE, 2023).

The region's natural assets hold great value to residents. The region contains both dry-land and irrigated land, providing valuable farming land and having some of the most successful agricultural areas in NSW. Rice has proven to be one of the more lucrative irrigation crops grown locally, along with wheat, canola, and pastoral activities. The largest rice mill in the southern hemisphere operates at Deniliquin and is the fourth-largest rice mill in the world.

The population is growing, particularly in and near regional cities and along the NSW-Victorian border, and demographic changes are causing a greater focus on supporting the older population. The region is experiencing growing unemployment paired with growing job vacancy rates, as well as chronic housing shortages, particularly in rental accommodation (Edward River Council, 2022).

The region is also home to the South West REZ, which is expected to support employment opportunities, energy connectivity and accessibility, and procurement of energy-intensive industries, including high-value agriculture and manufacturing. Section 3.2.2 outlines a further description of the South West REZ.

3.1.3. Edward River LGA

The Edward River Council area sits within the Riverina Murray Region of south-western New South Wales, approximately 700 km southwest of Sydney and 300 km north of Melbourne. It shares borders with Hay Shire to the north, Murrumbidgee Council area and Berrigan Shire to the east, and Murray River Council area to the south and west.

Established in 2016 through the merger of Deniliquin Shire and Conargo Shire, the Edward River Council area covers Deniliquin's urban zone and extends north and west across the pastoral southern Riverina plains. Predominantly rural, the land is largely dedicated to agriculture, with sheep and cattle grazing, rice, wheat, canola cultivation, and some forestry (Edward River Council, 2018b). The agriculture, forestry, and fishing sectors collectively generated $282 million in output during 2021/22, while health care and social assistance emerged as the largest employers, supporting 647 local jobs (.idcommunity, 2024).

Housing affordability and availability are major concerns for the Edward River LGA. Vacancy rates across regional and metropolitan NSW are generally low. Between 2019 and 2020, during the introduction of COVID-19 lockdowns, rent increases were generally lower, and in some cases, median rents even decreased by as low as 17.6% (Berrigan). However, during this period, the Edward River LGA saw significant increases in median rents, particularly for one-bedroom (16.7%) and two-bedroom properties (25.0%) (NSW Government, 2023b).

Media reports indicate that tenants are experiencing significant difficulties finding and retaining affordable rental accommodation. Notably, less than one percent of rental properties are affordable for individuals earning a full-time minimum wage (AAP Newswire, 2023). Issues include strong competition for properties, rent bidding, significant rent increases, tenants spending a large portion of their income on rent, evictions, and potential homelessness (NSW Government, 2023b).

3.1.4. Deniliquin locality

Location

The proposed BESS would be located on private land zoned RU1 Primary Production within the rural locality of Deniliquin. To the north, east, and west, the area surrounding the Project site is predominantly grazed agricultural land.

Table 3-2: Proximal townships and localities, and population.

Township/ locality	Distance from Project site	Population (2021 Census)
Blighty NSW	~26km west	192
Mathoura NSW	~45km south	1,002
Finley NSW	~51km west	2,455
Tocumwal NSW	~68km southeast	2,862
Berrigan NSW	~72km southeast	1,264
Echuca VIC	~90km south	15,056

Social and Economic Environment

The locality of Deniliquin was home to 7,432 people at the time of the 2021 Census. The locality had a 5.1% unemployment rate in 2021, with Social Assistance Services or Hospitals as the highest employer. The closest larger population centres (over 20,000) are Shepparton and Swan Hill, VIC. A summary of townships/localities is presented in Table 3-2.

Additionally, Deniliquin's unemployment rate is lower at 3.9% compared to the state average of 4.9% (ABS, 2021). Deniliquin is losing population at a rate of around 68 residents per year (0.8%). In contrast, the rest of NSW is gaining population at an average rate of 1.1%. The local economy is also in decline, while the NSW average is improving (Edward River Council, 2022). Additionally, Deniliquin's unemployment rate is lower at 3.9% compared to the state average of 4.9% (ABS, 2021).

Deniliquin's location at key highway junctions and as an alternate route to the Newell Highway to Bendigo presents an opportunity for a regionally significant intermodal terminal utilising the Deniliquin railhead, subject to freight volume. These factors create the potential for Deniliquin to become a larger transport and logistics hub for southwestern NSW and northern Victoria (Edward River Council, 2022).

Between 2023 and 2050, Deniliquin's population is expected to almost double through efforts to foster population growth, expand housing options, activate new industries, create sustainable employment opportunities, and stimulate economic activity (Edward River Council, 2024). Strategies to achieve this growth include promoting tourism and events, expanding residential construction with a focus on affordable housing, developing a regionally significant centre for care and emergency services, expanding and intensifying the agribusiness sector, establishing a manufacturing and intermodal hub, and developing education, training, and research facilities, including a Country Universities Campus.

Regarding the leading industry in Deniliquin, the agricultural sector is the leading contributor to the economic base. Deniliquin is known for its rice production, wool, beef, and other grains and cereals. The town centre comprises the main retail area and access to several other service providers (Edward River Council, 2018a). The town centre comprises the main retail area and access to a number of other service providers (Edward River Council, 2018a).

The social and economic pressures in the Deniliquin locality are represented by a 2018 community profile on Deniliquin administered by the Federal Government's Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA). This profile found that between 2001 and 2016, the following took place (Murray-Darling Basin Authority, 2018):

- Population decreased by 12.2%
- Total workforce decreased by 26.4% (747 FTE)
- Agricultural workforce decreased by 73.1% (791 FTE)
- Agricultural manufacturing workforce increased by 74.7% (70 FTE)
- Non-agricultural private workforce decreased by 16.7% (624 FTE)
- Government services workforces increased by 18.5% (94 FTE)

Further, key economic statistics of Deniliquin are presented in Table 3-3.

The Plan set 'Sustainable Diversion Limits', which limit how much water can be used in the Basin by towns and communities, farmers, and industries while keeping the rivers and environment healthy (Murray–Darling Basin Authority, 2024). The Edward River runs through the town of Deniliquin, which is part of the larger Murray-Darling Basin network. The administration of water resources in the area has been altered by introducing the *Water Act 2007* (Cth) and the broader Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The plan has been perceived by some constituents in the Deniliquin locality as contributing to the social and economic pressures on the town, detailed in the above statistics from the community profile.

Following the release of the Murray-Darling Basin Authorities, Deniliquin Community Profile (Murray-Darling Basin Authority, 2018), the Edward Council wrote a submission to the Productivity Commission's 'Five Year Review of the Murray Darling Basin Plan' noting a friction between the purported environmental outcomes with the social and economic health of the town (Brennan, 2018). The Mayor of Edward Council at the time, Norm Brennan, noted that "the reality that is seen every day within our community is that the environmental outcomes being sought are stripping away from the social and economic outcomes. To date, any structural support or reform to mitigate these effects has been limited and failed to balance the negative impacts of having water removed" (Brennan, 2018, p.1). The letter conveys the sentiment that restrictions on water usage can potentially be detrimental to the region, particularly with regards to agricultural production, such as by reducing the availability of water for irrigation.

More recently, the Mayor of Edward River Council, Peta Betts (as at December 2023), expressed that "the government is simply turning a blind eye to the vast and ongoing problem they are creating for rural economies – in the last fortnight, thousands of people have taken to the streets, here in Deniliquin and in Leeton and Griffith, to rally against government proposed buybacks" (Edward River Council, 2023).

Table 3-3: Key economic statistics Deniliquin SAL (ABS, 2021)

Key economic statistics – Deniliquin SAL	
Top occupation:	1. Professionals (16.1%) 2. Community and Personal Service Workers (14.9%) 3. Technicians and Trade Workers (14.4%) 4. Managers (12.2%) 5. Clerical and Administrative Workers (11.8%)
Industry of employment:	1. Social Assistance Services (4.9%) 2. Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (4.0%) 3. Supermarket and Grocery Stores (3.6%) 4. Primary Education (3.3%) 5. Local Government Administration (3.2%)
Median weekly household income	$1,199

Accommodation and workforce:

The Project will likely require the utilisation of local accommodation and also the local workforce. The amount of available accommodation and workforce in the Deniliquin locality and surrounds is discussed in the 2023 'Deniliquin and Surrounds Local Area Plan and Recommended Actions' document (Destination Riverina Murray NSW, 2023, p.13-14). The Project will likely require the utilisation of local accommodation and the local workforce. The amount of available accommodation and workforce in the Deniliquin locality and surrounds is discussed in the 2023 'Deniliquin and Surrounds Local Area Plan and Recommended Actions' document (Destination Riverina Murray NSW, 2023, p.13-14) as being:

- "Overall, a lack of accommodation throughout the destination. This prevents visitors from staying overnight in the region, particularly the sporting market and other large-groups due to lack of large-scale accommodation."
- The document further describes that there is a "lack of affordable accommodation to support attraction and retention of the workforce" and, furthermore, "labour shortages, including skilled and unskilled workers, exacerbated by lack of international migration."

Given there is likely a shortage of accommodation and workforce in the region is a factor that will need to be managed for any Projects in the region. The Plan sets out the region's intention to increase its tourism accommodation capacity and also the affordability and availability of general housing (Destination Riverina Murray NSW, 2023).

As per the data maintained by SQM Research, the rental vacancy rate for Deniliquin (postcode 2710) has consistently remained below 3% since August 2011, indicating a very limited housing supply. The rate briefly increased to 3.2% in June but has since declined, reaching 0.1% in December 2024 (SQM Research, 2024). Since then, there has been a gradual increase in Deniliquin's rental vacancy rate, reaching 0.4% in September 2024 (SQM Research, 2024). Therefore, the current rental vacancy rate indicates extremely high rental demand. According to SubursbFinder (2023), a vacancy rate of 3% is considered healthy, with vacancy rates of less than 2% indicating high rental demand and above 4% mean more housing supply than demand.

Accommodation and workforce pressures will be contingent upon the requirements of other state-significant development Projects near to the Deniliquin locality. The coincidence of multiple Projects in the region will create greater demands for accommodation and the local workforce. Table 3-3 in section 3.2.2 outlines the proposed and approved state-significant Projects within 60km of the proposed Project site.

Traditional Owners and Aboriginal governance

The Riverina region is within the Wiradjuri Nation, the largest Indigenous area in New South Wales. Known as the "people of three rivers", the Wiradjuri people have deep connections with the Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, and Macquarie rivers. To the east, the Edward River flows through the traditional lands of the Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa Nations, which straddle the border of New South Wales and Victoria. This geographical proximity highlights the cultural and historical significance of these communities and their interconnected relationship with the land and waterways.

The Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre Aboriginal Corporation covers the Northern part of the Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa Country that includes the district around Deniliquin and Moonacullah. For the Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa peoples, their language is foundational to their culture, and the loss of traditional language was deeply impactful, but revitalising it can aid in healing and securing a meaningful future for younger generations. However, there is a historical lack of funding for cultural activities in southern NSW, including language resources.

Within the broader Riverina region, nine (9) local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) support the region's diverse lands, peoples, and cultures. The LALCs manage affairs pertaining to Aboriginal people living in the LGA, as well as managing land holdings in accordance with the revitalisation and rehabilitation of cultural heritage and values (DPE, 2023). Across the Edward River LGA there is one LALC: the Deniliquin LALC.

These bodies liaise with the ERC through the Aboriginal Advisory Committee. Currently, there is no Aboriginal Community Development Officer within the Deniliquin LALC to coordinate local Aboriginal interagency meetings, which are a key mechanism of organisation and communication for Aboriginal community support and development within the LGA.

3.2. Development context

3.2.1. Socio-economic planning context

Land-use planning at the regional level is guided by the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (the Regional Plan) (DPE, 2023). The plan aims to support productive and innovative growth for the region by protecting and enhancing the region's natural assets, improving transport connectivity and infrastructure, and investing in emerging industries, with a focus on renewable energy technology and investment. Another key objective was supporting the integration of Aboriginal culture, heritage, and aspirations into local planning. The plan also strongly emphasises housing, as it aims to ensure that housing options can meet regional demand for affordable accommodation over the coming years.

The plan recognises a stronger population growth, particularly along the Murray River, and related housing pressures. It also supports the transition to a net zero carbon emission state by 2050, including the establishment of the South-West Renewable Energy Zone. At the local level, socio-economic planning is guided by the ERC's Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) (Edward River Council, 2020). Key priorities within this plan include leveraging ERC's agricultural strengths, supporting the manufacturing and light industrial sectors, recognising and conserving heritage assets, providing infrastructure in the right place at the right time, and enhancing the liveability and attractiveness of the region. Access to a wider variety of housing choices is identified as crucial for facilitating this final priority.

Promoting and preserving the natural environment and wildlife habitat is noted as an integral to building sustainable and resilient communities. This involves understanding the impact of climate change on weather patterns and ensuring these findings are incorporated into local planning controls. The Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct (WWSAP), Albury Regional Job Precinct (ARJP), WR Connect industrial hub and freight terminal, and the South West Renewable Energy Zone have laid the groundwork for the region to leverage its agricultural and manufacturing strengths.

The WWSAP, situated on the Inland Rail, will connect Australia's richest food-growing region to global markets. It includes the Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics (RiFL) hub, providing overnight access to international ports and 75% of Australia's population. The precinct is expected to create up to 6,000 new jobs across various industries and is currently in the delivery phase, overseen by the Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation (NSW Government, 2023a).

The ARJP aims to streamline the planning process through technical studies, reducing the cost and time required for business establishment or expansion. This efficient pathway will attract investment across multiple industry sectors, leading to economic growth and job creation for the region's young, skilled, and expanding workforce.

3.2.2. Renewable energy policy and setting

The South West (SW) REZ was formally declared by the Minister for Energy under section 19(1) of the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (the Act) and published in the NSW Gazette on Friday 4 November 2022. It is important to note that the Deniliquin BESS is not located within the SW REZ; instead, it is situated approximately 25 km from the REZ border.

REZs are defined geographic zones that allow for a grouping together of new renewable energy generation, so that energy can be efficiently stored and transmitted across NSW. REZs are the equivalent of modern-day power stations in that they combine:

- New renewable energy infrastructure, including generators (such as solar and wind farms).
- Storage (such as batteries and pumped hydro).
- High-voltage transmission infrastructure (EnergyCo, 2024).

The SW REZ was chosen due to an abundance of high-quality wind and solar resources, proximity to existing and planned high-voltage transmission, including Project EnergyConnect, relative land-use compatibility and a strong pipeline of proposed Projects. The REZ is expected to support around 2,000 construction jobs, generating up to $2.8 billion in private-sector investment (NSW Government & EnergyCo, 2024).

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is the Infrastructure Planner for the REZ and is responsible for coordinating the delivery of Projects. As shown in Figure 3-1, the SW REZ encompasses the major towns of Buronga, Balranald, and Hay.

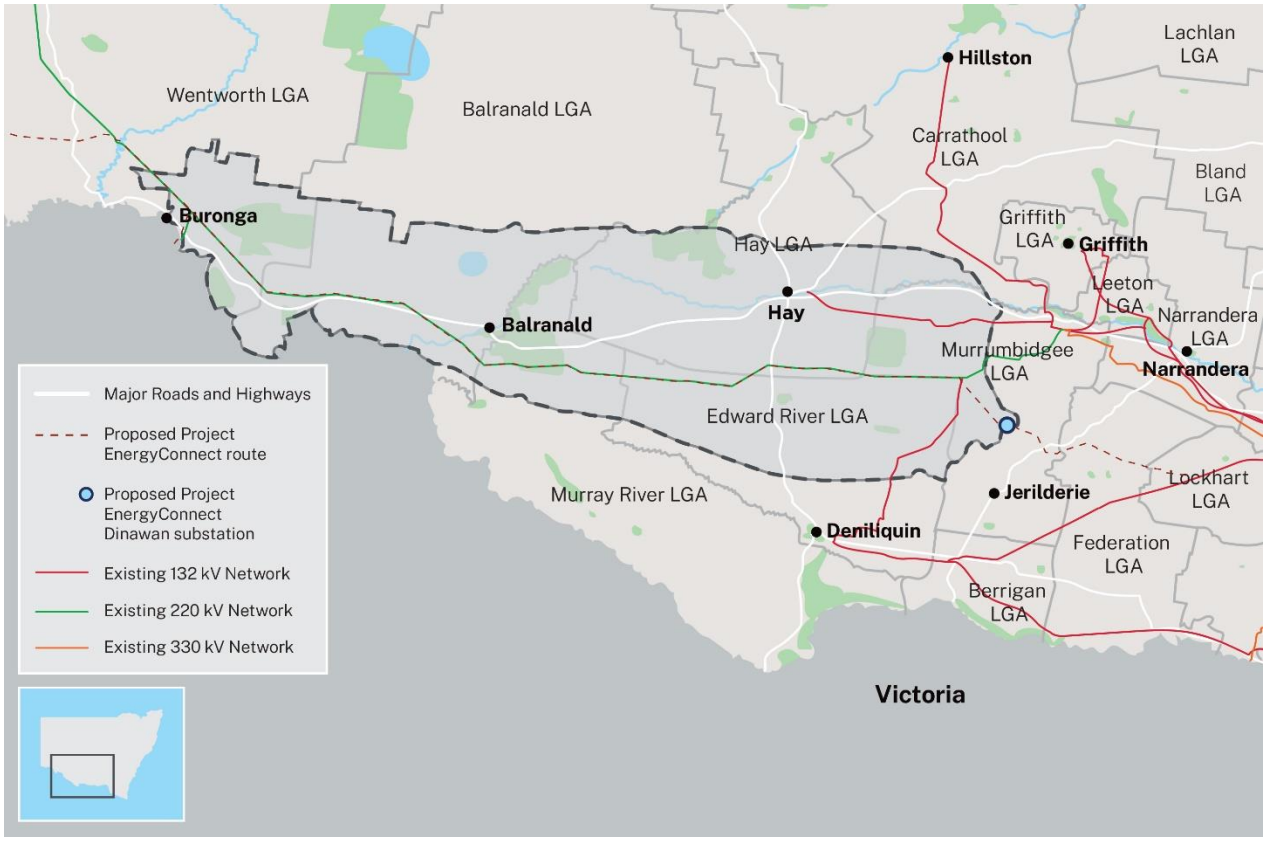

Figure 3-1: South West REZ Source: (EnergyCo, 2024)

The REZ declaration will likely further concentrate renewable energy development in the Riverina region. Already, there are several solar and wind developments that have either been constructed or are under construction in the Edward River region. These include the Currawarra Solar Farm (operational), Tilbuster Solar Farm (operational), and Oxley Solar Farm (in construction).

State-significant Projects within 60km of the Project site are outlined in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3: Proximal State Significant Developments

Project	LGA	Proximity to the Project	Stage of delivery
Deniliquin East BESS	Edward River	Adjacent to Project	Prepare EIS
Tarleigh Park Solar Farm	Edward River	~20km	Approved
Currawarra Solar Farm	Edward River	~35km	Operational
Deniliquin Ethanol Plant	Edward River	~40km	Approved
Conargo Wind Farm	Edward River	~40km	Prepare EIS

Source: (DPE, 2024)

4. Social Impact Evaluation

This section provides an evaluation of the social impacts identified in relation to the Project, with the aim of assessing the anticipated changes to the current social baseline due to the Project proceeding. Supplementary secondary insights have also been compiled to further contextualise, benchmark and qualify the matters raised to inform the evaluation of each social impact.

During the Scoping phase of the Project, a community online survey administered by the NGH engagement team asked some critical questions to understand community's perception of the Project in relation to the perceived impacts and to determine the attitude towards the Project. A total of 29 responses were received. The survey results revealed that the proposed Project can be grounds for contestation within local communities with about 41% of participants opposing the Project with majority strongly opposing (Figure 4-1). However, a two-day community consultation for the EIS phase, which was participated by 16 attendees in Deniliquin from 11 to 12 September 2024, did not reveal any grounds for contestation. Additionally, not a single person from the community participated in the survey.

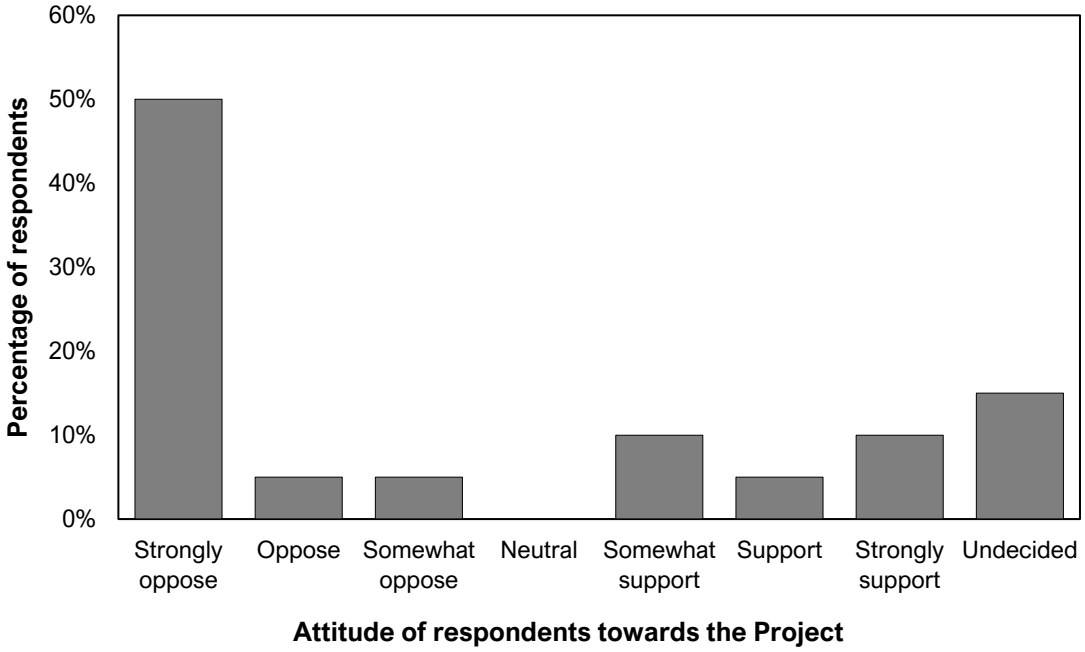

Figure 4-1: Attitude towards the Deniliquin BESS

Some of the reasons for opposing the Project's development could be explained by establishing the kinds of values that the community members attach to Deniliquin. As shown by Figure 4-2, the majority of the respondents attached values to the landscape, community safety and resilience, natural values, including biodiversity and ecosystems, and recreation opportunities, including sporting, fishing, etc.

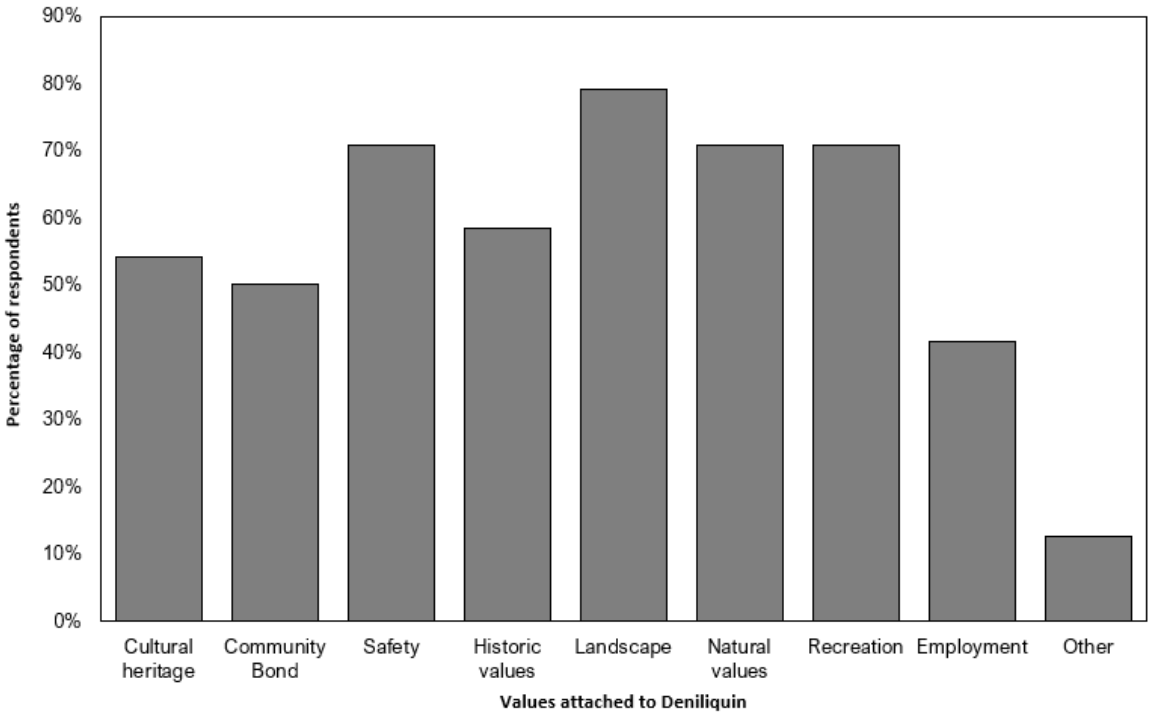

Figure 4--2: Thematic areas of values attached by the Deniliquin community

When respondents were asked what important social and economic factors apply to the local community, most were concerned about the potential impacts on property values, followed by impacts on the cultural heritage and recognised the benefits of the community benefit opportunities (Figure 4-3).

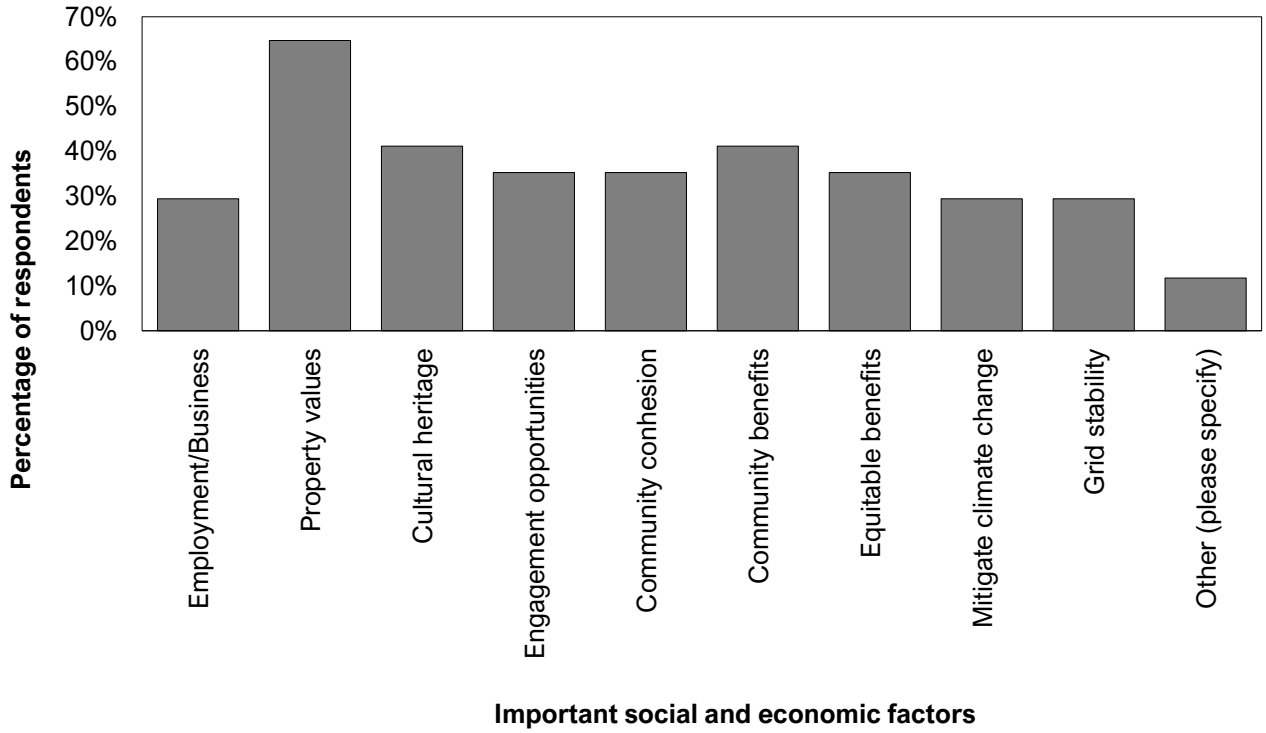

Figure 4--3: Important social and economic factors according to survey respondents

The details of each identified impacts are discussed in the following section, which expands on the positive and negative impacts raised during consultation and through assessment of the Project, categorising them according to the social impact categories of livelihoods, accessibility, way of life, surroundings, social

amenity, engagement and decision making, community, health and well-being and culture, as outlined in the SIA Guideline (DPIE, 2023a). The technical risk of the impact occurring has also been considered in addition to stakeholders' perceived concern regarding Project impacts. The cumulative impact of concurrent renewable energy and other development Projects has also been considered, rather than the impacts of the Project being assessed in isolation.

4.1. Livelihoods

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, livelihoods include "people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19).

Three themes emerged within the livelihood impacts categories: increased employment and training opportunities, increased local economic activity, and potential impacts on property values and insurance. Livelihood impacts are positive and negative and are discussed in the following sections.

4.1.1. Increased employment and training opportunities

The opportunity for increased employment in the region is a key potential Project benefit. During the anticipated 12-month construction period, the Project is estimated to employ 80-90 FTE workers, who are expected to vary in skill sets. The Project is expected to employ 1–2 FTE workers during its operational phase, in addition to employing local contractors to perform ongoing maintenance work, such as clearing the surroundings, maintaining fences, etc.

Interview and consultation participants welcomed the potential growth in employment opportunities that construction may offer, including procurement opportunities for local suppliers. For instance, one stakeholder stated that *"…locals would be excited…because of employment opportunities and hopefully, money spent in the town,"* and another said, *"…provide employment all the way through, not just at the build stage,"* when asked about their opinion of the proposed Project. One interview participant identified employment as the only benefit of the Project, stating, *"…other than the employment and hopefully having another 90 people spending their wages, there's probably not a lot of benefits. Maybe increased fuel sales."* While employment opportunity is the only benefit identified by this respondent, there is an acknowledgement that the Project could bring some economic benefits to the region, which is discussed later in the section.

However, according to the Council, *"…there is not enough local capacity to meet the requirements of the workforce to build the Project in the region…"* This could mean that, though the Project intends to employ locals, it is very likely that some workers may need to be sourced from outside the region. Additionally, there will be specialist jobs that cannot be sourced from the local population. The influx of workers outside the region could potentially change the community dynamics and impact the delivery of services and accommodation services. Contrarily, it could also mean increasing business activities in the region. The other impacts section discusses the associated positive and negative impacts of employing a workforce outside the region.

Though not enough local workforce may be available for the Project, considering generating local employment as an important aspect of bringing the Project to the region, the Project will develop strategies to employ Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractors who are local. This is with an expectation that locally registered EPCs would already have a workforce employed from the region. Should this strategy be implemented, much of the potential impacts associated with the influx of workers could be minimised. The stakeholders identified this strategy, and it remained consistent that, to maximise benefits offered through the Project to the local community, there were expectations for local workers and businesses to be engaged during the construction and operational phases of the Project. In addition, ~17% of survey respondents (N=29) identified securing employment from the Project as a benefit.

In addition to the increased employment opportunities, the Project presents an opportunity to benefit local people through increased training and development opportunities. Stakeholders who participated in the

interview and consultation sessions were positive about the benefits of increased training & education opportunities for local residents should the Project proceed. An interview participant stated that

> *"…employment training and linking that in with physical infrastructure development would be good…. General capabilities that would be required by the Project, you know, all the way through, not just at the build stage, I guess."*

The training opportunities, including pre-employment support or other upskilling, are expected to be generated through the Project. Further, TAFE- Deniliquin is already in the process of developing programs to cater to the needs of skilled professionals as developments of short programs *"…can be done as those programs are non-nationally recognised trainings…we can make them based on the requirements…"* This aligns with the potential benefits of increased training opportunities the Project could bring to the community. This potential benefit is consistent with the Council's expectations of the need for the Project to *"…focus on up-skilling."*

The importance of training opportunities for skill development is consistent across the consulted stakeholders. However, it was strongly mentioned by the representatives of Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre, who highlighted the potential of the Project to engage with young Indigenous people:

> *"…as many young people drop out of school at around Year 9 and spend time unproductively…later when they reach the age of around 30, they lack necessary skills even if they wish to enter job market."*

In order to meet the skills requirement of the Project, consultation revealed that it was important for local networks and support organisations to know, in advance, what kinds of jobs would be available and what skills would be required, so the preparedness of local people could be supported. However, an interview with TAFE revealed that with skills training development plans in development now, *"…models for most of those skills* (referring to electrical, plumbing and construction)*…needed to build the Project should already be running…"*

Therefore, considering the stakeholders' positive expectations, there is an opportunity for the Project to collaborate with the relevant stakeholders of Deniliquin to develop a clear career pathway. According to the stakeholders who participated in the interview, the pathway should focus on providing 'micro-skills' that could lead to employment, skill development, and increased confidence. According to the stakeholder, this can be initiated by the Project and remarked, *"…we would really like to see developers collaborate to help turn this vision into reality."*

Taken together, the positive impact significance for increased local employment and training opportunities is rated as **Medium** (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1: Positive impact significance for potential employment and training opportunities

Impacts	Ranking
Potential increase in local employment	There is a medium probability for a mild increase in the number of local people employed for the Project during the construction work and also 1-2 FTE during the operation phase [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Possible**] Social impact significance – **Medium**

Potential increase training opportunities	Noticeable improvements/increases in the skill training opportunities and frequencies [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**] Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.1.2. Increased local economic opportunity

The Project is perceived to create additional demand for goods and services such as construction support, accommodation, construction materials, freight, and local labour, directly and indirectly, through its supply chains. For instance, a relatively higher proportion (~ 24%) of respondents (N=29) acknowledged increased economic opportunities through employment, tourism, and economic stimulus as potential opportunities (Figure 4-3) when asked what they liked about the coming of large-scale renewable energy developments.

An EPC contractor is anticipated to be employed as a lead contractor during Project construction. However, some local businesses in Deniliquin and other regional centres would likely be able to supply some of these goods and services and/or subcontract to the EPC. During operations, there is likely to be an opportunity for procurement in maintenance and operations activities, and potentially, the local businesses could secure these contracts. An interview participant remarked,

> *"…naturally they're going to, you know, run out of screwdrivers or lose them or something like that and have to go to the local hardware, perhaps. Those sorts of things, you know, during the construction phase."*

Stakeholder consultations indicated that the key potential benefit of this Project is the increase in these supply chains. However, the council members suggested that limited trade resources existed in Deniliquin town, and an adequate notice period would be required to maximise the provision of services by local businesses. Predicted increased income and spending by construction workers and other supply chains are also expected to stimulate the local economy broadly.

Further, the Project has the potential to generate positive impacts for the host landholder and other stakeholders through local employment, as described earlier, and expenditure. The landholder benefits will diversify household income through hosting payments, supplementing the income generated from agricultural activities. However, despite recognising positive contributions to the landholder, some stakeholders raised concerns about the distributive equity of these payments and benefits and, as a result, the potential for inequity to result in community division, described in the relevant impacts section within this report.

In addition to the increase in local economic opportunity, ~ 41% of the survey respondents (Figure 4-3) noted the potential for further positive economic contribution of the Project through local community investment and sponsorship. The potential impacts generated from the increased community investment are discussed within the 'community' impact category. Regarding the community benefit ideas, stakeholders who participated in the interviews and attended the community drop-in sessions provided several suggestions on where funds could be distributed. This is further discussed in section 4.2.1.

The positive impact significance of increased local economic opportunities is rated as **Medium**, and the positive impact generated from community benefit sharing is rated **High** (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2: Impact significance for increased business opportunities

Impacts	Ranking
Potential increase in local economic activity	Medium probability for a noticeable increase in the economic opportunity from the Project during the construction work [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**] Social impact significance – **Medium**
Increased economic benefit through Community benefit sharing	Almost definitely expected to contribute to noticeable improvements in the community development aspects from the Project's contribution to community benefit sharing through supply chains to undertake developmental works [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Almost certain**]. Social impact significance – **High**

4.1.3. Potential impacts to property values and insurances

It is widely reported that renewable energy Projects have recurring concerns regarding the perceived potential impact of Project infrastructure on property values, especially for near neighbours. Some of the key concerns associated with this perceived potential impact are the visual and health impacts, further discussed later in the relevant impacts section. Most survey respondents (~65%) perceived the reduction in rural property values associated with land, houses, or property close to Project infrastructure as potentially detrimental to people's livelihoods.

Similarly, ~70% of the survey respondents perceived similar Projects impacting property values in general. This potential impact is consistent with the findings from CSIRO's report, where the concerns about falling property prices and compensation fairness resulting from the development of renewable Projects were reported as one of the important Australian attitudes towards renewable energy development (McCrea et al., 2024). However, the report stated that concerns about reducing the visual attractiveness of the local landscape and devaluing property were higher for transmission and wind farms than other renewables such as solar and BESS.

An initial assessment of the impacts on insurance premiums suggested potential impacts due to increased property risks associated with heightened fire risks. However, further consultation with stakeholders did not reveal any concerns or indications of premium increases, suggesting that the initial concerns may not be a significant issue. Further, credible studies suggesting such impacts are limited except for some anecdotal reports published on insurance web pages (see Rider, 2023).

The impact significance on property values is rated as **Medium**, and the impact significance for the potential impacts on insurance premiums is rated as **Low** (Table 4-3).

Table 4-3: Impact significance for property values and insurance

Impacts	Ranking
Perceived decrease in values of adjacent property	Medium probability for a 'mild' impact in the values of adjacent properties due to visual impacts and associated risks [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]

	Social impact significance – **Medium**
Perceived increase in insurance premiums	Little noticeable change may be experienced in the insurance premiums [Magnitude level – **Minimal**; Likelihood level – **Unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.2. Community

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, community include "composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, resilience, and people's sense of place" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19).

Three themes emerged within the community impacts categories: increased community investment, potential changes to community cohesion, and contribution to clean energy transition and grid stability. Community impacts are positive and negative and are discussed in the following sections.

4.2.1. Increased community investment

The Project presents an opportunity for increased community investment in localised initiatives through the proposed Community Benefit Sharing Program (CBSP). While the Applicant has made no financial commitments, the discussion with the Council has been established by issuing a letter of intent regarding the CBSP.

Major proportions (~42%) of the survey respondents identified community benefit sharing as an important social and economic factor that could benefit from the Project (Figure 4-3). This is consistent with the community expectations highlighted by the interview participants and stakeholders consulted by the Project's engagement team. Survey respondents suggested various ideas for the CBSP:

- initiating the development of community sports
- upgrading/improving community infrastructure, such as roads
- initiate a program to support activities for children.

However, a participant who attended the community consultation voiced that *"…community benefit should venture into the possibility of developing agriculture in the community…"* Another attendee also said, *"… I want to see community benefit going back to agriculture…"* However, it must be noted here that this statement is irrelevant to where the Project will be located. This is because the same attendee did not express any concerns (in relation to agriculture productivity), acknowledging that the land where the Project will be located has been left fallow. This is discussed in relevant impacts section within this report.

However, while the CBSP could be established with good intentions, the ERC expressed concerns based on past negative experiences with other renewable energy developers concerning the development and implementation of CBSP, reinforcing the need to engage the Council. ERC proposed that the CBSP be administered through a grant or sponsorship program in partnership with the Council. Similar concerns were raised by consulting participants from the Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre when reflecting on the need for the developers to reconsider the approach to community benefits and be clear on the reasons for providing such benefits.

The impact significance on increased community investment is rated as **High** (Table 4-4).\

Table 4-4: Positive impact significance for increased community investment

Impacts	Ranking
Increased community investment	It is expected for the Applicant and the Council to negotiate on the CBSP to contribute to the noticeable improvement in areas where the CBSP is invested [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Almost Certain**]. Social impact significance – **High**

4.2.2. Potential changes to community cohesion

The proposed Project can be grounds for contestation within local communities, adversely impacting community cohesion, trust, and relationships. The community conflict could arise due to differing opinions about renewable energy development and potential Project impacts. For instance, a survey administered by the Project's engagement team during the Scoping phase of the Project found that about 41% of participants opposed the Project, with the majority strongly opposing it.

However, all sixteen of the second community engagement attendees did not reveal any grounds for contestation and expressed their support for the Project. For instance, one of the attendees stated,

> *"…the land* [Project site] *is not good for agriculture. In fact, I thought of buying this piece of land as I knew that something was going to come up in the future…"*

Another said, *"…the land is not being used…"* implying the low agricultural production capacity of the land at the Project site. Such opinions were consistent across all the attendees of the second community engagement. Therefore, it is unlikely that the Project could change community cohesion.

However, the Council expressed that, though a positive attitude towards the Project exists in the community,

> *"…visual is a big concern as it is next to sub-station and visible and wondered how people would react when it becomes obviously visible once the development starts…"*

Therefore, while the second community engagement did not reveal any grounds for contestation, some may be opposed to it but chose not to take part in the survey or attend the community drop-in sessions.

The impact significance on potential changes to community cohesion is rated as **Low** (Table 4-5).

Table 4-5: Impact significance for potential changes to community cohesion

Impacts	Ranking
Potential changes to community cohesion	There is a low probability that the Project will disrupt community cohesion. However, taking into account the percent of survey respondents who opposed the Project during the Scoping phase, mild deterioration of the community cohesion could occur [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.2.3. Contribution to energy transition and grid stability

Stakeholders who participated in broader consultation and interviews identified the Project's contribution to clean energy. Stakeholders identified the perceived benefits the Project would bring in producing a reliable and affordable source of renewable energy.

About 17% of the survey respondents indicated 'renewable energy generation' and 'reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and help to combat climate change' when asked what they like about such Projects coming to their locality. However, an equal 17% of respondents expressed disapproval, with some stating that the Project is not "…*environmentally friendly…*" and that renewable Projects are merely a "… *money-making scam."*

Thus, while there are mixed attitudes regarding renewables' contribution to generating clean and green energy, some interview participants expressed their strong support for such developments linked to their emotions. For instance, an interview participant said:

> *"Yeah… You have to do it. I've got grand kids…I don't want them to have a terrible life because of global warming…It's something that we've done…. And I think the other thing is that we're probably about 30 years too late..."*

The positive impact significance on contribution to the clean energy transition is rated as **High** (Table 4-6).

Table 4-6: Impact significance for contribution to clean energy transition and grid stability

Impacts	Ranking
Potential contribution to clean energy transition	A high probability of contributing to the clean energy transition through storing the energy when in excess and supplying it when required, contributing to the grid stability is noticeable [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Likely**]. Social impact significance – **High**

4.3. Accessibility

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, accessibility includes "how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private, or not-for-profit organisation" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19).

Three themes emerged within the accessibility impacts categories: increased pressure on housing and accommodation, increased traffic on local roads, and increased pressure on social infrastructure. While all three impacts identified within the accessibility category are negative social impacts, certain groups of stakeholders may benefit.

For instance, while the community, in general, may experience increased pressure on housing and accommodation, this could also mean an increase in demand for the rental market for the real estate industry and house owners. Similarly, increased traffic could benefit local businesses, as discussed in section 4.1.2.

4.3.1. Increased pressure on housing and accommodation

According to the NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS, 2023), the Riverina Murray region, including Deniliquin, faces critical housing shortages and limited affordable housing options. Housing costs have

increased at a greater rate than incomes for decades, exacerbating the issue. As discussed earlier in the report (Section 3.1.4), the current rental vacancy rate of Deniliquin indicates extremely high rental demand.

Though the Applicant commits to generating local employment, as mentioned in section 3.1.4, Deniliquin and the broader region do not have enough workforce. Therefore, considering the shortage of available workforce and the required skills, it is anticipated that a major proportion of workers from the estimated 80-90 FTE (during peak construction) will be employed from outside the region, potentially increasing the pressure on housing and accommodation.

Therefore, depending on the accommodation arrangements for these workers, particularly if accommodation for the construction workforce is not actively planned, an increase in the non-resident population could strain an already tight housing market in Deniliquin and the region. Though increased demand could economically benefit landlords, it could further constrain the availability and affordability of rental stock and place upward pressure on rental prices, particularly when considering cumulative impacts. According to the ABS (2021a), the median weekly rent in the LGA was $220 in 2021.

Considering events such as Ute Muster, which attracts large gatherings of people, in addition to that of the Edward River Council Community Strategic Plan 2022-2050, highlighting 'build on the success of the Visit Deni Campaign to grow our visitor economy' (Edward River Council, 2022, p. 29), Deniliquin and the region already cater to a large number of visitors. For instance, one of the stakeholders who participated in the interviews said that during events such as Ute Muster, all accommodations in town cater to accommodating event sponsors, security and trade personnel. The stakeholder said,

> *…so generally, anybody who attends the Ute Muster, if they don't get in early and have their own caravan…go out to the actual site and camp out there….*

This statement highlights that existing accommodation cannot even support the events that come to Deniliquin. Further, the Council and all other stakeholders consulted did not want the Project to take up temporary accommodation as it could potentially impact the local tourism industry. The Council suggested developing temporary accommodation in Deniliquin to reduce the potential impacts on housing and accommodation significantly.

According to the Council, Fourpost Caravan and Camping, 12 km from Deniliquin, does not see much activity throughout the year and would be an ideal location to establish temporary accommodation for workers. The Council believes that, with several similar upcoming Projects, this could benefit the community in the long run.

Though there are not enough local workers to be employed for the Project, the Applicant could adopt a strategy of hiring established local contractors who already generate local employment. Adopting this strategy could mean that accommodation and housing issues would only remain relevant to a few specialised skilled workers and the Project staff who would visit the development site during the Project's development stage. However, this calls for developing an employment strategy to analyse the availability of established local contractors who can develop such Projects.

The negative impact significance of increased pressure on housing and accommodation is rated as **High** (Table 4-7).

Table 4-7: Impact significance for increased pressure on housing and accommodation

Impacts	Ranking
Increased pressure on housing and accommodation	Pressure on housing and accommodation during the Project's construction phase is definite or almost definitely expected. The intensity of scale or degree of change is expected to be moderate, with high sensitivity or importance. Thus, a noticeable deterioration in

	accommodation availability is expected during the Project's construction phase [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Almost certain**]. Social impact significance – **High**

4.3.2. Increased traffic on local roads

It is apparent that the Project could increase traffic, including heavy vehicles, during construction on the public road network. Construction activities have the potential to impact access to locations near the Project Site through temporary removal or changes in access arrangements and local parking. This may cause some discomfort to the local community. It must be noted that due to the rural context of the Project Site, it is unlikely that the Project would impact the availability of local parking or result in changes to access arrangements.

However, no stakeholders raised the issue of increased traffic on local roads during the construction and operational phases, both during the Scoping and EIS consultation phases. Conversely, during the survey carried out as part of engagement during the Scoping phase, about 24% of the online survey respondents selected *'traffic, during construction or operation'* when asked, *'What concerns do you have about potential impacts of large-scale renewable energy developments, generally?*' Additionally, about 35% of the respondents, for each category, chose '*temporary construction impacts (i.e., noise, traffic, dust)' and 'transportation planning and the use of local roads'* as their most important amenity factors.

This is consistent with the Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) for the Project, which concluded that the existing road network can accommodate the expected vehicle types and traffic volumes during the Project's construction, operation, and decommission phases. Additionally, the TIA indicated that a Traffic Management Plan would be prepared outlining a range of traffic management measures in order to minimise the potential impacts.

The negative impact significance of increased pressure on housing and accommodation is rated as **Medium** (Table 4-8).

Table 4-8: Impact significance of increased traffic on local roads

Impacts	Ranking
Increased traffic on local roads	Though an increase in traffic is expected, consultations reveal a low probability of impact on traffic on local roads from an increase in vehicular movements [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.3.3. Increased pressure on social infrastructure

As mentioned in section 4.1.1, though the Project intends to generate local employment, the majority of the workforce will likely come from outside the region due to the unavailability of a workforce in Deniliquin and the region. This could mean an influx of non-residents in Deniliquin, potentially increasing demand for local social and community infrastructure (e.g. health and community services), and cumulative impacts may apply.

While stakeholders and online survey respondents did not raise this as a concern, construction activities have the potential to temporarily affect access to essential infrastructure, including gas, electricity, water, sewerage, and telecommunications. Although short-term impacts to neighbouring premises' ability to access

utility services may be possible during the Project's construction phase, any impacts would be short-term and arranged with the affected parties in advance.

On the contrary, one of the stakeholders during the interview said that health care services have become stable and the "*…health care concerns of the community have been about primary care and not hospital…*" Although healthcare impacts were not mentioned, the influx of workers could potentially strain local healthcare services. Additionally, one of the survey respondents' responses to potential areas where the Project could invest in the community initiative was "*…anything that could help entice/attract teachers, medical staff…"* highlighting the need for increased human resources in these fields.

When considering the potential for cumulative impacts from the construction workforces of concurrent large-scale developments more broadly, there is likely to be significant increases in pressure on social services, particularly health and emergency services. To respond to these issues, a broader health and emergency service workforce strategy may be required.

The Council recognises the disruption to health care services resulting from the influx of workers, and the Council suggested that the Applicant explore the possibility of recruiting medical practitioners such as doctors and nurses to cater to the health care needs of the Project's workforce. Further, the Council suggested that the Project medical practitioners may practise from the site where temporary accommodation is built.

The negative impact significance of increased pressure on social infrastructure is rated as **High** (Table 4-9).

Table 4-9: Impact significance of increased pressure on social infrastructure

Impacts	Ranking
Increased pressure on social infrastructure	While increased pressure on other services, such as telecommunication, electricity, water, etc., was not highlighted, increased pressure on health care services was important. There is a high probability of impacts on health care services during the construction period experiencing a noticeable deterioration in the services [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Likely**]. Social impact significance – **High**

4.4. Health and wellbeing

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, health and wellbeing include "physical and mental health, especially for people vulnerable to social exclusion or substantial change, psychological stress resulting from financial or other pressures, access to open space and effects on public health" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19).

Health and well-being impacts include impacts on physical and mental health, psychological stress resulting from uncertainty, financial and/or other pressures, and changes to individual and public health. As shown in Figure 4-1, a large proportion of people who participated in the online survey during the Scoping engagement phase opposed the Project. According to Prenzel and Vanclay (2014), development Projects and any conflict contexts surrounding them can create psychological stress, uncertainty, and anxiety in people who oppose the Project and/or are directly impacted.

In addition to the psychological stress resulting from the attitude towards the Project, there were concerns surrounding the potential health impacts due to the nature of the battery Project. For instance, though it was not a common narrative, one near neighbour expressed concerns about potential health risks from EMF

(Electromagnetic field) radiation during the community consultations. Additionally, a survey respondent left comments such as *"…there is no need for them"* and *"…effect on long-term health."*

Taken together, it was apparent that some near neighbours were stressed about the proposed Project, which could potentially cause stress and anxiety to people who oppose the Project. However, regarding the EMF impacts on health, experimental studies on low-frequency EMF revealed conflicting data, leading to inconclusive findings (Diab, 2020). Consistent with Diab (2020), Malek et al. (2015) reported no statistically significant difference in cognitive performance and physiological effects between participants exposed to mobile phone base stations and sham exposure. However, since this growing science requires a detailed study of the relationship between BESS, EMF, and health, it must be approached with caution.

The negative impact significance of increased pressure on social infrastructure is rated as **Medium** (Table 4-10).

Table 4-10: Impact significance on health and wellbeing

Impacts	Ranking
Potential impacts on health and wellbeing through dust, noise, and perceived EMF	Small groups of individuals opposing the Project are expected to experience increased stress and anxiety. Regarding the potential EMF impacts on near neighbours, the duration of the impact could be permanent, but the mental impacts could be time-bound [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.5. Way of life

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, way of life includes "how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, and how they interact each day" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19). During construction, adverse social amenity impacts may be associated with traffic, noise, and air quality for near neighbours and/or along the proposed haulage route. These may impact any nearby residents' way of life, including their commuting or travelling time, their experience of travel, and their privacy, peace, and quiet enjoyment.

A survey conducted as part of the Scoping engagement phase revealed that ~40% of the respondents (Figure 4-4) were concerned about the noise that could be generated during the construction phase due to the increase in vehicular traffic. For instance, one of the interview participants expressed concern about the Project's noise level during the operational phase, mentioning, "*…hopefully it won't generate excessive noise, considering the area is surrounded by livestock owners with horses and sheep…*"

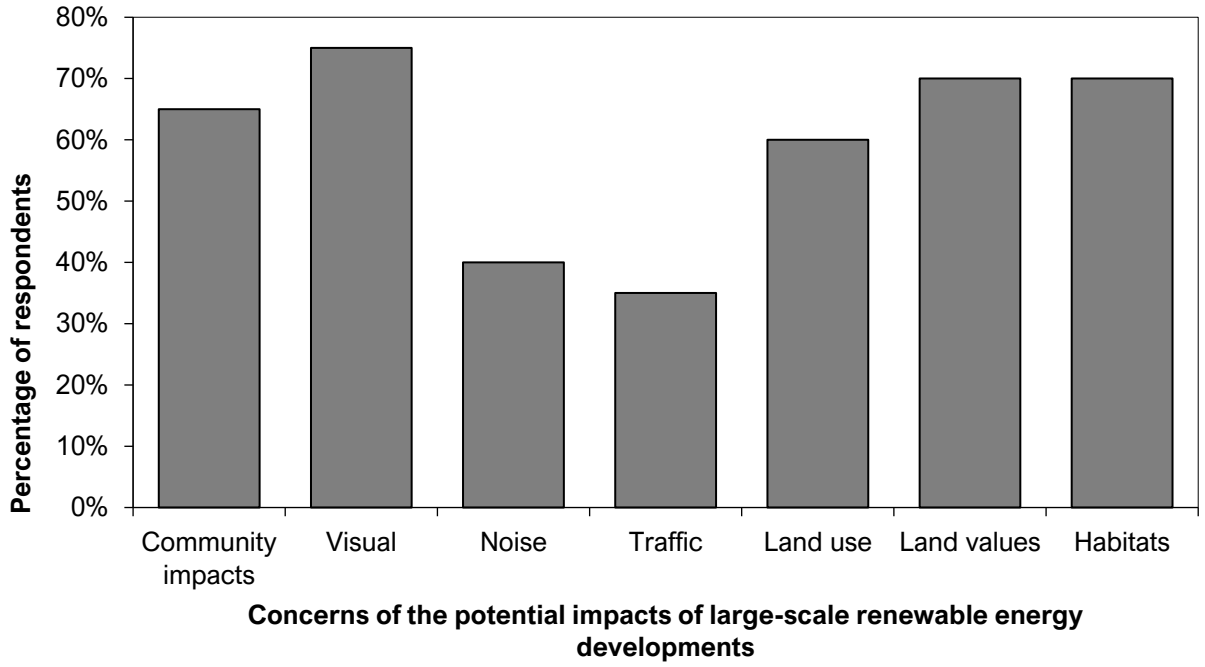

Figure 4-4: Survey respondents' concerns about the potential impacts of large-scale renewable energy developments

A Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) carried out for the Project concluded that noise emissions from the construction and operational phases of the Project comply with the nominated criteria, to the extent that the noise generated will be below the nominated sleep disturbance criteria. Further, road traffic noise due to additional traffic generated during the construction phase of the Project is also predicted to be negligible.

In addition to noise, ~35% of respondents were concerned about dust impacts and their associated health impacts. However, during the EIS consultation and engagement activities, not a single concern was raised regarding the noise and dust impacts that the Project could potentially cause.

The negative impact significance of increased noise on the way of life and that of dust affecting the air quality is rated as **Low** (Table 4-11).

Table 4-11: Impact significance on way of life

Impacts	Ranking
Impacts of noise on the way of life	Except for some concerns expressed during the Scoping phase of the Project's consultation, the stakeholders and attendees of the community engagement program expressed no concerns [Magnitude level—**Minor**; Likelihood level—**Unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**
Impacts of dust and air quality on the way of life	Though impacts on air quality through the increase in dust was one of the important concerns established during the Scoping phase consultation, further consultation during the EIS phase did not reveal any concerns from the stakeholders [Magnitude level—**Minor**; Likelihood level—**Unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.6. Culture

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, culture includes "both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, practices, obligations, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19).

Though the Scoping SIA report acknowledged the potential for damage to, or uncovering of, Aboriginal cultural assets during construction, the same concern was not featured during the consultation for the EIS phase.

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) has been undertaken in consultation with representative Aboriginal stakeholders for the Project as a part of the EIS. The ACHA concluded that the Project site is not listed on any heritage register at a state or local level and that no items or structures of historical significance were encountered during the site visit. Therefore, the report concluded that the proposed development of the Deniliquin BESS will not have a negative overall heritage impact on the Project site of the surrounding area.

The negative impact significance of the negative impact on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is rated as **Low** (Table 4-12).

Table 4-12: Impact significance on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

Impacts	Ranking
Impacts on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage	Though the possibility of impacts on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage from the development of the Project was raised during the Scoping phase, it was not a concern during the EIS consultation phase [Magnitude level – **Minimal**; Likelihood level – **Very unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.7. Surrounding

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, surrounding includes "ecosystem services such as shade, pollution control, erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19).

Three themes emerged within the surrounding impacts categories: change in landscape character and visual amenity, increased fire risks, and loss of agricultural land. While all three impacts identified within the category are negative social impacts, the landowner may benefit from leasing the land, which would otherwise be unproductive.

4.7.1. Change in landscape character and visual amenity

A survey conducted during the Scoping engagement phase revealed that more than 70% of the respondents (Figure 4-4) were concerned about the Project's visual impacts. However, during the EIS community engagement phase, an attendee asked about the height of the batteries. After explaining that the height of the batteries would be below 3 metres, the attendee said, *"…in that case, I do not see any issues regarding the visual impacts that the Project would have…"* This was consistent with another attendee who perceived no concerns about the visual impacts.

This is consistent with the stakeholders who participated in the semi-structured interview. Although visual impact was discussed during the interview, it was not raised as an issue by all the interview participants. Instead, one interview participant noted that the visual impacts may be temporary, as people will get used to seeing the Project, given its proximity to an existing substation. A visual impact assessment carried out for the Project also concluded that the Project would result in an overall low visual modification of the existing landscape character due to the existing electrical infrastructure on the site. Thus, the Project is not expected to disrupt or alter the key landscape features of the visual catchment.

Almost 80% of the survey respondents valued the landscape in their local area (Figure 4-2). Similarly, ~70% expressed concerns about disrupting the habitat during the development of large renewable Projects. While these concerns are valid, the ecological assessment carried out as part of the Biodiversity Development Assessment of the Project reported that no threatened species and high-quality habitats were recorded within the proposed Project site.

The negative impact significance of the impacts on landscape character and visual impacts are rated as **Low** (Table 4-13).

Table 4-13: Impact significance on change in landscape character and visual amenity

Impacts	Ranking
Impacts on landscape character affecting people's sense of place	Subsequent community consultations and interviews did not reveal any concerns regarding the landscape change due to the development of the Project [Magnitude level – **Minimal**; Likelihood level – **Very unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**
Impacts on visual	Though, initial assessment indicated visual impacts to be significant, further consultations and engagement process did not reveal any concerns from the stakeholders who participated in the consultation processes [Magnitude level – **Minimal**; Likelihood level – **Very unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.7.2. Fire risks

The fire risk can be categorised into two categories: the potential for the BESS lithium battery to catch fire and the potential for the BESS to catch fire due to surrounding grass or bushfires. For instance, during the EIS community consultation, an attendee asked what type of batteries would be used for the Project. The reason was the fire risk, as the attendee stated, *"…bring batteries with low fire probability…"* Similarly, another attendee expressed concerns and noted that *"…batteries are getting recalled because of fire; I'm not so sure about such risks for large batteries…"* Such a statement indicates people's concern about batteries and potential fire risks.

This concern was consistent with ~48% of the survey respondents, carried out during the Scoping phase of the community engagement, identifying *'fire management practices'* as their top environmental concern related to the Project. Additionally, a survey respondent noted concerns about the risk of battery fires damaging nearby landscapes and farms.

However, a Rural Fire Service (RFS) representative from Deniliquin noted that while there may not be a significant fire hazard, local concerns exist, and they expect the Applicant to develop an emergency

management plan and collaborate with them. This call from the RFS is an opportunity for the Applicant to develop management and emergency response plans in close consultation with the RFS to minimise the fire risk and be prepared in case of a fire outbreak. This is consistent with the findings from the Project's Preliminary Hazard Assessment. The assessment concluded that the likelihood rating of fire hazard risk from the Project is very to extremely unlikely.

The impact significance of the potential fire risk is rated as **Medium** (Table 4-14).

Table 4-14: Impact significance of fire risks

Impacts	Ranking
Increased potential fire risks	There exists a perceived medium probability of fire risks due to the Project. The risk extends from construction to the decommissioning phase with a moderate level of concern from the respondents [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.7.3. Loss of agricultural land

Approximately 60% (Figure 4-4) of the survey respondents identified change in land use as one of their concerns from the Project and similar other renewable energy developments. Changes to existing land use were perceived as a negative impact of the Project, commenting that the Project will impact their farming enterprise, the overall productivity of the land, and consequently, the ability of landowners to profit from their land.

However, the Project site is located on an unproductive land. As indicated in section 4.2.2, an attendee at the EIS engagement session said the land where the Project is planned is *"not good for agriculture."* Similarly, another attendee said the *"land is not being used…low production…"* Therefore, considering the location of the land where the Project will be (adjacent to the existing sub-station), in addition to the land being left barren currently, with a history of some form of surface mining, the impact on agriculture productivity is not significant.

The significant impact on the loss of agricultural land is rated as **Low** (Table 4-15).

Table 4-15: Impact significance on loss of agricultural land

Impacts	Ranking
Loss of agricultural land	Considering the land not being used for farming, the impact is rated as low probability with the least level of concerns expressed by stakeholders [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.8. Decision-making systems

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, the decision-making system includes "the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and have access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19).

Two themes emerged within the decision-making systems impacts categories: perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making and distributive inequity.

4.8.1. Perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision making

With the development of many renewable energy Projects, there may be a real or perceived lack of inclusion of community members such as near-neighbours and relevant local stakeholders in decision-making processes. This can potentially impact people's ability to make informed decisions, which may lead to reduced levels of trust in any developmental process.

Stakeholders and the attendees of the community engagement sessions recognised the need for ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and the local community to ensure the enhancement of positive social impacts and the minimisation and mitigation of negative social impacts. A representative of the Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre who was consulted highlighted the importance of people in leadership positions (the Applicant) consulting with the communities rather than consultants or 'lower-level representatives' to ensure expectations are properly communicated.

Though respondents preferred several ways to engage with them, most (~40%) chose their preferred method of obtaining information about the Project from the Project's webpage (Figure 5-5). This is important as it indicates the importance of keeping the Project's webpage updated. One of the survey respondents notes the importance of disseminating *'balanced information via a well-advertised presentation to the community – with Q & A…preferably in the early evening to maximise attendance from employed persons."* Another stated *", Please address concerns within the survey and respond via email or post."* Such statement from the respondents shows the level of interest communities have regarding the Project and their willingness to be included in the decision-making process. However, ~17% of the survey respondents responded as *"no further contact necessary."*

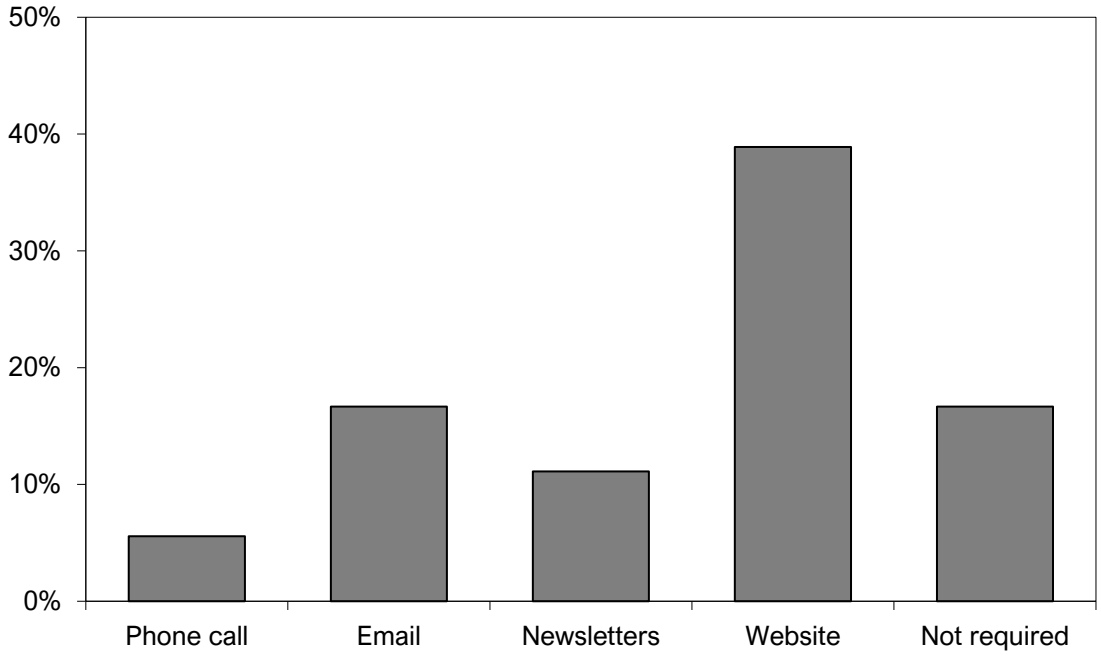

Figure 4-5: Percentage of respondents showing how they would want the Project team to engage with them going forward

There is also potential for a lack of community inclusion in decision-making and governance surrounding the community benefit-sharing program. This can particularly be the case if there is not an active focus on seeking out and securing community inclusion within the benefit-sharing design.

The significant impact of the perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making is rated as **High** (Table 4-16).

Table 4-16: Impact significance on perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making

Impacts	Ranking
Perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making	Considering the significance of engagement acknowledged by the survey respondents, there is a high probability of not meeting the expectations of communities, leading to a substantial deterioration of people's trust in the Project [Magnitude level – **Major**; Likelihood level – **Likely**]. Social impact significance – **High**

4.8.2. Distributive inequity

A recent CSIRO report stated that perceived benefits were more important than perceived impacts, as was the distributional fairness of perceived impacts and benefits. For instance, the report found that concerns over negative impacts and perceptions of unfairness regarding *"how much the community would bear the 'costs' versus receiving the benefits (distributional fairness) were next most important, with distributional fairness closely related to perceived benefits"* (McCrea et al., 2024, p. 27).

Consistent with the report, despite recognising the positive economic contributions to landholders, some stakeholders raised concerns about the distributive equity of these payments and benefits and, as a result, the potential for inequity to result in community division. This impact could likely be compounded by the large

number of renewable energy Projects currently in the planning phase or being developed in and around the region and perceived issues relating to distributive equity of the Project's negative and positive impacts.

For instance, ~ 21% of the survey respondents identified *'the equitable distribution of benefits'* as the Project's most important social and economic factor. This could be in the form of community benefits, as indicated by ~24% of the survey respondents, and also mentioned by stakeholders during the consultation processes. An equitable distribution of benefits and impacts is important as the perception of unfairly distributed impacts and benefits can negatively affect social acceptance and increase the likelihood of oppositional behaviours.

The significant impact of the perceived lack of distributive equity is rated as **Medium** (Table 4-17).

Table 4-17: Impact significance on perceived lack of distributive equity

Impacts	Ranking
Perceived lack of distributive equity	There exists a medium probability of communities developing an attitude that all benefits are directed to some groups or individuals. This could potentially impact the level of social acceptance of the Project [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.9. Summary of Social Impacts

A summary of the impact evaluation of potential positive and negative social impacts is provided in Table 4-18 and 4-19, respectively. The tables outline the impact category in line with the SIA Guideline (DPIE, 2023b), the perceived potential impacts on people, the Project aspect that may cause the impact, the stakeholder group that may be affected by the impact, the phase of the Project in which the impact may occur, and the likelihood and magnitude rating alongside the resulting impact significance.

The table also highlights the existing and potential enhancement measures against each identified potential benefit for the positive impacts and potential mitigation measures for the negative impacts. After evaluating each impact against the enhancement and mitigation measures and then considering cumulative impacts, residual significance is evaluated.

Table 4--18: Social Impact Assessment Summary - Positive Social Impacts

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Timing /Duration	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Enhancement Measure	Residual Significance
Livelihoods	Potential increase in local employment	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	C, O, D	Broader Community	Minor + Possible **Medium**	Continue to foster the use of local contractors and suppliers	**High**
	Potential increase in training opportunities				Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Liaise with local training providers and tailor the training needs to develop the required skills	**High**
	Potential increase in local economic activity	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	C, O, D	Broader Community, Local service providers and businesses	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Continue to foster the use of local contractors and suppliers. Coordinate efforts and liaise with key stakeholders to coordinate the provision of accommodation and other services or suppliers, including opportunities for local contractors and services.	**High**
	Increased economic benefit through community benefit sharing	Community benefit fund generating economic activities	C, O	Broader community, Local service providers, Community groups, Local government, Vulnerable	Moderate + Almost Certain **High**	Indirect benefits to local services through the construction and operation phases. Payments to host landholders via neighbour agreements result in financial contributions to the local community. A community benefit-sharing program will include a component to fund community benefit	**High**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Timing /Duration	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Enhancement Measure	Residual Significance
				community members		and employment programs. Promote training and upskilling opportunities in the local community.	
Community	Increased community investment	Community benefit fund leading to improved social and community infrastructure	C, O	Broader community, Local service providers, Community groups, Local government, Vulnerable community members	Moderate + Almost Certain **High**	Liaise with the Council and, through continued engagement, identify the priorities and contribute agreed funding as a community development fund with the intention of building a legacy.	**High**
	Potential contribution to clean energy transition	Establishment and operation of Project Infrastructure	O	Broader community, Energy consumers, State and Federal Government	Moderate + Likely **High**		**High**

Table 4--19: Social Impact Assessment Summary - Negative Social Impacts

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Timing /Duration	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
Livelihood	Perceived decrease value of adjacent property	Payments to host and proximal landholders, establishment of Project infrastructure, public release of Project plans	P, C, O, D	Proximal landholders	Minor + Possible **Medium**	Continued engagement with host and proximal landholders and the broader community. The community benefit program includes an ongoing targeted community sponsorship program and planning agreements with local councils. Continued implementation of Host landholder and neighbour agreements.	**Low**
	Perceived increase in insurance premiums	Increase in potential fire and health risks from the Project			Minimal + Unlikely **Low**	Continued engagement with host and proximal landholders. Liaise with insurance companies to convey accurate information to the broader community.	**Low**
Community	Potential changes to community cohesion	Payments to host landholders and difference in attitude towards the Project	P, C, O, D	Host landholders, near neighbours and the broader community	Minor + Unlikely **Low**	Further engagement with the broader community and strategies to increase social acceptance, such as through community benefit investment and funding.	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Timing /Duration	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
Accessibility	Increased pressure on housing and accommodation	Establishment and construction of Project infrastructure	C	Accommodation providers and the Broader community	Moderate + Almost Certain **High**	Develop Employment and Accommodation Strategy with the following strategies: • Continue to foster the use of local contractors and suppliers. • Coordinate efforts and liaise with key stakeholders to coordinate the provision of accommodation and other services or suppliers. • Collaboration with other renewable energy Applicants.	**Medium**
	Increased traffic on local roads	Movement of construction materials & increased traffic due to workforce travel	C	Broader Community and road users	Minor + Possible **Medium**	Development and implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), including traffic management measures. Develop detailed planning of transport routes with public safety considerations and information disclosure, notifying residents and considering any sensitive user groups.	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Timing /Duration	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
	Increased pressure on social infrastructure	Establishment and construction of Project infrastructure	C	Health providers	Moderate + Likely **High**	Finalised Planning Agreements with host Councils. Collaboration with other renewable energy Applicants. Explore the potential of recruiting health workers to cater to the Project's needs.	**Medium**
Health and Wellbeing	Potential impacts on health and wellbeing through dust, noise and perceived EMF	Establishment of Project	P, C, O	Proximal landholders and the broader community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Continued engagement with host and proximal landholders and the broader community. Implement measures outlined in the EIS relating to hazard and risk management.	**Low**
Way of life	Impacts of noise on the way of life	Establishment and construction of Project infrastructure	C	Proximal landholders	Minor + Unlikely **Low**	Development and implementation of a CEMP to identify controls to be implemented during the construction phase.	**Low**
	Impacts of dust and air quality on the way of life	Establishment and construction of Project infrastructure	C	Proximal landholders	Minor + Unlikely **Low**		**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Timing /Duration	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
Culture	Impacts on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage	Construction and operation of Project infrastructure	C, O	First Nations People	Minimal + Very unlikely **Low**	Implementation of management measures, including avoidance and salvage.	**Low**
Surrounding	Impacts on landscape character affecting people's sense of place	Establishment of Project infrastructure	C, O	Proximal landholders, nearby residents, tourists, and tourism operators	Minimal + Ver unlikely **Low**	Ongoing consideration of neighbour/adjacent property impacts and mechanisms to address personal issues on a case-by-case basis through host landholder and neighbour agreements.	**Low**
	Impacts on visual	Establishment of Project infrastructure	C, O	Proximal landholders, nearby residents, tourists, tourism operators, and the Broader community	Minimal + Very unlikely **Low**	Continued implementation of Host landholder and neighbour agreements. Targeted vegetation screening is to be planned in collaboration with affected landholders.	**Low**
	Increased potential fire risks	Establishment, construction, and operation of	C, O	Proximal landholders	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Develop management and emergency response plan in consultation with FRS	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Timing /Duration	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
		Project infrastructure					
	Loss of agricultural land	Establishment, operation, and decommissioning of Project infrastructure	C, O, D	Landholders and the broader community for farm production	Minor + Unlikely **Low**	Continued implementation of landholder and neighbour agreements.	**Low**
Decision-making systems	Perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making	Community and stakeholder engagement activities	P, C	Broader Community	Major + Likely **High**	Continued community engagement and community drop-in sessions throughout construction and operation. Continue proactive personal engagement with community members and proximal residents.	**Low`**
	Perceived lack of distributive equity	Community and stakeholder engagement activities	P, C, O	Broader Community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**		**Low**

5. Social impact mitigation and management

Social impact management planning is a key consideration of SIA. It ensures that the impacts identified through the SIA process and through community consultation activities are managed effectively across the development's life cycle.

This section provides a framework for managing social impacts and enhancing social benefits. It also provides further detail on the proposed strategies to be implemented in response to the Project's predicted social impacts. It relates to those impacts (both positive and negative) that have been evaluated as significant.

The proposed strategies seek to address multiple potential social impacts, whereas the measures noted in Table 4-18 and 4-19 seek to address the identified impacts. The identified enhancement and mitigation strategies were developed through community consultations, semi-structured interviews, and survey data. Furthermore, the social team's experience and expertise in undertaking SIAs for similar Projects across Australia also served as an important resource for developing social impact mitigation and management.

NSW SIA guideline (DPIE, 2023b, p. 15) outlines that mitigation measures to respond to Project impacts may be:

- Performance-based – achieve an appropriate social outcome without specifying how the outcome will be achieved
- Prescriptive – actions or measures that must be taken, such as a known best-practice technology, design or management approach
- Management-based – where potential impacts can be satisfactorily avoided or mitigated by implementing known management approaches.

Taken together, the social impact mitigation and management is broadly grouped within three broad categories: stakeholder engagement plan, community benefit sharing, and accommodation and employment strategy.

A summary of impacts and associated mitigations and enhancements is presented in Section 6.1. Where possible and relevant, some of these mitigation and enhancement measures have been consolidated into the following management strategies:

- Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (CSES)
- Accommodation and Employment Strategy (AES)
- Community Benefit Sharing Program (CBSP).

5.1. Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The community consultation, which included drop-in sessions, meetings, and interviews with stakeholders, revealed the need for continued engagement to foster social acceptance of the Project and ensure that communities are involved in the decision-making processes regarding its development.

The following are the key engagement needs for stakeholder and community engagement during the coming Project phases:

- Open, transparent, timely, and accessible communication of Project information to minimise uncertainty and address concerns.
- Address concerns about potential amenity and safety impacts (e.g., traffic, noise, and visual), as well as real and perceived impacts on the environment.
- Continue regular engagement with Councils, particularly during construction, to discuss and adaptively respond to any emerging community and business concerns.

- Develop accessible, adequate and responsive grievance and remedy mechanisms in the event of complaints.
- Communicate intentions about the accommodation of both the construction and operational workforces.
- Robust engagement with the community to allay concerns about the real and perceived.
- Establish a Community Consultative Committee and Community Benefit Sharing Program. Provide ongoing opportunities for the local community to be involved in decision-making processes relating to the Project, the Community Consultative Committee, and the Community Benefit Sharing Program. Ensure representation of Traditional Owners and other key local Aboriginal stakeholders.
- Collaborate with local councils and other key regional economic or social development stakeholders to support regional economic and social development initiatives.
- Work with economic development stakeholders to showcase the Project and the industry within the region. Tell the positive story of the Project's success.
- Integrate engagement needs for developing the Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan (IAPP) and Community Benefit Sharing Program (CSBP).
- Develop Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan in collaboration with First Nations People and Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre, Deniliquin.

5.2. Accommodation and Employment Strategy

To mitigate the impact on housing and accommodation within the social locality, it is recommended to prepare an Accommodation and Employment Strategy (AES) in consultation with local Councils and key stakeholders to:

- Propose measures that may be adopted to ensure adequate supply and availability of accommodation to house the Project's construction and operational workforce.
- Ensure that any new accommodation that may be developed, is situated within a reasonable distance from the Project Site and in an area that is considered suitable by Local Council(s). For instance, this may include prioritising the development of worker accommodation in Fourpost Caravan and Camping, 12 km from Deniliquin as suggested by the Council.
- Prioritise accommodation that avoids or reduces adverse social impacts on communities, such as impacts on the local housing market (i.e., given the potential for upward pressure on housing prices and housing availability for residents).
- Consider partnerships with existing accommodation providers, including temporary accommodation providers and manufacturers. However, in the selection of accommodation options, ensure that other industry sectors e.g., tourist accommodation providers, are not disadvantaged by the use of existing accommodation options in the region.
- Coordinate with the Council and local stakeholders and undertake an inventory of any buildings that are left under-utilised with an intention of converting them into a temporary accommodation for the Project's workforce.
- Facilitate the employment of local residents, where appropriate, to reduce impacts of Project related population influx. This could be achieved by employing the locally registered contractors, which could achieve local employment generation as well as reduce pressure on accommodation: this is with an assumption that the local contractors would already have local people employed.
- Liaise with education and training providers, such as TAFE to understand training needs and to sponsor skills development where required. This could form a part of legacy building of the Applicant.

- Develop policies and guidelines detailing expectations for Project workforce behaviours and safety whilst workers are in transit to site from their home communities, onsite, in accommodation camps, and when interacting with local communities.
- Where possible, consult with community liaison representatives for other renewable energy and large infrastructure Projects in the region to coordinate and appropriately manage the influx of workers to the region to minimise pressure on local stakeholders and businesses.

5.3. Community Benefit Sharing Program

This section will inform the development of the Project's Community Benefits Sharing Program (CBSP) which would aim to increase benefits to local community members throughout the Project lifecycle. On 8th October 2024, Edward River Council issued a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Applicant for "Community Benefit Fund (under a Planning Agreement)" wherein the Council expressed their support welcoming the investment in the region and community (see Appendix B)

In the LOI, the Council indicated that negotiation in relation to the CBSP will be reached with the Applicant once the Project status progresses towards determination stage by NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. The Applicant is committed to entering into planning agreements for the Project with the Council.

In addition to the CBSP which the Applicant will enter into the agreement with the Council, the Applicant will explore the possibility of sponsoring community programs. For instance, the Applicant was one of the sponsors of the 2024 Deni Ute Muster. To ensure that sponsoring of the programs and the CBSP lead to a lasting impact, the Applicant could:

- Continue to consult the community to understand needs and priorities to tailor the Community Benefit Sharing Program initiatives throughout the life of the Project.
- Collaborate with other industry and renewable energy developers to ensure coordination in the administration of funds across the communities most impacted by development within the region to avoid overlap and duplication.

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Appendix A Community Profile Data Set

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

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin UCL	Deniliquin and Surrounds SAL 2	Edward River LGA	Murray River LGA	Murray SAL 4	NSW
Population (n)	6,431	6,837	8,456	12,850	123,552	8,072,163
Female (%)	51.8	48.4	50.7	50.1	49.3	50.6
Male (%)	48.2	51.6	49.3	49.9	50.7	49.4
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population (%)	5.6	4.1	4.8	3.8	4.0	3.4
Median age (years)	47	49	46	49	44	39
0-14 years (%)	16.1	17.8	17.4	16.9	18.1	18.2
65+ years (%)	26.9	25.2	24.9	28.5	23.4	17.7
Country of birth (Australia) (%)	82.9	84.1	83.9	83.8	82.5	65.4
English only used at home (%)	86.8	89.0	87.9	89.2	86.9	67.6

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin UCL	Deniliquin and Surrounds SAL 2	Edward River LGA	Murray River LGA	Murray SAL 4	NSW
Households - non-English language is used (%)	4.2	3.4	3.7	4.1	6.7	29.5
Mental health condition	10.8	8.0	10.0	7.9	10.2	8.0
No long-term health condition(s) (%)	48.2	54.9	51.0	55.1	53.4	61.0
Year 12 or equivalent (%)	10.2	11.0	10.4	10.8	11.7	14.5
Certificate 3-4/Diploma (%)	19.5	19.3	19.8	19.9	20.5	15
Bachelor degree and above (%)	11.4	11.5	12.4	12.4	14.9	27.8
Family households (%)	60.7	68.7	64.2	70.5	66.7	71.2
Couple family with children (%)	31.9	37.1	35.6	36.3	37.2	44.7
One parent family (%)	16.5	10.4	13.8	10.6	15.5	15.8
Single (or lone) person household (%)	36.6	29.3	33.4	27.5	30.5	25.0

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin UCL	Deniliquin and Surrounds SAL 2	Edward River LGA	Murray River LGA	Murray SAL 4	NSW
Median household income ($/week)	1,159	1,208	1,240	1,260	1,341	1,829
Separate house (%)	87.6	93.7	90.0	89.0	86.1	65.6
Owned outright (%)	39.8	48.6	40.6	46.5	37.8	31.5
Owned with a mortgage (%)	28.2	25.3	29.4	27.9	30.7	32.5
Rented (%)	28.4	16.3	24.8	18.7	26.4	32.6
Median mortgage repayment ($/month)	1,083	1,083	1,083	1,408	1,300	2,167
Owner with mortgage households with mortgage repayments greater than 30% of household income (%)	6.6	12.3	8.2	10.3	10	17.3
Median rent ($/week)	230	170	220	260	250	420
Renter households with rent payments greater than 30% of household income (%)	31.7	21.4	30.0	26.7	29.5	35.5
IRSAD decile**	4	4	4	4	4	N/A

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin UCL	Deniliquin and Surrounds SAL 2	Edward River LGA	Murray River LGA	Murray SAL 4	NSW
IEO decile**	5	5	5	5	5	N/A
In the labour force (%)	52.7	57.7	56.2	54.6	57.2	58.7
Employed full-time (%)	56.8	61.0	59.0	55.8	56.8	55.2
Employed part-time (%)	32.4	30.0	31.5	33.5	32.9	29.7
Unemployed (%)	4.4	2.6	3.6	3.1	4.0	4.9
Professionals (%)	15.9	10.4	14.7	14.4	16.4	25.8
Managers (%)	11.0	35.0	19.3	22.2	16.1	14.6
Clerical & administrative workers (%)	11.6	9.7	11.3	10.8	11.5	13.0
Technicians & trades workers (%)	14.2	9.8	12.6	13.6	14.2	11.9
Labourers (%)	12.0	14.6	12.0	12.6	12.0	8.2
Community & personal services workers (%)	15.2	7.4	13.1	10.8	12.4	10.6
Sales workers (%)	9.6	4.9	7.9	7.4	8.4	8.0

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin UCL	Deniliquin and Surrounds SAL 2	Edward River LGA	Murray River LGA	Murray SAL 4	NSW
Machinery operators & drivers (%)	7.2	6.5	6.7	6.2	7.2	6.0

*For the UCLs and SAL 4, the SAL deciles have been provided.
**IRSAD: Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage; IEO: Index of Education and Occupation; decile 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest)

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

Indicator (%) ABS 2021 Census	1	2	3	4	5
Deniliquin UCL	Other Social Assistance Services (5.3)	Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (4.1)	Supermarket and Grocery Stores (3.8)	Aged Care Residential Services (3.3)	Primary Education (3.1)
Deniliquin and Surrounds SAL 2	Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming (8.3)	Other Grain Growing (6.6)	Sheep Farming (5.1)	Local Government Administration (3.5)	Dairy Cattle Farming (3.3)
Edward River LGA	Other Social Assistance Services (4.5)	Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (3.7)	Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming (3.3)	Primary Education (3.2)	Supermarket and Grocery Stores (3.2)
Murray River LGA	Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (3.7)	Local Government Administration (3.5)	Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming (3.3)	Other Grain Growing (2.9)	Primary Education (2.8)
Murray SAL 4	Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (4.0)	Aged Care Residential Services (2.9)	Supermarket and grocery stores (2.8)	Other Social Assistance Services (2.7)	Primary Education (2.7)
NSW	Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals (4.2)	Supermarket and grocery stores (2.5)	Other Social Assistance Services (2.4)	Computer System Design and Related Services (2.3)	Aged Care Residential Services (2.2)

Table A-3 Selected health statistics for selected LGAs, Primary Health Networks and NSW

Category	Indicator	Measure	Deniliquin	Edward River LGA PHN	Murrumbidgee PHN	NSW
Health conditions (2017-21)	Avoidable deaths from ischaemic heart disease	ASR per 100,000	38.2	36.3	25.3	19.6
	Avoidable deaths from transport incidents (0-74 years of age)	ASR per 100,000	n/a	n/a	11.2	4.5
	Potential years of lives lost – road traffic injuries	ASR per 1,000	n/a	0	3.2	1.3
Risk factors (modelled estimates) (2017-18)	Males who are current smokers	ASR per 100	37.1	21.9	21.9	17.2
	Number of people who consume alcohol at harmful levels (more than 2 drinks per day)	ASR per 100	19.2 (males 28.3)	20.3 (males 29.5)	20.4 (males 29.7)	15.5 (males 22.7)
Premature deaths (2017-21)	Deaths from avoidable causes (0-74 years of age)	ASR per 100,000	167.8	154.6	149.3	112.7
	Premature deaths from cancer	ASR per 100,000	38.5	38.7	31.3	19.8

Source: *Social Health Atlas of Australia* (PHIDU, 2023)

Appendix B Community Benefit Letter[1]

Edward River COUNCIL

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8 October 2024

Avenis Energy Pty Ltd
on behalf of AE BESS 4 Pty Ltd as Trustee for AE BESS 4 Unit Trust
Attn: Amy Mahon
NGH Consulting
Unit 2, 83 Hume St
Wodonga VIC 3690

Dear Amy,

RE: Letter of Intent between Avenis Energy Pty Ltd and Edward River Council for a Community Benefit Fund (under a Planning Agreement)

This Letter of Intent is not intended to be a legally binding contract and is non-exclusive. Edward River Council supports the entry into a Planning Agreement with Avenis Energy Pty Ltd, which will be negotiated between both parties upon the announcement of Deniliquin BESS (SSD-72258210) reaching determination by NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

Edward River Council takes this opportunity to show support to Avenis Energy welcoming investment in our region and communities.

In anticipation of future negotiations, Council foreshadows that the utilisation of a Community Benefit Fund established via a Planning Agreement is the preferred approach by Edward River Council. However, the developer is open to put forward any alternative proposals subject to compliance with section 7.4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Any proposal must address a public purpose and provide a tangible positive outcome for the Local Government Area, and in particular, the public and landowners impacted by the proposed development.

Any future proposal to establish a Community Benefit Fund under a Planning Agreement must include the following, (although is not limited to), in order to meet expectations of Edward River Council and community:

- Financial contribution to Edward River Council to develop, administer and govern a Community Benefit Fund to be met by the developer.
- Agreement must be met between neighbouring Councils where projects are being developed across (or impacting) multiple LGA's.
- Any negotiations and future Planning Agreement will be subject to non-exclusive rights. Edward River Council will negotiate with developers in a consistent and unbiased manner.

Page 1 of 2

[1] The Community Benefit Fund is still under negotiation with the Council

Edward River COUNCIL

- Any financial contribution to the proposed Community Benefit Fund is to be a minimum 1.5% of the Cost of Construction.
- Payment is to be weighted upfront, such that not less than 20% of the proposed financial contribution is to be paid prior to the commencement of construction.
- Financial contributions to the proposed Community Benefit Fund must be adjusted annually to the greater of CPI (Sydney – All Group), and 2.5%.
- Council regularly engages the Edward River community on its desires and aspirations in the development of plans and strategies and therefore, reference and consideration must be given to the Edward River Community Strategic Plan, Advocacy Plan, Operational Plan, and any other future plans and/or resolutions adopted by Council for the betterment and development of our region and communities.
- Council's reasonable legal costs of both negotiation and preparation of the Planning Agreement are to be met by the developer.

In light of the significant number of recent approaches and proposals made to Edward River Council for projects of state significance and in light of the limited resources available to Council, a decision has been made not to enter specific negotiations with any party pending confirmation of determination as a state significant project.

Thereafter, Council encourages written proposals at first instance before scheduling a meeting with Council staff.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to delivering great outcomes for our local, regional and national communities and our environment, and thank you for this opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Gary Arnold
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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