FINLEY BESS
SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Prepared for
BESS PACIFIC PTY LTD C/O GRANSOLAR DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA
17 April 2025

URBIS

URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT WERE:

Director	Allison Heller
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Assistant Planner	Lara Ball
Project Code	P0055617
Report Number	Final

Acknowledgement of Country

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

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

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

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

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BESS Pacific Pty Ltd c/o Gransolar Development Australia (the Proponent) engaged Urbis Ltd (Urbis) to prepare a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for a proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), impacting land within Lot 3 DP740920 (private land under agreement by the proponent), Lot B DP961693 (Transgrid Finley substation) and the road reserves of Canalla Road and Broockmanns Road, Finley.

The SIA will inform the State Significant Development (SSD-72430958) to establish the BESS facility with a connection to the existing electricity grid via a transmission line (TL) route comprising below-ground cables, connecting to TransGrid's Finley 132/66 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Substation (TS) (herein referred to as the 'proposal).

REPORT PURPOSE AND SCOPE

An SIA is an independent and objective study that identifies and analyses a proposed development's potential positive and negative social impacts. It involves a detailed study to scope potential positive and negative social impacts, identify appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures, and provide recommendations aligned with professional standards and statutory obligations. The SIA process intends to inform the Proposal, not just reflect and report on impacts.

Social impacts can be understood as the consequences people (individuals, households, groups, communities, or organisations) experience when a new project brings change. An SIA considers physical and intangible impacts, direct and indirect impacts, and short-term (construction) and long-term (operational) impacts.

The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (DPHI) Social Impact Assessment Guideline (2023) states that a SIA should consider the likely changes to the following social elements of value to people: way of life, community, accessibility, culture, health and wellbeing, surroundings, livelihoods and decision-making systems.

METHODOLOGY

A SIA social baseline, field study, impact scoping and assessment were undertaken to complete this report. The methodology for this SIA, as detailed in Section 2 was informed by the SIA Guideline and Technical Supplement (DPHI 2023).

The potential social impacts of the Proposal are assessed by comparing the magnitude of impact (minimal to transformational) against the likelihood of the impact occurring (very unlikely to almost certain). This risk assessment methodology follows the DPHI SIA Guideline: Technical Supplement (2023) guidance and is outlined in Section 6.

EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

The site is located within the Berrigan Shire Local Government Area, currently hosts four single detached dwellings with access from Broockmans Road. The proposed site, located north of Broockmans Road, is cleared agricultural land.

The proposed site and neighbouring lots are zoned RU1 Primary Production and used for rural purposes. The terrain is generally flat, with access via a driveway off Broockmans Road. The local area features several rural roads, with the Riverina Highway being the most significant, approximately 1.2km north of the site. The area has been largely cleared of vegetation for agricultural use, and the proposed site is mostly devoid of vegetation and structures. Above-ground power lines run between the site and Broockmans Road, and an existing solar farm is located about 490m southwest of the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).

A social locality was identified to assess the scale and nature of likely social impacts and the groups that may be affected. This assessment was based on a review of the proposal, the surrounding context, and consultation outcomes. The social locality considers two key areas and likely impacted groups. The immediate social locality includes nearby residents and businesses that may experience localised impacts such as construction noise and overshadowing. The surrounding social locality encompasses residents, businesses, and services in the broader area that the proposal may directly or indirectly impact

POTENTIAL POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SOCIAL IMPACTS

A summary of the potential positive and negative social impacts identified are provided in the table below, presented by impact significance. The full assessment is provided in Section 6.

Impact category	Impact description	Mitigated assessment	Recommendations provided
Way of life	Social cohesion and short-term accommodation availability during construction	Low negative	Yes, see Section 6.2.1.
Way of life	Temporary increase in demand for social infrastructure and services	Low negative	Yes, see Section 6.2.1.
Community	Contribution to the renewable energy sector	High positive	Yes, see Section 6.2.2.
Community	Increased opportunities for social value creation	Medium positive	Yes, see Section 6.2.2.
Accessibility	Potential access impacts from increased construction traffic	Low negative	Yes, see Section 6.2.3.
Culture	Potential disruption to Aboriginal objects and places	Low negative to negligible	Yes, see Section 6.2.4
Health and wellbeing	Potential health and amenity impacts	Low negative to negligible	Yes, see Section 6.2.5
Health and wellbeing	Perceived human safety risks	Low negative to negligible	Yes, see Section 6.2.5
Surroundings	Change to visual character	Low negative to negligible	Yes, see Section 6.2.6
Livelihoods	Perceived loss of productive agricultural land	Low negative to negligible	Yes, see Section 6.2.7
Livelihoods	Contribution to the local economy through increased employment opportunities and	Low negative	Yes, see Section 6.2.7

Impact category	Impact description	Mitigated assessment	Recommendations provided
	spending at local businesses		
Decision-making systems	Opportunity for the local community to have a say in the development of the area	Medium positive	Yes, see Section 6.2.8
Cumulative social impacts	See Section 6.3 and 7.1 for recommendations.		

PROPOSED MITIGATION, ENHANCEMENT AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

A consolidated list of measures to enhance positive social impacts and mitigate negative social impacts identified throughout this report and summarised in the table above is provided in Section 7. Additional SIA recommendations to further enhance positive impacts and mitigate negative impacts are also provided in Section 7.

1. INTRODUCTION

BESS Pacific Pty Ltd c/o Gransolar Development Australia (the Proponent) engaged Urbis Ltd (Urbis) to prepare a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for Lot 3, DP 740920, on the Riverina Highway, Finley, NSW 2713 (the site).

The SIA will inform the State Significant Development (SSD-72430958) on the site to establish a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility with a connection to the existing electricity grid via a transmission line (TL) route comprising below-ground cables, connecting to TransGrid's Finley 132/66 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Substation (TS) (herein referred to as the 'proposal).

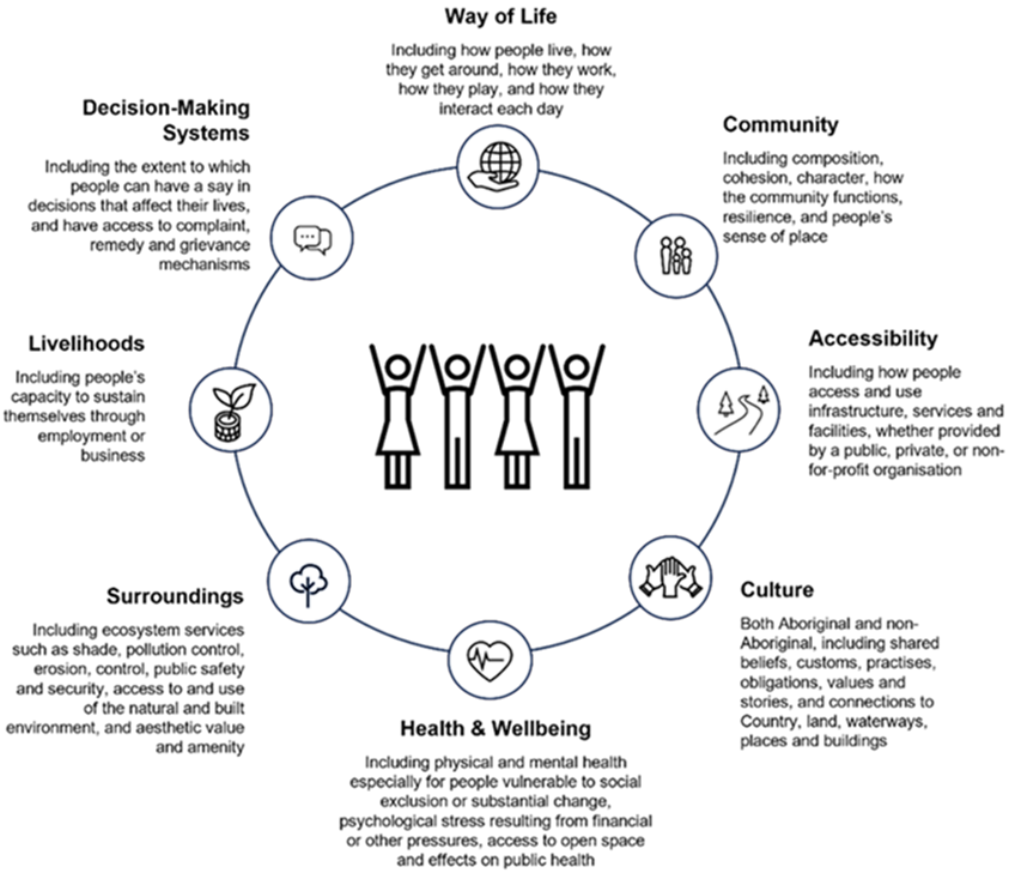
1.1. REPORT PURPOSE AND SCOPE

An SIA is an independent and objective study that identifies and analyses a proposed development's potential positive and negative social impacts. It involves a detailed study to scope potential positive and negative social impacts, identify appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures, and provide recommendations aligned with professional standards and statutory obligations. The intention is that the SIA process will inform the proposal, not just reflect and report on impacts.

Social impacts can be understood as the consequences people (individuals, households, groups, communities, or organisations) experience when a new project brings change. An SIA considers physical and intangible impacts, direct and indirect impacts, and short-term (construction) and long-term (operational) impacts.

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), now Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), Social Impact Assessment Guideline (2023) (SIA Guideline) states that a SIA should consider the likely changes to the following social elements of value to people.

Figure 1 SIA categories



Source: SIA Guidelines (DPHI 2023, p. 19)

1.2. SIA GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

This SIA aligns with the best practice methods in the SIA Guideline (2023). The SIA Guideline (2023) provides a framework to identify, predict and evaluate likely social impacts and helps to provide greater clarity and certainty for proponents and the community.

This SIA has been prepared to satisfy the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the proposal issued on 18 July 2024. The individual SEARs item relevant to this SIA is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1 SEARs item

Key issue	SEARs requirement	Relevant section of report
Social	Social - including an assessment of the social impacts or benefits of the project for the region and the State as a whole in accordance with the Social Impact Assessment Guideline (DPE, 2023), including consideration of any increase in demand for community infrastructure services, and consideration of construction workforce accommodation.	This report (Sections 1 - 7)

Source: SEARs issued for the proposal, issued 18 July (DPHI, 2024)

1.3. PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

BESS Pacific Pty Ltd c/o Gransolar Development Australia (the Proponent) seeks to develop an approximately 100 Megawatt AC (MWAC)/ 200 Megawatt Hour (MWh) Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) impacting land within Lot 3 DP740920 (private land under agreement by the proponent), Lot B DP961693 (Transgrid Finley substation) and the road reserves of Canalla Road and Broockmanns Road, Finley. Collectively are hereafter referred to as 'the development site'.

The development site has a total area of approximately 10 hectares (ha), accessible from the existing access via Broockmanns Road, and located within the Berrigan Shire Council (BSC) Local Government Area (LGA) in the locality of Finley.

The development site area within Lot 3 is currently used for agricultural activities and primary production. The area of the development site within Lot B contains the Transgrid Finley substation.

The proposed Finley BESS includes:

Table 2 Proposal overview

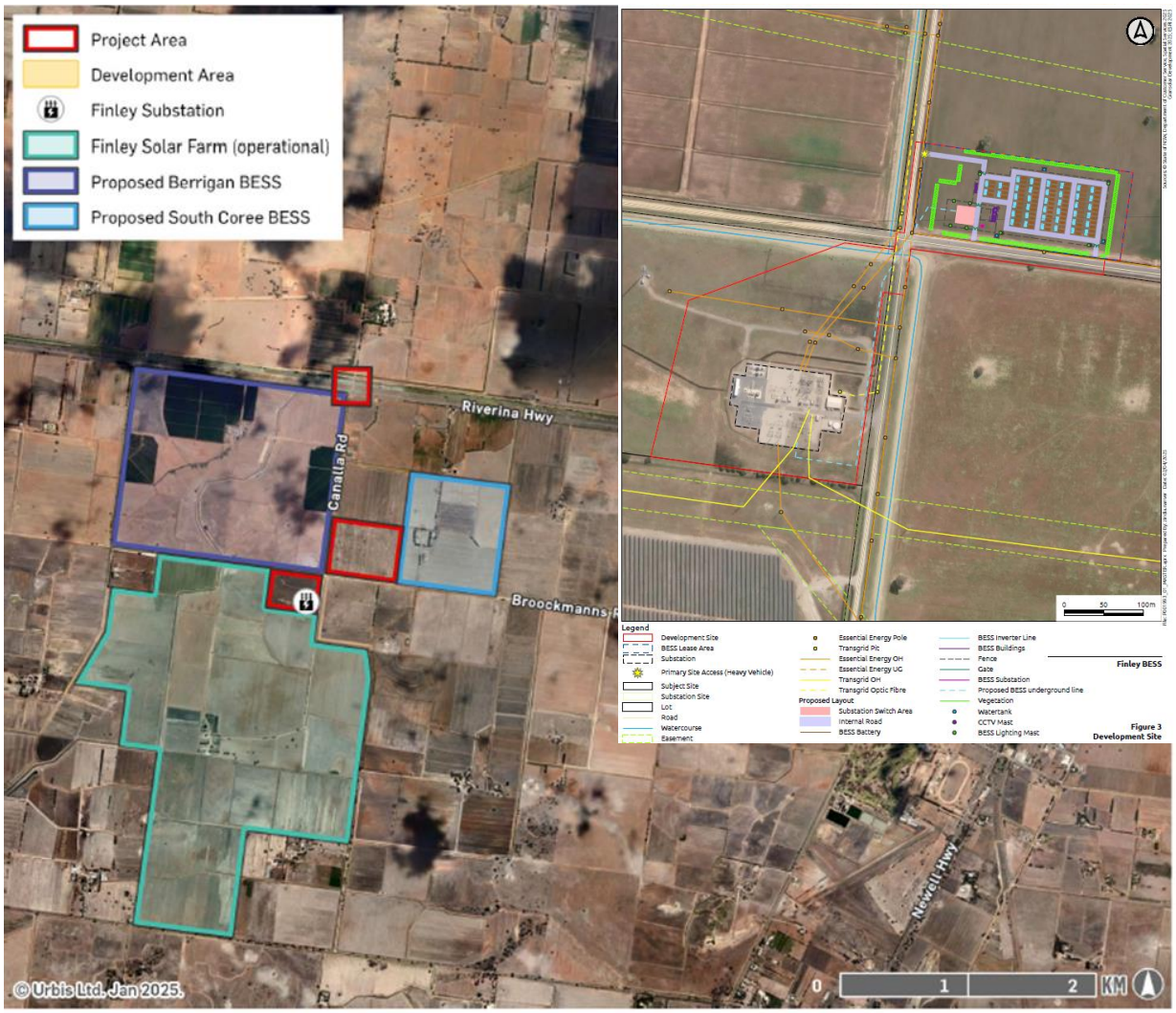
Project element	Description
Development site details	▪ Lot 3 DP740920, Riverina Highway, Finley (BESS site); ▪ Lot B DP961693, Finley (substation site); and ▪ Broockmanns/Canalla Road reserves (transmission line easement).
Development site	The area accommodating the BESS infrastructure and associated operational and construction infrastructure – having an area of approximately 3.5 ha
Approximate battery storage capacity	100 MW_{AC}/200 MWh
BESS Lifespan	Up to 20-25 years

Project element	Description
Infrastructure	▪ Approximately 100 MWAC/200 MWh BESS occupies the majority of the development site; ▪ Upgrade works within the existing 132/66kV Transgrid Finley Substation to accommodate the connection of the BESS; ▪ Underground transmission cables approximately 480 m long connecting the BESS substation to the Finley Transgrid substation; ▪ Temporary construction compound including material laydown areas, site offices, vehicle parking and amenities; ▪ Construction of a new property accesses from Canalla and Broockmanns Roads; ▪ Security fencing and lighting, and ▪ Specific native vegetation screening from identified visual impact locations if required.
Site Access	Heavy vehicles access the site via a new access treatment from Canalla Road. Transgrid vehicles will use a new light vehicle entrance from Broockmanns Road, and light vehicle associated with the project will use the existing (upgraded) access off Broockmanns Road.
Access route	▪ Heavy vehicles carrying BESS components would travel to the site from the Port of Melbourne and utilising the proposed heavy vehicle site access location on Canalla Road. ▪ Heavy vehicles carrying project construction materials and machinery, utilising the proposed heavy vehicle site access location on Canalla Road. ▪ Light vehicles including shuttle buses carrying construction workers would be expected to travel from Finley and Deniliquin via either Riverina Highway and Canalla Road, or, if from Finely, via Broockmanns Road.
Construction	▪ Construction is expected to commence in 2026 and occur over an approximately 10-month period. ▪ Construction would occur during standard construction hours. However, it is anticipated that some activities that are inaudible and would not result in amenity impacts to surrounding receivers, may be required to occur outside of standard hours in accordance with an Out-of-Hours Construction Protocol.
Operations and maintenance	The project would be operated remotely with occasional maintenance activities generally be undertaken by up to two Full Time Equivalent (FTE) personnel.
Decommissioning and rehabilitation	▪ The development site would be progressively rehabilitated during the decommissioning period, including removal of the temporary construction facilities. Temporary construction facilities include temporary buildings installed on site to provide for workers associated with decommissioning.

Project element	Description
	▪ At the end of operational life, components above ground and below ground (with depth subject to agreement with landowner) would be removed and land rehabilitated to as close as possible to pre-development conditions.
Workforce	Up to 55 FTE construction jobs and 2 FTE ongoing operational jobs
Hours of Operation	24 hours, 7 days a week

Source: Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Finley Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), 14 April 2025

Figure 2 Aerial view of land within Lot 3 DP740920 (private land under agreement by the proponent), Lot B DP961693 (Transgrid Finley substation) and the road reserves of Canalla Road and Broockmanns Road, Finley



Source: Urbis, 2025 (see detail over page)

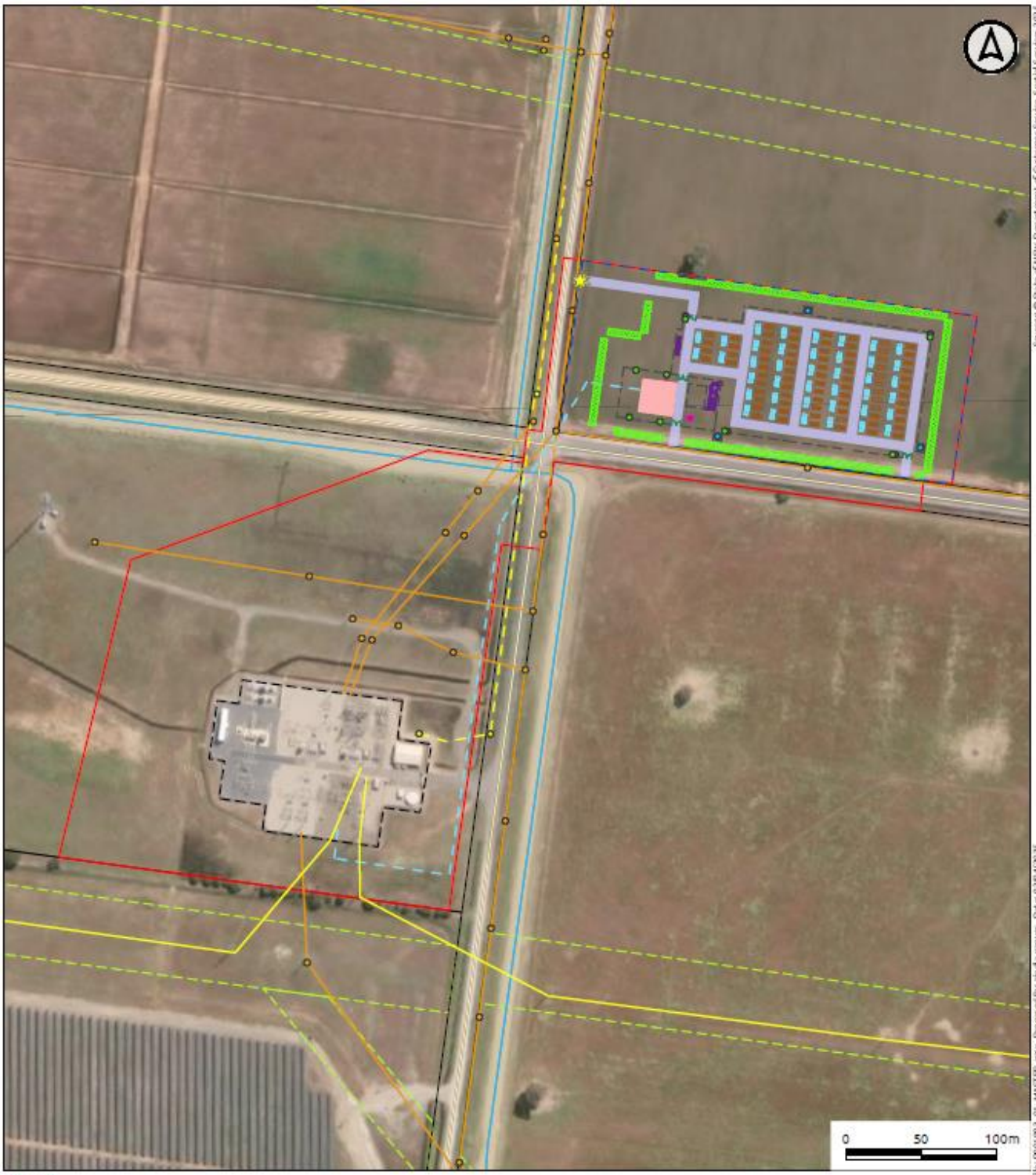
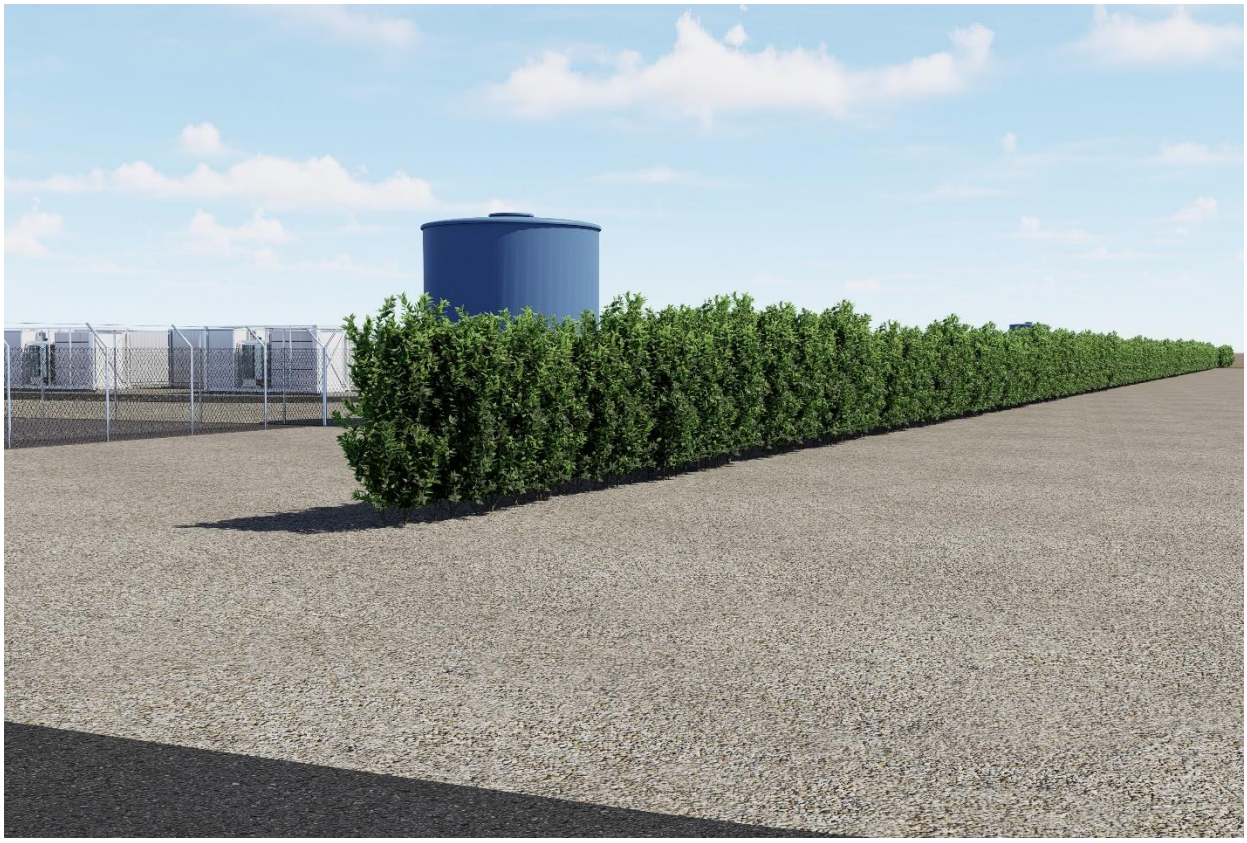


Figure 3
Development Site

Figure 3 Example of proposed vegetation screening



Source: Gransolar Development Australia, 2025

1.4. AUTHORSHIP AND SIA DECLARATION

The authorship SIA Declarations for this report are provided in the following sections.

1.4.1. Authors

This report has been prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced lead author and reviewed and approved by a suitably qualified and experienced co-author, who hold appropriate qualifications and have relevant experience to carry out the SIA for this proposal. The following introduces each author:

Allison Heller	Project Director
Position	Director
Qualifications	Bachelor of Town Planning, University of NSW Post Grad Diploma History of Architecture & Art, University of London
Affiliations	Member of the Planning Institute of Australia Member of Property Council of Australia – Social Sustainability Roundtable
Experience	Allison has deep expertise in impact assessment. She has delivered social impact assessments and health and health equity impacts for a range of state-significant projects and precincts for government and private sector clients.
Liliana Peña	Project Management and Quality Assurance
Position	Associate Director
Qualifications	Master of Urban Planning, National University of Colombia Bachelor of Social Work, National University of Colombia
Experience	Liliana is a specialist in social impact assessment and stakeholder engagement, with experience in local and large-scale infrastructure projects in the renewable energy, built environment, mixed-use and residential development, following authority standards and best practice guidelines, including the NSW SIA Guideline (DPHI 2023).
Sarah Kerridge-Creedy	SIA Analyst
Position	Consultant
Qualifications	Bachelor of City Planning (Honours), University of New South Wales
Experience	Experience in writing SIA reports for renewable energy and regional NSW based projects in the context of the SIA Guideline (DPHI 2023) and best practice social research, evaluation and impact assessment.
Rebekka McWhirter	SIA Analyst
Position	Consultant
Qualifications	Bachelor of Arts (Archaeology), University of Sydney Master of Planning, Macquarie University

Experience	Experience in writing SIA reports for renewable energy and regional NSW based projects in the context of the SIA Guideline (DPHI 2023) and best practice social research, evaluation and impact assessment.
Lara Ball	SIA Analyst
Position	Assistant Social Planner
Qualifications	Diploma of Social Science Western Sydney, Bachelor of Planning (Major in Geography and Urban Studies), Western Syndey University (ongoing)
Experience	Lara has experience writing social impact assessment reports for mixed-use and residential projects in the context of the SIA Guideline (DPHI 2023) and best practices in social research, evaluation, and impact assessment.

1.4.2. Declaration

The authors declare that this SIA report:

Was completed on 17 April 2025.

Has been prepared in accordance with the EIA process under the EP&A Act

Has been prepared in alignment with the DPHI's (2023) SIA Guideline

Contains all reasonably available Proposal information relevant to the SIA

As far as Urbis is aware, contains information that is neither false nor misleading.

Liliana Peña
Associate Director – Lead Author
17 April 2025

Allison Heller
Director - Review and quality assurance
17 April 2025

1.5. SIA GUIDELINES REVIEW QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

The review questions outlined by the SIA Guideline (2023) are designed to confirm that the requirements of the SIA Guideline have been fulfilled when considering the scale of social impacts associated with the proposed development. Table 3 below outlines these review questions and indicates how they have been addressed in this SIA.

Table 3 Guideline review questions and responses

SIA Review questions	**Addressed by report (yes/no), relevant section**
Does the lead author meet the qualification and experience requirements?	Yes, Section 1.5
Has the lead author provided a signed declaration?	Yes, Section 1.5
Would a reasonable person judge the SIA report to be impartial, transparent and suitably rigorous given the nature of the project?	Yes
Project's social locality and social baseline	
Does the SIA report identify and describe all the different social groups that may be affected by the project?	Yes, Section 3
Does the SIA report identify and describe all the built or natural features that have value or importance for people, and explain why people value those features?	Yes, Sections 3 and 4
Does the SIA report identify and describe historical, current, and expected social trends or social changes for people in the locality, including their experiences with this project and other major development projects?	Yes, Sections 3 and 4
Does the social baseline study include appropriate justification for each element, and provide evidence that the elements reflect both relevant literature and the diversity of view and likely experiences?	Yes, Section 3
Does the social baseline study demonstrate social-science research methods and explain any significant methodological data or limitations?	Yes, Sections 3 and 6
Identification and description of social impacts	
Does the SIA report adequately describe likely social impacts from the perspectives of how people may experience them, and explain the research used to identify them? When undertaken as a part of SIA scoping and initial assessment, has the plan for the SIA report been detailed?	Yes, Section 6
Does the SIA report apply the precautionary principle to identifying social impacts, and consider how they may be experienced differently by different people and groups?	Yes, Section 6
Does the SIA report describe how the preliminary analysis influenced project design and EIS engagement strategy?	Yes, Sections 4 and 6

SIA Review questions	Addressed by report (yes/no), relevant section
Community Engagement	
Were the extent and nature of engagement activities appropriate and sufficient or canvass all relevant views, including those of vulnerable of marginalised groups?	Yes, Section 4
How have the views, concerns and insights of affected and interested people influenced both the project design and each element of the SIA report?	Yes, Section 6
Predicting and analysing social impacts	
Does the SIA report impartially focus on the most important social impacts to people at all stages of the project, without any omissions or misrepresentations?	Yes, Section 6
Does the SIA report analyse the distribution of both positive and negative social impacts, and identify who will benefit and who will lose from the project?	Yes, Section 6
Does the SIA report identify its assumptions, and include sensitivity analysis and alternate scenarios? (including 'worst-case' and 'no project' scenarios where relevant?	Yes. Section 2 sets out the key assumptions underpinning the assessment. This includes the assumption that information provided through other technical reports (e.g., traffic and noise) are accurate. The SIA considers alternative site scenarios from the perspective of the 'worst case' scenario (i.e., no technical mitigations), in alignment with the EIS. It is the role of the SIA, to assess the chosen development scenario at hand – no other alternative scenarios have been considered. Therefore, the sensitivity analysis and assessment of 'worst case' scenarios relate to a 'no mitigations' scenario for the chosen development option.

SIA Review questions	Addressed by report (yes/no), relevant section
	This evidence is clearly assessed as part of the SIA tables in Section 6.
Evaluation significance	
Do the evaluations of significance of social impacts impartially represent how people in each identified social group can expect to experience the project, including any cumulative effects?	Yes, Section 6
Are the evaluations of significance disaggregated to consider the likely different experiences for different people or groups, especially vulnerable groups?	Yes, Section 6
Responses, monitoring and management	
Does the SIA report propose responses that are tangible, deliverable, likely to be durably effective, directly related to the respective impact(s) and adequately delegated and resourced?	Yes, Section 7
Does the SIA report demonstrate how people can be confident that social impacts will be monitored and reported in ways that are reliable, effective and trustworthy?	Yes, Section 7
Does the SIA report demonstrated how the proponent will adaptively manage social impacts and respond to unanticipated events, breaches, grievances and non-compliance?	Yes, Section 7

1.6. STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This SIA has seven sections, as summarised below:

- **Section 1** (this section) introduces the proposal, purpose and scope of this report.
- **Section 2** outlines the legislative requirements and methodology applied to complete this SIA.
- **Section 3** provides a social baseline of the study area, including the site's context, social and demographic characteristics, and policy context.
- **Section 4** provides an overview of the field study conducted to inform the SIA, including a summary of the key findings.
- **Section 5** identifies and provides details on the proposal's social locality.
- **Section 6** assesses the proposal's positive and negative social impacts, including with and without mitigation and enhancement measures.
- **Section 7** outlines the assessed impacts' mitigation, enhancement, and management measures.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology undertaken to prepare this SIA is outlined in Table 4. The SIA Guideline and Technical Supplement (DPHI 2023) informed the methodology.

Table 4 Methodology overview

Stage	Activities
Social baseline	▪ Site visit of surrounding land uses and site. ▪ Review of relevant state and local policies and strategies to understand potential social implications. ▪ Analysis of relevant data sets to understand the existing community profile and community values, strengths and vulnerabilities. ▪ Identification of likely impacted groups and communities. ▪ Early identification of potential social impacts (positive and negative) based on research tasks undertaken.
SIA field study	▪ Engagement with stakeholder representatives from Berrigan Shire Council via an online in-depth interview. ▪ Engagement with the local community through a community information session, online community survey, and community newsletter distribution. ▪ Analysis of field study data and identification of key themes.
Impact scoping	▪ Review of social baseline and SIA field study outcomes. ▪ Review of proposal plans, proposal documentation and relevant technical assessments. ▪ Identification of the proposal's social locality and likely impacted groups. ▪ Identification and scoping of potential social impacts (positive and negative), mitigation and enhancement measures. ▪ Identification of potential opportunities for additional measures to be incorporated into the proposal.
Assessment and reporting	▪ Assessment of social impacts (positive and negative) with and without mitigation and enhancement measures. ▪ Provision of recommendations to further reduce negative social impacts and enhance positive social impacts. ▪ Preparation of draft and final SIA reports.

Approach to assessing social impacts

The assessment of social impacts can be approached in several ways. The Technical Supplement of the SIA Guideline highlights a risk assessment methodology whereby the significance of potential impacts is assessed by comparing the magnitude of an impact against the likelihood of the impact occurring.

The DPHI's risk assessment methodology has been applied in this SIA and is outlined in Section 6.

Assumptions

- This report is dated 17 April 2025 and incorporates information and events up to that date only and excludes any information arising or events occurring after that date.
- In preparing this report, Urbis was required to make judgements that may be affected by unforeseen future events, the likelihood and effects of which are not capable of precise assessment.
- All surveys, forecasts, projections and recommendations contained in or associated with this report are made in good faith and based on information supplied to Urbis at the date of this report and upon which Urbis relied. Achievement of the projections and forecasts set out in this report will depend, among other things, on the actions of others over which Urbis has no control.
- Information provided through other technical reports that have informed the identification and assessment of impacts is assumed to be accurate.
- This report has been prepared with due care and diligence by Urbis. The statements and opinions in this report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading, subject to the abovementioned limitations.

3. SOCIAL BASELINE

This section provides a social baseline of the site and the surrounding area. This includes reviewing the site location, policy context and demographic profile. The findings from the social baseline have been used to inform the approach to stakeholder consultation, the scoping of initial impacts and the identification of the site's social locality (as described in Section 5).

3.1. SITE LOCATION

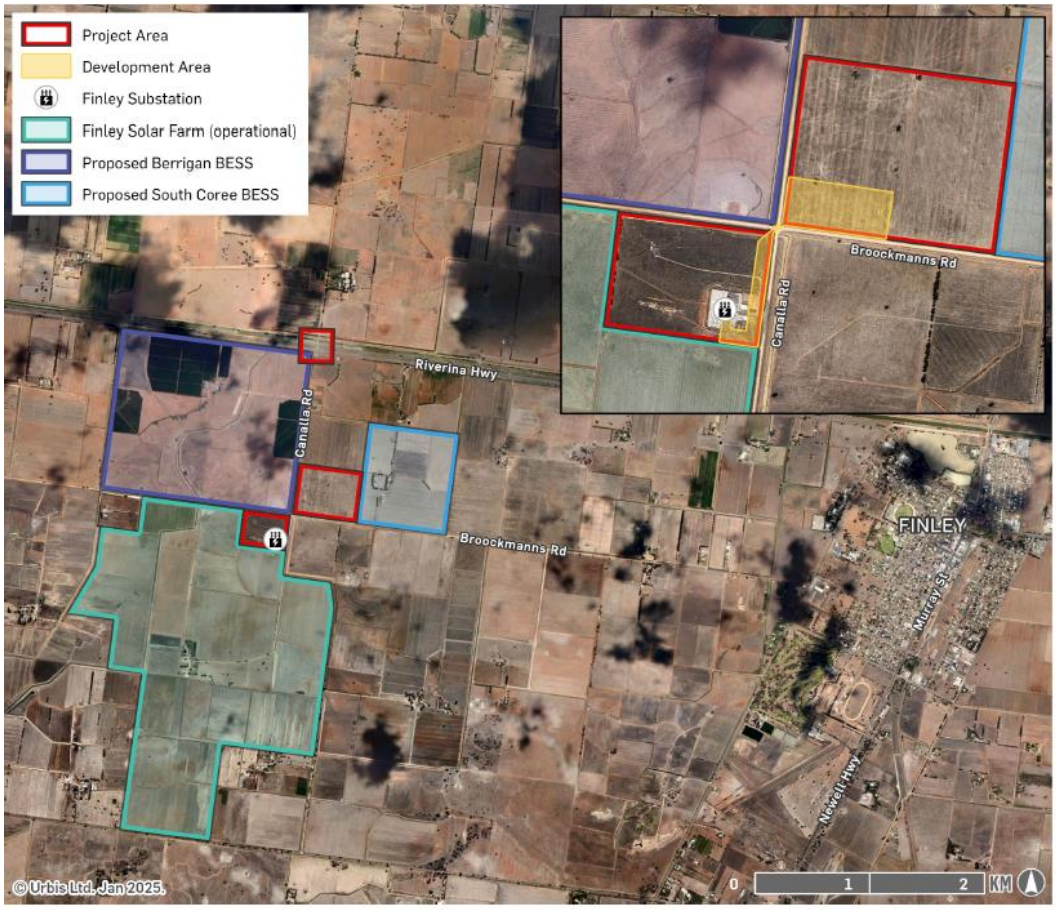
3.1.1. Local context

The BESS is proposed on Lot 3 DP740920 at Riverina Highway, Finley New South Wales (NSW) 2713 (the 'site'). The underground TL is proposed to the Finley 132/66 kV TS located on Lot B DP961693, Finley NSW 2713 (the 'substation site'), approximately 250 m to the southwest of the BESS Site. The substation site is set back from the intersection and visually characterised by the various infrastructure components behind chain-wire fencing. To the southwest of the BESS site, the Finley 132/66KV transmission station is also located and forms part of the more extensive TransGrid electricity network with NSW.

The site is classified as RU1—Primary Production via the Berrigan Local Environmental Plan. The BESS site is agricultural, with a few trees located sporadically outside of this area. The site is vacant of supporting structures and intermittently used for dryland cropping during favourable weather conditions.

The surrounding land uses predominantly comprise primary production lands, which are visually characterised as cropping and grazing lands. Rural dwelling houses are situated on the large primary production areas surrounding the site, with two located between 500 and 700 m from the site. Further away, dwelling houses are concentrated on large lots at the eastern end of Broockmanns Road, closer to the town centre of Finley. The local site context is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Site context map



Source: Urbis, 2025

Figure 5 Site photos

Picture 1 Northwest view of site from the corner of Broockmans Road and Canalla Road

Picture 2 Quarry located south of site along Broockmans Road

Picture 3 Northern view of site from entrance gate located along Broockmans Road

Picture 4 Secondary viewpoint from entrance gate of site (looking north)

Source: Urbis, 2024

3.1.2. Regional context

The residential township of Finley is approximately 4.5km east of the site. Finley would likely be the key service centre of the BESS construction workforce, with other service centres including Berrigan, Tocumwal, Deniliquin, Jerilderie, Shepparton, Holbrook, and other smaller surrounding towns. Finley features one main street, including cafes and essential retail outlets.

Regionally, the site is also near several regional centres, including Albury, Shepparton, Griffith, and Wagga Wagga. These centres provide access to more extensive infrastructure, such as hospitals and other specialised services that are unavailable in the Finley town centre.

The Murray Valley National Park is located approximately 18km to the south-west.

The regional context of the site is shown in the Finley social and infrastructure and open space map (refer Figure 6) and regional social locality map (refer Figure 8)

3.2. SURROUNDING SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPEN SPACE

3.2.1. Social infrastructure and open space overview

Social infrastructure is critical to supporting individual and community health and wellbeing, promoting a cohesive community, and supporting economic prosperity. It includes ‘hard’ infrastructure (facilities, venues, and spaces) and ‘soft’ infrastructure (activities, events, and programs). Open space comes in various forms, from structured sports fields to parks and natural ecosystems.

This section contains an overview of hard social infrastructure in the Finley town centre. This includes health facilities, community facilities, educational institutions, childcare centres, community service providers, sports and recreation facilities, open spaces, and short-term accommodation. This review, along with the consultation outcomes (see Section 4) will help to understand strengths and weaknesses within the social infrastructure and open space network, including opportunities to inform the community benefit-sharing scheme.

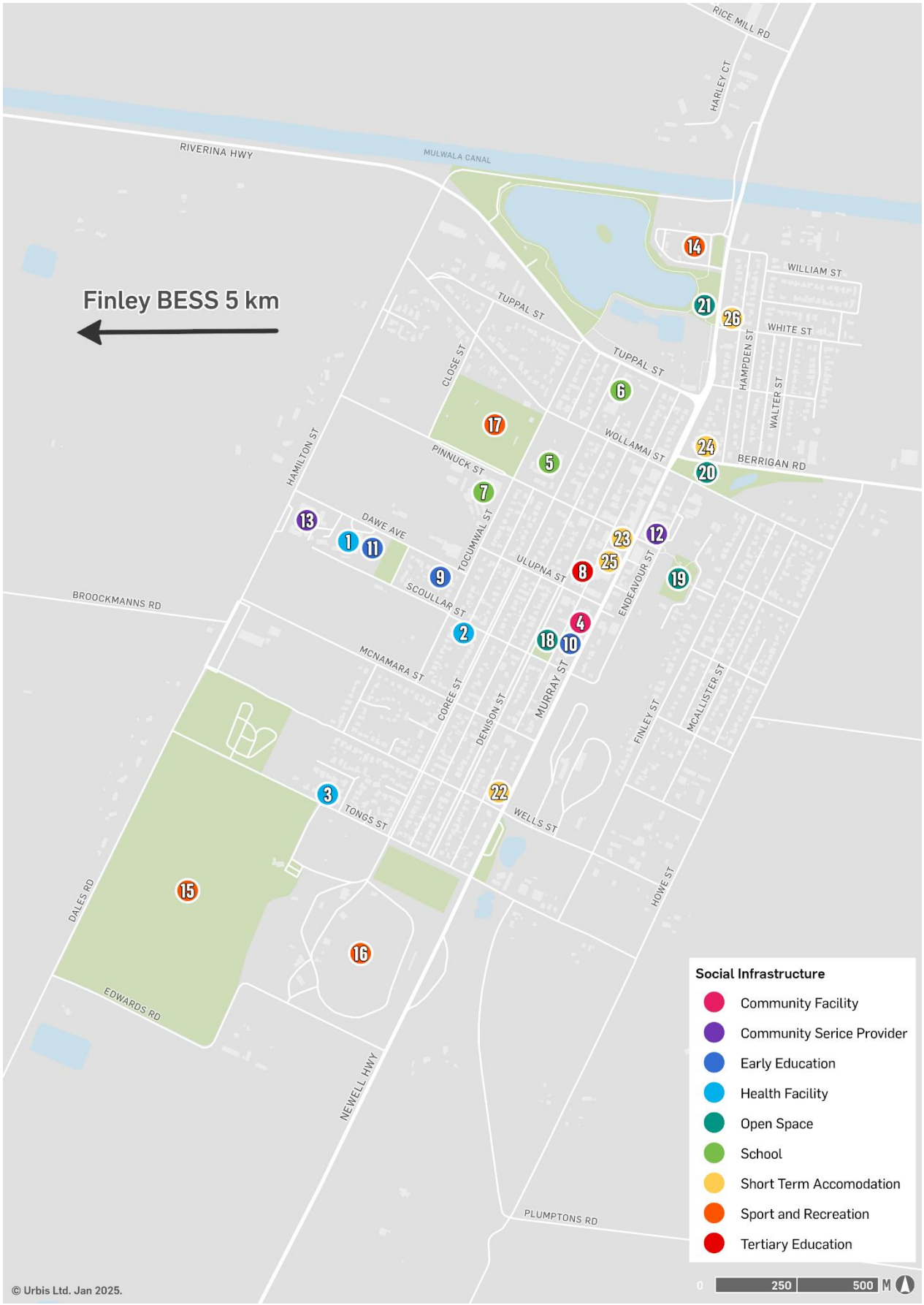
3.2.2. Existing social infrastructure and open space in Finley

As shown in Figure 6 and Table 5 Finley is currently served by three health facilities, four education institutions, three childcare centres, two community service providers, four sport and recreation facilities, four local open spaces, and five short-term accommodation facilities.

Data from Schools Infrastructure NSW shows that new education institutions or planned upgrades are envisioned in Finley. According to MySchools (accessed February 2025), existing primary and high schools have capacity as the public schools have experienced a downward trend in student enrolments over a five-year period. In contrast, the number of non-government schools has experienced a minor increase.

Health NSW also plans to redevelop the Finley Health Service to provide improved infrastructure.

Figure 6 Social infrastructure and open space in the Finley town centre



Source: Urbis 2025

Table 5 List of social infrastructure and open space in Finley town centre

No.	Facility type	Facility name
1	Health Facility	Finley Health Service
2	Health Facility	Finley Medical Centre
3	Health Facility	Lakeside Medical Centre
4	Community Facility	Finley Library
5	School	Finley Public School
6	School	St Joseph's Primary School
7	School	Finley High School
8	Tertiary Education	Finley TAFE
9	Early Education	Finley Preschool, Kindergarten & OOSH
10	Early Education	Finley Early Learning Centre
11	Early Education	Biralee Preschool Finley
12	Community Service Provider	Intereach
13	Community Service Provider	Finley Regional Care
14	Sport and Recreation	Finley Swimming Pool
15	Sport and Recreation	Finley Golf Club
16	Sport and Recreation	Finley Showground & Sporting Complex
17	Sport and Recreation	Finley Football & Netball Club
18	Open Space	Rotary Park
19	Open Space	Railway Park
20	Open Space	Memorial Park
21	Open Space	Hayden Maher Park
22	Short Term Accommodation	Century Motor Inn & Service Station
23	Short Term Accommodation	Albion Hotel Motel
24	Short Term Accommodation	Finley Palm Motor Inn
25	Short Term Accommodation	Finley Country Club Hotel Motel

No.	Facility type	Facility name
26	Short Term Accommodation	Finley Motel by the Lake

Source: Google Maps, Urbis 2025

3.3. SURROUNDING RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

When planning for renewable energy projects, it is essential to consider both the existing and likely future supply to assess workforce accommodation demand and other potential cumulative social impacts (see Section 6.3).

As shown in Table 6, several renewable energy projects are located within 150 km of the site. These include projects for solar farms, wind farms, and BESS that are operational or in the planning stages.

Table 6 List of surrounding renewable energy projects

Project name	Application No.	Status	Approx. distance from the site
Finley Solar Farm, Finley	SSD-8540	Operational	388m
South Coree BESS, Finley	SSD-77238990	Planning	300m
Berrigan BESS, Finley	SSD-78106206	Planning	300m
Deniliquin East BESS, Deniliquin	SSD-61612229	Planning	44.5km
Currawarra Solar Farm & BESS, Deniliquin	SSD-8437	Approved	30.5km
Tarleigh Park Solar Farm & BESS, Deniliquin	SSD-8436	Approved	26.5km
Yanco Delta Wind Farm & BESS, Jerilderie	SSD-41743746	Approved	45km
Dinanwan Solar Farm & BESS, Jerilderie	SSD-50725959	Under Assessment	72km
Bullawah Wind Farm, Hay	SSD-50505215	Planning	112km
Pottinger Wind Farm, south of Hay, NSW	SSD-59235464	Under Assessment	110km
Pottinger Solar Farm, Booroorban	SSD-59254709	Planning	110km

Source: Nearmap, Urbis

3.4. POLICY CONTEXT

A review of relevant state and local policies was conducted to understand the strategic context of the proposed development and its potential positive and negative impacts. This included:

State

- NSW Government, Renewable Energy Planning Framework (2024)
- NSW Government, NSW Network Infrastructure Strategy: A 20-Year Strategy to Transform the NSW Electricity Network (2023)
- NSW Government, NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board's Plan (2022)
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline (2022)
- NSW Government, Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 (2020)
- NSW Government, Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020 – 2030 (2020)
- NSW Government, NSW Electricity Strategy (2019)
- NSW Government, Transmission Infrastructure Strategy (2018)
- NSW Government, Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (enabled by the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020)
- State of NSW and Office of Environment and Heritage, Climate Change Policy Framework (2016)
- Department of Planning and Environment, Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (2023)
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Guidelines for Construction Workers Accommodation (2024)

Local

- Berrigan Shire Council, Long Term Financial Plan (2024-2034)
- Berrigan Shire Council, Finley Town Master Plan (2015)
- Berrigan Shire Council, Community Strategic Plan 2040 (2024)
- Berrigan Shire Council Delivery Program (2024-2034)
- Berrigan Sire Council, Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) (2020)
- Berrigan Shire Council, Renewable Energy Community Benefit Framework (2024)
- Berrigan Shire Council, Energy Strategy (2021)

The key social themes from the policy review are summarised in Table 7 over page.

Table 7 Key social themes from policy review

Theme	Summary of findings
Support of a diverse and prosperous regional economy	The Berrigan Shire Council's Long Term Financial Plan (2024-2024) is a strategic blueprint to foster a diverse and prosperous regional economy. Central to this plan is a commitment to financial sustainability, ensuring that the council can support economic growth while maintaining fiscal health. The council aims to secure the necessary funds to invest in critical infrastructure and community services by implementing prudent revenue strategies, such as targeted rate increases and actively pursuing grants. This financial stability is crucial for creating a conducive environment for business growth and attracting new investments. A key component of the Financial Plan is the detailed capital works program, which prioritises infrastructure projects that enhance connectivity, accessibility, and the overall quality of life in the region. Upgrading roads, improving community facilities, and investing in environmental initiatives create immediate job opportunities and lay the foundation for long-term economic resilience. These projects are designed to support local businesses, stimulate economic activity, and attract new enterprises to the region. Furthermore, the plan incorporates initiatives to support local economic development, including partnerships with businesses and stakeholders to drive innovation and job creation. The Berrigan Shire Council's Long Term Financial Plan (2024-2024) is poised to create a vibrant, diverse, and prosperous regional economy by fostering a supportive business environment and investing in infrastructure.
Become a leader in renewable energy for a more sustainable future	The NSW Government has established a comprehensive and forward-thinking framework to position the state as a renewable energy and sustainability leader. Central to this vision is the Renewable Energy Planning Framework (2024), which streamlines approval processes, emphasises community engagement, and ensures environmental safeguards for renewable energy projects. Complementing this is the NSW Network Infrastructure Strategy (2023), a 20-year plan to modernise the electricity network with smart grid technology, energy storage solutions, and enhanced transmission capabilities, crucial for integrating an increasing share of renewables and ensuring grid reliability. The Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act (2020) provides the legislative backbone, offering financial incentives and regulatory support to attract investment in large-scale renewable energy projects. The Net Zero Plan Stage 1 (2020–2030) and the Climate Change Policy Framework (2016) set ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving net zero by 2050, driving immediate actions to cut emissions and support low-emission technologies. The NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board’s Plan (2022) and the Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline (2022) further bolster this effort by fostering industry collaboration, workforce development, and responsible project development. The NSW Electricity Strategy (2019) supports these initiatives to deliver affordable, reliable, and sustainable electricity, enhancing market competition and energy security. The Transmission Infrastructure Strategy (2018) focuses on upgrading and expanding transmission infrastructure to support the integration of renewable energy, addressing the need for new transmission lines and grid enhancements.

Theme	Summary of findings
	The Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, enabled by the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020, provides a detailed plan for transitioning the electricity system to a renewable energy future, coordinating efforts across government, industry, and communities. Additionally, regional plans, such as the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (2023), highlight the potential for local renewable energy projects, promoting sustainable development and economic growth in specific regions. These policies create a cohesive and strategic approach, driving NSW towards a sustainable energy future. By integrating renewable energy projects, modernising infrastructure, and setting clear legislative and policy directions, NSW demonstrates leadership in transitioning to a low-carbon economy, ensuring a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for its communities. Berrigan Shire Council's strategic plans also support NSW's transition to renewable energy to support a sustainable future through local initiatives. The Community Strategy Plan 2040 (2024) includes an objective to reduce the LGA's carbon footprint by mitigating the impacts of climate change through renewable energy and water conservation measures and encouraging sustainable living. This objective is informed by the Council's priorities and community values expressed during community consultation. Further, the Council identifies local community groups as partners with which to collaborate to achieve this objective.
Supporting the transition to net zero by 2050	The suite of policies from the NSW Government and local councils collectively supports the transition to net zero by providing a comprehensive framework for renewable energy development, infrastructure modernisation, and sustainable community planning. The Renewable Energy Planning Framework (2024) and Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline (2022) streamline the approval and development of renewable energy projects, while the NSW Network Infrastructure Strategy (2023) and Transmission Infrastructure Strategy (2018) focus on upgrading the electricity grid to accommodate increased renewable energy capacity. The Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 and the Roadmap provide legislative and strategic support for large-scale renewable energy investments. The Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020 – 2030 and the Climate Change Policy Framework (2016) set ambitious emission reduction targets and outlined immediate actions to achieve net zero by 2050. The NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board's Plan (2022) fosters industry collaboration and innovation, enhancing the state's renewable energy capabilities. To support the development of renewable energy projects in regional NSW, DPHI has provided Guidelines for Construction Workers Accommodation (2024). This Guideline outlines the recent amendments to the NSW Housing SEPP to provide a clear local approval pathway for temporary construction workers' accommodation in renewable energy zones. Local initiatives integrated within Berrigan Shire Council's Long Term Financial Plan (2024-2034), Finley Town Master Plan (2015), Community Strategic Plan 2040, and Energy Strategy (2021) align with these state policies by promoting sustainable development and community resilience. Together, these policies create a cohesive

Theme	Summary of findings
	strategy that drives the transition to a low-carbon economy, ensuring environmental sustainability, economic growth, and community well-being.
A resilient region	Building resilient regions in New South Wales (NSW) is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and prosperity of communities across the state. This involves a multifaceted approach integrating economic diversification, sustainable development, robust infrastructure, and community well-being. Berrigan Shire Council exemplifies this approach through its comprehensive suite of policies. The Long-Term Financial Plan (2024-2034) ensures financial sustainability through balanced budgeting, strategic capital investments, and comprehensive risk management strategies, reducing financial vulnerability and enabling effective responses to economic challenges. The Finley Town Master Plan (2015) revitalises urban spaces by enhancing public amenities, supporting local businesses through economic diversification, and integrating environmental sustainability practices, creating a vibrant, economically diverse, and environmentally sustainable urban environment. The Community Strategic Plan 2040 addresses holistic community needs by promoting health, education, and social services to enhance quality of life, supporting innovation and local businesses to drive economic growth, and advocating for sustainable land use and conservation efforts to ensure environmental stewardship. The Delivery Program (2024-2034) outlines specific projects to upgrade infrastructure, such as roads and public facilities, expand community services like health and education, and support economic initiatives that attract investment and create jobs, thereby enhancing the region’s capacity to adapt to change and maintain essential services. The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) (2020) provides a sustainable land use planning and development framework. It ensures that growth is balanced with environmental protection, strategic and coordinated infrastructure development, and community involvement in planning processes is prioritised to reflect local values and needs. Together, these policies create a robust framework for addressing current challenges and future uncertainties, positioning Berrigan Shire as a model for building sustainable and resilient regions across NSW.
Investment in the Southwest Renewable Energy Zone	The Australian and New South Wales governments are fast-tracking the delivery of Renewable Energy Zones (REZS) across New South Wales. The Zones are intended to connect investors with communities looking to diversify their local industries into renewable energy, as the Net Zero Plan Stage 1 2020-2030 (2020) explains. The Southwest REZ is in the Riverina Murray region and is near the Berrigan Shire Council borders. While the site is not within the Southwest REZ, it will contribute to the $2.8 billion in private investment by 2030 and over 2,000 construction jobs generated by the REZ at its peak.
Established agricultural and industrial sectors	The Department of Planning and Environment's Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (2023) builds on this foundation by outlining strategies to enhance the region's agricultural productivity and diversify its industrial base. The plan promotes

Theme	Summary of findings
	innovation and value-adding activities in agriculture, such as developing agribusiness hubs and adopting advanced farming technologies. It also identifies opportunities for industrial growth, particularly in sectors that can leverage the region's natural resources and existing infrastructure. By supporting the development of renewable energy projects and sustainable industries, the plan aims to create a resilient and diversified regional economy.
Encouraging community benefit sharing with impacted communities	The Renewable Energy Community Benefit Framework (2024) promotes benefit-sharing strategies for developing renewable energy projects across the LGA. Benefit-sharing strategies are enacted through a voluntary planning agreement between the Council and a developer, under which the developer must dedicate land free of cost, pay a monetary contribution, and/or provide any other material benefit to be used for or applied towards a public purpose. This Framework ensures that regional communities are fairly compensated for the impacts they are expected to endure due to the development of renewable energy projects. Examples of public purposes a developer can contribute include upgrading public spaces or community facilities, providing affordable and/or key worker housing, reduced cost electricity deals to allow local use of renewable energy, and others listed in Section 5 of the Framework.

3.5. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

A demographic profile identifies the demographic and social characteristics of a proposal's likely social locality. This is an important tool in understanding how a community currently lives and that community's potential capacity to adapt to changes arising from a proposal.

A demographic profile has been developed for Finley (SAL11523) based on demographic data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021) Census of Population and Housing and DPHI (2022). The demographic characteristics of Berrigan LGA and, where relevant, NSW have been used to provide a comparison.

Population and age

In 2021, there were **2,456 residents in Finley**, representing 35% of the residents in the Berrigan Shire Council (8,815).

The largest age group in Finley is 60-69, comprising 7.9% of the population. The median age in Finley is 51, which is comparable to the LGA (52).

Finley and Berrigan LGA have an average household size of 2.2 people, slightly lower than NSW (2.6 people).

Culture and diversity

Finley has a **higher proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People** (4.9% or 120 people), compared to Berrigan LGA (2.8%) and NSW (3.4%).

Finley has slightly **lower levels of cultural and linguistic diversity** than NSW. 4.4% of households in the study area speak a language other than English at home compared to Berrigan LGA (4.1%) and NSW (7.1%).

The **top countries of birth other than Australia include New Zealand, the United Kingdom and India.**

Education and qualifications

Finley has a **lower proportion of residents with tertiary education qualifications**, with only 10.8% having obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 27.8% in NSW. Similarly, Berrigan LGA has a slightly lower percentage, with 10.5% of residents holding tertiary education qualifications.

Finley has **similar proportions of people who hold an advanced diploma or associate degree** (5.6%) and a certificate-level qualification (19.3% %) compared to Berrigan LGA (6.9% and 20.2%) and NSW (9.3% and 15%).

The **most common occupations** in Finley include:

- Manager (19.5%)
- Community and Professional Service Workers (14.4%)
- Labourers (13.8%).

The **most common industries of employment** in Finley include:

- Dairy Cattle Farming (7.8%)
- Aged Care Residential Services (6.3%)
- Secondary Education (3.9%).

Workforce and employment

	Finley has a **higher proportion of people in the labour force** (50.9%) than Berrigan LGA (48.7%), but a lower proportion than NSW (58.7%).
	The **top industry of employment in Finley is dairy cattle farming (7.8%), followed by aged care residential services (6.3%) and secondary education (3.9%).** Berrigan LGA has different top industries of employment, with the top sector being aged care residential services (4.8%), followed by supermarket and grocery (3.4%) and cheese and other dairy product manufacturing (3.3%).
	The **most common method of travel to work for residents in Finley is by private vehicle** (63.4%), a higher proportion than in NSW (43.1%) but comparable to Berrigan LGA (65.3%). A high proportion of residents also worked at home or did not go to work (11.4%); this is likely due to the high proportion of residents working in agricultural industries.

Income

	Finley has a **higher weekly individual income** ($636) than Berrigan LGA ($618). However, both study areas have lower personal incomes than the NSW average of $813.
	Finley has a significantly **lower family weekly income** ($1,456) than NSW ($2,185). However, Berrigan LGA has a comparable family weekly income ($1,460)
	A **significant proportion of Finley's households are experiencing rental stress, with 21.3%** spending more than 30% of their household income on rent. This proportion is lower compared to NSW (35.5%).
	A **lower proportion of households in Finley are experiencing mortgage stress, with 12.2% of households spending more than 30% of their household income on mortgage repayments, compared to 17.3% in NSW**.

Housing and homelessness

	Finley has a **higher proportion of occupied dwellings (90.1%) than** Berrigan LGA (86.6%).
	The **majority of Finley residents live in separate houses** (91.1%), which is slightly higher than Berrigan LGA (90.2%) and significantly higher than NSW (65.6%)
	There are also **high levels of home ownership** in Finley, with 45% of Finley residents owning their homes outright, comparable to Berrigan \ LGA (46.5%) and significantly higher than NSW (31.5%). The study area has a similar proportion of renters (21.8%) compared to Berrigan Shire LGA (19.5%) and lower than NSW (32.6%).
	Data on the **estimated levels of homelessness** have been analysed according to the ABS 2021 Estimating Homelessness Census. This data is only available at the regional level and has been gathered for the Berrigan Shire LGA. Rates are per 10,000 population. ▪ In 2021, there were no people recorded living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out. ▪ There were 19 people recorded living in other crowded dwellings ▪ There were eight people recorded staying temporarily with other households ▪ There were four people recorded as marginally housed in caravan parks.

Advantage and disadvantage

According to the 2021 SEIFA, relative to other NSW suburbs, **Finley has a lower relative score for the following socio-economic indexe**s:

Finley ranks in the **lower 20% of suburbs in the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage and the Index of Economic Resources**. This suggests that the area has more people and households with low incomes, no qualifications, or low-skilled occupations, as well as an average number of households that pay low rent or do not own their homes.

Finley ranks in the **lower 20% of suburbs in the Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage Index**. This indicates that there may be more households with low incomes and unskilled occupations or fewer households with high incomes and people in skilled occupations.

Finley also ranks in the **lower 20% of suburbs in the Index of Education and Occupation**, indicating that the area may have many people without qualifications, people in low-skilled occupations, or people who are unemployed.

Health, wellbeing and disability

Finley has a **significant proportion of residents with a long-term health condition** (41.7%), which is comparable to Berrigan LGA (40%) and lower than NSW (30.9%)

The **most common long-term health conditions** in Finley are:

- Arthritis (15.3%)
- Asthma (10.4%)
- Mental health condition (10%).

In Finley, **22.4% (550 people) reported having at least one health condition**, 9.5% have two long-term health conditions, and 6.6% have three or more.

Of residents aged 15 and over, **13% of people (268 people) provided unpaid assistance to someone with an identified need for assistance due to disability, old age, or long-term health condition.**

4. SIA FIELD STUDY – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of the community and stakeholder consultation undertaken as part of this SIA. Consultation is critical to understanding what local stakeholders value and how they perceive the proposal's potential impact on them.

Stakeholders' anticipated impacts may sometimes differ from those that eventuate as part of a proposal. The consultation summary below does not distinguish between this and summarises the feedback as it was heard to provide an accurate summary of stakeholders' sentiments, thoughts, and feelings. The assessment of social impacts (Section 6) considers the outcomes from consultation against the details of the proposal and other technical report findings.

Approach and summary of SIA field study and engagement activities

Urbis' Social Planning and Urbis' Engagement team developed and undertook an integrated SIA field study and engagement program to accompany the proposal. The field study was informed by the outcomes of the social baseline (see Section 3) to identify the potentially impacted community and appropriate engagement methods. Activities were focused on individuals and groups within the immediate social locality (see Figure 8, as well as key stakeholders.

The methods of engagement and consultation with the community and key stakeholders are provided in Table 8. Representatives from the Urbis engagement team have also undertaken additional communication and engagement activities, which are detailed in full in the Engagement Outcomes Report.

A copy of the relevant engagement materials is provided in Appendices A and B.

Table 8 Methods of engagement and consultation

Method	Administered	Timeframes	Invited	Participated
In-depth interview	Online via Microsoft Teams	45min on 24 February 2025	Three representatives from the Berrigan Shire Council	Three representatives from Berrigan Shire Council
Community information session	In person at the Finley School of Arts Hall	Session 1: 30 January 2025 between 5:00 pm-7:00 pm Session 2: 31 January 2025 between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm	Immediate and wider community (1,200 properties)	Four community members spoke to the project team over the two sessions.
Community survey	Online, distributed via postcard letterbox distribution, 1,200 properties	Between 15 January 2025 and 29 January 2025	Immediate neighbours and wider community (1,200 properties)	Six community members
Engagement activities				
Community Newsletter distribution	Distributed via letterbox drop	26 March 2024	Immediate neighbours and broader community	1,200 properties

Method	Administered	Timeframes	Invited	Participated
Newspaper advertisement	Southern Riverina News Newspaper	2 January 2025 and 29 January 2025	All community stakeholders	n/a
Community information session	In person at the Finley School of Arts Hall	Session 1: 30 January 2025 between 5:00 pm-7:00 pm Session 2: 31 January 2025 between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm	Immediate and wider community (1,200 properties)	Four community members spoke to the project team over the two sessions.
Individual stakeholder briefings	Online, invited via email to attend a community pop-up session, or an individual stakeholder briefing	n/a	Current site landowner Neighbouring dwellings Council's elected officials State and Federal MPS Community groups	n/a

4.1. ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The engagement activities for the proposal's strategy sought to inform and consult with stakeholders and the community and provide balanced and objective information to assist stakeholders in understanding the proposal and obtaining public feedback.

The following outlines the key themes that arose during the consultation period:

- Managing the impact on visual amenity
- Concerns regarding the loss of farming land
- Community tension and discontent
- Concerns regarding construction impacts on local road networks
- Environmental Impacts
- Potential fire risks
- Temporary workforce arrangements

The engagement activities are detailed in full in the Engagement Outcomes Report (Urbis, 2025).

4.2. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

A videoconference was held with representatives from Berrigan Shire Council on 24 February 2025. This discussion aimed to understand the community's local character and any other potential positive or negative social impacts associated with the proposal. A copy of the interview guide is provided in Appendix A.

A summary of the consultation, as relevant to this SIA, is provided below.

Social and site context

- The representatives noted that Finley has experienced significant change since the commencement of the Murray Darling Basin Implementation Plan in 2012.
- Specifically, it was noted that Finley was once a key service town in the region. However, Finley has since experienced a decline in residential population, and many local community services and retail tenancies have withdrawn from the town.
- As a result of the above, the representative noted that Finley residents predominantly comprise of lower socio-economic groups who cannot access the same level of local services as they previously could.
- The representatives noted they believe that residents who have left Finley have likely moved to nearby regional centres, such as Albury.

Workforce and housing

- It was noted that access to housing and temporary accommodation is an existing challenge across the LGA. Specifically, they noted that large temporary workforces are generated by renewable energy projects and horticulture (i.e., fruit picking).
- The representative noted that there are some local construction companies and workers; however, there is not a large supply of civil workers.

Potential social impacts

- The representatives noted that the community understands the proposal will benefit the wider community by enhancing grid stability. However, the community does not understand how renewable energy projects will directly benefit them.
- They expressed concern about the loss of agricultural land and noted that the community is interested in knowing if the land can be remediated back to agricultural uses if the site is decommissioned.
- Given the large number of renewable energy and BESS projects occurring in the community, the representatives explained that the community is experiencing difficulty differentiating the projects and understanding their locations in relation to one another. The council emphasised the importance of clear community communication to minimise confusion and improve the community's capacity to provide feedback on each project.

Community benefits

- The representatives explained the community’s sentiments toward renewable energy projects, noting that they are sceptical of renewable energy developers and their ability to give back to the community they impact.
- Specifically, the representatives noted that the community felt that a previous renewable energy developer overpromised and underdelivered on the community benefits they would provide as part of the proposal. They noted this was particularly in relation to the employment of local construction companies and the use of local trades workers, as the community was encouraged to apply for these roles, but only one or two businesses were successful.
- The council didn’t believe that any group should be the primary beneficiary of the proposed benefit-sharing program; instead, it should go towards facilities and services that support the whole community.

- Specifically, the representatives noted that some local community services have been financially supported through a government financial support program that will end this year. They indicated that monetary contributions to support the operation of local community services, such as allied health professionals, would benefit the community.
- It was also noted that Finley has several extensive, quality recreation facilities that require high maintenance. Therefore, the representative identified an opportunity for the community benefit sharing scheme to provide monetary contributions to support the maintenance of these recreational facilities.

Other comments

- The representative noted how the community dislikes that solar energy projects are referred to as 'solar farms', as they do not consider them farms.

4.3. SIA SURVEY

An online SIA survey was prepared to obtain feedback on the proposal's potential positive and negative social impacts. The survey was advertised in the community newsletter and project website and opened between 15 January 2025 and 29 January 2025. Six residents responded.

Appendix C of this SIA includes a copy of the social impact survey questions.

A summary of key findings from the survey that are relevant to this SIA is provided below.

- Providing employment opportunities for local residents was identified as a positive impact of the proposal.
- The community has expressed concerns about several key areas of negative impact, including ecological and environmental damage, community division, and the lack of direct benefits to local residents.
- Negative impacts can be mitigated by landscaping (to offset visual impact).
- Two respondents stated not to build the BESS, and another reaffirmed the perceived bushfire impact. These respondents shared that the entire locality would be negatively affected.
- Some sentiments of personal greed (for the land owners) were also shared as a negative impact.

4.4. COMMUNITY POP-UP SESSION

Representatives from Urbis Social Planning and Community Engagement, Premise and Gransolar held two community pop-up sessions in Finley Hall on 30 January 2025 and 31 January 2025.

The purpose of the sessions was to provide residents and workers with an opportunity to learn about the project and to share any feedback or concerns directly with the project team. Newsletters were distributed to 1,200 properties in the Finley area, inviting residents to attend the information sessions. The team presented four poster boards with information on the proposal and the proponent. Responses were heard from four of these participants. The main concerns are outlined below:

A summary of the consultation, as relevant to this SIA, is provided below.

- All four residents who attended the information sessions were concerned about the visual impact the BESS would create.
- One resident who attended, who lives directly across from the site, questioned the BESS's colours and whether screening would be involved.
- All four residents questioned the direct benefit the BESS would create for Finley and energy prices in the area. One resident directly stated, "We are farmers; we do not want these batteries that have nothing to do with Finley." Another resident further questioned the functionality of the BESS for Finley and how it would work with the local Solar Farm.

4.5. KEY IMPLICATIONS OF SIA FIELD STUDY FINDINGS

This section outlines the key social impacts identified by stakeholders throughout the SIA field study and engagement activities. The consultation activities sought to understand how participants viewed their community and identify how the Proposal may impact them. Table 9 includes the potential positive and negative impacts and opportunities to mitigate or enhance these impacts as identified by stakeholders.

Table 9 Potential impacts and opportunities as identified by stakeholders

Perceived positive impacts	Perceived negative impacts	Opportunities as identified by community stakeholders
▪ Local employment opportunities ▪ Supporting NSW's transition to renewable energy ▪ Providing local grid sustainability	▪ Visual impacts ▪ Perceived loss of agricultural land ▪ Environmental and ecological concerns, including perceived fire and radiation risks ▪ Potential community division ▪ Potential impacts on short-term and/or rental accommodation if a temporary construction workforce is introduced	▪ Provide direct economic benefits through providing local construction employment opportunities ▪ Provide direct community benefits through investment in community infrastructure, services and/or groups ▪ Utilising landscaping to screen the proposal and mitigate visual impacts

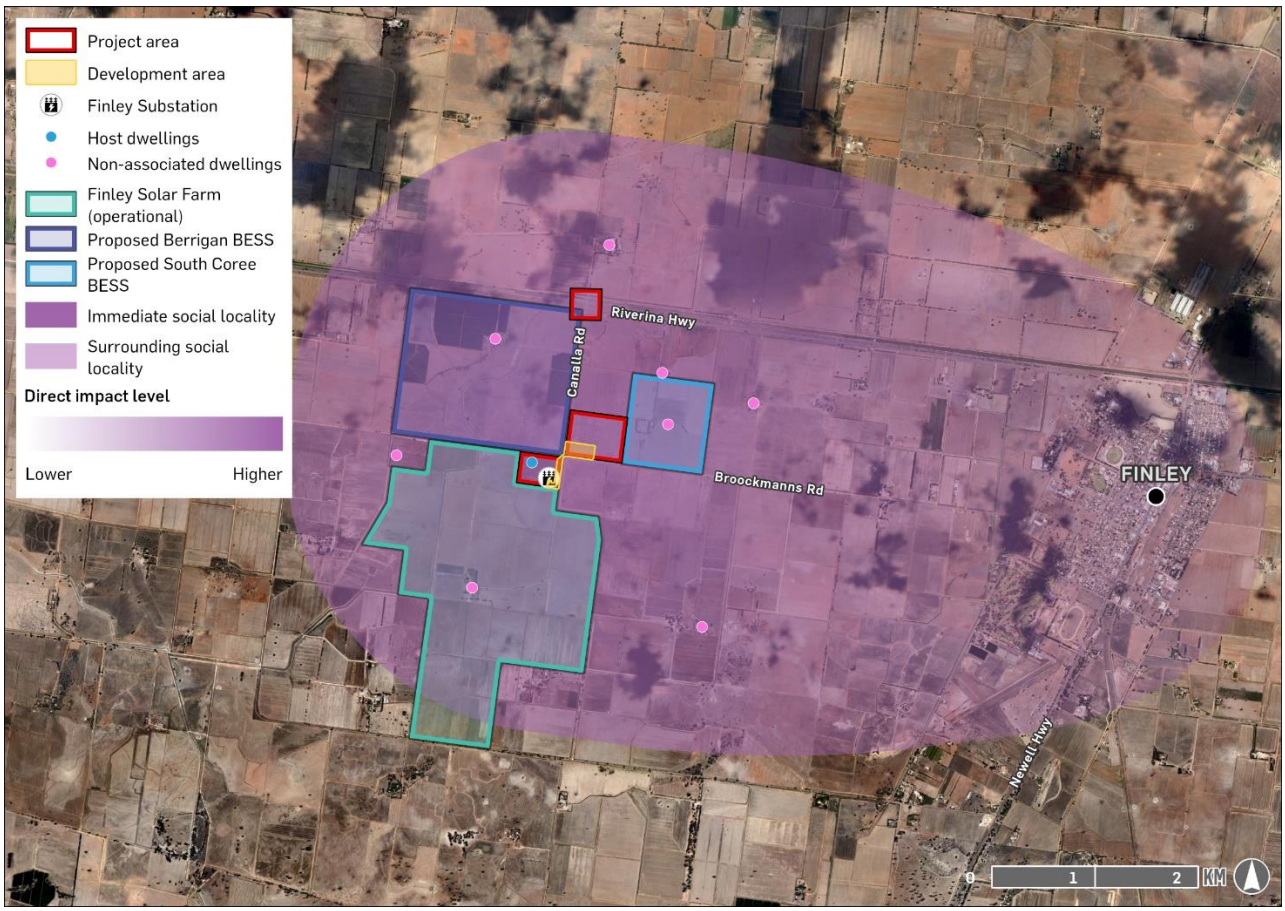
5. SOCIAL LOCALITY

A social locality helps identify the scale and nature of the Proposal's likely social impacts and the likely impacted groups.

The proposal's likely social locality (shown in Figure 7) was determined based on a review of the proposal, the surrounding context and consultation outcomes. The social locality considers two key areas and likely impacted groups. These include:

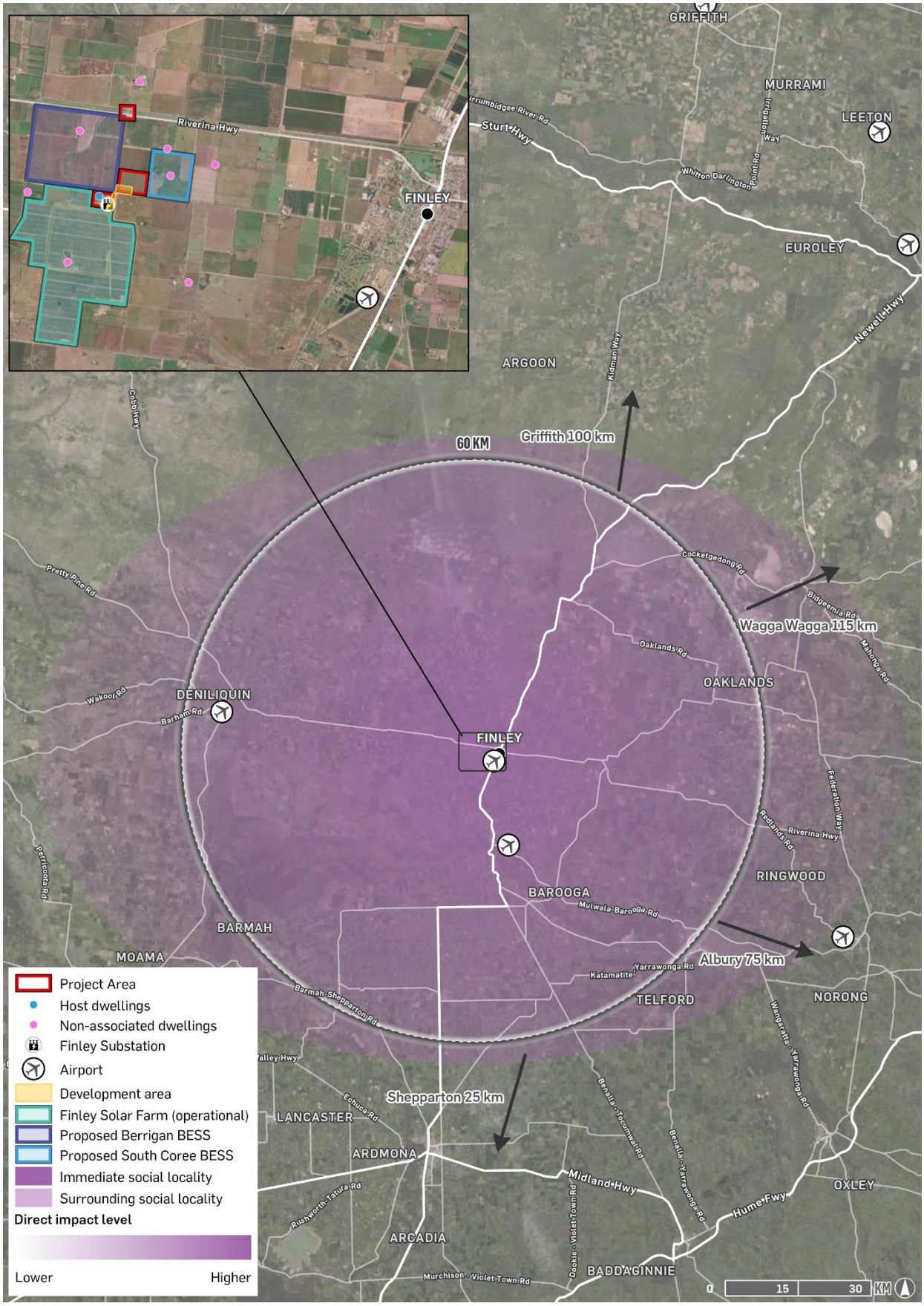
- **Immediate social locality**: This area includes the residents within 2km of the proposal who may be directly impacted during construction and operation, such as potential noise impacts and changes to visual character. It also includes nine neighbouring properties that have been identified as potential sensitive receivers.
- **Surrounding social locality**: This area includes communities that the proposal may impact directly or indirectly. It is anticipated that workers and residents within the Finley town centre and the surrounding rural area may be affected by the temporary increase in construction workers living there over the construction period. This may pressure the availability of local accommodation, social infrastructure and services. These groups are also likely to experience long-term benefits associated with the operation of the proposal and community benefits delivered as part of the proposal's community benefit sharing program.
- **Regional social locality**: The regional social locality may also impact nearby regional centres, including Albury, Shepparton, Griffith and Wagga Wagga, as the temporary worker population may need to access a hospital or other specialised services unavailable in Finley town centre.

Figure 7 Social locality



Source: Urbis 2025

Figure 8 Regional social locality



Source: Urbis 2025

6. SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This section provides a ranking of the identified social impacts of the proposal. It is structured by the social impact categories outlined in the SIA Guideline (DPHI 2023), as shown in Table 10 below.

6.1. ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Each impact is assessed in accordance with the risk assessment methodology applied in the SIA Guideline Technical Supplement, which assesses the significance of each potential social impact by comparing its magnitude against the likelihood of occurring.

This methodology and associated assessment parameters are outlined in the tables below.

Table 10 Social impact category definitions

Social impact category	Definition
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 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, 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, and changes to public health overall
Surroundings	Including ecosystem services such as shade, pollution control, and erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity
Livelihoods	Including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business, whether they experience personal breach or disadvantage, and the distributive equity of impacts and benefits
Decision-making systems	Particularly whether people experience procedural fairness, can make informed decisions, can meaningfully influence decisions, and can access complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms.

Source: SIA Guideline (DPHI 2023, p.19)

Table 11 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: DPHI, 2023, SIA Guideline: Technical Supplement, p. 13

Table 12 Likelihood levels

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

Source: SIA Guideline: Technical Supplement (DPHI 2023, p. 12)

Table 13 Magnitude levels

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

Source: SIA Guideline: Technical Supplement (DPHI 2023, p. 13)

Table 14 Dimensions of social impact magnitude

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

Source: SIA Guideline: Technical Supplement (DPHI 2023, p. 12)

Mitigation and enhancement measures

Social impacts are assessed before and after the implementation of mitigation measures (for negative social impacts) and enhancement measures (for positive social impacts). These measures can take different forms and may be incorporated in the proposed development's design, planning, construction, or operational stage. Mitigation measures, enhancement measures, and SIA recommendations are summarised in Section 7.1.

SIA recommendations

SIA recommendations are proposed throughout the impact assessment to further enhance positive social impacts and mitigate negative ones. These measures have not been included in the assessment of mitigated or enhanced impacts but have been recommended as additional measures for consideration by the proponent to enhance the social outcomes of the proposal.

Mitigation and enhancement measures, which are committed to and have informed the assessment of mitigated and enhanced social impacts, are detailed in the 'mitigated' and 'enhanced' sections of each social impact throughout this section and summarised in Section 7.1.

SIA recommendations are identified separately from the mitigated and enhanced assessment for each impact and are summarised in Section 7.2.

6.2. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS ACROSS CATEGORIES

This section assesses the projects' key impacts, as per the categories set out in the SIA Guideline.

6.2.1. Way of life

Guideline definition: *Way of life, including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, and how they interact each day.*

6.2.1.1. Social cohesion and short-term accommodation availability during construction

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Surrounding residents and workers in the immediate locality	Construction
Assessment – without mitigation: Medium negative	

The impact of newcomers is an essential social consideration concerning service capacity, housing availability, local social cohesion, and community sensitivities about what this means for a community's long-term composition and cohesiveness. Ensuring equitable access to services and housing is essential for supporting the day-to-day lives of individuals living in or visiting an area.

Renewable energy projects in regional NSW often require additional construction workers on a fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) or drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) basis due to a lack of available or adequately skilled workers in the local area. Depending on the scale of a project and the associated workforce requirements, these projects can impact local housing availability, value, affordability, and the size and length of time the workforce is required to stay.

During consultation (refer to Section 4), Council noted that access to housing and temporary accommodation is an existing challenge across the LGA. Specifically, large temporary workforces are generated by renewable energy projects and horticulture activities (i.e., fruit picking). This highlights the potential for cumulative impacts on social cohesion and short-term accommodation availability if several large, temporary workforces are introduced to Finley and/or surrounding suburbs simultaneously. The local community also raised concerns that the proposal may cause community division, impacting social cohesion.

The proposal is expected to undergo an 10-month construction period, generating up to 55 FTE local jobs during peak construction periods (3 months of peak construction over the total 10-month construction period). The number of construction jobs that can be sourced locally would depend on the availability of local workers with the necessary skill sets. However, it is assumed that some specialised workers must be sourced externally and accommodated locally.

As discussed in the SIA field study (refer to Section 4) Council representatives noted that there are some local construction companies and workers. However, there is not an ample supply of civil workers. This aligns with Finley's demographic profile (refer to Section 3.5), which shows that 141 people, or 13.8% of the Finley workforce, are labourers. However, the availability, specific skills, and aspirations of these local workers are unknown, and it cannot be assumed that all construction workers can be sourced locally at this stage.

Considering the available information, the proposal would likely require specialised construction workers to be sourced externally and accommodated within Finley or the surrounding suburbs. However, the magnitude is reduced given the construction workforce generated by the proposal is relatively small and for a relatively short construction period, therefore it is not expected to have a significant impact on local social cohesion or short-term accommodation availability.

The likelihood and magnitude of this impact could increase if potential cumulative impacts are associated with other proposed projects in the area. As such, the proposal's impact on social cohesion and short-term accommodation availability is assessed as **low negative**, given the possible likelihood and minimal magnitude.

Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Low negative

During consultation (Section 4) Council explained that the local community lacks trust in renewable energy developers given their past experiences, noting that a developer has previously overpromised the number of local employment opportunities and underdelivered. The proponent would need to consider this community sentiment, as it may reduce the willingness of local construction workers to apply for employment opportunities associated with renewable energy projects.

Where possible, local workers would be employed; however, due to the nature of some of the work and the quantity of workers required, this may result in out-of-area workers being employed, who would need to be accommodated near the project.

Given Finley's limited size, it is anticipated that workers will reside in Finley, Tocumwal, Berrigan, Jerilderie, and Deniliquin, travelling by bus or private car to the site each day. The potential exists to support local training and support services organisations during the construction and operation phase, and these opportunities would be explored through an Accommodation and Employment Strategy (AES).

No mitigation measures have been identified at this stage; therefore, the mitigated impacts remain **low negative**, given the possible likelihood and minimal magnitude.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- Before selecting a construction partner, prepare a Workforce and Accommodation Plan or Accommodation and Employment Strategy (AES) in consultation with Council to achieve the following:
  - Determine the approximate number of workers sourced locally and externally to understand workforce accommodation requirements.
  - Avoid occupying all available accommodation options, minimising impacts on local short-term accommodation providers and the availability of rental accommodation in Finley.
  - Consult with short-term accommodation providers to understand their average vacancy rates and peak occupancy periods, such as when major events occur, to align the proposal's peak construction periods outside of these events.
- Continue to consult with Council regarding the pipeline of proposed renewable energy projects in the local area and peak horticulture periods. This will enable the proponent to adequately consider cumulative construction impacts as part of their Workforce and Accommodation Plan or Strategy and/or stage their construction activities to minimise overlapping construction periods with competing renewable energy projects or horticulture periods.
- Engage with local employment and training organisations to ensure that potential local employees are informed of opportunities associated with the proposal through various channels.
- Mitigation measures are recommended for adoption to manage any residual impacts proactively and in consultation with the local community.

6.2.1.2. Temporary increase in demand for social infrastructure and services

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Surrounding social locality, including residents, workers and future construction workers	Construction
Assessment – without mitigation: Low negative	
Social infrastructure comprises the facilities (e.g. healthcare, schools, public facilities, parks, and community support), spaces, services and networks that support communities' quality of life and wellbeing. During consultation (refer to section 4.2) Council noted that Finley has experienced a significant level of change since the commencement of the Murray-Darling Basin Implementation Plan in 2012. Specifically, Council notes that Finley was once a key service town in the region. However, Finley has also experienced a decline in residential population, and many local community services and retail tenancies have withdrawn from Finley. As a result, Finley residents predominantly comprise of lower socio-economic groups who cannot access the same level of local services as they previously could. As indicated in the social baseline (refer to Section 3), there is minimal social infrastructure and community services available in Finley town centre (refer to Section 3.2.2). The demographic profile (refer to Section 3.5) also reveals greater levels of socio-economic disadvantage and prevalence of long-term health conditions, compared to the Berrigan Shire LGA and NSW. Specifically, the proposal would likely introduce some externally sourced construction workers to support the construction phase. Like the existing community, the incoming worker population would likely require access to local social infrastructure and services to meet their needs, which may strain the availability of existing facilities and services. There is also the potential for impacts on local services and employment. Therefore, the proposal's potential incoming worker population could impact how the existing community accesses social infrastructure and services. Considering the existing context, the unmitigated impact is assessed as **low negative**, given the possible likelihood and minor magnitude. It is noted that this impact would be temporary and only experienced during the construction phase of the proposal.	
Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Low positive	
The Proponent intends to deliver a community benefit sharing scheme with the Council. This refers to an agreement, such as a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA), between the Proponent and Council to determine the amount and distribution of financial contributions from the Proponent to offset potential negative impacts and share any benefits associated with the proposal. Implementing a VPA can increase the supply of social infrastructure while providing the Council with the autonomy to distribute the funding where it is needed most to support the needs of the existing and incoming worker population. As discussed in Section 4.2, the Council has identified several community benefit opportunities. These include monetary contributions to support the operation of local community services, such as allied health professionals, and/or to support the maintenance of existing recreation facilities. The Proponent has requested the Council's input on preparing a VPA. However, the Proponent has not received a response when writing this SIA, and the VPA has not been finalised.	

Assuming a VPA or other form of Community Benefits scheme is finalised before the construction of the proposal, the mitigated impact is assessed as **medium positive –** given a possible likelihood and moderate magnitude. The magnitude of the mitigated impact has the potential to be positive, depending on the allocation of financial contributions within the VPA to contribute to meeting community needs for local social infrastructure and services.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- Ensure community facilities and service providers are informed of the potential incoming workforce so they can plan accordingly.
- Continue to consult with the Council to confirm the potential community benefits to be considered for any Community Benefit Sharing scheme/VPA.
- Consider preparing a Letter of Intent, a non-legally binding document outlining the community benefits or financial contribution a proponent intends to provide through a VPA. This allows for flexibility, given that community and Council priorities can change between lodgement and approval and allows the Council to coordinate community benefits associated with other renewable energy projects.
- Prepare the final VPA, ensuring it is informed by Council consultation.

6.2.2. Community

Guideline definition: *Community, including composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, resilience, and people's sense of place.*

6.2.2.1. Contribution to the renewable energy sector

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Surrounding social locality, including residents and workers in the broader region.	Operation

Assessment – without mitigation: High positive

As discussed in the policy review (refer to Section 3.3), a suite of policies from the NSW Government and local councils collectively support the State's transition to renewable energy sources and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. These policies provide a comprehensive framework for renewable energy development, infrastructure modernisation, sustainable community planning and impact minimisation. Specifically, the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (NSW Government, 2020) aims to attract $32 billion of private sector investment in renewable energy projects by 2030, including long-duration energy storage. The proposal closely aligns with these strategic objectives.

Locally, Berrigan Shire Council identifies reducing the LGA's carbon footprint as a strategic objective within its Community Strategic Plan 2040 (2024). The strategy to achieve this objective is to mitigate the impacts of climate change through renewable energy and water conservation measures and encourage sustainable living in partnership with local community groups. Local strategies are primarily informed by community consultation and local and State government priorities; therefore, it can be assumed that this strategic objective generally aligns with community aspirations for their region.

The proposal would assist in balancing supply and demand on the power grid, enhancing reliability and efficiency by storing excess energy and releasing it when needed. These systems help reduce reliance on less environmentally friendly power sources and minimise greenhouse gas emissions (Huawei, 2023). As such, BESS infrastructure is an integral part of the shift to renewable energy, providing greater stability to

the community's electricity provision. BESS also alleviates the pressure on the grid, a significant challenge in developing the renewable energy sector (Time2Energy, 2023).

During consultation (refer to Section 4), the Council noted that the community generally understands the proposal would positively impact the broader community by providing enhanced grid stability. However, it was also noted that the community generally doesn't understand how the energy projects would directly benefit them.

Given the provision of renewable energy infrastructure and its contribution to achieving both State and local renewable energy objectives, this unenhanced impact is assessed as **high positive**, given its likely likelihood and moderate magnitude.

Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: High positive

As described above, the proposal would contribute to the renewable energy sector by providing long-term storage of electricity, which is required to provide large amounts of reliable energy on demand.

During the community pop-up session, all four residents who attended questioned how the proposed Finley BESS would impact local energy prices, and another resident questioned the functionality of the BESS to Finley and how it would work with the local Solar Farm. Council also emphasised the importance of clear communications with the community and differentiation of renewable energy projects to minimise confusion between competing renewable energy projects (refer to Section 4.2).

In response to community and Council concerns outlined in Section 4, it is recommended that the Proponent continue providing information to educate the local community on the benefits of BESS infrastructure, how it will integrate into existing energy infrastructure, and its broader contribution to the NSW renewable energy sector.

While the Proponent has already distributed some information to the local community through newsletters, community pop-up sessions, and stakeholder briefings, this could continue throughout the proposal's development timeframe, as some community concerns and questions may remain.

Considering the above enhancement measures, the enhanced impact remains **high positive**, given the likely likelihood and moderate magnitude. However, as outlined above and in the SIA recommendations below, there are further opportunities to enhance the proposal's positive impact amongst the community.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- Continue educating the local community about the BESS infrastructure's role, function, and benefits. This could be included in future project newsletters and on the project website.

6.2.2.2. Increased opportunities for social value creation

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Surrounding social locality, including residents, businesses and workers	Operation

Assessment – without mitigation: Medium positive

As the renewable energy sector matures, community benefit sharing is increasingly used to positively integrate projects into local communities, benefiting developers, councils and residents. As mentioned, community benefits are typically shared through a formal and legally binding agreement, such as a VPA between the Proponent and Council. A VPA aims to determine the amount and distribution of financial

contributions from the Proponent to offset potential negative impacts and share any benefits associated with the proposal.

As mentioned in the policy context (refer to Section 3) a Community and Benefit Sharing Program for REZ in NSW (the Program) (EnergyCo, 2024) highlights potential benefits that can be shared with the local community through developer contributions. Examples include the provision of public or community services or infrastructure, health services, accommodation or housing, employment, skills and training programs, amongst others outlined in the Program.

Furthermore, the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (DPHI, 2023) calls for investment in freight road networks, health infrastructure, planning for growth in regional cities, agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, and the protection and sustainability of the Murray River waterfront.

Priorities for the Berrigan Shire LGA, as per the Finley Town Master Plan (Berrigan Shire Council, 2015), include revitalising urban spaces by enhancing public amenities, supporting local businesses through economic diversification, and integrating environmental sustainability practices, creating a vibrant, economically diverse, and environmentally sustainable urban environment.

While the proposal is not located within a REZ, there is an opportunity for the proposal to provide similar community or employment benefits through a VPA. During consultation (refer to Section 4), the Council explained that there is a lack of social infrastructure and services in Finley to support vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Further, the Council expressed a preference for community services and facilities to be the primary beneficiaries of a VPA rather than a specific demographic group, as they can support various groups within the community.

As noted in Section 4 the council highlighted several social and recreational infrastructure types and community services that would benefit from additional funding. These include opportunities ranging from financial support for community services, such as allied health services, to large council-owned recreational facilities.

The proposal will likely provide employment benefits through providing local construction employment opportunities, given that the Proponent intends to source as much of their construction workforce from the local area as possible. However, the Council explained that the community feels that previous renewable energy developers have fallen short in delivering on promised community benefits, particularly in local employment and community development. This has contributed to a lack of trust amongst the Finley community, which may impact the likelihood of local construction workers and companies applying to work on future renewable energy projects (refer to Section 4.2).

The Proponent has advised that they are committed to providing additional community infrastructure support and have invited Council to inform the preparation of a VPA. Considering this, the proposal would likely generate community and employment benefits for the local community. Therefore, the unmitigated impact is assessed as **medium positive**, given its possible likelihood and minor magnitude.

It is noted that, should community investment continue into the operational phase, the local community could potentially contribute to long-term benefits.

Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Medium positive

When writing this SIA on 17 April 2025, the Council has not responded to the Proponent's invitation to provide input into preparing a VPA to support the proposal's SSDA. However, the Proponent intends to continue engaging with the Council.

Facilitating investment in the local community would strengthen social cohesion and resilience by increasing the community's access to social infrastructure, services, and financial support. Assuming the

Proponent prepares a VPA in consultation with the Council, the enhanced impact is assessed as **medium positive**, given its possible likelihood and moderate magnitude.
SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations
▪ Continue engagement with the Council and key stakeholders on the proposal's design, construction activities, benefit-sharing initiatives, and further opportunities to deliver local benefits to the local community and maintain a social licence to operate. ▪ Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement and communication strategy so that residents can provide feedback on the proposal throughout its construction and operational periods.

6.2.3. Accessibility

Guideline definition: *Accessibility, including how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private, or not-for-profit organisation*

6.2.3.1. Potential access impacts from increased construction traffic

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Immediate social locality, including residents and businesses neighbouring the site, and the surrounding social locality, including residents and workers in Finley.	Construction
Assessment – without mitigation: Low negative	

Regional areas typically lack access to frequent and extensive public transport networks compared to urban areas. As a result, regional communities rely more on their local road network to access employment, social infrastructure and other services they require regularly. This is evident in Finley suburb and Berrigan LGA, where most residents travelled to work in a private vehicle as the driver or passenger on the day of the 2021 census, as discussed in the Demographic Profile (3.4). This also demonstrates an existing reliance on private vehicle transportation and the local road network.

The Transport Impact Assessment (TIA), prepared by Premise (2025), assesses the potential impact that the construction and operation of the proposal would have on the capacity and quality of the road network. The TIA found that the increase in traffic volume is not considered significant, and the net daily traffic volume and peak hour volume generated during construction are easily absorbed into the surrounding road network with minimal impact on the capacity of the existing traffic streams using the road system.

The anticipated construction phase of Finley BESS is 11 months, with the peak period spanning three months. An estimated 56 light vehicles will generate 29 daily movements, supplemented by shuttle buses for construction workers. Heavy vehicles, including one over-dimensional transformer delivery, will access the site via Canalla Road. Traffic impacts during construction will not overlap with peak hours on Riverina Highway, and heavy vehicles will be scheduled outside peak times.

Operational traffic will have up to two staff members, generating minimal impact (four light vehicle movements per day). The decommissioning phase will be addressed with a future traffic plan.as per the TIA, overall, the BESS project will have a manageable and decreasing traffic impact over time, with no significant safety concerns or infrastructure upgrades required.

Although this impact is assessed as minimal in the TIA, residents may be unfamiliar with the amount of traffic, particularly given its proximity to Finley town centre, and therefore could perceive access impacts.

As such, the unmitigated impact during construction is assessed as **negligible to low negative**, given the possible likelihood and minimal magnitude.

Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Low negative

Premise (2025) has prepared a draft traffic management plan (TMP) and a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).

The CTMP details that the Proponent has committed to providing one minibus containing up to 19 people on board for commencement and finalisation of the construction when the workforce is not peak, and two minibuses for the peak construction period. This should assist in reducing some traffic caused by the proposal.

The CTMP also outlines directions for handling complaint management and dispute resolution, which would allow the community to raise concerns regarding traffic during the construction phase.

Given the possible likelihood and minimal magnitude, the mitigated assessment remains **negligible to low negative**.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- Implement the recommendations of the Traffic Management Plan and Construction Traffic Management Plan prepared by Premise (2025).
- As part of the community and stakeholder engagement strategy, advise the community and road users of significant traffic changes that may impact travel time or road access.

6.2.4. Culture

Guideline definition: *Culture, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, practices, obligations, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings*

6.2.4.1. Potential disruption to Aboriginal objects and places

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who currently live within the surrounding social locality or have a connection to the land.	Construction

Assessment – without mitigation: Low negative to negligible

The construction and operation of any development should consider impacts on Aboriginal objects, the landscape, or the spiritual connection that Aboriginal people have with Country.

As noted in the demographic profile (Section 4), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent 4.9% (or 120 people) of Finley's population.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) prepared by Premise (2025) notes no evidence of high-intensity Aboriginal occupation or use of the landscape on and surrounding the development site. However, it notes Aboriginal people occupied the broader Murray-Darling region within at least the last 40,000 years, indicative of background research and consultation undertaken as part of the ACHA.

The ACHA (Premise, 2025) assesses the proposal as having nil impacts on Aboriginal heritage or Aboriginal cultural heritage values associated with the site and the broader area. The archaeological field

survey found no artefacts or objects within the site or 200m around it, therefore assessing the site as having nil to low archaeological sensitivity.

Considering the ACHA findings, the unmitigated impact is assessed as **low negative to negligible**, given the very unlikely likelihood and minor magnitude.

Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Low negative to negligible

While the proposed works are unlikely to harm Aboriginal objects, the ACHA (Premise, 2025) states that a chance finds protocol should be developed as part of the Finley BESS Construction Environment Management Plan. This will ensure that should any unexpected archaeological deposits are uncovered during site works; they will be appropriately managed to ensure potential disruption is mitigated.

Assuming the procedures for chance finds are applied, the mitigated impact assessment remains **low negative to negligible**, given the very unlikely likelihood and minor magnitude.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- Continue engagement with the relevant Registered Aboriginal Parties throughout project delivery.
- Implement all recommendations outlined within the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment prepared by Premise (2025).

6.2.5. Health and wellbeing

Guideline definition: *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*

6.2.5.1. Potential health and amenity impacts

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Immediate social locality, including neighbouring residents along Brockmans Road, Canella Road and Riverina Highway,	Construction

Assessment – without mitigation: Low negative

As discussed in the demographic profile (refer to Section 3.5), the most common long-term health conditions are arthritis, asthma and mental health conditions. Further, 268 people provided unpaid assistance to someone with an identified need for assistance due to disability, old age, or long-term health condition. This highlights several groups who would be vulnerable to amenity impacts, such as noise, dust and traffic, during the construction of the proposal.

Exacerbated levels of noise or impacted air quality can impact residents' way of life and physical and mental health. Increased noise levels can impact an individual’s sleep or ability to concentrate. In contrast, increased dust can impact an individual’s health and wellbeing, particularly those with respiratory-related health issues, such as asthma. Further, prolonged or extended periods of experiencing these types of amenity impacts have the potential to impact an individual’s mental health.

The construction of the proposed BESS may impact local amenity and the physical and mental health of wellbeing of neighbouring residents through increased noise, dust and traffic. Increased traffic during construction can also affect individuals’ ability to undertake everyday tasks, particularly in regional areas,

as they heavily rely on the local road network and private transportation and cause some stress. Impacts related to increased traffic during construction periods are assessed in Section 6.2.3.1 of this report.

The Noise and Vibrations Impact Assessment (NVIA) prepared by Assured Environmental (2025) assesses both the construction and operational phases of the project. The NVIA (Assured Environmental, 2025) identifies nine single existing dwellings as potential noise and vibration sensitive receivers given their proximity to the proposal.

During construction, the assessment of predicted noise levels found that some construction activities may exceed the 45 dB(A) Noise Affected criterion but will remain below the Highly Noise Affected 75 dB(A) criterion. Any adverse construction noise impacts are expected to be short-lived. The vibration assessment also expects the proposal's construction to have no adverse impacts on residential receivers.

Due to minimal staffing requirements, road traffic noise is expected to be negligible during operation. Further, the majority of predicted noise levels generated by the proposal's operation are expected to remain within acceptable limits without additional mitigation measures.

Potential amenity impacts due to increased dust have been considered in the proposal's EIS. The EIS specifies appropriate mitigation measures to minimise the risk of dust spreading throughout the development site and onto neighbouring land. Compliance with mitigation measures specified within the EIS is anticipated to reduce the risk of conflict related to air quality impacts.

Considering the short periods of time that the Noise-Affected criterion will be exceeded and the small number of individuals who are likely to experience construction-related amenity impacts, the unmitigated impact during construction is assessed as **low negative**, given the possible likelihood and minimal magnitude.

Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Low negative to negligible

The NVIA (Assured Environmental, 2025) recommends mitigation measures to future mitigate potential construction noise impacts, including community consultation, noise management awareness and ongoing equipment maintenance. The full list of mitigation measures is provided in Section 2.5 and 3.6 of the NVIA (Assured Environmental, 2025).

During operation, most predicted noise levels would remain within acceptable limits without additional mitigation measures. Therefore, no operational mitigation measures are recommended within the NVIA (Assured Environmental, 2025).

Considering the above, the mitigated impact is assessed as **low negative to negligible**.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- Prepare a project-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan to minimise potential noise, dust, and construction traffic impacts. This includes implementing all reasonable and feasible recommendations provided in the Noise and Vibrations Impact Assessment prepared by Assured Environmental (2025).
- Provide a community liaison officer to liaise with the local community during construction. This would ensure that the local community is aware of the proposal updates and provide a point of contact for them should stakeholder complaints about increased noise or dust arise.
- Implement all measures specified in management plans identified in the EIS and/or consent conditions (if approved).

6.2.5.2. Perceived human safety risks

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Existing and future residents, businesses, workers and visitors in the immediate and surrounding localities.	Operation
Assessment – without mitigation: Low Negative	
As outlined in section 4, there is a negative community perception of the risk of BESS and its impacts on human wellbeing. Community consultation identified that human safety risks are prevalent within the community, specifically regarding the fire risk associated with the operation of the batteries. Fires can have health, and well-being impacts on individuals and vulnerable groups, including asthma exacerbations and chronic health problems, if prolonged exposure. Fires can also trigger cardiovascular effects even with short-term exposure (Australia Government Department of Health and Aged Care, 2022). Bushfires have also been shown to increase mental health issues in local communities linked to evacuation and loss of property (Leviston et al., 2023). As noted in the demographic profile (refer to Section 4), asthma is the third most common long-term health condition, impacting 10.4% of the Finley resident population. Therefore, these individuals are particularly vulnerable to potential health and well-being impacts associated with large, uncontrolled fires. The Bush Fire Assessment Report by Peak Land Management (2025) determines that the project meets the criteria for wind and solar farms (including BESS) and complies with risk assessment. The Preliminary Hazard Analysis by Riskcon Engineering (2025) concludes that the project would only be classified as potentially hazardous and permitted within the current land zoning for the site. Considering the above, the unmitigated assessment is rated **low negative** due to its unlikely likelihood and minor magnitude.	
Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Low negative to negligible	
The Bush Fire Assessment Report by Peak Land Management (2025) outlines a set of recommendations for the mitigation of the bush fire threat to the BESS: ▪ Buildings should be designed and constructed to withstand bushfire impacts, and essential equipment should minimise bushfire risks. ▪ Fire protection equipment, such as extinguishers and hose reels, should be available and maintained regularly. ▪ Access roads must provide safe operational access for emergency services, conforming to PBP 2019 standards, with adequate clearance, width, and load-bearing capacity. ▪ Landscaping should minimise flame contact and radiant heat to buildings, complying with Asset Protection Zone standards. ▪ A Bush Fire Emergency Management and Operations Plan should identify risks and mitigation measures, including fire prevention, equipment availability, and notification of local fire authorities during high-risk periods	

The Preliminary Hazard Analysis by Riskcon Engineering (2025) outlines a set of recommendations for mitigating hazards at the site. These recommendations suggest that the BESS be tested in accordance with relevant fire safety guidelines and installed correctly and with fire protection systems.

Considering the above, the mitigated assessment is rated **low negative** – negligible due to its unlikely likelihood and minor magnitude.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- Implement the Bush Fire Assessment Report and Preliminary Hazard Analysis recommendations.
- Continue engagement with the local Fire Services to gather feedback on the proposal, access requirements and how best to implement mitigation measures.
- Continue stakeholder engagement with the community to address any potential perceived bushfire risk.

6.2.6. Surroundings

Guideline definition: *Surroundings, including ecosystem services such as shade, pollution control, and erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity.*

6.2.6.1. Change to visual character of the locality

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Residents, businesses, workers and visitors in the immediate social locality.	Operation

Assessment – without mitigation: Low negative

The visual environment and landscape are essential components of people's surroundings. Changes to the visual environment or landscape, such as the loss of scenic aesthetics, can impact the amenity within a place, influence a person's sense of place, and impact community character.

Consultation activities (refer to Section 4) revealed strong community sentiments towards protecting productive agricultural lands for their economic and visual attributes. During the community information session, all four residents who attended were concerned about the visual impact the BESS would create. One resident who attended lives directly across from the site and questioned the colours of the BESS and if screening would be involved.

The proposed BESS will occupy approximately 3 hectares of lease land, which is currently used for dryland cropping and occasional sheep grazing.

The Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) by Premise (2025) assessed four sensitive viewpoints surrounding the proposal site. The viewpoint sensitivity levels have been classified as Very Low, particularly for Transport/Infrastructure viewpoints taken from local roads.

The scenic quality of these viewpoints is characterised as Low due to extensively cleared and cropped areas with limited variation in colour and texture. Consequently, each viewpoint's visual sensitivity and magnitude are rated as Very Low, resulting in a Very Low visual impact rating.

Proposed night lighting is minimal, inwardly focused for security purposes, and will not affect neighbouring properties or dark sky requirements. Considering the above, the unmitigated impact is assessed as **low negative**, given the possible likelihood and minimal magnitude.
Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Low negative to negligible
The VIA concludes that the proposed BESS will have limited visibility from the viewpoints due to its size and distance from these locations. With a Very Low visual impact rating, no mitigation is proposed as part of the VIA. To further mitigate residual visual impacts for existing or potential future residential receivers, the proposal includes a vegetation screen around the site's perimeter between the BESS structures and security fencing, as noted in the EIS (Premise, 2025). Considering the above, the mitigated impact is assessed as **low negative to negligible**, given its unlikely likelihood and minimal magnitude.
SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations
▪ Continue stakeholder engagement to identify the risk of perceived visual impacts.

6.2.7. Livelihoods

Guideline definition: Livelihoods, including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business, whether they experience personal breach or disadvantage, and the distributive equity of impacts and benefits.

6.2.7.1. Perceived loss of productive agricultural land

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Existing residents in the immediate and surrounding social locality.	Operation
Assessment – without mitigation: negligible to low negative	
The loss of productive agricultural land in Finley and the broader Berrigan Shire Council area is perceived as a concern to the community. The Murray and Riverina region (where the site is located) contains a substantial proportion of agricultural land, crucial to the local economy and workforce. According to Profile.id, the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry accounted for 10.2% of employment in the Riverina and Murray Region. However, this figure has steadily declined from 11.9% in 2017. Furthermore, the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector was the most significant contributor to total exports in the Riverina and Murray Region, generating a substantial $2,984 million in 2022/23. Additionally, the proposal site is approximately 100 km from the South West REZ, which is experiencing significant growth and development of renewable energy projects. As per sections 3.1-3.5, the surrounding area is predominantly rural and has faced a population decline in recent years. The Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report by Urbis (2025) outlines the significant community concern regarding the loss of productive agricultural land. During stakeholder consultation, Berrigan Shire Council officers expressed a concern about the loss of farm land. They noted that the community is interested in knowing if the land can be remediated back to agricultural uses if the site is decommissioned.	

The Agricultural Impact Assessment prepared by Premise (2025) states that the proposed development will occupy three hectares of land currently used for dryland cropping and occasional sheep grazing, with an estimated annual production value of $3,832.23. As the operational phases commence, this land would be fenced off and no longer used for agriculture. At the same time, the remaining paddock would continue to support cropping and occasional grazing.

While the proposal represents a reduction in annual agricultural farm productivity, there is a relatively small agricultural effect due to the small size and production value of the 3-hectare lease and study area. The economic impact assessment included in the EIS contains an analysis of employment and value-added benefits to the surrounding region. The reduction in agricultural productivity is expected to be relatively small for the area and is considered unlikely to impact local agricultural communities and significantly negatively affect supply chains (grain traders, saleyards, abattoirs, agricultural suppliers).

Additionally, the project is expected to have minimal impacts on the site's long-term agricultural productivity. During the decommissioning stage, land in the study area will be rehabilitated and returned to its pre-existing land use or another land use as agreed upon by the site provider and the proponent.

The loss of agricultural land is considered minimal compared to the benefits of developing the solar farm and BESS. As such, the perceived loss of productive agricultural lands has been assessed as **negligible to low negative**, given its likely likelihood and minimal magnitude.

Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: Low negative

The Agricultural Impact Assessment (Premise, 2025) concludes that the development will slightly reduce annual agricultural productivity due to the small size and production value of the 3-hectare lease and study area. However, the renewable energy project is expected to diversify the region's income portfolio, offering financial flexibility in an unpredictable climate. Therefore, the project is anticipated to have minimal long-term impacts on the site's agricultural productivity. After decommissioning, the land will be rehabilitated and returned to its original use or another agreed-upon use between the site provider and the project proponent.

Therefore, the perceived loss of productive agricultural land is considered a **low negative** impact, given its low likelihood and minimal magnitude. However, this perception contributes to local animosity towards renewable energy projects in the region and can heighten community tension.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- At the pre-construction stage, implement all reasonable and feasible mitigation measures recommended in the AIA (Premise, 2025).
- Consider developing a land management plan to facilitate land and agricultural benefits during operation through post-decommissioning.
- Develop land management plans with landowners and local agricultural producers to investigate and implement sustainable land practices.
- Develop educational materials accessible to the local community to inform them about the function and role of BESS.
- Highlight the proposal's limited loss of agricultural land and inform the community about the decommissioning process.

6.2.7.2. Contribution to the local economy through increased employment opportunities and spending with local businesses

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Surrounding residents and workers in the immediate and broader locality	Construction

Assessment – without mitigation: Medium positive

A strong local economy and access to employment opportunities significantly impact the livelihoods of individuals and businesses and their ability to participate and contribute within their communities. The proposal will generate employment opportunities locally and in the broader region. The proposal's externally sourced construction workforce will also increase spending at local businesses, such as supermarkets, retail stores, and cafes, as well as at short-term accommodation providers who will accommodate this workforce.

The proposal is expected to generate up to 55 jobs during the peak of construction (3 months of peak construction over a total 10-month construction period). Where possible, the proponent intends to employ local workers. However, due to the nature of some of the work and the quantity of workers required, the proponent may need to employ workers who live out of the area and would need to be accommodated near the project site.

During the proposal's operational phase, it is expected to generate two full-time equivalent ongoing employment opportunities. Given the small number of operational workers, this is expected to have a minimal contribution to the local economy.

The SIA field study (refer to Section 4) revealed that there are some local construction companies and workers; however, there is not a large supply of civil workers. This aligns with the demographic profile (refer to Section 3.5), suggesting there are opportunities for local employment as 13.8% of the Finley population are employed as labourers.

The SIA field study also revealed mixed community sentiments towards renewable energy projects and developers. While some SIA survey respondents identified the potential for local employment opportunities as a potential positive social impact, Council representatives noted the community felt that a previous renewable energy developer overpromised and underdelivered on the community benefits they were going to provide as part of their proposal. This matter was raised concerning the perceived overpromising of employing local construction companies and using local trades workers, as the community was encouraged to apply for these roles. Still, only one or two businesses were successful.

Considering the above, the proposal's expected contribution to the local economy through increased employment opportunities and spending at local businesses during its construction stage is assessed as **medium positive**, given its possible magnitude and likely likelihood.

The likelihood is possible because the number of construction workers sourced locally and externally is unknown at this stage. Similarly, the magnitude of this impact is minor given that several benefits would only be available over an 11-month construction period, and the ongoing benefits only apply to a few beneficiaries.

Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: high positive

While the construction employment opportunities will only be available over an 11-month construction period, the Proponent intends to provide training and/or value-added opportunities for local workers when necessary. This will equip the local workforce with skills and experiences that increase their capacity to

obtain additional employment in similar jobs. Given several renewable energy projects in the local area (refer to Section 3.3), individuals are more likely to obtain similar employment opportunities.

Construction and/or operational workers that need to be sourced externally would provide local economic benefits through increased spending at local businesses and short-term accommodation providers.

When recruiting locally, the Proponent could explore ways to build trust and manage expectations within the community to ensure they feel adequately informed of the available opportunities and that their applications will be prioritised over workers sourced out of the area. This is particularly important given the community's experience with applying for employment opportunities on other renewable energy projects in the area, as noted by the Council during consultation (refer to Section 4).

Considering the above enhancement measures, the enhanced impact is assessed as **high positive**, given its likely likelihood and moderate magnitude.

SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations

- Wherever possible and practical, engage with local business services to identify and maximise local procurement benefits derived from the proposal.
- Encourage local employment during construction and operation by actively advertising available jobs in various communication means used by the local community, including community boards, local newspapers, and online community groups.
- Engage with local employment and training organisations to ensure that potential local employees are informed of opportunities associated with the proposal through various channels.
- Wherever possible and practical, prioritise sourcing materials and services from local businesses to stimulate the local economy.

6.2.8. Decision-making systems

Guideline definition*: Decision-making systems, including the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and have access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms.*

6.2.8.1. Opportunity for the local community to have a say in the development of the area

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Existing residents, businesses and services in the immediate and surrounding social locality.	Construction and Operation

Assessment – without mitigation: Medium positive

Decisions about the built environment significantly impact how communities interact and live, making inclusive engagement essential to fostering community cohesion and trust. The ability to contribute to or influence the decision-making process and have a say in the area's development is a fundamental aspect of the social impact the proposal could generate. Important decisions around the natural or built environment can positively or negatively affect how people interact and live within communities and how they interact with a proposal and the Proponent.

The proposal is situated in a region set to experience transformative change associated with the South West REZ. This transformation will reshape the area's character and identity and heighten the importance of ensuring community members are adequately informed and have access to the appropriate communication channels to have a say in decisions that affect their lives in the short and long term.

Affected stakeholders	Duration of impact
Keeping residents and stakeholders updated reduces potential feelings of uncertainty or lack of control over the significant transformations occurring in the area. Clear, consistent communication throughout all proposal phases is essential to ensure the community understands the changes in their environments and their potential impacts. The Proponent has fostered opportunities for stakeholders to increase their ability to participate in decision-making for the proposal. As detailed in Section 4, the Proponent has undertaken targeted community and stakeholder engagement for the proposal (refer to Section 4). The Proponent has also provided communication channels to interested community members and stakeholders and access to complaints, remedy and grievance mechanisms. Through the engagement activities, stakeholders have demonstrated general support for the proposal. However, few residents generally disagreed with solar and wind renewable projects. All feedback collected to inform this SIA is summarised in Section 4 of this SIA. Refer to the Engagement Outcomes Report prepared by Urbis (2025) for a summary of all feedback collected to inform the proposal. Recognising that the Proponent has provided a range of communication channels for the community to have their voices heard to increase community and stakeholder participation in decision-making systems that affect them, the impact is assessed as **medium positive**, given the likelihood and minor magnitude.	
Assessment – with mitigation/ enhancement: medium positive	
As detailed above, the proposal has engaged with the community and key stakeholders through various channels to provide them with opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. The Engagement Outcomes Report (Urbis, 2025) notes that the Proponent will keep stakeholder informed of the project approval process through the exhibition and determination phases. Considering these enhancement measures, the enhanced impact is assessed as **medium positive** given its likely likelihood and minor magnitude.	
SIA recommendations – additional social mitigations	
▪ Utilise communication channels that are relevant and accessible to the local communities to keep stakeholders informed. ▪ Ensure updates and opportunities for involvement are communicated efficiently and avoid consultation fatigue. ▪ Consider establishing a dedicated community liaison officer before construction to be a consistent point of contact for residents, address concerns, and provide timely information. ▪ Continue engagement with the Council and key stakeholders on the proposal's design, construction activities, benefit-sharing initiatives, and further opportunities to deliver local benefits to the local community and maintain a social licence to operate. ▪ Continue presence and consultation in the community during planning stages to increase the perception of influence. ▪ Continue stakeholder engagement and assess opportunities to further develop the VPA and/or good neighbour programs.	

6.3. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are the result of incremental, sustained, and combined effects of human action and natural variations over time and can be both positive and negative (DPHI 2022, p.4). They can be caused by the compounding effects of a single project or multiple projects in an area and by the accumulation of effects from past, current, and future activities as they arise (ibid, p.4).

There are several state-significant and local projects operating or intended to operate in and around the social locality, which may contribute to cumulative impacts to the proposal. These are summarised in Table 12 below.

Table 15 Concurrent development projects

DA Reference	Development Description	Current Status
SSD Applications		
SSD-77238990	South Coree Battery Energy Storage System	Prepare EIS
SSD-78106206	Berrigan Battery Energy Storage System	Prepare EIS
SSD- 8540	Finley Solar Farm	Determination (operational)
SSD-10299	Finley South Solar Farm	Withdrawn
SSD-64923965	Tocumwal Magazine Storage Upgrade	Response to Submissions

Source: Major Projects (DPHI 2025)

Increased demand for infrastructure and services from the cumulative temporary workforce increases

As noted in Section 6.3.1, the local rental and accommodation market may be strained by the influx of the workforce required for the anticipated development of several renewable energy facilities across the region. Any potential added pressure could generate cumulative social impacts within the broader social locality related to reduced housing availability and affordability.

Furthermore, the stakeholder consultation activities (section 4.2) identified that Finley was once a key service town, but it has experienced a decline in residential population and the withdrawal of many local community services and retail businesses. As a result, the town's residents now predominantly belong to lower socio-economic groups and lack access to the same level of local services as before.

Council representatives believe those who have left Finley have likely moved to nearby regional centres, such as Albury. It is recommended that construction partners demonstrate how the workforce will be managed, including accommodation solutions that do not result in an unreasonable impact on local infrastructure and services, such as accommodation and providing solutions where capacity issues and impact risks are mitigated.

Cumulative impact of concentrated renewable energy projects in one area

The concentration of renewable energy projects in Finley and the broader South West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) is set to drive economic growth and job creation. Still, it also brings several cumulative impacts that require careful management.

The influx of workers may strain the local housing market, reducing availability and increasing prices, which could disproportionately affect lower-income residents. The increased demand for local services and infrastructure, such as healthcare, education, roads, and water supply, could place significant pressure on existing systems.

Environmental impacts, including land use changes and effects on local biodiversity, must also be considered. To mitigate these challenges, comprehensive planning, stakeholder engagement, and robust environmental management plans are essential to ensure that the benefits of the BESS are realised without compromising the well-being and sustainability of the local communities and environment.

7. MITIGATION, ENHANCEMENT AND MANAGEMENT

This section provides a summary of:

- Identified positive and negative social impacts,
- Corresponding unmitigated and mitigated risk rankings, and
- Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management measures.

Key potential stakeholders and/or partners have been identified to inform the implementation of the proposed mitigation and enhancement strategies. Their involvement and participation in monitoring and managing social impacts and social benefits will improve the outcomes of the proposed mitigation and management strategies.

Not all potential impacts will be the responsibility of the Proponent to mitigate or manage. In some cases, their role may be to cooperate or inform the mitigation and provide data and information to future tenants. In other cases, they may have direct responsibility for mitigating and managing the identified potential social impacts and the opportunity for partnerships.

7.1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED MITIGATION, ENHANCEMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL IMPACTS

A summary of the identified social impacts and benefits, risk ratings and proposed mitigation, enhancement, and management strategies is provided in Table 16 below.

Table 16 Summary of proposed mitigation, enhancement and management strategies of social impacts

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
Way of life	Social cohesion and short-term accommodation availability during construction	Medium negative	Low negative	▪ Before selecting a construction partner, prepare a Workforce and Accommodation Plan or Accommodation and Employment Strategy (AES) in consultation with Council ▪ Continue consulting with Council regarding the pipeline of proposed renewable energy projects in the local area and peak horticulture periods. This will enable the proponent to adequately consider cumulative construction impacts as part of their Workforce and Accommodation Plan or Strategy and/or stage their construction activities to minimise overlapping construction periods with competing renewable energy projects or horticulture periods. ▪ Engage with local employment and training organisations to ensure that	Proponent	Construction partner Local training and education institutions

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
				potential local employees are informed of opportunities associated with the proposal through various channels.		
Way of life	Temporary increase in demand for social infrastructure and services	Low negative	Low negative	▪ Ensure community facilities and service providers are informed of the potential incoming workforce so they can plan accordingly. ▪ Continue to consult with the Council to confirm the potential community benefits to be considered for the Community Benefit Sharing Scheme/VPA. ▪ Consider preparing a Letter of Intent, a non-legally binding document outlining the community benefits or financial contribution a proponent intends to provide through a VPA. This allows for flexibility, given that community and Council priorities can change between lodgement and approval and allows the Council to coordinate community benefits associated with other renewable energy projects.	Proponent	Council Local service providers Social Planning consultants

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
				▪ Prepare the final VPA, ensuring it is informed by Council consultation.		
Community	Contribution to the renewable energy sector	High positive	High positive	▪ Continue educating the local community about the BESS infrastructure's role, function, and benefits. This could be included in future project newsletters and on the project website.	Proponent	Engagement consultants Construction partner
Community	Increased opportunities for social value creation	Medium positive	Medium positive	▪ Continue engagement with the Council and key stakeholders on the proposal's design, construction activities, benefit-sharing initiatives, and further opportunities to deliver local benefits to the local community and maintain a social licence to operate. ▪ Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement and communication strategy so that residents can provide feedback on the proposal throughout its construction and operational periods.	Proponent	Council Social Planning consultants Engagement consultants
Accessibility	Potential access impacts from increased	Low negative	Low negative	▪ Implement the recommendations of the Traffic Management Plan and Construction Traffic Management Plan (2025).	Proponent	Construction partner

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
	construction traffic			▪ As part of the community and stakeholder engagement strategy, advise the community and road users of significant traffic changes that may impact travel time or road access.		Traffic consultants
Culture	Potential disruption to Aboriginal objects and places	Low negative to negligible	Low negative to negligible	▪ Continue engagement with the relevant Registered Aboriginal Parties throughout project delivery. ▪ Implement all recommendations outlined within the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment.	Proponent	RAP
Health and wellbeing	Potential health and amenity impacts	Low negative	Low negative to negligible	▪ Prepare a project-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan to minimise potential noise, dust, and construction traffic impacts. This includes implementing all reasonable and feasible recommendations provided in the Noise and Vibrations Impact Assessment prepared by Assured Environmental (2025). ▪ Provide a community liaison officer to liaise with the local community during construction. This would ensure that the local community is aware of the proposal updates and provide a point	Proponent	Construction partner

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
				of contact for them should stakeholder complaints about increased noise or dust arise. ▪ Implement all measures specified in management plans identified in the EIS and/or consent conditions (if approved).		
Health and wellbeing	Perceived human safety risks	Low Negative	Low Negative - negligible	▪ Implement the Bush Fire Assessment Report and Preliminary Hazard Analysis recommendations. ▪ Continue engagement with the local Fire Services to gather feedback on the proposal, access requirements and how best to implement mitigation measures. ▪ Continue stakeholder engagement with the community to address any potential perceived bushfire risk.	Proponent	Construction partner Emergency Services
Surroundings	Change to visual character	Low negative	Low negative to negligible	▪ Continue stakeholder engagement to identify the risk of perceived visual impacts.	Proponent	Design consultants
Livelihoods	Perceived loss of productive agricultural land	Negligible to low negative	Low negative	▪ Wherever possible and practical, engage with local business services to identify and maximise local	Proponent	Council Local stakeholders

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
				procurement benefits derived from the proposal. ▪ Encourage local employment during construction and operation by actively advertising available jobs in various communication means used by the local community, including community boards, local newspapers, and online community groups. ▪ Engage with local employment and training organisations to ensure that potential local employees are informed of opportunities associated with the proposal through various channels. ▪ Wherever possible and practical, prioritise sourcing materials and services from local businesses to stimulate the local economy.		Social procurement partners
Livelihoods	Contribution to the local economy through increased employment opportunities and	Medium positive	High positive	▪ Wherever possible and practical, engage with local business services to identify and maximise local procurement benefits derived from the proposal.	Proponent	Council Local business Engagement consultants

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
	spending at local businesses			▪ Encourage local employment during construction and operation by actively advertising available jobs in various communication means used by the local community, including community boards, local newspapers, and online community groups. ▪ Engage with local employment and training organisations to ensure that potential local employees are informed of opportunities associated with the proposal through various channels. ▪ Wherever possible and practical, prioritise sourcing materials and services from local businesses to stimulate the local economy.		
Decision making systems	Opportunity for the local community to have a say in the development of the area	Medium positive	Medium positive	▪ Utilise communication channels that are relevant and accessible to the local communities to keep stakeholders informed. ▪ Ensure updates and opportunities for involvement are communicated efficiently and avoid consultation fatigue.	Proponent	Council Engagement consultants

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
				▪ Consider establishing a dedicated community liaison officer before construction to be a consistent point of contact for residents, address concerns, and provide timely information. ▪ Continue engagement with the Council and key stakeholders on the proposal's design, construction activities, benefit-sharing initiatives, and further opportunities to deliver local benefits to the local community and maintain a social licence to operate. ▪ Continue presence and consultation in the community during planning stages to increase the perception of influence. ▪ Continue stakeholder engagement and assess opportunities to further develop the VPA and/or good neighbour programs.		
Cumulative impacts	▪ Before selecting a construction partner, prepare a Workforce and Accommodation Plan or Accommodation and Employment Strategy (AES) in consultation with Council to assess the housing and accommodation environment, identifies potential accommodation and rental market pressures in the local and regional area, and details plans to accommodate the proposed construction workforce effectively.					Proponent Construction partner

Theme	Matter	Unmitigated /Unenhanced	Mitigated /Enhanced	Proposed mitigation, enhancement and management	Responsibility	Potential partners
	▪ Consider liaising with other significant concurrent projects in the area to understand their peak workforce requirements and consider programming construction works for the proposal to align with reductions in workforce requirements for concurrent projects. ▪ Consider developing a land management plan to facilitate land and agricultural benefits during operation through post-decommissioning. It is recommended that this be developed in collaboration with landowners to investigate and implement sustainable land practices. ▪ Implement a Construction Management Plan that considers concurrent renewable and significant projects, particularly concerning cumulative traffic impacts, and aligning any workforce accommodation plans or employment strategies. ▪ Consider developing a workforce strategy for construction and operation, including measures to prioritise local employment, establish ongoing partnerships with local training and education institutions to connect local apprentices, trainees and workers with placement during construction and operation, and upskilling pathways for employees. ▪ Continue implementing a stakeholder consultation program and foster opportunities for the local community to have a say on the proposal design and delivery.					Engagement consultants

7.2. FURTHER SIA RECOMMENDATIONS

The following summarises the recommendations proposed to enhance positive impacts further and mitigate negative impacts as previously identified in Section 6.

These measures have not been included in the assessment of mitigated or enhanced impacts but have been identified as additional measures for consideration by the proponent to enhance the social outcomes of the proposal. Mitigation and enhancement measures, which are committed to and have informed the assessment of mitigated and enhanced social impacts, are summarised in Section 7.1 above.

Communication

- Continue engagement with the Council and key stakeholders on the proposal's design, construction activities, benefit-sharing initiatives, and further opportunities to deliver benefits to the local community and maintain a social licence to operate.
- Continue presence and consultation in the community during planning stages to increase the perception of influence and foster trust.
- Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement and communication strategy so that residents can provide feedback throughout the construction period.
- Engage community stakeholders in identifying opportunities to develop a benefits sharing scheme or good neighbour programs.

Construction management

- Develop and implement an operational workforce accommodation strategy before construction that assesses the housing and accommodation environment, identifies potential accommodation and rental market pressures in the local and regional area, and details plans to accommodate the proposed workforce effectively.
- Continue engagement with the Council and relevant stakeholders and develop and implement a construction workforce accommodation strategy before construction.
- Consider liaising with other significant concurrent projects to understand their peak workforce requirements. Moreover, programming construction works for the proposal should be considered to align with reductions in workforce requirements for concurrent projects.
- Engage key stakeholders to inform the development of the procurement plan, which should outline commitments to achieving local content and diversity requirements as required by the relevant State and Federal Government policies.
- Identify and assess potential cumulative construction-related impacts associated with other surrounding developments. Mitigation and monitoring measures should be provided for all identified cumulative construction impacts.
- Explore programming construction works to align with reductions in workforce requirements for concurrent projects to enhance the potential availability of local workers, to support the proposal.
- Develop a detailed Construction Management Plan that considers concurrent renewable and significant projects, particularly concerning cumulative traffic impacts, and aligning any workforce accommodation plans or employment strategies.

Operation management

- Consider engaging communities in the definition of the community benefit fund to ensure meaningful opportunities to deliver local benefits are identified and implemented to maintain social licence.

ACRONYMNS

Acronyms	Term
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACHAR	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report
BOCSAR	NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
CMP	Construction Management Plan
CSP	Community Strategic Plan
CTPMP	Construction Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan
DA	Development Application
DPHI	NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
EIS	Environmental Impact Assessment
GCCSA	Greater Capital City Statistical Area
GTP	Green Travel Plan
HANML	Highly Affected Noise Management Levels
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LGA	Local Government Area
LSPS	Local Strategic Planning Statement
NCA	Noise Catchment Area
NML	Noise Management Levels
NVIA	Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Parties
SEARs	Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SAL	Suburbs and Localities
SSDA	State Significant Development Application
TAIA	Traffic and Accessibility Impact Assessment

Acronyms	Term
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment

REFERENCES

This SIA has been informed by a range of data sources, information and technical studies. The following data sources have been used:

Demographic, crime and health data

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2021, NSW, Berrigan Shire LGA, Finley (SAL) data.

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2021, School enrolment data.

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Finley, Berrigan Shire LGA and NSW hotspot maps and crime rates.

NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 2022, NSW population projections.

Profile id. Finley community profile

Policy documents

Berrigan Shire Council, Community Strategic Plan 2040 (2024)

Berrigan Shire Council, Delivery Program (2024-2034)

Berrigan Shire Council, Energy Strategy (2021)

Berrigan Shire Council, Finley Town Master Plan (2015)

Berrigan Shire Council, Long Term Financial Plan (2024-2034)

Berrigan Shire Council, Renewable Energy Community Benefit Framework (2024)

Berrigan Sire Council, Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) (2020)

Department of Planning and Environment, Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (2023)

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Guidelines for Construction Workers Accommodation (2024)

NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline (2022)

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NSW Government, Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020 – 2030 (2020)

NSW Government, NSW Electricity Strategy (2019)

NSW Government, NSW Network Infrastructure Strategy: A 20-Year Strategy to Transform the NSW Electricity Network (2023)

NSW Government, NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board's Plan (2022)

NSW Government, Renewable Energy Planning Framework (2024)

NSW Government, Transmission Infrastructure Strategy (2018)

State of NSW and Office of Environment and Heritage, Climate Change Policy Framework (2016)

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Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment, Premise Australia (2025)

Agricultural Impact Assessment, Premise Australia (2025)

Bush Fire Assessment Report, Peak Land Management (2025)

Environmental Impact Statement, Premise Australia (2025)

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Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment, Assured Environmental (2025)

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Other

NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 2023, Social Impact Assessment Guideline and Technical Supplement.

NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, 2022, Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects.

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APPENDIX A COUNCIL DISCUSSION GUIDE

Social Impact Assessment Discussion Guide

Berrigan Shire Council

Project overview

Gransolar Development Australia (Gransolar) has engaged Urbis to undertake a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) to inform a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility at the corner of Canalla Road and Broockmanns Road (eastern side) (Lot 3 of DP740920).

If approved, the proposed development would be located approximately five kilometres from the township of Finley in the Riverina District of NSW. The proposed BESS will store 200 Megawatt Hours (MWh) of electricity to power up to 30,000 homes and provide renewable energy to NSW consumers when needed. The BESS will span a 3.5-hectare site.

The proposed development includes:

- Installation of up to 80 lithium-ion battery containers
- Connection of the BESS to the existing Finley substation
- Associated infrastructure and systems to convert power from the batteries into electricity
- Internal access tracks, on-site parking and a construction laydown area
- Control room and staff amenities
- Security fencing
- A firefighting water tank (minimum 20,000L)
- Landscaping to minimise visual impacts.

The BESS aligns with NSW energy initiatives to promote sustainability, reliability, and cost-efficiency. The BESS would enhance grid stability and ensure a consistent power supply by storing excess energy from renewable sources such as solar and wind.

The BESS would help to promote grid stability, increasing the resilience of the local energy infrastructure while supporting state energy policies and positioning Finley as a leader in sustainable energy solutions, potentially attracting further investment and fostering economic growth.

Subject to approval, approximately 55 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs will be required during the construction peak, which is expected to be 10-12 months. During peak construction periods, there will be approximately 55 construction workers on site at a time. The proposal will accommodate approximately one FTE operational job. The Finley town centre and surrounding areas will need to accommodate the temporary increase in worker population during construction as no worker accommodation is being proposed.

What is a BESS and why are they needed?

A Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) consists of lithium-ion batteries that store electrical energy from another source (such as solar or wind) for later use. The BESS will store energy during times of high energy supply and low demand (typically during the middle of the day) and then release energy back into the grid during times of lower supply (i.e., less solar) but higher demand, such as 5pm to 8pm. BESS technology is commonly used in electricity grids, electric vehicles, solar power installations, and smart homes.

BESS technology is a key component of Australia's clean energy transition and has become an increasingly popular solution for integrating renewable energy and power grid stability.

Benefits of BESS technology include increasing energy efficiency by storing excess energy during low-demand periods and releasing it during peak periods, reducing carbon and greenhouse gas emissions and

reliance on fossil fuel by integrating renewable energy sources into the grid and providing fast and reliable response times to prevent electricity network disruptions.

About the SIA process

An SIA is an objective, independent study undertaken to identify and analyse a proposed development's potential positive and negative social impacts. Social impacts can be understood as the consequences people (individuals, households, groups, communities and organisations) experience when a new project brings change. An SIA considers social impacts concerning *Way of Life, Community, Accessibility, Culture, Health and Wellbeing, Surroundings, Livelihoods,* and *Decision-making Systems*.

The SIA process is being guided by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment's Social Impact Assessment Guideline (2023). The SIA will be available for public viewing during the SSDA exhibition period, during which it will be open to receive public submissions via the NSW Planning Portal Major Projects website: https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects.

About the interview

As part of the SIA process, the Urbis team on behalf of Gransolar is interested in speaking with Berrigan Shire Council to inform our understanding of the local context and community, potential social and economic impacts (both positive and negative), and any enhancement measures (for positive social and economic impacts) and mitigation measures (for negative social and negative impacts).

Any information provided will not be attributed to individuals in the SIA; however, we would like to reference any comments as *'Consultation with Berrigan Shire Council'*.

We have prepared the interview questions below, which provide a starting point for the discussion. Thank you in advance for your time and for sharing your knowledge and insight.

The interview will be approximately one hour long and will be undertaken online via Microsoft Teams. Urbis Social Planners will lead the discussion. The latest iteration of the draft plans will be shared before the interview.

interview Questions

Social and site context

As part of the SIA, we have examined ABS 2021 Census data to understand the key demographic characteristics of the Deniliquin community.

- **Are there any observations or insights you can add from the Council's perspective on characteristics or the needs and aspirations of these communities?**
- **Are there any vulnerable groups or communities we should consider for our assessment?**
- **Can you describe the community's sentiment toward locally delivering renewable energy and BESS projects?**

Workforce and housing

We are currently assessing the workforce demand for the proposal, including the local workforce capacity within Finley and whether drive-in drive-out (DIDO) or fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers will be required.

- **Can you provide any insights into Finley's construction workforce?**
- **What are the current opportunities and challenges in terms of housing and community services in Finley?**

Potential social impacts

Social impacts can include positive and negative impacts on individuals, their family or other community members. These can include short- and long-term impacts during construction and/or the project's operation.

Positive or negative impacts may be concerning:

- How people live, work, play and interact with others

- How a community looks and functions
- How people access services and facilities
- How people express their beliefs and customs (including First Nations Connection to Country)
- People's health and wellbeing (physical and mental)
- People access, use and impact on the natural and built environment
- People's work or capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business
- People's ability to have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

Considering the above:

- Do you expect positive impacts to be associated with the proposal – and if so, what are they?
- How could these positive impacts be further enhanced?
- Do you expect negative impacts to be associated with the proposal – and if so, what are they?
- How could these negative impacts be avoided or reduced?

Cumulative impacts

Several nearby BESS and other renewable energy projects are being constructed and/or operational. Cumulative impacts can arise from project activities (such as dust and noise), or multiple projects needing similar resources (e.g. skilled labour and housing) that can have a cumulative social impact on the affected community.

- The region is experiencing an increase in BESS or renewable energy projects. Are you currently experiencing any impacts as a result of these projects?
- Do you anticipate there to be any additional cumulative impacts (positive/negative) from these nearby BESS and renewable energy projects?

Community benefits

Gransolar is developing a benefit-sharing program (Voluntary Planning Agreement, VPA) that aims to contribute to the area's environmental, social and economic value. This is being developed in consultation with Berrigan Shire Council and the community. The benefit-sharing program (VPA) will likely contain details on funding and/or works for infrastructure, services and programs that benefit the community.

- Who do you think the primary beneficiaries of the benefit-sharing program (VPA) should be?
- What community opportunities would you like to see supported by the benefit-sharing program (VPA)?
- Who should be involved in choosing the programs or infrastructure to be supported by the benefit-sharing program (VPA)?

APPENDIX B SIA SURVEY QUESTIONS

About the proposed development

Gransolar Development Australia (Gransolar) is in the process of preparing a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility at the corner of Canalla Road and Broockmanns Road (eastern side). If approved, the proposed development would be located approximately five kilometres from the township of Finley in the Riverina District of NSW.

The battery storage would have a capacity of 100 Megawatts (MW) and 200 Megawatt Hours (MWh), spanning a 3.5-hectare site.

The proposed development includes:

Installation of up to 80 lithium-ion battery containers

Connection of the BESS to the existing Finley substation

Associated infrastructure and systems to convert power from the batteries into electricity

Internal access tracks, on-site parking and a construction laydown area

Permanent office and staff amenities

Security fencing

A firefighting water tank (minimum 20,000L)

Landscaping to minimise visual impacts.

The BESS aligns with NSW energy initiatives to promote sustainability, reliability, and cost-efficiency. The BESS would enhance grid stability and ensure a consistent power supply by storing excess energy from renewable sources such as solar and wind.

The BESS would provide backup power during outages, increasing the resilience of the local energy infrastructure while supporting state energy policies and positioning Finley as a leader in sustainable energy solutions, potentially attracting further investment and fostering economic growth.

What is a Social Impact Assessment (SIA)?

An SIA is an objective, independent study undertaken to identify and analyse a proposed development's potential positive and negative social impacts. Social impacts can be understood as the consequences people (individuals, households, groups, communities and organisations) experience when a new project brings change. An SIA considers social impacts concerning Way of Life, Community, Accessibility, Culture, Health and Wellbeing, Surroundings, Livelihoods, and Decision-making Systems.

The SIA process is being guided by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment's Social Impact Assessment Guideline (2023). The SIA will be available for public viewing during the SSDA exhibition period, during which it will be open to receive public submissions via the NSW Planning Portal Major Projects website: https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects.

About this survey

This survey aims to gather insights from key stakeholders (such as residents, visitors, and workers) about how the proposed BESS may impact them positively and negatively. Survey responses will also help identify mitigation or enhancement measures that could be implemented during the BESS's design, construction, and/or operation to reduce negative and enhance positive impacts.

Please contact the Urbis Engagement Team on 1800 244 863 or engagement@urbis.com.au if you have any questions or want to speak with us directly about the SIA.

Questions

Clarificatory text

Social impacts can include positive and negative impacts on you, your family or other community members. These can include short- and long-term impacts during construction and/or the project's operation.

Positive or negative impacts may be in relation to:

How you live, work, play and interact with others

How your community looks and functions

How you access services and facilities

How you express your beliefs and customs (including First Nations Connection to Country)

Your health and wellbeing (physical and mental)

Your access, use and impact on the natural and built environment

Your work or your capacity to sustain yourself through employment or business

Your ability to have a say in decisions that affect your life

Q1. Have you heard about the proposal before this survey?

Yes

No

Q2. Please select the category that best describes your perspective when answering the survey. If you want to answer from multiple perspectives, please complete the survey considering your primary perspective. Once completed, you are welcome to retake it with considerations from a secondary perspective.

1) A local resident

2) A local business owner

3) A local employee

4) Representing a local community organisation

5) Representing a council or a public service organisation

6) Other (please specify)

Q3. What do you most value about the Finley community, environment and way of life?

(Multiple Row Answer text)

Q4. In what ways do you think the proposal could impact these aspects of the local community, environment and way of life?

(Multiple Row Answer text)

Q5. In what way do you anticipate the proposed development will mainly impact the community?

1) Positively

2) Negatively

3) Both positively and negatively

4) Neither positively nor negatively

5) Not sure

Q6. Please describe any positive impacts you think the proposal will have.

(Multiple Row Answer text)

Q7. In what ways could these positive impacts be enhanced?

(Multiple Row Answer text)

Q8. Please describe any negative impacts you think the proposal will have.

(Multiple Row Answer text)

Q9. In what ways could these negative impacts be reduced?

(Multiple Row Answer text)

Q10. Are there any specific groups or community members that will be particularly impacted (positively or negatively) by the development?

(Multiple Row Answer text)

Q11. Would you like to be contacted by the Urbis team to discuss the proposal's potential social impacts further?

1) Yes

2) No

Q12. Please include your preferred contact details:

(Multiple Row Answer text)

Thank you for your participation. Please get in touch with the Urbis Engagement Team on 1800 244 863 or engagement@urbis.com.au if you have any questions or want to speak with us directly about the SIA.

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