



Social Impact Assessment Report

Stoney Creek Battery Energy Storage System

FOR: Enervest Operations Pty Ltd

SLR PROJECT No: 620.031316.00000

Revision: 3.0

13 October 2025



Revision Record

Revision	Date	Prepared By	Checked By	Authorised By
1.0	10 March 2025	Alex Belerique	Roland Short	Esther Diffey
2.0	30 July 2025	Alex Belerique Astrid Ruban	Melissa Creber	Esther Diffey
2.1	22 August 2025	Astrid Ruban	Melissa Creber	Esther Diffey
3.0	14 October 2025	Astrid Ruban	Esther Diffey	Esther Diffey

Basis of Report

This report has been prepared by SLR Australia (SLR) with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the timescale and resources allocated to it by agreement with Enervest Operations Pty Ltd (the Client). Information reported herein is based on the interpretation of data collected, which has been accepted in good faith as being accurate and valid.

This report is for the exclusive use of the Client. No warranties or guarantees are expressed or should be inferred by any third parties. This report may not be relied upon by other parties without written consent from SLR.

SLR disclaims any responsibility to the Client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the work.

Statement of Qualification

The New South Wales Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (DPE, 2023) requires that authors of SIAs are 'suitably qualified persons' who hold appropriate qualifications and have relevant experience in social science or related areas.

The author's qualifications, experience and demonstrated understanding of social impacts is outlined below.

Name: Astrid Ruban

Role: Principal – Social Performance

Expertise/Qualifications: Astrid holds a Bachelor of Urban Planning and Development, is a member of Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) and International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) has almost 20 years of experience in social planning, community and stakeholder planning and social impact assessment.

Date the SIA was completed: 14 October 2025

I declare to the best of my knowledge that this SIA contains all relevant information. I understand my legal and ethical obligations, and confirm that assessment has been undertaken impartially using the best available information at the time of writing and none of the information herein is false or misleading.



Executive Summary

This Social Impact Assessment (SIA) evaluates the potential social impacts of the proposed Stoney Creek Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Project, to be developed by Enervest Operations Pty Ltd (Enervest) in Narrabri Shire, New South Wales. The Project involves the construction and operation of a 125 Megawatt (MW) BESS facility and associated connection infrastructure linking to TransGrid's Narrabri 132/66 kV substation, located approximately 40 metres south of the BESS site.

The BESS is proposed on Lot 156 in DP 754944 at 41 Stoney Creek Road, Narrabri NSW 2390. The existing substation is located on Lot 1 in DP 502189 at 70 Stoney Creek Road. The facility is expected to have an operational life of approximately 25 years.

The development will include up to 150 battery units housed in modified shipping containers, approximately 50 inverters, transformers, a control building, access roads, laydown area, fencing, landscaping, lighting, and associated infrastructure. The BESS will operate autonomously with periodic maintenance visits and will not be accessible to the general public.

Project Context and Assessment Approach

This SIA has been prepared in accordance with the *NSW Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (Department of Planning and Environment, 2023), building on the Stoney Creek BESS SIA Scoping Report. The assessment has been undertaken within a regional context experiencing growing development interest in large-scale infrastructure, including solar farms, gas projects, and battery energy storage systems.

The social locality for the assessment was defined as:

- **Local Study Area (LSA):** A 10 km radius around the Project site, focused on Narrabri township and adjacent rural areas.
- **Regional Study Area (RSA):** The Narrabri Shire Local Government Area (LGA), reflecting broader social and economic influences.

This assessment involved a combination of desktop analysis, consultation with stakeholders and community members, and review of relevant technical studies. It draws on insights from face-to-face interviews, pop-up and drop-in events, and a public online survey conducted during 2024–2025.

Key Findings

The SIA identified a range of social impacts and opportunities across the construction and operational life of the Project.

Construction Phase

Positive Impacts:

- Local employment and procurement opportunities, particularly during construction.
- Potential use of existing workforce accommodation in Narrabri (e.g. Civeo) reduces strain on residential housing.
- Short-term economic stimulus to Narrabri's retail, service, and accommodation sectors.



Negative Impacts:

- Temporary amenity impacts such as dust, noise, and traffic affecting nearby residents, particularly along Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Road.
- Community concern regarding perceived fire risks and emergency response readiness.
- Community perceptions around limited long-term value if local benefit sharing is not clearly communicated.
- Potential cultural heritage impacts requiring sensitive management and consultation with Traditional Owners.

Operational Phase

Positive Impacts:

- Improved regional grid stability and support for NSW's transition to renewable energy.
- Contribution to energy resilience and decarbonisation goals.
- Long-term community benefit through a community benefit scheme prepared following community consultation and with Narrabri Shire Council.

Negative Impacts:

- Ongoing community concerns about battery safety and fire risk, even with mitigation in place.
- Visual and landscape character change for residents in proximity to the Project Area.
- Minimal operational employment opportunities post-construction.

Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

A range of project-based and social mitigation strategies are proposed to manage social impacts, including:

- Ongoing implementation of a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (CSEP) to maintain transparency and responsiveness.
- Continued engagement with NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and local brigades to coordinate fire preparedness and site access.
- Development of plain language communication materials on BESS safety and emergency protocols.
- Consideration of local grant or benefit-sharing mechanisms through a community benefit fund to ensure positive legacy outcomes.
- Alignment with broader regional planning and other infrastructure proponents to mitigate cumulative impacts.



Residual Impacts

With the application of the recommended mitigation and engagement measures, most adverse social impacts are expected to be reduced to low or medium significance. The Project is anticipated to result in a net social benefit to the Narrabri region, particularly through improved energy reliability, local economic stimulus, and the potential for a positive community legacy.

The SIA concludes that the Stoney Creek BESS Project can proceed with acceptable social outcomes, subject to continued community engagement and effective implementation of the proposed social impact management measures.



Table of Contents

Basis of Report	i
Statement of Qualification	i
Executive Summary	ii
Acronyms and Abbreviations	viii
1.0 Introduction	10
1.3 Project description.....	11
1.3.1 Project Overview	11
1.3.2 Project Objectives	11
1.3.3 Project Location	12
1.3.4 Development Footprint	14
1.3.5 Construction	14
1.3.6 Operation	16
1.3.7 BESS Units	17
1.3.8 Site Access	17
1.3.9 Removal of Vegetation	18
1.3.10 Ancillary Infrastructure.....	18
1.3.11 Maintenance	19
1.3.12 Decommissioning.....	19
1.3.13 Estimated Development Cost.....	19
2.0 Methodology.....	21
2.1 Purpose.....	21
2.2 Defining Social Impacts.....	21
2.3 Social Impact Assessment Process.....	22
2.4 Review SIA Scoping Report	22
2.5 Community Consultation and Engagement	23
2.6 Community Survey	23
2.7 Social Baseline.....	24
2.8 Impact assessment	24
2.9 Evaluation of Significance	25
2.10 Cumulative impacts.....	25
2.11 Development of mitigation and enhancement measures	25
3.0 Policy context.....	26
4.0 Social baseline	27
4.1 The Project's Social Locality.....	27



4.2	Regional setting	29
4.2.1	New England North West region	29
4.3	Local social baseline characteristics.....	31
4.3.1	Housing and Accommodation.....	32
4.4	Employment and Industry.....	33
4.4.1	Employment by Industry.....	33
4.4.2	Employment Rates.....	34
4.5	Community and Culture.....	34
4.5.1	Volunteering and Community Participation.....	34
4.5.2	Household Mobility.....	34
4.5.3	Transport and Connectivity	35
4.5.4	Health and Wellbeing	35
4.5.5	Socioeconomic Indicators	35
4.6	Summary of key findings relevant to the Social Impact Assessment	36
4.6.1	Social infrastructure	37
5.0	Consultation	38
5.1	Community and Stakeholder Consultation for The Project	38
5.2	Previous Consultation in the Region.....	39
5.2.1	Issues and outcomes	39
6.0	Impact assessment and prediction.....	43
6.1	Interaction with other technical studies.....	43
6.2	Social impacts.....	44
6.2.1	During construction	44
6.2.2	Construction and operation	50
6.2.3	Operation	52
6.2.4	Decommissioning.....	57
6.3	Cumulative impacts.....	59
6.3.1	Cumulative Impact Considerations.....	60
7.0	Impact enhancement, mitigation and residual impacts.....	61
7.1	Residual Impacts.....	65
8.0	Conclusion	69
9.0	References.....	71



Tables

Table 1	Site Descriptions.....	14
Table 2	BESS Specifications	17
Table 3	Social Impact Categories	21
Table 4	Social Baseline Data Sources.....	24
Table 5	Social Impact Significance Matrix	25
Table 6	Local and regional policy context	26
Table 7	Summary of Consultation Activities.....	39
Table 8	Issues and outcomes as relevant to the SIA	40
Table 9	Summary of interactions with other technical assessment outcomes	43
Table 10	Proposed mitigation and enhancement measures	61
Table 11	Residual Risk Assessment	65

Figures

Figure 1	Site Overview	13
Figure 2	Indicative Image of BESS Containers	17
Figure 3	Indicative Heavy Vehicle Route through Narrabri.....	20
Figure 4	Social locality	28



Acronyms and Abbreviations

Term	Meaning
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
CSEP	Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
CTMP	Construction Traffic Management Plan
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EOL	End of Life
FIA	Flood Impact Assessment
FRNSW	Fire and Rescue New South Wales
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
HV	High Voltage
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
IRSD	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage
kg	Kilogram
km	Kilometre
kV	Kilovolt
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LGA	Local Government Area
LSA	Local Study Area
m	Metre
MW	Megawatt
MWh	Megawatt Hour
NSW	New South Wales
NSW TrainLink	New South Wales TrainLink
OOH	Out of Hours
OSOM	Oversize and Over Mass
QLD	Queensland
REMPAN	Regional Economic Modelling and Planning
RFS	Rural Fire Service
SA2	Statistical Area Level 2
SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SIA	Social Impact Assessment



Term	Meaning
SLR	SLR Consulting
SQM	SQM Research
SSD	State Significant Development
TL	Transmission Line
TMP	Traffic Management Plan
TS	Transmission Substation
UCL	Urban Centres and Localities



1.0 Introduction

Enervest Operations Pty Ltd (Enervest) engaged SLR Consulting (SLR) to prepare this Social Impact Assessment (SIA) as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Stoney Creek Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project (the Project).

1.1 Purpose

The SIA builds upon the findings of the initial SIA Scoping Report (Element, 2023), aligning with the New South Wales (NSW) Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (the SIA Guideline) (Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (previously: Department of Planning and Environment), 2023). This SIA aims to comprehensively analyse potential social impacts associated with the Project, ensuring that the assessment accurately reflects the scope and scale of anticipated impacts.

The primary objective of the SIA is to validate and expand upon the preliminary findings from the Scoping Report by examining specific social impacts in greater detail. The SIA does this by:

- Assessing potential social risks and benefits identified in the SIA Scoping Report by incorporating technical data from other assessments and stakeholder feedback to refine understanding of these impacts.
- Identifying and evaluating the likely social impacts on local and regional communities, with attention to vulnerable or potentially impacted groups.
- Developing targeted management and mitigation strategies to address identified adverse impacts and enhance project benefits for affected communities.
- Establishing a framework for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of social impacts throughout the project lifecycle, ensuring adaptive management in response to emerging social dynamics.

This document serves as a critical component of the EIS, supporting informed decision-making and promoting sustainable, socially responsible outcomes for the Project and surrounding communities.

1.2 Compliance with Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements

This SIA has been prepared to meet the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the Project, specifically addressing the requirement related to 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, and potential opportunities for nearby settlements.

In line with the SEARs, this SIA includes a comprehensive baseline study, details consultation undertaken, a social impact analysis, and tailored management measures. Per the requirement, the SIA also includes an analysis of local community infrastructure and services and local accommodation options.



1.3 Project description

1.3.1 Project Overview

The Stoney Creek BESS 'the Project' will involve the development, construction, operation, and eventual decommissioning of a BESS with a capacity of 125 MW / 1,000 MWh connecting via a Transmission Line (TL) directly to the existing Narrabri 132/66 kV substation, operated by TransGrid.

The BESS will consist of BESS containers (or enclosures), with each container having dimensions of approximately 10.5m long and an approximate weight of 47,000 kg. The BESS will be supported by inverters from the BESS and connect to the existing TransGrid substation via approximately 340m of 132 kV overhead and underground lines.

The key elements of the Project include the following:

- Installation and operation of a BESS including battery enclosures, inverters, HV Switchrooms, Control rooms and transformers on hardstand. Minor earthworks will be required on the site to level the foundation for project components.
- Associated upgrades and connection into the Narrabri 132/66kV Substation , including construction of an overhead or underground 132 kV TL to facilitate connection, associated high voltage steel poles, increase in hardstand area and establishment of easements.
- Associated ancillary infrastructure including CCTV, operations and maintenance buildings, security fencing, access and internal roads, fire water tanks, temporary parking.
- Decommissioning and/or refurbishment of the BESS towards the End of Life (EOL).

Construction of the Project is anticipated to take approximately 12-14 months. It is expected that the operational life of the Project would be approximately 25 years. However, the Project may continue beyond 25 years if it is deemed viable to extend the lifespan of the development. Towards the EOL the BESS would either be decommissioned and the infrastructure removed (returning the land to its original use) or refurbished to extend operations.

1.3.2 Project Objectives

The purpose of the Project is to coincide with the integration of renewable energy consumption and to improve overall grid stability and resilience. This is achieved by storing excess renewable power from the network during low demand periods (i.e., renewable electricity created in daylight hours such as solar energy) and distributing back at peak times alleviating added network constraints.

Commercial scale solar farms and wind farms may need to constrain their output during the day due to insufficient system demand and increased power supply from rooftop installations, while peak demand in the evening continues to increase. Meanwhile, as coal plants close, the grid needs fast dispatchable energy to help balance generation and load.

By participating in the statewide frequency control market, the Project will assist to stabilise the frequency of the grid at critical times in response to loss of load or loss of generation. The resulting improvement to the stability of grid frequency reduces the risk of system failure and blackouts. It also helps to ensure that the national grid can accommodate an increasing proportion of variable solar, wind and other renewable generations in years to come.



Once constructed, the utility-scale development will operate independently to store and discharge excess power to the electricity grid, generating an array of economic, environmental, social and network benefits.

The Project also aims to provide benefit to the local community outside of the energy storage benefits through supporting local businesses and implementing initiatives that will address local needs and build long-term, positive relationships with the community. Further, it is anticipated that a Community Benefits Fund will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders, the local community and the Narrabri Shire Council.

1.3.3 Project Location

The BESS is proposed on Lot 156 DP 754944 at 41 Stoney Creek Road, Narrabri NSW 2390 (BESS Site). The existing Narrabri 132/66 kV TS that the BESS will connect to via an overhead and underground line is identified as Lot 1 DP 502189, 70 Stoney Creek Road, Narrabri NSW 2390 (Substation Site), approximately 40m south of the BESS site. The TL will traverse south from the BESS Site and across Stoney Creek Road into the Substation Site.

The BESS Site is a privately owned site and will be leased to the project from the landowner.

The area to which the Project relates, hereafter referred to as the Project Areas, comprises:

- Portion of Lot 156 DP754944.
- The substation land on Lot 1 on DP502189.
- Area of Stoney Creek Road reserve between the BESS Site and Substation Site.

Refer to Figure 1.



FIGURE 3

LEGEND

- Road
- Watercourse
- Indicative Transmission Line
- Indicative Underground Cable
- Disturbance Footprint
- Project Area
- Title Containing Substation
- Title containing BESS Site
- BESS Area
- Cadastre

Data Sources:
NSW SS.
Aerial imagery: Nearmap (July 2025).
Project Area supplied by client.

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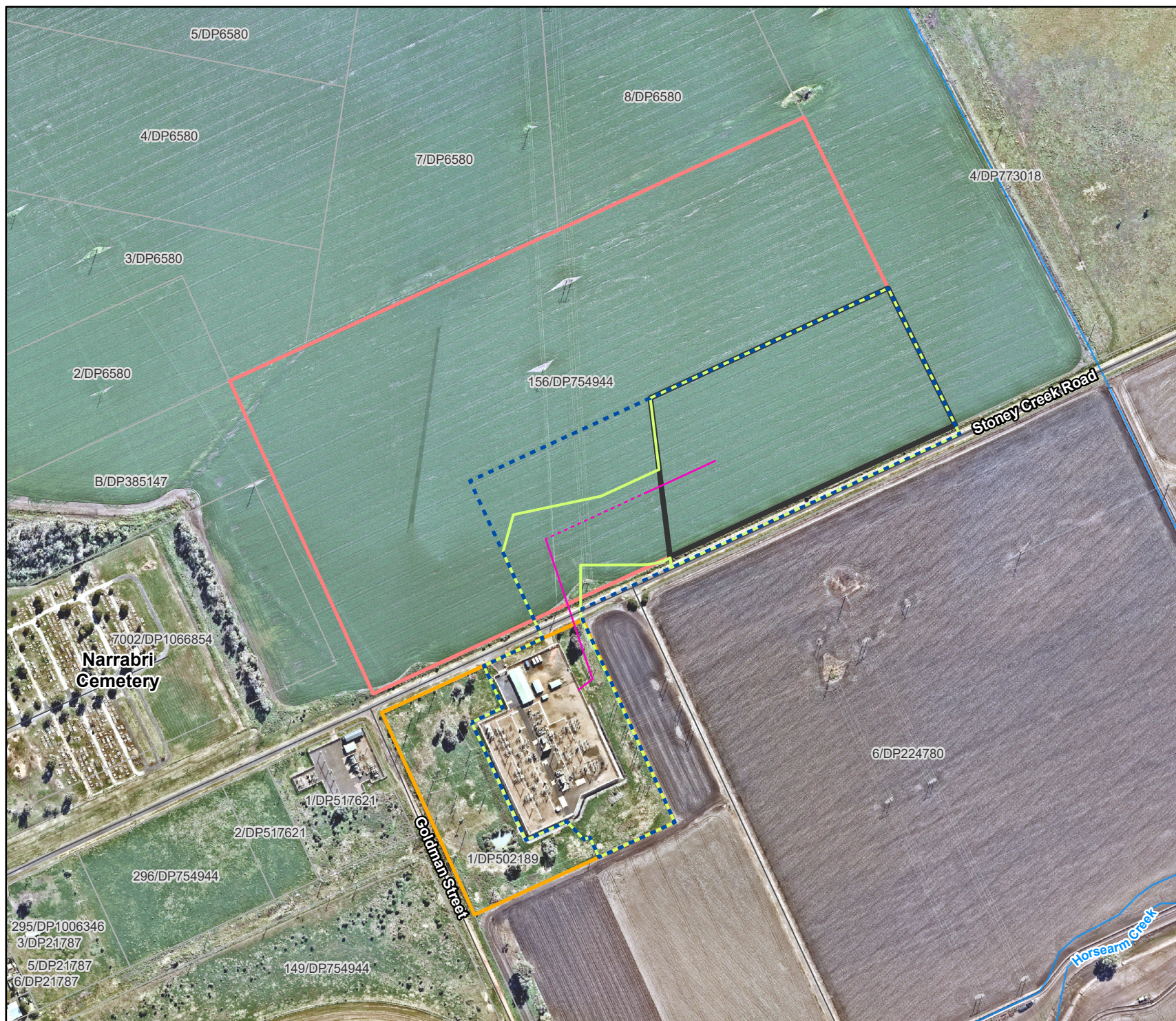
Coordinate System: GDA2020 MGA Zone 55

Scale: 1:5,000 at A4

Project Number: 620.V31316

Date Drawn: 16-Oct-2025

Drawn by: RB



1.3.4 Development Footprint

The area detailed as 'Project Area' below will be leased privately, with no Torrens title or Strata title subdivision proposed. The extent of the proposed development footprint is detailed below in Table 1.

Table 1 Site Descriptions

Development Component	Development Component Footprint
Project Area	9.55ha
Disturbance Footprint	8.24ha
BESS Area	4.05ha
Substation Site	4.53ha
Transmission Line Route	340m
Vegetation Removal Area	0.04ha

1.3.5 Construction

Construction of the Project will require heavy vehicles, plant, and equipment for the transportation and installation of components. The Project will require earth-moving equipment for civil, foundation and road works, cable trenching equipment, forklifts, and cranes subject to detailed design to install the BESS and complete ancillary works.

1.3.5.1 Construction Activities

It is anticipated that the construction and commissioning phase will last approximately 12-14 months. Over that time, the main construction activities will include:

- Mobilisation and establishment of access, temporary construction facilities and laydown area.
- Transport of construction personnel, associated heavy and light vehicles, and materials to and from site on a day-to-day basis, dependent on construction schedule.
- Road works to formalise internal site access road to accommodate heavy vehicles and a new driveway crossing to Stoney Creek Road.
- Clearing and grubbing, cut, fill and compaction activities to create level pads.
- Installation of drainage systems.
- Installation of concrete footings or piles to support transformers, BESS containers, inverters, HV switchrooms and control building(s) and other outdoor electrical infrastructure.
- Delivery and placement of all equipment on the footings/pads.
- Electrical connection and testing of all cabling systems.
- Construction of an overhead or underground 132 kV TL to facilitate connection to the existing Narrabri 132/66 kV TS and associated high voltage steel poles.
- Construction of hardstand, paved internal roads, control room, switchgear, transformers, circuit breakers, harmonic filters, auxiliary underground transmission



lines, car parking, lay down area, security fencing/lighting, and a demountable building used for operation, maintenance and storage.

- Construction of ancillary works including:
 - Parking area.
 - Stormwater management infrastructure.
 - CCTV, security lighting and fencing.
 - Fire Water Tanks.
- Removal of temporary construction facilities, and rehabilitation of disturbed areas following completion of construction of the Project.

1.3.5.2 Construction Materials

The following materials will be transported to the Subject Sites to facilitate construction of the Project and ancillary facilities and infrastructure:

- Approx 150 lithium battery containers.
- Approx 50 Inverter skids.
- Gravel hardstand work materials and equipment.
- Bulk earthworks materials and equipment.
- Piling.
- Cabling.
- Building structures (including temporary structures for construction crew and management).
- Internal roads and parking areas.
- Control room and 33 kV Switchgear.
- Harmonic Filters.
- Auxiliary transformers and associated LV cabling; fence, gates and lighting.
- Fire Safety System.
- High voltage steel poles.
- High voltage cabling.
- 132/33kV Main HV Transformer.

1.3.5.3 Construction Hours and Personnel

During on-site construction, it is anticipated that approximately 48 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs will be required during the peak of site activity. Employment numbers will fluctuate starting with about 15 workers on site for the early stage of construction. Worker numbers then progressively increase to 48 staff at the peak period for several months before tailing off toward completion and the start of commissioning. Testing and commissioning of the BESS equipment commences relatively early and is anticipated to take approximately 3 months in total.



The workforce will be sourced from the local area where possible, and the wider region where worker deficits arise. It is expected the peak period would extend for approximately 3-4 months. Outside of the peak period, approximately 10-15 workers will be required at any one time.

The following standard construction hours are proposed for the Project:

- Monday to Friday – 7:00 am to 6:00 pm
- Saturday – 8:00 am to 1:00 pm
- Sunday and Public Holiday – No Work.

No works are proposed to be undertaken outside of the standard construction hours. In the event this is required, Out of Hours (OOH) approval would be sought, and all works would be undertaken in accordance with the appropriate OOH protocols and approval processes.

1.3.6 Operation

1.3.6.1 Operation Activities and Equipment

The operation of the Project will involve, but not be limited, to the following general activities:

- Maintenance and management of all BESS equipment, site buildings, and landscaping.
- General administrative activities.
- Receipt of equipment or goods.
- Waste removal from maintenance and administration activities.

Minimal plant and equipment will be required for operation of the facility, primarily for staff access and maintenance vehicles.

1.3.6.2 Operation Hours and Personnel

The BESS will operate at any time of the day depending on different energy supply and demand scenarios however, it will never operate continually 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Once operational, there will be no activities that require large numbers of workforce on-site. For the majority of the development's lifespan, operations will involve a range of preventative, corrective and condition-based maintenance activities which would entail various maintenance, inspection and servicing for the BESS, the associated electrical network and internal road infrastructure.

During operation, approximately 4 staff will be required for ongoing monitoring and maintenance. For the first 6 months, maintenance visits may be required weekly to resolve any initial issues as the asset becomes fully operational. Thereafter, scheduled maintenance visits will occur quarterly for a duration of 3-7 days. These visits will occur Monday to Friday and within normal business hour and agreed ahead of time.

Reactive, unplanned maintenance visits is extremely rare. However, access to the site will be required 24 hours a day 7 days per week to manage any faults or unexpected operational issues.



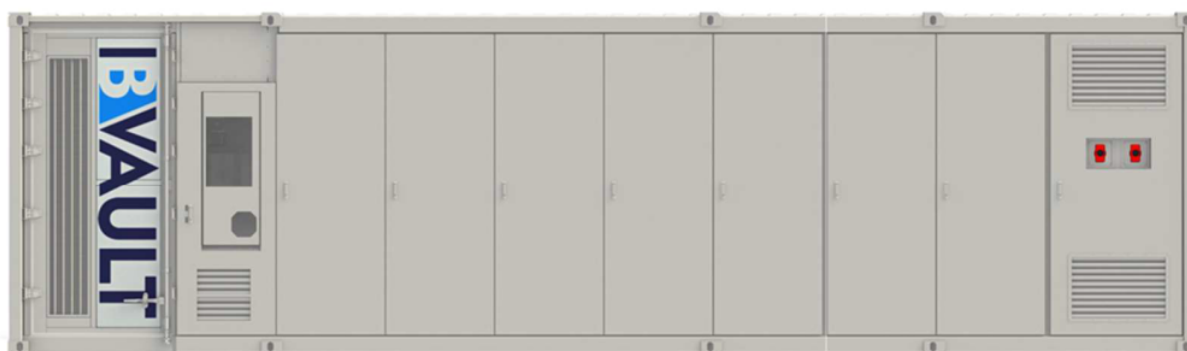
1.3.7 BESS Units

The following specifications are provided for the proposed BESS below in Table 2, with an example of a BESS module shown in Figure 2.

Table 2 BESS Specifications

Equipment	Specification	Detail
BESS Containers	Numerical Amount	Up to 150 battery enclosures (10.5m long container frame)
	Approximate Dimensions	10.5m length x 2.44m wide x 2.94m high
	Weight	~47,000 kg each
Inverters	Numerical Amount	50 Inverters (4400 Kilovolt-amps (kVA))
	Approximate Dimensions	6.06m long x 2.44m wide x 2.90m high
	Weight	<18,289 kg each

Figure 2 Indicative Image of BESS Containers



1.3.7.1 Connection to Existing Substation

A new overhead and underground TL (132 kV) will be constructed to connect the BESS site's substation to the existing TransGrid Narrabri 132/66 kV TS on the Substation Site.

The TL will partially transect the BESS site and connect to the Narrabri 132/66 kV TS to the south via above ground or underground TL. A 60m width easement is proposed for the TL.

1.3.8 Site Access

Access to the BESS site for both the construction and operational stages of the development will be from Stoney Creek Road.

Vehicle parking will be provided on site for general maintenance staff. Construction vehicles and parking will utilise a temporary laydown area.

The internal access road is planned to be gravel formalised to accommodate heavy vehicles associated with the construction of the BESS.



The BESS facility, along with the other materials and the construction fleet, will be transported to the BESS site from the Port of Newcastle. It is anticipated 9 oversize and over mass (OSOM) vehicles will be required from Newcastle to the Project Area. There will be one OSOM vehicle required for the transportation of the main HV transformer, which will be coming from Melbourne.

The construction fleet is to be finalised, however, at the preliminary stage, it is anticipated that there will be a composition of the following fleet:

- 20m long AVs
- 20m long low loaders
- 26m long B-Doubles (short)
- 17m long truck and dog combinations
- Various Over Size Over Mass Vehicles for 9 OSOM trips
- 31m OSOM platform trailer and primer mover for the main HV transformer

All heavy vehicles will take the routes to and from the Project, as shown in Figure 3.

1.3.9 Removal of Vegetation

The majority of the Project Area comprise cleared agricultural lands. As detailed within Table 1 the vegetation area to be cleared comprises an area of 0.04ha.

1.3.10 Ancillary Infrastructure

The following ancillary infrastructure will be undertaken in conjunction with the BESS construction:

- Earthworks for minor cut and fill and preparing the pad sites.
- Stormwater management works.
- Temporary construction facilities (temporary parking, storage containers).
- Landscaping for screening around the perimeter of the BESS units.

1.3.10.1 Security, Fencing and Lighting

The BESS site shall be secured by up to approximately 2.5m tall chainmesh security fencing and access gates which shall remain during operation.

Boundary lighting and CCTV will be installed for security purposes.

1.3.10.2 Water Use

Water will be required during the construction phase for dust suppression, general construction, and maintenance activities. This water will be brought to site in water tankers. Construction water requirements for the Project are anticipated to be sourced from the council's bulk water supply.

Wastewater during construction will be captured and appropriately removed from site and disposed of in accordance with the council/water authority requirements. Potable water may be transported to the BESS site in bottles for use by the construction workforce. If utilised, toilet facilities will involve waterless toilets (or equivalent) that are emptied off-site.



1.3.11 Maintenance

Over the lifetime of the Project, semi-regular scheduled maintenance will be required. The current lithium battery technology experiences calendar aging, whereby the lithium-ion batteries have a lower capacity and reduce power capability over the battery life cycle. Therefore, maintenance will be required to ensure the Project maintains its capacity of 125 MW / 1,000 MWh. Furthermore, advancements in technology will enable the Project to adopt and install new technology, when scheduled maintenance occurs.

1.3.12 Decommissioning

The Project is proposed to be decommissioned, and the infrastructure removed following the EOL of the BESS, with works required to return the Project Area as close as possible to its original state and use. All decommissioning and restoration activities shall be in accordance with permits, approvals and regulatory requirements at the time.

The operational life of the Project will be determined by the evolving nature of the technology; however, it is anticipated that the lifespan will be approximately 25 years.

The standard construction hours, heavy vehicles, plant, and equipment required for the construction of the Project shall also apply to the decommissioning phase.

1.3.13 Estimated Development Cost

The estimated development cost (EDC) of the Project is over \$300 million, triggering this application for State Significant Development (SSD) under State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2012, Schedule 1, Clause 20(a).





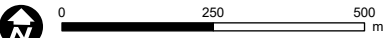
PROPOSED HEAVY VEHICLE
ROUTE THROUGH NARRABRI

FIGURE 3

- LEGEND**
- Watercourse
 - State Road
 - Proposed HV Route
 - Disturbance Footprint
 - Project Area
 - Title Containing Substation
 - Title containing BESS Site
 - BESS Area

Data Sources:
NSW SS.
Aerial imagery: Nearmap (July 2024).
Project Area supplied by client.

DISCLAIMER: All information within this document may be based on external sources. SLR Consulting Pty Ltd makes no warranty regarding the data's accuracy or reliability for any purpose.



Coordinate System:	GDA2020 MGA Zone 55
Scale:	1:12,500 at A4
Project Number:	620.V31316
Date Drawn:	28-Oct-2025
Drawn by:	RB



2.0 Methodology

The methodology adopted for this SIA aligns with current industry best practices and the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) *Social Impact Assessment Guideline (2023)* for State Significant Development (SSD). This section outlines the methodology used to assess the social impacts related to the proposed Project.

2.1 Purpose

This SIA aims to identify, predict, and evaluate likely social impacts and benefits arising from the Stoney Creek BESS Project, and to propose appropriate responses to manage, mitigate, and enhance those outcomes.

The SIA process follows the principles of:

- **Life-cycle focus:** considering impacts across all project stages.
- **Materiality:** prioritising the impacts that matter most to affected communities.
- **Proportionality:** scoping the assessment based on the scale and complexity of the project.
- **Integration:** aligning with findings from other EIS technical studies and policies.

2.2 Defining Social Impacts

In accordance with the SIA Guideline, social impacts are defined as “consequences that people experience when a project brings change” (DPE, 2023a, p 7). These may be positive (e.g., increased employment or energy security) or negative (e.g., construction fatigue or loss of amenity).

The SIA Guideline groups social impacts into eight categories, as shown below in Table 3. These categories form the frame that allows for a thorough identification of potential social impacts across the range of the social domain (i.e., across all the social categories) for each of the different Project activities, in the Project’s initial social impact Scoping stage (which was undertaken as part of the Scoping Report prepared by Element Environment). This SIA considers the findings of several other technical specialists’ studies and is informed by stakeholder and community engagement activities.

Table 3 Social Impact Categories

Impact Category	Description
Way of life	Includes how people live, work, interact, and move around
Community	Encompasses cohesion, character, identity, and resilience
Accessibility	How people access and use services, infrastructure, and facilities
Culture	Includes shared beliefs, practices, values, customs, and Aboriginal cultural heritage
Health and wellbeing	Covers mental and physical wellbeing, especially for vulnerable populations
Surroundings	Encompasses natural and built environments, amenity, and safety
Livelihoods	People’s ability to sustain themselves through work or enterprise
Decision-making systems	Includes participation, procedural fairness, and access to redress mechanisms



2.3 Social Impact Assessment Process

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

The assessment was undertaken through three key stages:

- 1 **Project Scoping:** The scoping phase involved defining the social locality and social baseline and identifying likely impacts across the eight impact categories based on project information (conducted by a separate consultancy) and prior consultation data.
- 2 **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** Community and Stakeholders were identified. Engagement was undertaken through public events, briefings and meetings, doorknocking, one on one semi structured interviews, and an online community values SIA survey.
- 3 **Impact Assessment and Management:** Data gathered through engagement, secondary research, and technical studies was used to determine the likelihood and magnitude of social impacts. A significance matrix was applied to assess and prioritise these impacts and to inform mitigation and enhancement strategies.

2.4 Review SIA Scoping Report

The Stoney Creek BESS SIA Scoping Report was reviewed to identify the key social matters and potential impacts raised during the scoping phase. These have been incorporated into the scope and methodology of this SIA, ensuring alignment with DPHI expectations and the SIA Guideline (2023).

Based on the Scoping Report and stakeholder engagement to date, the following potential social impacts have been identified:

- Community cohesion and function
- Community character
- Access to and use of the natural environment
- Livelihoods and employment
- Access to and use of infrastructure
- Workforce accommodation and service access
- Traffic, health, and safety risks
- Amenity impacts
- Potential stress or anxiety for vulnerable groups
- Energy security benefits.

These impacts will be examined in more detail through targeted stakeholder engagement, analysis of workforce and demographic data, and a review of existing environmental and technical studies. Particular attention will be paid to potential disproportionate impacts on vulnerable groups and opportunities for positive local benefit-sharing



2.5 Community Consultation and Engagement

Community and stakeholder engagement for the Project occurred in two phases: the initial Scoping Phase (Element Environment, 2023) and the EIS Phase (led by the Project's engagement team in collaboration with SLR). Engagement was designed to align with best practice principles, the NSW SIA Guideline, and the Project's Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (CSEP).

The engagement strategy aimed to:

- Provide accessible and transparent information.
- Ground-truth assumptions and validate potential social impacts.
- Identify benefit-sharing opportunities.
- Ensure inclusive representation, including Aboriginal stakeholders.

Engagement activities during the EIS phase included:

- Near-neighbour door knocking
- A community pop-up event
- A drop-in session at a local venue
- Six semi-structured stakeholder interviews
- Four targeted meetings with Council, emergency services, and local organisations.

Aboriginal engagement was undertaken as part of the broader consultation program. Several invitations were extended to the Narrabri Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) to participate in the SIA. While no formal interview was secured within the project timeframe, insights from previous meetings held between the LALC, proponent and engagement team were reviewed and incorporated.

For detailed engagement methods, outcomes, and a full list of stakeholders, see Chapter 5 – Consultation.

2.6 Community Survey

A community survey was distributed online via Zoho and QR codes embedded in project factsheets, posters and postcards. An unaddressed mailout of DL flyers which included a link to the survey was distributed to resident homes within a 10km radius of Narrabri totalling 4,090 homes. The survey sought to:

- Understand attitudes toward the Project.
- Identify community values and local investment priorities.
- Gather input on preferred engagement methods.

While participation during the EIS phase was limited (one response), the submission provided useful insights into community values and concerns. During the Scoping phase, an online survey via SurveyMonkey was also administered to the community by a previous consultancy and the findings were incorporated into the SIA Scoping and subsequently incorporated into this SIA.



2.7 Social Baseline

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

The development of a social baseline gathers knowledge from both primary and secondary data sources to increase understanding of the existing social environment in which a Project is proposed, and of the potentially affected communities. A broad overview of the sources utilised to undertake desktop analysis and develop the social baseline is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 Social Baseline Data Sources

Activity	Task/Source
Desktop research and data collection	- Project's Scoping Report - Narrabri Shire Council and local organisation websites - Profile.id - Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data - Community infrastructure and stakeholder mapping - Identification of nearby major projects.
Data analysis	- ABS 2021 Census - NSW Government data (health, crime, education, housing, transport) - DPHI population projections.
Literature and strategic review	- Regional and local planning documents - Previous SIAs and EIS documents from similar infrastructure projects.
Stakeholder engagement review	- Engagement outcomes from Scoping and EIS phases - Interviews and survey findings.

2.8 Impact assessment

Social impacts identified in the scoping phase were validated and re-assessed through data triangulation – the application of multiple data sources to understand the dimensions of the impact.

The dimensions of each social impact were investigated by:

- Understanding the key components and activities of the project contributing to the impact.
- Contextualising the project in its strategic and regulatory setting.
- Considering the characteristics of communities in the social locality likely to be affected.
- Identifying links to outcomes of various other technical studies prepared for the EIS.
- Understanding the outcomes of stakeholder and community engagement.



2.9 Evaluation of Significance

The overall significance rating will be determined using the social impact significance matrix provided in the SIA Guideline and shown in Table 5. A detailed description of the impact criteria is provided on page 12 of the SIA Guideline Technical Supplement.

Table 5 Social Impact Significance Matrix

Likelihood Level	Magnitude				
	1 Minimal	2 Minor	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 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

2.10 Cumulative impacts

Cumulative impacts will be assessed by:

- Identifying other approved or proposed projects in the social locality.
- Analysing the temporal and spatial overlap of impacts.
- Considering the community's experience with past projects.
- Evaluating the potential combined effects on social impact categories.
- Assessing the community's capacity to adapt to cumulative change.

2.11 Development of mitigation and enhancement measures

Mitigation and enhancement measures will be developed for impacts rated medium or higher significance through:

- Refinement of stakeholder suggestions and recommendations.
- Review of best practice social impact management strategies.
- Integration with other EIS mitigation measures.
- Consideration of implementation feasibility and effectiveness.
- Development of monitoring and adaptive management approaches.



3.0 Policy context

Table 6 outlines the project's regional and local policy context as relevant to the SIA.

Table 6 Local and regional policy context

Policy	Overview	Relevance to the SIA
New England North West Regional Plan 2041	The New England North West Regional Plan (DPE, 2022) sets the NSW Government's 20-year vision for sustainable growth in the region. It emphasises renewable energy investment, infrastructure resilience, job creation, and the protection of environmental and cultural assets. Direction 5 focuses on enabling communities and places within the region to grow as the renewable energy hub of NSW.	• Supports development of renewable energy infrastructure. • Requires careful consideration of local character, amenity and land use. • Highlights importance of inclusive economic growth and resilient infrastructure.
Narrabri Shire Community Strategic Plan 2022–2032	Developed by Narrabri Shire Council, this 10-year plan identifies goals across society, environment, economy and leadership. The plan seeks to enhance quality of life through community connectivity, sustainable development, and robust local governance.	• Highlights need to preserve social cohesion and local identity. • Supports projects that create jobs and enhance liveability. • Emphasises transparency and community involvement.
Narrabri Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement (2020)	This statement sets out a 20-year land use vision focused on protecting rural character while encouraging sustainable development. It identifies key planning priorities under four themes: economy, people, infrastructure, and environment.	• Reinforces importance of infrastructure capacity and coordination. • Calls for maintaining rural amenity and managing growth near townships. • Relevant to assessments of visual, traffic, and land use impacts.
NSW Net Zero Plan: Stage 1 (2020–2030)	The NSW Net Zero Plan outlines the state's commitment to reducing emissions by 35% by 2030 (from 2005 levels), with a target of net zero emissions by 2050. The plan recognises the role of battery energy storage in supporting a low-emission electricity grid.	• Supports BESS development as essential to meeting NSW emission targets. • Aligns with state government priorities on energy transformation. • Requires that benefits are locally communicated and understood.
NSW Premier's Priorities (2022)	These strategic priorities guide decision-making across government and aim to strengthen the economy, education, health services, and community wellbeing.	• Emphasises improved local services and regional equity. • Supports local employment and community benefit-sharing initiatives. • Underlines the importance of stakeholder engagement and social equity.



4.0 Social baseline

The social baseline presents a snapshot of the current social and economic conditions of the communities likely to be affected by the Project. This chapter provides insight into the social locality and broader regional setting, including key demographic, economic, cultural, and infrastructure indicators, to inform the assessment of social impacts and opportunities.

The social baseline has been developed using both primary and secondary data sources, drawing on stakeholder consultation, desktop research, strategic planning documents, and data from the ABS, government agencies, and local organisations. This approach supports a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics, values, and needs of potentially impacted communities.

4.1 The Project's Social Locality

The social locality represents the area in which social changes are most likely to be experienced by people as a result of the Project. It provides the spatial boundary for the assessment of social impacts and underpins both the development of the social baseline and the scope of the community and stakeholder engagement program.

Definition and rationale

For this SIA, the social locality is defined as the township of Narrabri, including the urban centre and surrounding residential and service areas captured by Australian Statistical Geography Standard Urban Centre and Locality (UCL) boundary UCL114023 (illustrated in Figure 4).

Narrabri is the closest population centre to the Project Area, located approximately 2km away and directly adjacent to the existing electrical substation. The town provides a range of housing, retail, health, and community services that are likely to experience direct or indirect interactions with the Project across all phases, particularly construction and operation.

While the SIA Scoping Report similarly identified Narrabri as the primary social locality, further consideration has been given in this assessment to potential indirect and regional effects beyond the UCL boundary. These include:

- **Workforce accommodation**, which may extend beyond Narrabri township to nearby centres such as Boggabri, if overflow occurs from the primary accommodation provider (Civeo Narrabri).
- **Potential transport and haulage routes** that utilise the Newell Highway and the Kamilaroi Highway and regional roads extending toward Newcastle Port and the Wilson Transformer Company in Melbourne, Victoria.
- **Energy distribution benefits**, as the electricity stored within the battery is part of the broader energy grid and therefore may provide service or resilience benefits to users across a wider geographic footprint.
- **Community investment and economic benefits** including the implementation of a community benefits fund which will be determined in conjunction with Council as well as the employment and training opportunities for which are likely to draw on broader regional labour force or supply chain.

These broader influences are acknowledged throughout the SIA and considered where relevant to cumulative and regional social impact categories. However, they do not shift the boundary of the defined social locality, which remains focused on the township of Narrabri as the primary site for potential lived experiences of change.



FIGURE 1

LEGEND

- Road
- Watercourse
- ▭ Disturbance Footprint
- ▭ Project Area
- ▭ Title Containing Substation
- ▭ Title containing BESS Site
- ▭ BESS Area
- ▭ Social Locality Area and UCL (114023)

Data Sources:
NSW SS.
Aerial imagery: Nearmap (July 2025).
Project Area supplied by client.

DISCLAIMER: All information within this document may be based on external sources. SLR Consulting Pty Ltd makes no warranty regarding the data's accuracy or reliability for any purpose.



Coordinate System: GDA2020 MGA Zone 55

Scale: 1:45,000 at A4

Project Number: 620.V31316

Date Drawn: 17-Oct-2025

Drawn by: RB



Engagement considerations

A flyer introducing the Project and directing residents to an online survey was distributed to properties within a 10 km radius of the Project Area to support early awareness. However, the majority of the engagement activities were focused within the town of Narrabri, including:

- Door-knocking of near neighbours in proximity to the Project Area.
- A pop-up stall at the Narrabri Rotary Market.
- A community drop-in session at the Narrabri Aquatic Centre.

As such, this SIA is grounded in the understanding that Narrabri is both the most proximate and most materially affected locality, and the site of strongest community interface with the Project.

Broader contextual reference

While the assessment is centred on the Narrabri locality, it does not exclude the possibility that secondary impacts—such as employment opportunities, service pressures, or regional economic benefits—may extend into the New England North West region. These dynamics are addressed through the regional context and planning policy chapters, and in the assessment of cumulative impacts.

4.2 Regional setting

The Stoney Creek BESS Project is located within the New England North West region of NSW, and specifically within the Narrabri Shire Local Government Area (LGA15750). For the purposes of this SIA, the Narrabri LGA is identified as the Regional Study Area (RSA), providing a useful benchmark for comparison against local-level data from Narrabri township. This section outlines the broader socio-economic characteristics of the region in which the Project is situated.

4.2.1 New England North West region

The New England North West region comprises a mix of vibrant regional centres, agricultural communities, and emerging energy infrastructure. The region benefits from its connectivity to major freight corridors such as the Newell Highway and Kamilaroi Highway and is known for its agricultural productivity and growing role in the renewable energy transition.

The region is also home to significant ecological assets such as the Pilliga Forest, Mount Kaputar National Park, and the Gwydir Wetlands, which contribute to the area's environmental significance and tourism appeal.

The Narrabri Shire Council area in particular, is a key service and employment hub for surrounding rural communities, offering health, education, retail, and logistics services. The Shire also has a strong innovation focus, particularly in the cotton industry, and plays an active role in research and development through institutions like the Australian Cotton Research Institute and the University of Sydney Plant Breeding Institute.

Population forecasts

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (2021) projects the population of the New England North West region to grow from around 188,000 in 2021 to over 197,500 by 2041. This increase reflects regional economic development and urban expansion, especially in growth centres such as Tamworth, Moree and Armidale. While growth in smaller towns such as Narrabri is forecast to be slower, overall regional population gains may influence workforce availability, housing demand, and service pressure.



Key industries

The New England North West region has a diversified economy built on primary industries and supported by emerging sectors such as renewables and services. Agriculture remains the backbone of the regional economy, particularly cotton, grains, and livestock. Key economic features include:

- **Agriculture:** Cotton, wheat, and cattle are dominant. The region is home to several large-scale agricultural operations and research institutes.
- **Mining and resources:** Narrabri and Gunnedah LGAs host active coal mining operations, alongside emerging gas projects.
- **Manufacturing:** Concentrated in Tamworth and Gunnedah, with links to agricultural processing and machinery.
- **Energy:** A growing focus on renewable energy including solar farms, battery storage, and wind projects.
- **Transport and logistics:** Enabled by the Newell and Kamilaroi highways and inland rail infrastructure.
- **Health and education:** Major employers in Tamworth and Armidale, supporting regional service delivery.

The energy sector is increasingly prominent, with several solar farms, wind energy projects, and battery storage developments proposed or operational across the region. These projects align with the NSW Government's clean energy transition goals and reflect the region's strategic importance in the evolving energy landscape.

The regional economy supported approximately 83,000 jobs in 2021, with an annual output exceeding \$20 billion, making it one of the largest non-metropolitan economies in NSW.

Major settlements

The New England North West region is characterised by a series of strategically located towns and service centres that support both urban and rural communities. Major population centres in proximity to the Project include:

- **Narrabri:** Located approximately 2 km from the Project Area, Narrabri is the administrative and economic hub of the Narrabri LGA, with a population of 12,703 (2021 Census). It supports agriculture, energy, logistics, and retail, and includes key infrastructure such as the Narrabri Hospital, Council offices, and the Civeo workforce accommodation village.
- **Wee Waa:** Situated around 38 km west of the Project, with a population of 2,080. It is known for its cotton industry and strong Aboriginal community presence.
- **Boggabri:** Located approximately 35 km north-east of the Project. It is a smaller town that may serve as secondary accommodation support for construction workers if needed.
- **Gunnedah:** A larger regional town located to the south-east, serving as a broader agricultural and mining centre, with an established industrial base.
- **Tamworth:** Around 180 km east of the Project and the largest city in the region, Tamworth functions as the key regional centre for healthcare, education, administration, and freight logistics.



These settlements offer varying levels of infrastructure, accommodation, and services, which are relevant to the Project in terms of workforce sourcing, transport planning, and community engagement.

4.3 Local social baseline characteristics

This section describes the social and demographic characteristics of the local area, focused primarily on the township of Narrabri. It supports an understanding of the communities most likely to experience direct or near-neighbour impacts associated with the Project.

The social baseline adopts the Narrabri Urban Centre and Locality (UCL114023) as the primary statistical area of focus. This boundary reflects the urban footprint of Narrabri as defined by the ABS and captures the majority of the town's population, services, and infrastructure.

While initial stakeholder awareness activities—such as mailouts and notifications—were conducted within a 10 km radius of the Project Area, engagement activities (including pop-up stalls, door knocking, and one-on-one interviews) were concentrated within the Narrabri township.

The UCL was therefore selected as the most appropriate statistical unit for social baseline reporting, as it reflects the community most likely to experience near-neighbour impacts from the Project. Where relevant data is unavailable at the UCL level, supplementary data has been drawn from the Narrabri Local Government Area (LGA15750) and clearly indicated. Where possible, Narrabri LGA data has also been used to provide broader regional context and highlight differences between the township and the wider regional setting.

Demographics

Gender

According to the 2021 Census, the population of Narrabri township (UCL114023) is approximately 5,499 people. The gender split is relatively even, with 50.4% identifying as female and 49.6% as male, closely aligning with state averages. This balanced demographic supports a diverse workforce and family-oriented community profile.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

The township of Narrabri sits on the traditional lands of the Gomeroi (also known as Gamilaroi, Gamilaraay, Kamilaroi, Kamillaroi) people, with a strong and visible Aboriginal community. In the Narrabri UCL, 17.7% of the population identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander—significantly higher than the NSW average of 3.4%. This reflects the strong cultural identity and enduring connection to Country that exists in the region.

Age Distribution

The median age in Narrabri UCL is 39 years, consistent with the national median (38 years) and slightly older than many urban centres in NSW. This suggests a mature, working-age population base. The age distribution is as follows:

- **0–14 years:** 20.4%
- **15–24 years:** 11.6%
- **25–54 years:** 36.6%
- **55–64 years:** 13.3%
- **65+ years:** 18.2%



This profile reflects a mix of families with young children, working adults, and a significant proportion of older residents.

For comparison, the Narrabri LGA had a total population of 12,703 at the 2021 Census. The median age was also 39, mirroring the UCL. In terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation, 16.1% of LGA residents identified as Indigenous—slightly lower than the UCL figure (17.7%) but still significantly above the NSW state average of 3.4%. This reinforces the strong and visible Aboriginal presence across the broader region, not just in the township.

4.3.1 Housing and Accommodation

Housing Characteristics

Narrabri features predominantly low-density residential housing, with the vast majority of dwellings being separate houses. According to the 2021 Census:

- **Occupied private dwellings: 2,152**
- **Separate houses: 83.9% of dwellings**
- **Average household size: 2.3 people**
- **Tenure type: 30.7% owned outright, 28% owned with a mortgage, 37.1% rented.**

These figures suggest a mix of long-term homeowners and renters, indicating both residential stability and some degree of housing mobility. The relatively high rate of rental tenure may reflect the role of Narrabri as a regional centre with a transient workforce, particularly in mining and agriculture.

Housing Affordability

As of early 2025, median weekly rents in Narrabri range between \$420 and \$575, depending on dwelling type. According to SQM Research, the average rent for all houses is currently \$575.65, while the combined dwelling average (which includes houses and units) is \$421.67. These figures remain below the current NSW average of approximately \$675 per week.

Over the past five years, Narrabri has seen rental prices increase by approximately 25–30%, with annual growth averaging 4.9% for combined dwellings and 6.0% for houses. This reflects ongoing demand pressures in the region, including the expansion of renewable energy and infrastructure projects, which may further impact rental availability and affordability during peak construction periods.

Short-term Accommodation

Approximately 1,300 short-term accommodation rooms are available across the Narrabri region, with the majority located within Narrabri town. The accommodation stock includes motels, caravan parks, serviced apartments, and purpose-built workforce camps. Civeo's Narrabri accommodation village is the primary workforce facility in the region and is the preferred venue to accommodate the majority of the Project's temporary construction workforce. Additional options include the Adelong Motel, Club Motor Inn, Bellview Motel, Narrabri Big Sky Caravan Park, and Narrabri Motel and Caravan Park, among others.

Occupancy rates typically fluctuate based on seasonal agricultural and resource sector demands. During peak periods, such as the spring harvest season (October–November), occupancy rates can reach near capacity, limiting room availability. In contrast, off-peak periods, particularly during the cooler months (June–August), see lower occupancy rates,



offering greater availability. These variations suggest that while there is generally adequate accommodation, peak periods may see tighter availability.

Should demand exceed local capacity, overflow accommodation may be sourced from nearby towns such as Boggabri (35 km away), although this would only be required in exceptional circumstances.

As of the 2021 Census, there were 4,574 occupied private dwellings in the Narrabri Local Government Area (LGA). Of these, 89.9% were separate houses, 8.4% were semi-detached or townhouse-style dwellings, and 0.7% were flats or apartments. Tenure types in the LGA were relatively balanced, with 34.9% of dwellings owned outright, 29.2% owned with a mortgage, and 29.1% rented. These figures suggest a stable, low-density housing market dominated by separate houses, with a relatively balanced mix of ownership and rental tenure but limited housing diversity.

4.4 Employment and Industry

4.4.1 Employment by Industry

Narrabri's economy is underpinned by a mix of traditional rural industries and emerging sectors. The most common industries of employment in Narrabri UCL are:

- Health care and social assistance – 13.6%
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing – 11.6%
- Retail trade – 10.6%
- Education and training – 9.2%
- Public administration and safety – 6.4%
- Construction – 6.1%
- Accommodation and food services – 5.8%.

These figures reflect the town's role as a service and administrative centre for the surrounding agricultural district. While agriculture remains a cornerstone of the local economy, there is strong representation in health, education, and government services—consistent with the presence of Narrabri Hospital, schools, and Council offices.

Emerging industries, such as renewable energy and mining, are not as prominent in the UCL data but are highly relevant at the LGA level and in regional strategic planning. According to external sources such as REMPLAN (2023) and the Narrabri Region Economic Snapshot, the mining and energy sectors contribute significantly to gross regional product and employment through fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and contract roles.

Occupations

According to the ABS (2021), the most common occupation groups in the Narrabri township are:

- Professional – 16.4%
- Technicians and Trades Workers – 14.8%
- Machinery Operators and Drivers – 14.3%
- Labourers – 12%
- Community and Personal Service Workers – 11.4%.



This occupational profile suggests a local labour market capable of supporting a range of roles likely to be associated with the construction and maintenance of The Project. The relatively high proportion of machinery operators, drivers, and trades workers points to capacity for plant operation and logistics roles, while professionals and service workers reflect broader sectoral diversity.

Across the Narrabri LGA, the economic profile differs slightly, reflecting a broader emphasis on primary industries. Agriculture, forestry and fishing was the dominant industry, employing 17.5% of the workforce, followed by mining (11.1%) and health care and social assistance (10.2%). Compared to the UCL, where health, retail, and education dominate, the LGA data highlights a stronger reliance on traditional resource-based sectors in surrounding rural areas.

4.4.2 Employment Rates

Based on Small Area Labour Markets data (September Quarter 2024), the Narrabri Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) (used in the absence of UCL data) has an unemployment rate of 2.9%, well below the NSW average of 3.9%. This indicates a tight labour market, with potential constraints on local workforce availability, particularly for short-term or specialist roles.

These low unemployment rates may lead to increased competition for workers and could place upward pressure on wages or drive demand for accommodation if external workforces are required.

While UCL-specific employment data is not publicly reported, the Narrabri LGA recorded a 2021 unemployment rate of 4.1%—higher than the more recent SA2 estimate of 2.9% (2024). This suggests an improvement in local labour market conditions over time, possibly linked to regional infrastructure projects and recovery from pandemic-related disruptions.

4.5 Community and Culture

4.5.1 Volunteering and Community Participation

Narrabri exhibits strong community participation. According to the ABS (2021), 17.4% of people aged 15 and over in the Narrabri LGA reported undertaking voluntary work through an organisation or group in the previous 12 months. This is higher than the NSW average of 14.1%, reflecting strong social capital and a culture of civic engagement.

Approximately 11.7% of people provided unpaid care for a person with disability or long-term illness, indicating a close-knit community with a strong ethic of care.

This active civic environment suggests a community that values local engagement and may be sensitive to changes that impact communal norms, social networks, or perceptions of fairness.

4.5.2 Household Mobility

Census data indicates a moderate level of household stability in Narrabri:

- 80.8% of residents had lived at the same address one year prior to the Census.
- 55.4% had lived at the same address five years prior.

This level of stability suggests a community with a core of long-term residents, complemented by a smaller portion of more mobile individuals—likely influenced by employment shifts in agriculture, energy, and government services. The mix of permanence



and mobility may shape the way new projects are received and influence the effectiveness of engagement strategies.

4.5.3 Transport and Connectivity

Narrabri is a car-dependent community with limited public transport options. The ABS (2021) reports that 86.8% of households own at least one motor vehicle, with 54.7% owning two or more.

The town is serviced by the Kamilaroi Highway and Newell Highway and has a train station serviced by NSW TrainLink, although public transport is infrequent and largely impractical for most commuting needs. The Narrabri Airport provides regular flights to Sydney.

The reliance on private vehicles may heighten community concerns around construction traffic, vehicle access, and road safety during project delivery, particularly along local roads such as Stoney Creek Road.

4.5.4 Health and Wellbeing

In Narrabri LGA (UCL data limited), 6.5% of people reported needing assistance with core activities due to disability, long-term health condition, or old age. This is slightly higher than the NSW average (5.4%).

Chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses are common, consistent with regional health trends. Mental health support is available through the local hospital and visiting practitioners, but services are generally more limited than in urban centres.

Vulnerable residents may experience heightened sensitivity to changes in amenity, noise, traffic, or disruption to services during construction.

4.5.5 Socioeconomic Indicators

Narrabri LGA has an Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) score of 923, placing it in the 3rd decile nationally (ABS, 2021). This indicates that the area experiences higher levels of relative disadvantage compared to most other parts of NSW.

Key contributing factors include:

- Lower median weekly household income of \$1,395, compared to the NSW average of \$1,829.
- Lower rates of tertiary education.
- Higher proportion of households without internet access.

These socioeconomic indicators highlight a community that may be less resourced to adapt to rapid change or navigate complex engagement or benefit-sharing processes. This has important implications for equity, resilience, and the design of communication and benefit-sharing strategies.

While Narrabri's median rent is notably lower than the NSW average of \$675, affordability must also be considered in relation to local income levels. With a lower median household income, the relative cost of housing may still pose challenges for some residents. This suggests that households in the area may be more vulnerable to rental increases. Increasing pressure on local rental markets is a common trend in areas with strong visitor and tourism markets as a result of introduction of short-term accommodation such as Airbnb displacing traditional rental models. It is not anticipated that demand for workforce accommodation will be directly addressed through the local residential rental market. However, the possible use



of short-term accommodation during peak construction periods may exacerbate existing trends and pressures on local renters. Ensuring housing remains accessible and that benefit-sharing measures account for cost-of-living pressures will be important to mitigate social risks.

These indicators reflect broader socio-economic patterns across the Narrabri LGA, which includes the Narrabri township and its surrounding rural settlements, providing context for understanding local vulnerability and adaptive capacity.

4.6 Summary of key findings relevant to the Social Impact Assessment

The social baseline analysis highlights several key considerations for the Stoney Creek BESS Project's Social Impact Assessment:

- **Population stability and ageing trends:** Narrabri has a median age of 39 and a relatively balanced age distribution, with 18.2% of residents aged over 65 (UCL). This suggests the presence of a stable, family-oriented community with a growing cohort of older residents who may be more sensitive to amenity changes, access limitations, or construction-phase disruptions near the Project Aite.
- **Strong community participation:** Above-average volunteerism and rates of unpaid care reflect strong social cohesion and a high degree of local engagement. Changes brought by The Project—especially during construction—may affect perceptions of local control or disrupt established networks and social rhythms.
- **Affordable and family-oriented housing:** Housing in Narrabri remains more affordable than NSW averages, and family households make up the majority. The Project should consider potential pressures on local housing availability and affordability, particularly if construction workforce accommodation spills into the local rental market.
- **Periodically constrained short-term accommodation:** While Narrabri offers a reasonable number of rooms, short-term accommodation supply can vary seasonally, and demand from concurrent projects or events may create periods of constraint. Overflow accommodation in Boggabri has been flagged, but capacity should be closely monitored to avoid pressure on local services should local short term accommodation be required in the Narrabri township.
- **Transport reliance and road access:** High rates of car ownership and limited public transport reflect a car-dependent community. Construction-phase traffic, particularly along Stoney Creek Road and connecting rural routes, may disrupt access and raise local concerns around safety, congestion, and road wear.
- **Employment and economic participation:** The regional workforce includes a high proportion of professionals, tradespeople, and machinery operators (UCL), indicating potential capacity to support the Project. However, the broader SA2 unemployment rate of 2.9% (SALM 2024) points to a tight labour market. Careful workforce planning and engagement with local contractors and suppliers will be important to maximise benefit while avoiding local labour constraints.
- **Socioeconomic disadvantage:** Narrabri LGA is ranked in the 3rd decile nationally on the IRSD, indicating moderate to high levels of disadvantage. This may affect how certain groups experience project impacts and benefit from opportunities. A tailored approach to communication, support, and benefit-sharing will be important.



- **First Nations engagement:** The Project is located on traditional Gomeroi (also known as Gamilaroi, Gamilaraay, Kamilaroi, Kamillaroi) lands, and within the area of the Narrabri LALC. Ongoing engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders is essential, not only in relation to cultural heritage but also for procurement, employment, and long-term community benefit initiatives.
- **Emergency planning and rural service delivery:** The Project's rural setting, combined with bushfire risk and known seasonal weather extremes, underlines the importance of proactive emergency planning. Collaboration with local fire services, police, health services, and Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) will be critical during both construction and operations, especially regarding access, risk response, and incident management.

These findings form the basis for assessing potential social risks and benefits and will guide the development of appropriate mitigation, management, and benefit-sharing measures in subsequent sections of the SIA.

4.6.1 Social infrastructure

The relatively small construction workforce and the short-term nature of the peak construction period for The Project mean that impacts on local social infrastructure are expected to be limited. Interactions are most likely to occur with essential services such as emergency services and healthcare facilities in the event of an incident.

Key infrastructure and service providers in the area include:

- **Narrabri Hospital:** Operated by Hunter New England Health and located in Narrabri approximately 15 km from the Project Site, the hospital provides general medical services, including a 24-hour emergency department, acute care beds, and limited specialist services.
- **NSW Police Force:** The Narrabri Police Station, located on Doyle Street, provides law enforcement and community safety services to the region.
- **NSW Ambulance Service:** Ambulance services are based in Narrabri and are responsible for emergency medical response across the district.
- **NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS):** The Narrabri RFS brigade is the primary rural firefighting service in the region. General insights provided by the RFS and from other comparable BESS projects across NSW have informed considerations for dual site access, firefighting infrastructure requirements, and broader emergency planning protocols.
- **Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW):** The Narrabri Fire Station is managed under Fire and Rescue NSW and supports urban fire and emergency response in conjunction with RFS where needed.
- **State Emergency Service (SES):** The Narrabri SES unit is located on Reid Street in the town centre. They support flood and disaster response.

Given the existing capacity of these services and the limited scale of the workforce, no sustained pressure is anticipated. However, emergency management planning and ongoing communication with local emergency service providers will remain important throughout the construction and operational phases.



5.0 Consultation

5.1 Community and Stakeholder Consultation for The Project

As part of the EIS and SIA processes, Enervest and SLR undertook a staged and comprehensive stakeholder consultation program for The Project. The approach was guided by best practice principles, the SIA Guideline (DPE,2023), and informed by the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (CSEP) developed in 2024.

The consultation program aimed to:

- Identify key social values and priorities of the Narrabri community.
- Provide accessible and transparent information about The Project.
- Seek input on potential social impacts and benefit opportunities.
- Build trust and foster long-term relationships between Enervest and the Narrabri community.

A broad range of tools and engagement formats were used, from face-to-face meetings with neighbours and stakeholder groups to targeted community events, digital communications, and an SIA survey.

Consultation extended to near neighbours, community organisations, Council, the LALC, Chamber of Commerce, emergency services, and the broader Narrabri township. A total of six formal stakeholder interviews were also conducted to inform the SIA, along with public events that reached more than 30 attendees, and a letter drop targeting residents within a 10km radius of the Project Area.

While this report includes inputs on Aboriginal cultural values and interests, it should be noted that these were derived from secondary sources, including notes from previous engagement meetings between the Narrabri LALC, the proponent's and the Projects' engagement team. Several attempts were made to engage directly with the Narrabri Local LALC to invite participation in the Social Impact Assessment; however, a response was not received within the assessment timeframe. The insights captured therefore reflect broader themes raised in project engagement to date and are not the result of a dedicated SIA interview with the LALC. Detailed assessment of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage matters is included in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment undertaken by Virtus heritage to inform the EIS.

Community and stakeholder input from this process has directly shaped the development of this SIA and informed proposed mitigation and enhancement measures. Table 7 summarises the engagement activities undertaken.



Table 7 Summary of Consultation Activities

Engagement Activity	Date(s)	Details
Near neighbour door knocking	1 November 2024	Door knocking of residents on Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Road. Tailored discussions and collateral distributed.
Community pop-up event	2 November 2024	Held at Narrabri Rotary Market. Approximately 22 attendees.
Community drop-in session	14 November 2024	Held at Narrabri Aquatic Centre. Approximately 9 attendees.
Stakeholder meetings	November 2024 – March 2025	Meetings with Narrabri Shire Council, Narrabri LALC, RFS, and Geni Energy.
SIA stakeholder interviews	January – March 2025	Interviews with Chamber of Commerce, Council officers, and local residents.
Letter drop within 10km radius	October 2024	Priority mail sent to properties within 10km catchment with QR code to SIA survey.
Newspaper advertisement	31 October 2024	Narrabri Courier print ad promoting the drop-in session.
Online survey	26 Sept – 5 Dec 2024	Hosted via project website and promoted in all collateral. One completed response.

5.2 Previous Consultation in the Region

The Narrabri region has experienced a steady increase in large-scale infrastructure and renewable energy developments in recent years, including coal seam gas projects (e.g. Santos), solar farms, and agricultural and recycling innovations. As a result, the local community is familiar with engagement processes associated with environmental approvals and major project development.

Feedback from stakeholders during this engagement program indicated some residual community fatigue linked to previous project consultations. In particular, stakeholders referenced the Santos gas development and early-stage solar projects as examples where initial opposition was shaped by misinformation or unmet expectations regarding local benefit sharing. While some community members remain cautious, others expressed a pragmatic or neutral stance toward new development, provided that projects deliver tangible benefits, communicate clearly, and engage consistently.

This context shaped the engagement approach for the Project, with a focus on transparency, local benefit, and early involvement of key community representatives and landholders.

5.2.1 Issues and outcomes

Table 8 provides an overview of the consultation outcomes and where they are addressed in the SIA.



Table 8 Issues and outcomes as relevant to the SIA

Theme	Interest and/or identified issue	Stakeholders who raised this	Addressed in other technical assessment	Were addressed in the SIA
Traffic and transport	- Concerns about increased construction traffic on Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Road. - Requests to avoid disrupting school buses, garbage collection, and local access. - Suggestions to schedule heavy vehicle movements during off-peak hours. - Calls for a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) to minimise impacts.	- Near neighbours - Local residents - Narrabri Shire Council - Chamber of Commerce	Traffic Impact Assessment Bushfire Risk Assessment Hazard and Risk Assessment	Impacts C-05, O-10
Social impact and local benefits	- Desire for local employment opportunities during construction and operations. - Support for local procurement of services and materials. - Need for reinvestment into the community through grants or benefit funds (e.g. childcare, housing, community programs). - Community concern over “fly-in, fly-out” workforce offering limited long-term value.	- Local residents - Narrabri Shire Council - Chamber of Commerce - Narrabri LALC	Economic Impact Assessment	Impacts C-05, O-09, O-11
Emergency management	- Fire risk associated with battery units, including suppression systems and surrounding vegetation. - Site access for emergency vehicles and need for appropriately sized entry/exit points. - Potential need for water tanks and compatible couplings for RFS response. - Risk of smoke plumes and potential benefits of underground cables for fire resilience. - Desire for early and ongoing coordination with local fire services.	- RFS (Narrabri) - Local residents - Narrabri Shire Council - Fire Services	Bushfire Risk Assessment and Hazards and Risk Assessment	Impact O-10



Theme	Interest and/or identified issue	Stakeholders who raised this	Addressed in other technical assessment	Were addressed in the SIA
Grid stability and energy supply	- Community interest in local grid reliability and energy security. - Desire for clarification on whether stored power benefits Narrabri or broader NSW. - Concerns about the battery system causing transformer overloads or disconnecting smaller solar setups. - Curiosity about how the battery integrates with existing energy systems.	- Local residents - Online survey respondent - Chamber of Commerce	Project description and objectives in EIS focus on grid stability benefits.	Impact O-09
Community benefit sharing	- Desire for long-term, tangible benefits beyond the construction phase. - Recommendation for a community panel to guide benefit fund allocation. - Community fatigue from past projects with unfulfilled benefit-sharing promises. - Calls for the Project to be transparent and inclusive in how benefits are distributed.	- Chamber of Commerce - Narrabri Shire Council - Local residents	Not specifically addressed in technical assessments but relates to social and economic contributions.	Impact O-11
Visual impacts	- Proximity to the cemetery raised concerns about visual amenity. - Suggestions to use vegetation screening and public art to improve aesthetic integration. - Desire to reduce visibility and avoid “industrial look” near sensitive land uses.	- Local residents - Narrabri Shire Council.	Visual and Landscape Impact Assessment	Impact CO-06
Aboriginal cultural heritage	- Requests for procurement, training, and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people. - Suggestions to include cultural representation through art or landscaping.	Narrabri LALC	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment	Impact CO-07



Theme	Interest and/or identified issue	Stakeholders who raised this	Addressed in other technical assessment	Were addressed in the SIA
	• Proposal to support LALC's bush tucker initiative or other community-led uses of land. • Recommendations to support energy security and housing for Aboriginal families.			



6.0 Impact assessment and prediction

This section provides a detailed assessment of social impacts identified through scoping and consultation.

6.1 Interaction with other technical studies

Table 9 provides a summary of the outcomes of other technical assessments as relevant to the SIA.

Table 9 Summary of interactions with other technical assessment outcomes

Technical Assessment	Relevance to the SIA
Economic Impact Assessment	Investigates existing local and regional economy and economic drivers to understand potential impacts on and opportunities for local employment, procurement, and economic output. Findings will inform assessment of job creation, local benefit sharing.
Visual Impact Assessment	Describes existing local landscape values and identifies sensitive viewsheds to assess visibility of infrastructure from key viewpoints, proximity to the cemetery and residential areas, and the effectiveness of vegetation screening. Recommends appropriate management and mitigation to minimise visual impacts on surrounding areas and communities.
Noise and Vibration Assessment	Measures latent environmental noise levels and models construction and operational noise impacts, particularly from inverters and cooling systems, to assess complaint and recommend management and mitigation measures where appropriate (e.g. noise walls, hours of work).
Bushfire and Emergency Risk Assessment	Include fuel load assessments, firebreaks, fire suppression systems, and emergency access requirements to inform community safety planning and stakeholder confidence.
Hazards and Risk Assessment	Identifies risks associated with lithium-ion battery storage, including EMF, containment, and incident response, and outlines recommended mitigations to protect and enhance community safety and wellbeing.
Traffic Impact Report	Models construction traffic volumes, haul routes, intersection safety, and potential conflicts with local users including school buses and agricultural vehicles. Outlines recommended management and mitigations to minimise disruptions and maintain safety and compliance.
Biodiversity and Ecological Assessment	Assess potential impacts of land clearing and disturbance on native vegetation and wildlife, and recommend mitigation measures and management approaches related to flora, fauna, and habitat.
Surface and Ground Water Assessment	Assess potential impacts on local drainage, flood-prone areas, and the nearby cemetery, and inform site design and stormwater management.
Flood Impact Assessment	Investigates the flooding characteristics of the Project Area and its catchment, to evaluate potential changes in flood levels, depths, peak velocities, and discharges and to identify any adverse hydraulic impacts resulting from the proposed works.
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment	Documents Aboriginal cultural values of the Project Area and surrounds and assesses potential disturbance to heritage sites or cultural landscapes. Will inform planning of engagement, monitoring, and mitigation.



Technical Assessment	Relevance to the SIA
Agricultural Impact Assessment	Examines potential impacts on agricultural land at the BESS Site and the broader Narrabri LGA

6.2 Social impacts

6.2.1 During construction

C-01: Amenity impacts during construction activities, including, but not limited to, noise and vibration affect residents' wellbeing and the way they use and enjoy private space

Description: Construction of the Stoney Creek BESS will involve bulk earthworks, battery unit installation, and civil infrastructure development, requiring heavy machinery and frequent vehicle movements. These activities may generate dust, noise, and disruption over an estimated 12-14 month construction period.

Extent: Residents located along or near Bailey Street and Stoney Creek Road, 12 properties, particularly near neighbours and those adjacent to site access routes, are expected to experience the most significant impacts. Nearby sensitive receivers include private rural properties and the Narrabri Cemetery.

Duration: Temporary impacts over the 12-14 month construction period.

Level of concern/interest: Concerns were raised by near neighbours and Council regarding dust and noise levels, particularly during peak construction, and the potential for disruption to everyday life and road access.

Scale: Impacts will be localised to those living near the Project Area or along haulage routes. Effects will be most pronounced at key traffic pinch points and where construction coincides with residential areas and public use assets (e.g. the cemetery).

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

A Noise and Vibration Assessment (NVA) identified nine sensitive receivers in the vicinity of the Project and found that:

- Vibration from construction and operational activities is unlikely to be perceptible by nearby receivers
- Construction noise at all receivers is expected to comply with project criteria at all times during the construction program.
- The use of standard mitigation measures to minimise the impacts is considered sufficient to control most impacts.

Impact Assessment:

Magnitude level: Minor	Likelihood: Unlikely	Overall Impact: Low
Nine sensitive receivers were identified with minimal disturbance anticipated over a short period of time during peak construction.	Construction noise is anticipated to comply with relevant standards and standard mitigations are imposed therefore disturbance is unlikely.	Disturbance is not anticipated, but would be minor, short term or sporadic if it does occur.



C-02: Changes to community cohesion and character due to an influx of construction workers during construction.

Description: The Stoney Creek BESS project will require a temporary construction workforce of 48 full time equivalent (FTE) workers over a 12-14 month period during peak construction. Employment numbers will fluctuate starting with about 15 workers on site for the early stage of construction. Worker numbers will progressively increase to 48 FTE at the peak period for several months before tailing off toward completion and the start of commissioning. It is expected the peak period would extend for approximately 3-4 months. Outside of the peak period, approximately 10 to 15 workers will be required at any one time.

The workforce will be sourced from the local area where possible, and the wider region where necessary. As required, it is assumed that workers coming from outside the region will be accommodated at the self-contained Civeo workforce accommodation facility in Narrabri and transported to and from the site daily. Workers from outside the local area are unlikely to be accommodated within the established residential areas.

The proposed working hours during construction are 7:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday to Friday and 8:00 am to 1:00 pm on Saturday. Worker time in the Narrabri community is expected to be limited to after-hours and weekends, with minimal direct interaction in residential areas. It is anticipated that workers accommodated at the Civeo Narrabri Village will access all essential services on site.

Extent:

- Residents of Narrabri and nearby rural properties who may interact with workers in town or on transport routes.
- Local business owners and service providers who may benefit from increased demand.
- Community members with interest in maintaining rural amenity and social cohesion.

Duration: Temporary impact over the 12-14 month construction period, with peak workforce presence (approximately 48 workers) expected for approximately four months.

Level of concern/interest: During stakeholder interviews and engagement activities, participants expressed a desire for local employment opportunities and raised concerns about short-term workers not contributing to long-term community wellbeing. Some stakeholders referenced other projects in the region where “fly-in, fly-out” arrangements were used and left little local legacy. Council representatives noted that any influx should be accompanied by clear benefit pathways, such as procurement opportunities or targeted community support.

Scale: The impact would be highly localised and limited primarily to retail and hospitality venues in Narrabri, where construction workers may purchase meals, groceries, or personal supplies. Surrounding rural areas and nearby localities would experience minimal interaction, as it is assumed that workers will be based at a centralised accommodation facility and transported directly to and from the Project Area.

It is acknowledged that accommodating workers at the Civeo facility in Narrabri introduces non-residents into the community. However, Narrabri is a well-established regional centre with a population of approximately 5,500 (2021 Census) and a history of hosting temporary workforces associated with agriculture, mining, and infrastructure projects. Even if a significant portion of the construction workforce is sourced externally, the temporary population increase would be modest and consistent with existing population fluctuations experienced during harvest periods or regional events.



Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

The use of the existing Civeo workforce accommodation facility represents a continuation of Narrabri's established practice of hosting non-resident workforces, particularly for agricultural, mining, and infrastructure projects. Given the small size of the proposed construction workforce (approximately 48 workers at peak), the temporary population increase is minimal in the context of Narrabri's overall population and unlikely to result in significant change to community cohesion or character.

As such, impacts associated with the temporary workforce were screened during the scoping phase and are not considered to require detailed technical assessment, provided workforce management measures are in place and interaction with the broader community remains limited.

Impact Assessment:

Consequence: Minor	Likelihood: Possible	Overall Impact: Medium
The workforce will be accommodated in an existing centralised facility and will have limited presence in the broader community. Some residents may notice increased activity but impacts on social cohesion and character are expected to be low.	Given community expectations and previous experiences with large-scale projects, it is possible that worker presence may attract some community attention or commentary.	With appropriate planning and communication, impacts from the construction workforce on local cohesion and character are expected to be minor and temporary. Positive local perceptions may increase if job creation and economic benefits are clearly demonstrated.

C-03: Delays and disruption to local traffic networks resulting from construction activity, including increased truck movements and heavy and oversized vehicles, affect residents' movement patterns and perceptions of safety on the road network.

Description: Construction of the Stoney Creek BESS project will generate approximately 7,750 inbound and 7,750 outbound vehicle trips over the 12-14 month construction period. This includes a mix of light vehicles for worker transportation and heavy vehicles for equipment and material delivery. At peak construction, the project is expected to generate around 62 daily return trips during the first 50 days. Light construction vehicles will access the Project Area from Narrabri via Doyle Street, Old Cemetery Road and Stoney Creek Road.

The Port of Newcastle is the receiver port for battery units and switch gear equipment. Ten over size over mass (OSOM) movements. Wilson Transformer Company in Glen Waverley (Victoria) has been identified as the origin of the transformer for the purposes of transportation. All other materials will be transported from various towns, mainly from the south via the Newell Highway and the Kamilaroi Highway.

Extent: Residents living along or near Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Street, including near neighbours and sensitive receivers, will be most affected by increased vehicle movements. School transport operators, garbage collection services, agricultural users, and general road users who regularly rely on these routes may also experience temporary disruptions.

Duration: Temporary impacts over the 12-14 month construction period, with varying intensity depending on the construction phase. The most significant traffic impacts are expected during the peak construction period of approximately 3-4 months.



Level of concern/interest: Stakeholders raised several traffic-related concerns during consultation, including:

- Disruption to local traffic patterns and road user safety.
- Potential conflicts with school bus routes and essential services like rubbish collection.
- Suitability of existing rural roads for frequent use by heavy vehicles.
- The need for a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) to mitigate risks and ensure community safety.

Suggestions included scheduling heavy vehicle movements outside of peak traffic and school transport times, providing advance notice of oversized deliveries, and establishing clear contact protocols in case of concerns during construction.

Scale: The impacts are expected to be restricted to localised to roads immediately surrounding the Project Area, particularly Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Street. These roads are not currently designed to accommodate high volumes of heavy vehicles, which could lead to short-term congestion, safety concerns, or road degradation without appropriate management.

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

A Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) determined that vehicular access to and from the development will be provided via Stoney Creek Road, which is a “No Through Road” with minimal daily traffic, mainly from agricultural activities.

Modelling indicated the development will generate approximately 7,750 inbound and 7,750 outbound trips during the assumed construction period of 300 working days over 12 months. An additional 3,100 trips are anticipated during the first 50 days of construction while earthworks take place. This equates to 26 return trips per day (22 light vehicle trips and four heavy vehicle trips) and 62 return trips per day during this peak period.

Turn warrant assessments identified that the existing road network can accommodate the project’s construction impacts under traffic management, and that no cumulative impacts are anticipated from nearby solar projects.

Impact Assessment:

Consequence: Minor	Likelihood: Possible	Overall Impact: Medium
Site access is via a No Through Road with low daily traffic and haulage routes are not anticipated to experience substation disruptions.	Possibility of disruptions along the haulage route with traffic management required during peak activity or Over Size Over Mass heavy vehicle movements.	Temporary disruptions or changes may be experienced during peak construction activity and where traffic management is required.

C-04: Increased demand for temporary accommodation providers in the local area during construction results in limited accommodation options for seasonal workers, local needs, and tourists.

Description: The Stoney Creek BESS project will require approximately 48 full time equivalent (FTE) workers at peak construction, with a proportion likely to require temporary accommodation in or around Narrabri. This workforce will be present over a 12-14 month construction period, with peak workforce numbers concentrated over approximately four months. While the exact origin of workers and proportion of locally based workers is not yet



known, the proponent has indicated a preference for using existing accommodation facilities such as Civeo in Narrabri as required. It is not anticipated that the Project workforce will access short-term accommodation in the Narrabri township. However, in this instance, and depending on the scale and timing of the workforce, additional demand may place pressure on local accommodation providers already catering to seasonal agricultural workers, tourists, and other transient groups.

Extent: Several groups could be affected by increased competition for accommodation:

- Seasonal agricultural workers who rely on local accommodation during peak harvest periods.
- Tourists and business travellers who contribute to the local economy.
- Residents in need of short-term housing between rentals or due to housing insecurity.
- Local accommodation providers (e.g. motels, caravan parks) who may benefit economically but may also face capacity constraints.

Duration: Temporary impact over the 12-month construction period, with peak demand during the four-month period when the workforce reaches its maximum size. The impact may be more pronounced during existing high accommodation demand periods, such as during regional events or agricultural harvest seasons.

Level of concern/interest: Accommodation availability was raised as a community concern during consultation. Stakeholders noted that while Narrabri is well-equipped in terms of hospitality infrastructure, there are periods of high demand that can result in limited vacancy. Council officers and Chamber representatives recommended early engagement with accommodation providers and contingency planning for overflow, particularly during harvest seasons and regional events.

Scale: Impacts would be primarily limited to Narrabri, the most likely location for accommodation due to its existing capacity and proximity to the Project. Impacts are expected to be minimal in surrounding towns unless overflow accommodation is required (e.g. Boggabri), which may only occur if project timelines coincide with peak seasonal demand or other regional developments.

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

The proponent has indicated a preference to accommodate the construction workforce at the existing Civeo facility in Narrabri, which is consistent with previous workforce accommodation arrangements for regional infrastructure and resource projects. This approach is strongly supported by Council and is expected to reduce pressure on other temporary accommodation providers in the area.

To mitigate potential shortfalls during peak periods, the proponent should prepare a workforce accommodation schedule and forecast expected worker numbers against available capacity. This will help identify potential overlap with high-demand periods, such as harvest season, school holidays or major regional events, and allow for contingency planning. The *Narrabri Region Tourism Destination Management Plan 2021-2025* notes the strong visitor economy in Narrabri and consistently high occupancy rates. It also encourages the expansion of the Civeo Villages with priority being to expand the Narrabri Village.

In line with the NSW Government's Guidelines for Construction Workers Accommodation – December 2024, the proponent may be required to prepare an Employment and Accommodation Strategy if there is any risk that demand could exceed supply or displace local users. However, this is considered unlikely.



Impact Assessment:

Consequence: Minimal	Likelihood: Unlikely	Overall Impact: Low
The estimated workforce is unlikely to exceed the capacity of Narrabri's existing accommodation stock, particularly if staged deployment and coordination with providers occurs. However, during peak periods or if multiple regional developments overlap, some pressure may be felt.	If the proponent successfully secures accommodation at Civeo and staggers workforce deployment, significant pressure on local supply is unlikely.	The combination of minimal consequence and unlikely likelihood results in a low impact rating. With proactive planning and engagement, the project is not expected to adversely affect accommodation availability for other users.

C-05: Construction activities create employment and procurement opportunities, supporting local economic development in Narrabri and surrounding regions.

Description: The Stoney Creek BESS project will incorporate an on-site workforce of approximately 48 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs during peak construction. This represents an injection of employment opportunities in an emerging renewable energy sector growing in regional NSW. Construction activities require various skills, including general labour, specialised trades, project management, and engineering expertise, to create diverse employment pathways. Additional economic benefits driven by construction and local investment flow into the ancillary roles and increased spend across local businesses and the service sector, and increased access to training and local employment to retain population and labour.

Extent:

- Working-age residents of Narrabri Shire and the broader North West Slopes region with relevant skills.
- Local contractors and businesses that may supply equipment, services, or materials to the project.
- Young people and jobseekers looking to enter the infrastructure, renewables, or construction sectors.

Duration: Temporary impacts lasting for the duration of the construction phase, anticipated to span several months. However, skills development and local business growth may lead to longer-term economic benefits.

Level of concern/interest: During community and stakeholder consultation, the creation of local employment and procurement opportunities was consistently raised as a key community priority. Stakeholders emphasised the need for transparent recruitment processes, early engagement with local suppliers, and initiatives to ensure economic benefits remain in the region. Narrabri Chamber of Commerce and Council stakeholders highlighted the importance of local contracting and fair access to tenders. There was also concern that previous projects in the region had under-delivered on local jobs, leading to community scepticism.

Scale: Benefits will be concentrated in Narrabri Shire, though wider regional gains may be felt depending on workforce sourcing and supply chain design. The impact will be most meaningful if local workers and businesses are prioritised.



Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

The Economic Impact Analysis (BDO, 2025) found that Project is expected to deliver significant economic benefits to both the local and state economies over a 12-14 month construction phase including:

- Direct and indirect benefits of \$29.7m in Gross Regional Product (GRP) and 122 FTE annually to the Narrabri region
- A further \$101.3m and 318 FTE annually are projected for NSW over the same period.

Once operational, the Project is anticipated to continue delivering economic value over a 25-year lifespan, contributing \$93.4m in GRP and supporting 12 FTE jobs on average in the Narrabri Shire.

Impact Assessment:

Consequence: Moderate	Likelihood: Almost Certain	Overall Impact: High (Positive)
The project has the potential to deliver tangible economic gains for local workers and businesses, though benefits will be time-limited and dependent on the proportion of local participation achieved.	Job creation and procurement needs are inherent to project delivery, and benefits are likely if local capability exists and is utilised.	The combination of moderate consequence and almost certain likelihood results in a high positive impact rating. Local economic opportunities represent one of the most valued community outcomes, and the project is well-positioned to deliver if implementation is done transparently and with community input.

6.2.2 Construction and operation

CO-06: Conversion of land from agricultural to renewable energy infrastructure, diminishes residents' sense of place, local identity, and private enjoyment of the area

Description: The Stoney Creek BESS Project will convert an existing rural parcel of land currently used for grazing and cropping into a renewable energy facility with built infrastructure including battery units, fencing, inverters, and transformers. While the Project is not on high-value farmland, the development introduces a non-rural land use and alters the visual landscape. This represents a shift from traditional rural and agricultural character toward infrastructure development, which contributes to cumulative land use change in the Narrabri region.

Extent: Residents in proximity to the Project Area, particularly along Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Road, are most likely to perceive the change in landscape character. Broader Narrabri Shire residents may also experience a symbolic shift in local identity as renewable and infrastructure projects become more common.

Duration: Impacts will persist throughout the operational life of the project (20-30 years), with permanent alteration to the landscape for the duration of operations.

Level of concern/interest: Consultation revealed concerns about the cumulative impact of industrial development on Narrabri's rural character, identity, and visual amenity. Some residents expressed those renewable projects "come in and leave without contributing to the town," reinforcing a sense of disconnection. Specific concerns included visual impacts near



the cemetery and the erosion of Narrabri's agricultural identity, even where physical impacts were limited.

Scale: The impact is both localised and perceptual. Visual impacts are expected to affect a small number of rural properties, nearby roads, and community sites. However, the broader sense of diminished rural identity and local character extends into the wider Narrabri township and surrounds. These perceptions are difficult to quantify but were clearly expressed during engagement and should be considered alongside measurable visual or environmental change.

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

The Land Resource Assessment (SLR, 2025) found that the Project Area is not highly productive agricultural land.

A Landscape and Visual Amenity Assessment (LVIA) (SLR, 2025) assessed the visual impact from 14 publicly accessible viewpoints. The LVIA concluded that the Project is well-sited to minimise impact to landscape and visual amenity of the Project Area and surrounding area given that:

- Most viewpoints were rated as having a Low impact with one viewpoint rated as having a Very Low visual impact.
- The visual elements of the Project would be visually absorbed by the landscape or screened by existing vegetation.
- Visual impact may be further reduced through adoption of the proposed mitigation measures.
- The Project would not detract from any key view lines of significant visual amenity given the flat topography and highly modified nature of the agricultural and rural landscape.
- Views Mount Kaputar National Park, Nandewar Ranges and its associated ridgelines would not be adversely affected to any significant degree.

Impact Assessment:

Consequence: Minor	Likelihood: Possible	Overall Impact: Medium
The shift from rural to non-rural land use introduces long-term changes to local land use and associated activities that may be apparent to near neighbours or those familiar with the site or with strong connections to the land.	While the Project is not anticipated to impact supply of highly productive agricultural land or generate substantial visual impacts, the perception of change is likely to persist.	The combination of perceived and physical changes represents a meaningful impact on sense of place and identity, particularly when considered within the cumulative development context.

CO-07: Loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage values due to construction activities and site preparation works affects Aboriginal peoples' connection to Country and spiritual wellbeing.

Description: Site preparation, ground disturbance, and construction activities for the Stoney Creek BESS project have the potential to disturb tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage values within the project area. These include known and unknown sites of cultural significance as well as broader connections to Country. The area is located within the



traditional lands of the Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay people and sits in proximity to key water systems and culturally important landscapes.

Extent: Aboriginal peoples with cultural, spiritual, and historical ties to the Narrabri region — particularly members of the Broader Narrabri Shire residents.

Duration: Permanent impacts on the physical landscape and any disturbed cultural heritage sites or artefacts. Spiritual and cultural impacts may persist beyond the construction phase and continue through the operational life of the project.

Level of concern/interest: The Narrabri LALC was consulted during early engagement and expressed interest in ensuring that cultural heritage is identified, respected, and managed appropriately. Gomeroi People Native Title Group and NTS Corp were consulted through the preparation of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA). The proponent has committed to working in partnership with the LALC and undertaking further heritage assessments.

Scale: Localised to the Project Area but connected to broader cultural landscapes. The impacts would primarily affect the specific cultural values associated with the project area but must be understood within the context of cumulative impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage across the wider region.

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

The ACHA (Virtus heritage, 2025) determined that the Project Area has low aesthetic and historical values, but high social and spiritual values, largely attributed to a song line that passes through the Project Area.

The ACHA identified nine artefacts within the project area including six falling within the disturbance footprint and which will be directly harmed by the project development. A 'destruction with mitigation, approach is required for these artefacts. An additional three artefacts outside the disturbance footprint require protection to remain in situ.

Impact Assessment:

Magnitude: Moderate	Likelihood: Almost Certain	Overall Impact: High
The site's high social and spiritual values mean that has cultural significance for Aboriginal communities	The 'destruction with mitigation' of six artefacts will result in changes to the established site through the removal of these artefacts. A further three artefacts are at risk of harm and require active protection.	The removal of six artefacts and further development of a site of cultural significance will have a meaningful impact on Aboriginal communities and must be managed with sensitivity.

6.2.3 Operation

O-08: Operational noise and light emissions affect residents' well-being and the way they use and enjoy private space.

Description: The operation of the Stoney Creek BESS will introduce new industrial sound sources, including low-frequency noise from cooling systems and inverters, as well as lighting associated with site security and operational safety. While the Project Area is located outside of the township, it is within 1–2 km of nearby rural properties and sensitive receivers, including a small number of rural residences and a nearby cemetery.



Once operational, the BESS will operate 24/7, resulting in a shift in the acoustic and lighting environment, particularly at night when background noise is low and light spill is more pronounced.

Extent: Residents in proximity to the Project Area, particularly near Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Road. Visitors to the nearby cemetery may also experience changes to the local character of the area.

Duration: Long-term — operational impacts will persist for the life of the project (anticipated 20-30 years).

Level of concern/interest: Consultation feedback highlighted specific concerns about operational amenity, particularly the low hum of cooling fans and visual impact of lighting. Residents noted the quiet character of the area and the importance of preserving the local soundscape and dark skies.

Suggestions were made during interviews and drop-in sessions to incorporate vegetative screening and ensure lighting was appropriately shielded. One stakeholder mentioned that Narrabri has experienced similar impacts from other energy projects and that cumulative changes to the landscape and sensory environment are beginning to affect community sentiment.

Scale: The impacts will primarily be experienced within a 1–2 km radius of the Project Area, with more noticeable effects for properties directly adjacent or downwind from the BESS facility. Effects will diminish with distance and are likely to be negligible in the broader Narrabri township.

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

The NVA found that operational noise levels are expected to comply with the trigger levels at the nearest receivers at all times and further noise mitigation beyond standard proprietary noise controls (i.e. noise walls) are not required.

As the Project is near Narrabri township, there are existing sources of night lighting. The impact of night lighting from the Project is unlikely to be experienced from the Siding Spring Observatory. Recommendations to reduce any light pollution are made to ensure minimal impacts.

Impact Assessment:

Magnitude: Minor	Likelihood: Unlikely	Overall Impact: Low
Any impacts will be limited to a small number of near neighbours and will be low level or sporadic.	Standard design mitigations will be employed as appropriate to minimise the risk of amenity impacts.	Operational amenity impacts are not anticipated to be significant or frequent.

O-09: Contribution to energy infrastructure and grid reliability

Description: The operation of the Stoney Creek BESS will introduce new energy storage infrastructure into the Narrabri region. The facility will store energy during off-peak periods and dispatch it back into the grid during peak demand, helping to stabilise the electricity network, support renewable energy integration, and provide backup during supply disruptions.

Extent: The primary beneficiaries include:

- Households and businesses across Narrabri Shire and the NSW electricity grid.



- Energy users affected by reliability issues or supply constraints.
- Regional and state beneficiaries of a more stable and responsive electricity network.

Duration: Long-term benefit beginning upon commissioning and continuing throughout the operational lifespan of approximately 25 years.

Level of concern/interest: Several stakeholders expressed interest in the grid benefits of the BESS during consultation. Specific feedback indicated curiosity and support for the facility's contribution to grid resilience and supply security. A Chamber of Commerce representative noted that Narrabri's role in agricultural and industrial energy demand made it a "logical location" for battery storage infrastructure.

Scale: While the facility is located in Narrabri, the grid benefits will be experienced more broadly. Local stakeholders are likely to value the contribution to energy stability, particularly in a region with historical constraints and high energy use across agriculture and industry.

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

- **Grid Stability and Renewable Integration:** The facility will enable energy storage during low-demand periods and dispatch during peak demand, improving grid reliability, supporting renewable energy integration, and providing backup during supply disruptions.
- **Strategic Location and Infrastructure Efficiency:** The Project's proximity to existing transmission infrastructure allows for efficient integration into the grid, minimising the need for additional network upgrades and limiting land disturbance.
- **Alignment with Government Policy:** The Project supports objectives under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, contributing to the transition to a low-emissions energy system and strengthening Narrabri's role in regional energy supply.
- **Community Interest and Communication:** Stakeholder feedback indicated strong interest in the Project's reliability benefits. Clear, ongoing communication about how the BESS supports energy resilience will be important to maintain trust and transparency.

Impact Assessment:

Magnitude: Major	Likelihood: Almost Certain	Overall Impact: Very High (positive)
The project contributes significantly to something highly valued (reliable electricity) and supports the long-term resilience of energy supply in the region.	Grid reliability improvements are a core function of BESS facilities and this outcome is highly likely given project design and purpose.	The combination of major consequence and high likelihood results in a very high positive impact rating. The Stoney Creek BESS will provide material benefits to energy security and system stability at both local and regional levels.

O-10: Residents concern about the risk of fire from the BESS Facility affects general feelings of safety and wellbeing.

Description: The introduction of a large-scale lithium-ion BESS creates a perceived and actual fire risk. Battery energy storage systems, particularly those using lithium-ion technology, carry inherent fire risks that differ from conventional infrastructure. The facility will store a significant amount of energy (1000 MWh) using battery technologies that have been associated with thermal runaway events and fires in other locations globally. Similarly,



the introduction of new technology and structures on site create changed conditions that may impact potential for adverse impacts during energy events such as floods.

Extent: Primary populations affected by fire risk concerns include:

- Residents near the Project Area.
- Local Rural Fire Service (RFS) and emergency responders.
- Broader Narrabri township given shared infrastructure and fire response networks.

Duration: Long-term concern spanning the entire operational life of the project (estimated 25 years). Fire risk perceptions may diminish over time if the facility demonstrates consistent safe operation but will likely persist at some level throughout the project lifecycle.

Level of concern/interest: Feedback provided by local council officers and general guidance from the NSW RFS and other comparable BESS projects across NSW helped shape fire safety considerations for this Project. Key issues raised include:

- Access for emergency vehicles and the need for dual entry/exit points.
- Suitability of coupling systems and water tank capacity for firefighting.
- Use of underground vs. overhead transmission lines to reduce fire plume risk.
- Potential need for foam blankets and suppression infrastructure.

These concerns were echoed by some residents who sought reassurance around risk mitigation and incident response.

Scale: The concern extends beyond physical project boundaries to encompass broader community perceptions of safety. While the actual fire risk may be confined to the immediate project area, the psychological impact of perceived risk affects a wider population across the local community, particularly during bushfire season.

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes:

A Bushfire Risk Assessment (BRA) found that the Project Area is located within bushfire prone land, but that risk issues can be adequately mitigated through appropriate planning including coordination and ongoing liaison with RFS and the preparation of a Bushfire a management Plan specific to each project stage.

The BRA concluded that the Project will be adequately protected from the threat of a bushfire event.

A Hazard Risk Assessment (HRA) found that BESS-related and other equipment-related fire risk issues can be adequately mitigated and that the facility should not in itself pose an additional fire hazard that has the potential to increase the extent or severity of a bushfire event on surrounding property, people and the environment

The HRA also found demonstrated that Electromagnetic Field (EMF) hazard issues can be adequately mitigated, for both the public and site workers.

A Flood Impact Assessment (FIA) confirms that the BESS pad is located within an active floodplain area subject to low flood depths and velocities. Flood modelling concluded that the BESS pad introduces no change to regional flood levels for the events modelled and that the development is not expected to result in adverse flood impacts on Stoney Creek Road, adjacent properties, critical infrastructure, or existing conveyance corridors.



Impact Assessment:

Magnitude: Moderate	Likelihood: Likely	Overall Impact: High
Fire risk, though mitigable through design and planning, remains a significant concern for community safety and wellbeing.	While actual fire events are expected to be rare due to mitigation measures, the perceived risk is high and likely to persist without clear communication and local engagement.	The combination of moderate consequence and likely occurrence results in a high significance rating. Addressing fire safety transparently and collaboratively will be crucial to maintaining community confidence and trust.

O-11: Implementation of a community benefit mechanism supports local development and fosters long-term goodwill

Description: As part of The Project's commitment to delivering positive local outcomes, a formal community benefit mechanism, such as a Community Benefit Fund, is expected to be implemented in collaboration with Narrabri Shire Council and/or community representatives. This mechanism would provide financial contributions to support community-identified priorities, with the aim of fostering long-term social license and enhancing local liveability.

Extent: Residents of Narrabri and surrounding rural areas stand to benefit from funding allocated through this mechanism. Key beneficiaries may include:

- Local community service providers.
- Community and volunteer organisations.
- Local businesses and cultural initiatives.
- Broader community members through shared infrastructure or amenity improvements.

Duration: Benefits would be delivered over the operational life of the project, with the potential for legacy improvements (e.g. upgraded facilities or programs) to remain in place long after operations cease.

Level of concern/interest: Community consultation revealed strong interest in ensuring that The Project delivers tangible, long-term value to Narrabri. Key recommendations included:

- Avoiding narrow allocation of funds to specific clubs or sporting codes.
- Establishing a neutral, representative panel to oversee fund distribution.
- Prioritising support for broad community services and catering for a broad range of age cohorts and community sectors.
- Ensuring transparency in how funds are managed and communicated.

Stakeholders also referenced past experiences with other projects where community benefits were unclear or inequitably distributed, which affected perceptions of fairness and trust.

Scale: The impacts of a well-managed benefit mechanism would be positive and felt across a broad cross-section of the community. Conversely, failure to deliver meaningful benefits—or a lack of transparency—could result in reputational risks and reduce social license.



Impact Assessment:

Consequence - Moderate	Likelihood: Almost Certain	Overall Impact: High (Positive)
The provision of a transparent and locally relevant community benefit mechanism would deliver positive improvements to services, programs, or infrastructure that matter to the community. These benefits, while not transformational for the entire population, represent meaningful contributions to local development and wellbeing.	Community benefit delivery is considered a standard expectation for large-scale renewable energy projects in NSW and is a key recommendation from stakeholders during consultation.	The implementation of a fit-for-purpose community benefit mechanism is one of the most direct and tangible ways The Project can contribute to local wellbeing, equity, and long-term support. Its success will depend on meaningful co-design, transparent governance, and responsiveness to local priorities.

6.2.4 Decommissioning

D-12: Socio-environmental changes associated with decommissioning the Stoney Creek BESS Facility

Description: Following the operational life of the Stoney Creek BESS—anticipated to be approximately 25 years—the Project will enter a decommissioning phase. This will involve the removal of all project infrastructure, including battery containers, inverters, internal access roads, fencing, and any associated equipment. Decommissioning also includes site remediation and restoration, with the objective of returning the Project Area to its pre-development condition or an agreed future land use.

Extent:

- Nearby residents with visual, environmental or amenity-related concerns.
- Narrabri Shire Council and neighbouring Councils.
- Local businesses and contractors who may participate in decommissioning works.
- Community groups with an interest in long-term land use planning or sustainability.
- Future generations concerned about environmental outcomes and land rehabilitation.

Duration: Decommissioning is expected to take 6 to 12 months depending on future technologies, market conditions, and regulatory requirements at the time. However, long-term social and environmental outcomes (e.g. waste disposal or land use changes) may persist well beyond that timeframe.

Level of concern/interest: While few stakeholders raised decommissioning explicitly during consultation, past experiences with other infrastructure projects suggest that there may be growing interest in:

- End-of-life battery management, including recycling of lithium-ion components.
- Rehabilitation expectations, such as replanting or returning the land to agriculture.
- Transparency and accountability, particularly around timelines, safety, and communication.
- Community perception of corporate responsibility and environmental ethics.
- Avoiding legacy issues, such as long-term visual impacts or residual infrastructure:



- It is likely that community expectations around decommissioning will evolve over time, particularly as awareness of circular economy practices, battery recycling technologies, and land rehabilitation standards increases.

Scale: The decommissioning impacts will primarily affect the immediate project area and nearby sensitive receivers, with waste management considerations extending to regional disposal and recycling facilities. The project documentation indicates the decommissioning phase will use similar equipment and follow similar hours as the construction phase, suggesting comparable levels of activity and disturbance.

Project considerations and technical assessment outcomes: Revised social baseline and technical assessments to be undertaken closer to commencement of decommissioning.

Provisional impact assessment:

While the project documentation provides high-level commitments around decommissioning, a detailed assessment of long-term social impacts is inherently limited by the 25-year timeframe of the Project's operational life. The proponent has committed to removing all infrastructure and returning the Project Area "as close as possible to its original condition and use," with materials to be recycled or disposed of in line with future regulatory requirements and best practice recycling systems for battery energy storage systems.

It is important to acknowledge that assessing social impacts across such a distant horizon is inherently speculative. The Narrabri region is undergoing continuous economic and demographic change, and over the coming decades, the community composition, land use planning, regulatory frameworks, and technological capabilities (particularly related to battery recycling and circular economy practices) will continue to evolve.

Given these realities, while it is appropriate to consider decommissioning at this stage, detailed strategies and social engagement processes will need to be developed closer to implementation, when community priorities, environmental standards, and waste management technologies are better understood. This approach supports adaptive planning and allows future decisions to respond to the social context and community values as they exist at that time, rather than being constrained by current assumptions.

The Project's commitment to site rehabilitation provides a strong foundation for future decommissioning planning. By continuing to apply the principles of transparent communication, environmental responsibility, and community involvement, the Project can maintain a strong social license throughout its entire lifecycle, including closure and transition phases.

The following presents a provision impact assessment subject to detailed social baseline investigation and analysis prior to decommissioning.

Provisional magnitude - Minor	Provisional Likelihood: Possible	Provisional Impact: Medium
Narrabri is anticipated to experience significance development and change over the projected operational life of the Project, including several solar farms proposed or approved in proximity to the township. Over this timeframe, development is anticipated to result in changes to local character, land use and population. The decommissioning of a single	Against the broader context of change, the likelihood if impacts is reduced.	The combination of minor magnitude and likely occurrence results in a medium significance rating.



Provisional magnitude - Minor	Provisional Likelihood: Possible	Provisional Impact: Medium
installation is anticipated present a minor magnitude of change.		

6.3 Cumulative impacts

While the social impacts of the Stoney Creek BESS Project have been assessed throughout this chapter, it is important to consider the Project within the broader regional development context. The Narrabri region and North West NSW more broadly are experiencing a steady increase in large-scale infrastructure and energy developments, including solar farms, gas projects, and other battery energy storage systems.

Several major infrastructure projects are currently proposed or underway in the region, including:

- Narrabri Solar Farm – An EIS is currently in preparation for a proposed 140MW solar farm with a battery energy storage system 100MW/800Mwh approximately 4km north of Narrabri township.
- Silverleaf Solar Farm – Consent was granted in 2022 for a proposed development of a 120 MW solar farm and associated infrastructure to the north of Narrabri township.
- Narrabri South Solar Farm - Consent was granted in 2018 for the development of a 60 megawatt solar farm and associated infrastructure to the south of Narrabri township.
- Narrabri Underground Mine Stage 3 Extension Project – Recently approved by the NSW Government, this extension will allow Whitehaven Coal's Narrabri mine to operate until 2044, maintaining local employment but raising environmental concerns due to its long-term emissions profile.
- Santos Narrabri Gas Project – Approved to supply up to half of NSW's gas needs, this major development involves the drilling of up to 850 coal seam gas wells and associated infrastructure. It has generated extensive public interest and community scrutiny.
- Inland Rail Project (Narromine to Narrabri section) – As part of the 1,700 km freight corridor from Melbourne to Brisbane, this project includes the construction of new track through the Narrabri region and is expected to increase freight capacity and regional connectivity.
- Kamilaroi Highway Upgrades – Planned upgrades to this key transport corridor aim to improve road safety and support increased freight and vehicle movements, particularly in areas impacted by nearby developments and industrial traffic.

These projects, individually and collectively, may generate cumulative pressures on regional infrastructure, services, housing, and the community's capacity to engage with successive rounds of development. They also represent significant social change as Narrabri continues its transition into a region of strategic energy and freight importance.

Given the relatively modest scale and temporary nature of the Stoney Creek BESS Project, its contribution to these broader cumulative impacts is expected to be limited. However, key cumulative considerations are discussed below.



6.3.1 Cumulative Impact Considerations

Workforce and Accommodation

The simultaneous development of large-scale infrastructure projects in the Narrabri region — including the Santos Narrabri Gas Project, Narrabri Underground Mine Extension, and the Inland Rail Project — is increasing demand for skilled labour and short-term accommodation across the region. While the Stoney Creek BESS Project alone is expected to require a relatively small construction workforce over a limited timeframe, the cumulative impact of overlapping projects may:

- Contribute to labour shortages across sectors such as agriculture, construction, and local trades.
- Create competition for accommodation, particularly during peak construction periods or major regional events.
- Increase demand on workforce accommodation providers like Civeo, which the proponent has identified as the intended accommodation facility for the Project.

Although Narrabri has a modest accommodation base, periods of high regional construction activity may place pressure on available rooms, impacting seasonal agricultural workers, tourists, and other temporary residents.

Community Services and Amenities

Cumulative infrastructure development may place additional pressure on local and regional services, including:

- Healthcare services, particularly emergency departments, GPs, and allied health, which already experience resourcing constraints.
- Local roads and transport networks, especially the Kamilaroi and Newell Highways, which serve as freight and workforce routes for multiple concurrent developments.
- Emergency services, including the NSW Rural Fire Service and local Volunteer Fire Brigades, which may be called upon to respond to a wider range of industrial and infrastructure risks across projects.

While the Stoney Creek BESS Project is not anticipated to place major demands on these systems, the cumulative effects of infrastructure growth across the region warrant monitoring and coordinated planning.

Social Cohesion and Community Wellbeing

Ongoing development in the Narrabri region has led to a degree of consultation fatigue, as noted in engagement for this and other recent projects. Community members have expressed scepticism about the long-term benefits of successive developments and concern about their ability to influence outcomes meaningfully.

Cumulatively, the increase in infrastructure projects may:

- Contribute to community disillusionment if perceived benefits are not delivered or communicated transparently.
- Generate frustration from repeated engagement processes, particularly if they appear duplicative or tokenistic.
- Exacerbate concerns about changing rural character, especially if multiple energy and resource projects alter traditional agricultural landscapes.



To mitigate these effects, project proponents should prioritise transparent, inclusive engagement that demonstrates responsiveness to community priorities and builds long-term trust.

Benefit sharing

Concurrent development across Narrabri and surrounding region also presents the possibility of cumulative benefits where projects are able to coordinate benefit sharing efforts. Where possible, this should be explored through the development of an appropriate community benefit sharing approach and ongoing Council, stakeholders and industry consultation.

7.0 Impact enhancement, mitigation and residual impacts

The management of social impacts will primarily be achieved through:

- Integration with the project's environmental management and reporting frameworks, as many social impacts are directly related to environmental factors such as noise, visual amenity, and traffic.
- Implementation of specific social management measures targeting impacts that cannot be fully addressed through environmental management alone.
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement to monitor community sentiment and respond to emerging concerns.
- Ongoing reporting and regular auditing of performance and mitigation measures on public platforms including the project website and collateral.

The proponent will employ additional management approaches for any remaining social impacts.

Given the relatively short construction timeframe and even shorter peak construction period, the plan will emphasise timely response to issues rather than long-term trend analysis. The management approach will:

- Focus on effective communication mechanisms managed in real-time.
- Address issues promptly as they emerge.
- Adjust management strategies based on feedback and observations.
- Apply learnings from similar BESS projects in the region.

Table 10 outlines the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures for each identified impact.

Table 10 Proposed mitigation and enhancement measures

	Impact	Mitigation
Construction		
C-01	Amenity impacts during construction activities, including, but not limited to, noise, vibration, dust, and odour affect residents' wellbeing and	• Communications and notification strategy to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are appropriately notified in advance of planned disruptions or changed conditions • Prepare and implement a Construction Communication and Stakeholder Management Plan to ensure that near neighbours and affected stakeholders are appropriately



	Impact	Mitigation
	the way they use and enjoy private space	notification and consulted ahead of planned works or disruptions. • Implementation of best practice noise management controls to minimise residual risk of harm at nearby receivers to reduce noise impacts as low as reasonably practicable. • Ongoing compliance with the NSW Noise Policy for Industry
C-02	Changes to community cohesion and character due to an influx of construction workers during construction.	• Prepare and implement a Construction Communication and Stakeholder Management Plan to ensure that affected stakeholders are appropriately notification and consulted ahead of planned works or disruptions. • Ongoing consultation with Council, business sector and service providers to plan for fluctuations in service demand • Work with Council and Narrabri community to design and implement an appropriate method of delivering community benefits • Construction workforce to be accommodated at Civeo Narrabri Village (where possible) • Consider preparing a Workforce Management Plan should workforce accommodation be required in Narrabri township
C-03	Delays and disruption to local traffic networks resulting from construction activity, including increased truck movements and heavy and oversized vehicles, affect residents' movement patterns and perceptions of safety on the road network	• Communications and notification strategy to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are appropriately notified in advance of planned disruptions or changed conditions • An Oversize/Over mass (OSOM) material route study be prepared to accompany the EIS package. • A construction traffic management plan (CTMP) be prepared. • Dilapidation surveys be undertaken prior to the commencement of substantial construction activities. • The construction workforce is briefed on the recommended route with a Driver's Code of Conduct prepared by the applicant.
C-04	Increased demand for temporary accommodation providers in the local area during construction results in limited accommodation options for seasonal workers, local needs, and tourists	• Prepare a workforce accommodation schedule and plan • Ongoing engagement with Civeo Narrabri Village • Work with Council, local businesses and the accommodation sector to develop appropriate contingencies where additional accommodation is required
C-05	Construction activities create employment and procurement opportunities, supporting local economic	• Continue to work with Council, stakeholders and local business networks to identify and implement opportunities to support the local economic, job market and skill development.



	Impact	Mitigation
	development in Narrabri and surrounding regions	Formalise an approach, objectives and implementation for benefit-sharing in line with the <i>Benefit-Sharing Guideline</i> (DPHI, 2024)
Construction and operation		
CO-06	Conversion of land from agricultural to renewable energy infrastructure, diminishes residents' sense of place, local identity, and private enjoyment of the area	- Maintain ongoing consultation with near neighbours and community, including appropriate complaint management procedures - Undertake noise and/or vibration monitoring in response to any complaints - Where site lighting is required, it should be directed downward and inward as much as possible and away from site boundaries. - Maintain high standards of site management to mitigate risk of land use conflict - Consult proactively with near neighbours and community with regard to site rehabilitation as the operational phase concludes.
CO-07	Loss of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage values due to construction activities and site preparation works affects Aboriginal peoples' connection to Country and spiritual wellbeing (pending heritage assessment)	Implement recommendation of ACHA including: - Detailed site recording - Preparation and implementation of management plans including: - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan (ACHMP) - Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), - Surface and community collection of identified Aboriginal Objects - Ensure all site inductions include location of any known Aboriginal sites, and Unexpected Find Protocols - Ongoing liaison with relevant stakeholders, including Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), throughout all Project stages
Operation		
O-08	Operational noise and light emissions affect residents' well-being and the way they use and enjoy private space	- Ongoing consultation with nearby properties and residents to determine suitable mitigation and treatments - Design mitigations to introduce appropriate lighting and installations on site including sensor lights, low lights and inward facing lighting. - Prepare and implement an Operational Communication and Stakeholder Management Plan to ensure that affected stakeholders are appropriately notified and consulted ahead of planned works.
O-09	Contribution to Energy Infrastructure and Grid Reliability	Ongoing consultation with Council and local community to facilitate ongoing capacity building and understanding changes in electricity grid
O-10	Residents concern about the risk of fire from the BESS Facility affects	Prepare and implement a Communication and Stakeholder Management Plan to:



	Impact	Mitigation
	general feelings of safety and wellbeing	○ Guide ongoing community consultation to build community understanding and trust in the project ○ Outline appropriate tools and techniques tailored to stakeholder groups and community ○ Guide regular monitoring and review of consultation activities and support continual improvement • Maintain a complaint handling process to record and respond to community concerns • Ongoing stakeholder engagement with RFS, emergency services, other operators in the area to support a coordinated and well-planned approach to emergency response and resource management • Ensure that smoking is prohibited throughout the site and that all employees are adequately trained in relevant fire procedures • Preparation, implementation and promotion of emergency management plans including: ○ Bushfire Management Plan ○ Fire Safety Study ○ Emergency Response Plan ○ Hazard management Plan
O-11	Implementation of a community benefit mechanism supports local development and fosters long-term goodwill	• Ongoing consultation with community and Council to identify appropriate process and model for the distribution and management of community benefits over the life of the Project • Formalise an approach, objectives and implementation for benefit-sharing in like with the <i>Benefit-Sharing Guideline</i> (DPHI, 2024)
Decommissioning		
D-12	Socio-environmental changes associated with decommissioning the Stoney Creek BESS Facility	Proposed mitigations are subject to a detailed review of social baseline and impacts assessment. They may include: • Ongoing consultation with Council and the local business sector and operators • Ongoing consultation with community and stakeholders through established channels such as project email, phoneline and website • Ensure community benefit model is appropriately design and implemented in close collaboration with Council and Narrabri businesses • Ongoing review and monitoring of social, economic and environmental impacts associated with the Project throughout operational phases and ongoing public reporting of findings through established communication channels including project website • Undertake decommission phase social baseline and impact assessment



7.1 Residual Impacts

In accordance with the guidelines, a comprehensive assessment of potential social impacts has been conducted.

Following this initial assessment, additional social management measures have been developed specifically targeting impacts rated as medium or higher. These enhanced measures aim to reduce all identified social impacts to as low as reasonably possible (ALARP), ensuring the project maintains appropriate social performance throughout its lifecycle. Table 11 details these supplementary management approaches and their anticipated effectiveness in further mitigating residual social risks.

Table 11 Residual Risk Assessment

#	Social Impact	Stakeholders Affected	Pre-Mitigation Social Risk Rating	Mitigation and management measures	Impact post mitigation		
					Magnitude	Likelihood	Residual Social Risk Rating
	Construction						
C-01	Amenity impacts during construction activities, including, but not limited to, noise, vibration, dust, and odour affect residents' wellbeing and the way they use and enjoy private space	Residents located along or near Bailey Street and Stoney Creek Road totalling 12 properties, particularly near neighbours and those adjacent to site access routes, are expected to experience the most significant impacts. Nearby sensitive receivers include private rural properties and the Narrabri Cemetery	Low (Minor + Unlikely)	- Communications and notification strategy to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are appropriately notified in advance of planned disruptions or changed conditions - Prepare and implement a Construction Communication and Stakeholder Management Plan to ensure that near neighbours and affected stakeholders are appropriately notification and consulted ahead of planned works or disruptions. - Implementation of best practice noise management controls to minimise residual risk of harm at nearby receivers to reduce noise impacts as low as reasonably practicable. - Ongoing compliance with the NSW Noise Policy for Industry	Minor	Unlikely	Low (Negative)
C-02	Changes to community cohesion and character due to an influx of construction workers during construction.	Residents of Narrabri and nearby rural properties who may interact with workers in town or on transport routes. Local business owners and service providers who may benefit from increased demand. Community members with interest in maintaining rural amenity and social cohesion.	Medium (Minor + Possible)	- Prepare and implement a Construction Communication and Stakeholder Management Plan to ensure that affected stakeholders are appropriately notification and consulted ahead of planned works or disruptions. - Ongoing consultation with Council, business sector and service providers to plan for fluctuations in service demand - Work with Council and Narrabri community to design and implement an appropriate method of delivering community benefits - Construction workforce to be accommodated at Civeo Narrabri Village (where possible) - Consider preparing a Workforce Management Plan should workforce accommodation be required in Narrabri township	Minor	Unlikely	Low (Negative)
C-03	Delays and disruption to local traffic networks resulting from construction activity, including increased truck movements and heavy and oversized vehicles, affect residents' movement patterns and perceptions of safety on the road network	Residents living along or near Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Street, including near neighbours and sensitive receivers, will be most affected by increased vehicle movements. School transport operators, garbage collection services, agricultural users, and general road users who regularly rely on these routes may also experience temporary disruptions.	Medium (Minor + Possible)	- Communications and notification strategy to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are appropriately notified in advance of planned disruptions or changed conditions - An Oversize/Overmass (OSOM) material route study be prepared to accompany the EIS package. - A construction traffic management plan (CTMP) be prepared. - Dilapidation surveys be undertaken prior to the commencement of substantial construction activities. - The construction workforce is briefed on the recommended route with a Driver's Code of Conduct prepared by the applicant.	Minor	Unlikely	Low (Negative)



#	Social Impact	Stakeholders Affected	Pre-Mitigation Social Risk Rating	Mitigation and management measures	Impact post mitigation		
					Magnitude	Likelihood	Residual Social Risk Rating
C-04	Increased demand for temporary accommodation providers in the local area during construction results in limited accommodation options for seasonal workers, local needs, and tourists	Seasonal agricultural workers who rely on local accommodation during peak harvest periods. Tourists and business travellers who contribute to the local economy. Residents in need of short-term housing between rentals or due to housing insecurity. Local accommodation providers (e.g. motels, caravan parks) who may benefit economically but may also face capacity constraints.	Low (Minimal + Unlikely)	- Prepare a workforce accommodation schedule and plan - Ongoing engagement with Civeo Narrabri Village - Work with Council, local businesses and the accommodation sector to develop appropriate contingencies where additional accommodation is required	Minimal	Unlikely	Low (Negative)
C-05	Construction activities create employment and procurement opportunities, supporting local economic development in Narrabri and surrounding regions	Working-age residents of Narrabri Shire and the broader North West Slopes region with relevant skills. Local contractors and businesses that may supply equipment, services, or materials to the project. Young people and jobseekers looking to enter the infrastructure, renewables, or construction sectors.	High (positive) (Moderate + Almost Certain)	- Continue to work with Council, stakeholders and local business networks to identify and implement opportunities to support the local economic, job market and skill development. - Formalise an approach, objectives and implementation for benefit-sharing in line with the <i>Benefit-Sharing Guideline</i> (PHI, 2024)	Moderate	Almost Certain	High (positive)
Construction and operation							
CO-06	Conversion of land from agricultural to renewable energy infrastructure, diminishes residents' sense of place, local identity, and private enjoyment of the area	Local residents in proximity to the site, particularly along Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Road Broader Narrabri Shire residents	Medium (Minor + Possible)	- Maintain ongoing consultation with near neighbours and community, including appropriate complaint management procedures - Undertake noise and/or vibration monitoring in response to any complaints - Where site lighting is required, it should be directed downward and inward as much as possible and away from site boundaries. - Maintain high standards of site management to mitigate risk of land use conflict - Consult proactively with near neighbours and community with regard to site rehabilitation as the operational phase concludes.	Minor	Unlikely	Low (Negative)
CO-07	Loss of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage values due to construction activities and site preparation works affects Aboriginal peoples' connection to Country and spiritual wellbeing (pending heritage assessment)	First Nations communities Narrabri LALC	High (Moderate + Almost Certain)	Implement recommendation of ACHA including: - Detailed site recording - Preparation and implementation of management plans including: - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan (ACHMP) - Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), - Surface and community collection of identified Aboriginal Objects - Ensure all site inductions include location of any known Aboriginal sites, and Unexpected Find Protocols - Ongoing liaison with relevant stakeholders, including RAPs, throughout all Project stages	Moderate	Possible	Medium (Negative)
Operation							



#	Social Impact	Stakeholders Affected	Pre-Mitigation Social Risk Rating	Mitigation and management measures	Impact post mitigation		
					Magnitude	Likelihood	Residual Social Risk Rating
O-08	Operational noise and light emissions affect residents' well-being and the way they use and enjoy private space	Residents in proximity to the project site, particularly near Stoney Creek Road and Bailey Road. Visitors to the nearby cemetery may also experience changes to the local character of the area.	Low (Minor + Unlikely)	- Ongoing consultation with nearby properties and residents to determine suitable mitigation and treatments - Design mitigations to introduce appropriate lighting and installations on site including sensor lights, low lights and inward facing lighting. - Prepare and implement an Operational Communication and Stakeholder Management Plan to ensure that affected stakeholders are appropriately notified and consulted ahead of planned works.	Minor	Unlikely	Low (Negative)
O-09	Contribution to Energy Infrastructure and Grid Reliability	Households and businesses within Narrabri and the wider NSW electricity grid. Energy users affected by reliability issues or supply constraints. Broader regional and state beneficiaries of a more stable and responsive electricity network.	Very High (Positive) (Major + Almost Certain)	Ongoing consultation with Council and local community to facilitate ongoing capacity building and understanding changes in electricity grid	Major	Almost Certain	Very High (Positive)
O-10	Residents concern about the risk of fire from the BESS Facility affects general feelings of safety and wellbeing	Residents near the project site. Local Rural Fire Service (RFS) and emergency responders. Broader Narrabri township given shared infrastructure and fire response networks	High (Moderate + Likely)	- Prepare and implement a Communication and Stakeholder Management Plan to: - Guide ongoing community consultation to build community understanding and trust in the project - Outline appropriate tools and techniques tailored to stakeholder groups and community - Guide regular monitoring and review of consultation activities and support continual improvement - Maintain a complaint handling process to record and respond to community concerns - Ongoing stakeholder engagement with RFS, emergency services, other operators in the area to support a coordinated and well-planned approach to emergency response and resource management - Preparation, implementation and promotion of emergency management plans including: - Bushfire Management Plan - Fire Safety Study - Emergency Response Plan - Hazard management Plan	Minor	Possible	Medium (Negative)
O-11	Implementation of a community benefit mechanism supports local development and fosters long-term goodwill	Residents of Narrabri and surrounding rural areas Local service providers (e.g. women's refuge, Meals on Wheels) Community and volunteer organisations (e.g. Lions Club, Rotary, sporting groups) Local businesses and cultural initiatives	High (Positive) (Moderate + Almost Certain)	- Ongoing consultation with community and Council to identify appropriate process and model for the distribution and management of community benefits over the life of the Project - Formalise an approach, objectives and implementation for benefit-sharing in like with the Benefit-Sharing Guideline (DPHI, 2024)	Moderate	Almost Certain	High (Positive)



#	Social Impact	Stakeholders Affected	Pre-Mitigation Social Risk Rating	Mitigation and management measures	Impact post mitigation		
					Magnitude	Likelihood	Residual Social Risk Rating
		Broader community members through shared infrastructure or amenity improvements					
Decommissioning							
D-12	Socio-environmental changes associated with decommissioning the Stoney Creek BESS Facility	All	Medium (Minor + Possible)	Proposed mitigations are subject to a detailed review of social baseline and impact assessment. They may include: • Ongoing consultation with Council and the local business sector and operators • Ongoing consultation with community and stakeholders through established channels such as project email, phonenumber and website • Ensure community benefit model is appropriately design and implemented in close collaboration with Council and Narrabri businesses • Ongoing review and monitoring of social, economic and environmental impacts associated with the Project throughout operational phases and ongoing public reporting of findings through established communication channels including project website • Undertake decommission phase social baseline and impact assessment	Subject to revised SIA and management planning		



8.0 Conclusion

SLR Consulting Australia Pty Ltd (SLR) has been engaged by Enervest to prepare a SIA for the Stoney Creek BESS facility in Narrabri, New South Wales.

The SIA drew on extensive desktop investigations and engagement with a range of stakeholders undertaken by the proponent during the planning and design phase and targeted interviews undertaken by SLR to ground-truth potential impacts. The SIA investigated potential impacts arising from the Project during the construction, operation and decommissioning phase of the Project as well as possible cumulative impacts resulting from a period of change across the broader region.

Overall, the Project will result in a range of positive and negative social impacts, across local, municipal and regional catchments.

Negative impacts associated with the Project predominantly relate to:

- Impacts to Aboriginal Cultural Heritage on a site of recognised cultural significance and harm to six identified Aboriginal artefacts
- Community concern regarding additional fire risk as a result of on-site components
- Changes to community character and cohesion resulting from the change of use from agricultural land to industrial installation and due to an influx of construction workforce during the 12-14 month construction period
- Delays and disruptions to local access and traffic networks during construction.

The assessment demonstrates that while the project will introduce some changes to the local social environment, these changes can be effectively managed to reduce the overall severity while maximising benefits for both local and broader communities. Proactive and ongoing communication with potentially affected communities will be vital to managing potential negative impacts.

The Stoney Creek BESS project also represents opportunity to deliver community benefit through:

- investment in local businesses and supply chain
- reliability of energy supply
- opportunities to leverage investment in local projects and initiatives through community benefit sharing.

The project's contribution to grid stability and renewable energy integration represents a significant positive outcome aligned with state and national energy transition goals. Furthermore, the project must be viewed within its broader development context, where multiple major infrastructure projects including new renewable energy installations are transforming the regional landscape. While each individual renewable project may have limited impacts, their collective presence represents a meaningful shift in land use patterns and community character. This cumulative dimension has been considered in the assessment and informs the management approach.

By implementing the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures outlined in this report, Enervest can deliver the Stoney Creek BESS project with social outcomes that align with community expectations and generate lasting benefits Narrabri LGA and the broader West region. Ongoing stakeholder engagement, transparent communication, and adaptive management will be critical to maintaining strong and positive social performance throughout the project lifecycle.



In conclusion, the Stoney Creek BESS represents an important contribution to Australia's renewable energy transition that, with appropriate management, can be delivered with acceptable social outcomes while providing significant infrastructure benefits at local, regional and state levels.



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