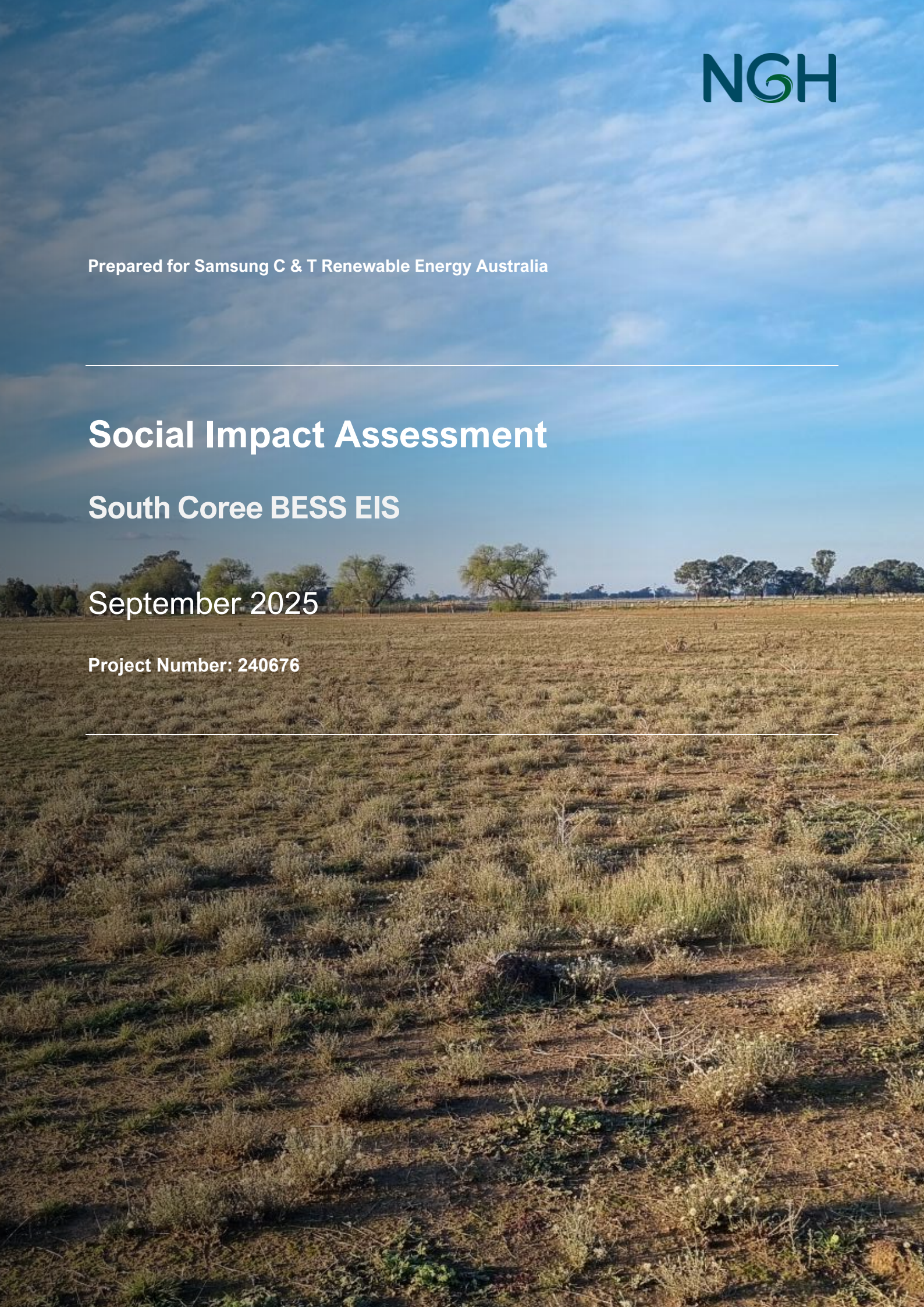

Prepared for Samsung C & T Renewable Energy Australia

Social Impact Assessment

South Coree BESS EIS

September 2025

Project Number: 240676

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACH Act	*Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*
AES	Accommodation and Employment Strategy
AHIMS	Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW)
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (NSW) (formerly DPE)
DPIE	(Former) Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (NSW) (now DPE)
DSE	Department of Sustainability and Environment
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
EIS	Environmental impact statement
EP Act	*Environmental Protection Act 1994* (Qld)
ha	hectares
Heritage Act	*Heritage Act 1977* (NSW)
ISEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007 (NSW)
km	kilometres
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LEP	Local Environment Plan
LGA	Local government area
m	metres
MW	Megawatt
P&E Act	*Planning and Environment Act 1987*
SREA	Samsung C&T Renewable Energy Australia Pty Ltd

Executive Summary

Samsung C&T Renewable Energy Australia Pty Ltd (SREA) is proposing the development of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), with a capacity of up to 80 MW / 360 MWh (4hr), located approximately 5 km west of Finley in the Berrigan Shire Council Local Government Area of New South Wales. The Project site lies adjacent to the existing Finley Substation and would involve associated infrastructure such as transmission lines, substation upgrades, control buildings, and internal site roads. The Project has been declared State Significant Development and will contribute to enhancing grid stability and supporting the NSW Government's net-zero emissions goals by enabling better integration of renewable energy into the electricity network.

The Project is situated within the Riverina region, one of Australia's key agricultural zones, characterised by irrigated farming and livestock production. The area has relatively low unemployment rates, a stable population, and a predominantly older demographic. Finley is well-serviced by medical, transport, and community infrastructure, although challenges around housing availability and affordability remain. The region's economy has historically been shaped by agriculture, though renewable energy projects are becoming an increasingly important part of the local development landscape.

Approach

To assess the likely social impacts of the Project, this Social Impact Assessment followed the NSW SIA Guideline and accompanying Technical Supplement. The methodology included desktop research, review of socio-economic and planning data, and engagement with the community through consultation meetings, a community survey, and targeted semi-structured interviews. These activities informed the definition of the Project's social locality. While survey responses were limited, the interviews and community drop-in sessions generated valuable qualitative insights into the community's priorities, concerns, and expectations. Social impacts were assessed across key domains including livelihoods, accessibility, community cohesion, culture, health and wellbeing, surroundings, way of life, and decision-making systems.

Social Impacts

The assessment found that the most significant potential impacts relate to livelihoods, community cohesion, landscape character, and perceptions of fairness in decision-making and benefit-sharing. On the positive side, the Project offers opportunities for local employment, training, economic stimulus, and regional investment. However, there are also concerns about cumulative impacts from multiple nearby renewable projects, visual amenity, property values, road safety, and local workforce availability.

Employment impacts emerged as a major theme. While the Project is expected to create approximately 60 jobs during construction and 1–2 ongoing roles during operations, stakeholders expressed scepticism about whether these roles would benefit local residents. The short-term nature of construction work may deter local contractors, and there is a limited pool of available skilled labour in the region. Additionally, substance testing requirements and skill mismatches may exclude some potential workers. However, the Project has been seen as an opportunity to provide targeted training and work-readiness programs, particularly for Aboriginal people, youth, and long-term unemployed groups.

Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of economic diversification and resilience. Increased activity in accommodation, food services, retail, and logistics could provide flow-on benefits to local businesses. However, equitable access to these benefits remains a concern, with calls for transparent procurement

processes and prioritisation of local suppliers. There is potential for division if some residents perceive that only a few landholders or businesses benefit financially. Community members highlighted the need for inclusive, measurable, and accountable benefit-sharing arrangements to avoid resentment and promote community trust.

Housing availability and affordability were identified as significant pressures that could be exacerbated by the Project. While Finley has some rental capacity, vacancy rates in surrounding areas such as Deniliquin and Tocumwal are extremely low. The influx of construction workers, especially if overlapping with other developments like the Berrigan BESS, could increase competition for accommodation. Stakeholders suggested planning for temporary workforce housing solutions and early engagement with councils and housing providers to avoid displacement or stress on vulnerable residents.

In terms of community wellbeing, concerns were raised about, traffic disruptions, fire risks, and mental health impacts. While these concerns were not widely shared, they reflect broader anxieties about the cumulative effect of renewable energy developments on rural character and lifestyle. Residents near the Project site voiced specific concerns about visual impacts and the potential devaluation of properties. These issues require careful management through landscape design, communication strategies, and fair grievance mechanisms.

The assessment also revealed high sensitivity to perceived procedural fairness. Some community members expressed fatigue and frustration over repeated consultations for similar projects without tangible outcomes or long-term benefits. While levels of community interest and participation in this Project were relatively low, this appears to reflect its modest scale and a perception among some stakeholders that it would have limited standalone impact. However, consistent calls were made for transparent decision-making, clear project timelines, and consistent follow-through on commitments. Meaningful involvement in planning and implementation phases was viewed as critical to maintaining social licence.

Social Impact Management

To address these risks and enhance positive outcomes, a range of mitigation and management measures are proposed. These include the development of Voluntary Planning Agreement to ensure ongoing dialogue, transparency, and responsiveness. Development of plans and strategy such as Accommodation and Employment Strategy, Traffic Management, and Bushfire Emergency Operations Plans are also recommended to maximise local participation, and to manage potential impacts. The Voluntary Planning Agreement will consist of programs with a potential to deliver lasting value to local communities, with a focus on equity, local priorities, and measurable outcomes.

Additional mitigations include proactive and clear communications on construction timelines and impacts, and robust health and safety protocols. Engagement with Aboriginal organisations is expected to continue throughout the Project lifecycle to support cultural inclusion, employment pathways, and partnerships. If approved, the Project will also be subject to ongoing social performance monitoring, enabling adaptive responses to emerging issues and community feedback.

The Project has the potential to deliver meaningful social and economic benefits to the Finley region, particularly in terms of employment, training, and local business stimulation. However, the Project also presents several risks, particularly around housing pressures, visual impacts, and community trust, that must be carefully managed. Transparent communication, early engagement, and tailored mitigation strategies are essential to ensuring that the benefits of the Project are shared widely and equitably.

1. Introduction

NGH has been engaged by Samsung C&T Renewable Energy Australia Pty Ltd (the Applicant) to complete a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the South Coree Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (the Project). This SIA has been prepared to form part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

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

This SIA responds directly to the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued for this Project by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) on 20 November 2024, which state the following is required (DPHI, 2024, p. 7):

> *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.*
>
> *Economic – including an assessment of the economic impacts or benefits of the project for the region and the State as a whole and provide details of any proposed voluntary benefit sharing, having regard for the Benefit Sharing Guideline 2024 and Private Agreement Guideline 2024.*

The assessment of economic impact from the Project is integrated within the broader analysis of economic and employment outcomes within the SIA, including workforce participation, local procurement opportunities, and sectoral flow-on effects. The Project's potential to contribute to economic diversification and regional economic resilience is reflected within the identified positive social and economic impacts.

1.1. Project Description

The Applicant is pursuing development approval for a 80 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) located approximately 5 km west of Finley, NSW, off Brockmans Road. The Project is located within the Berrigan Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA), and approximately 5 km west of Finley, NSW. Neighbouring townships include Berrigan and Deniliquin, located 27 km west and 52 km east of the Project site respectively. Other nearby towns include Tocumwal, located 20km southeast and Jerilderie, located 36km northeast.

The proposed BESS has the capacity of up to 80 MW / 360MWh (4hr) and is located within a land parcel that is adjacent to the existing Finley Substation and Finley Solar Farm. While the site is not within a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), it is approximately 40 km southeast of the Southwest REZ, and would provide energy storage closer to local consumption, enhancing regional grid capacity across the region.

The Project will include the following key built form features:

- BESS including battery enclosures, inverters, transformers, switchgear and control room
- Onsite substation including transformer switch bays and switchgear housed in portable substation containers

- Underground and/or overhead132 kV transmission lines to connect the BESS to the Finley substation
- Finley substation upgrade works to facilitate connection with the BESS
- Permanent office, operation and maintenance (O&M) buildings, hardstands and Project signage
- Site access to the BESS from Broockmanns Road, internal site access tracks and parking
- Stormwater management infrastructure, lighting, fencing and security

Temporary infrastructure, including construction facilities, site offices and amenities, tool and material storage sheds, construction staff car parking, component laydown areas, truck parking, and unloading areas, would also be required.

The Project is expected to support approximately 60 jobs at its construction peak, with an average of 20-30 jobs throughout the entire construction period. It would also diversify income streams and boost revenue for local service providers, including food, lodging, and tourism operators in the area. Once operational, the site is anticipated to sustain up to 1-2 ongoing full-time equivalent (FTE) roles, as it will primarily be remotely operated. Additionally, the Project will make a significant contribution to the NSW Government's goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 by supplying clean, renewable energy to the grid.

1.2. Social Locality

The social locality, or sphere of influence, defines the geographic and social boundaries within which the social impacts of a Project are assessed. These boundaries are shaped by the nature and scale of the Project, the characteristics of affected communities, and the ways in which various stakeholder groups may reasonably perceive or experience potential positive and negative impacts (DPIE, 2023a). Affected populations may include both:

- *Communities of place*: those living within or near the Project footprint; and
- *Communities of interest*: those connected to the area or Project through other social, cultural, or economic ties.

In defining the social locality, this assessment has prioritised the primary populated areas where people live, work, and visit, as well as the key transportation routes connecting them. The areas and communities of interest that make up the social locality for this Project includes (Figure 1-1):

- Host and adjacent/near-neighbour properties;
- Localities and townships likely to experience impacts or benefits from construction-related workforce activity, procurement, and traffic, such as: Berrigan Shire Council Local Government Area (LGA), and the Finley Suburb and Locality (SAL), Berrigan SAL, Tocumwal SAL, and Deniliquin SAL;
- Existing travel networks, transportation corridors, and regional infrastructure and service hubs.

These localities are considered of high importance to the Project and form the key areas of focus within the Project's social locality. However, as the Project evolves, so too may the social locality. Its boundaries may be refined or expanded over time, depending on factors such as the location of construction workforces, supply chains, or other changes to the Project scope.

Ref: 240316 South Coree BESS Planning_20250306 \ Locality - Social EIS Author: Amanda Conley Date created: 21.07.2025 © NGH 2025 © ESRI 2022

South Coree BESS

Figure 1-1 Social Locality

1.3. Structure of the SIA

Consistent with the principles set out in the NSW SIA Guidelines, this assessment includes:

1. **Introduction** – Purpose of the SIA, regulatory context, Project description.
2. **Methodology** – Assessment approach, including desktop research, community engagement activities, stakeholder mapping and methods used to determine impact significance.
3. **Social Baseline** – Profile of the social locality, including regional demographics, economic trends, housing, infrastructure, Aboriginal governance and existing land use.
4. **Social Impact Assessment** – Identification and analysis of both positive and negative impacts.
5. **Social Impact Mitigation and Management** – Outline of strategies to avoid, reduce, or offset adverse impacts, while enhancing positive outcomes.
6. **Conclusion** – Synthesis of key impacts and recommended actions, including guidance for future monitoring and adaptive management.

2. Methodology

The approach to conducting this SIA reflects current industry best practices, as outlined in the NSW SIA Guideline (DPIE, 2023a) and accompanying Technical Supplement (DPIE, 2023b). This section describes the methodology used to assess social impacts associated with the proposed Project.

2.1. Overview of approach

The SIA has been informed by best practice principles outlined in the NSW 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). Accordingly, the assessment is evidence-based, precautionary, and responsive to the local context.

This SIA aims to identify, predict, and evaluate the likely social impacts and benefits arising from the Project, and to propose appropriate responses to mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive outcomes. As stated by Vanclay (2003, p. 5):

> *Social Impact Assessment includes a process of analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positives and negatives, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions'*

Therefore, social impacts refer to the consequences experienced by people, whether individuals, households, groups, communities, or organisations, when a project introduces change. These impacts may be:

- **Positive**, such as increased employment, economic activity, or access to services;
- **Negative**, such as strain on housing markets, infrastructure, or community cohesion;
- **Cumulative**, arising when the effects of this Project interact with those of other past, present, or foreseeable future developments, potentially amplifying impacts on social infrastructure, environmental health, or wellbeing (e.g. combined dust, noise, or service pressure impacts).

The three interrelated phases shown in Figure 2-1 informed the findings and recommendations of this SIA. The methodology undertaken is detailed in the subsections following.

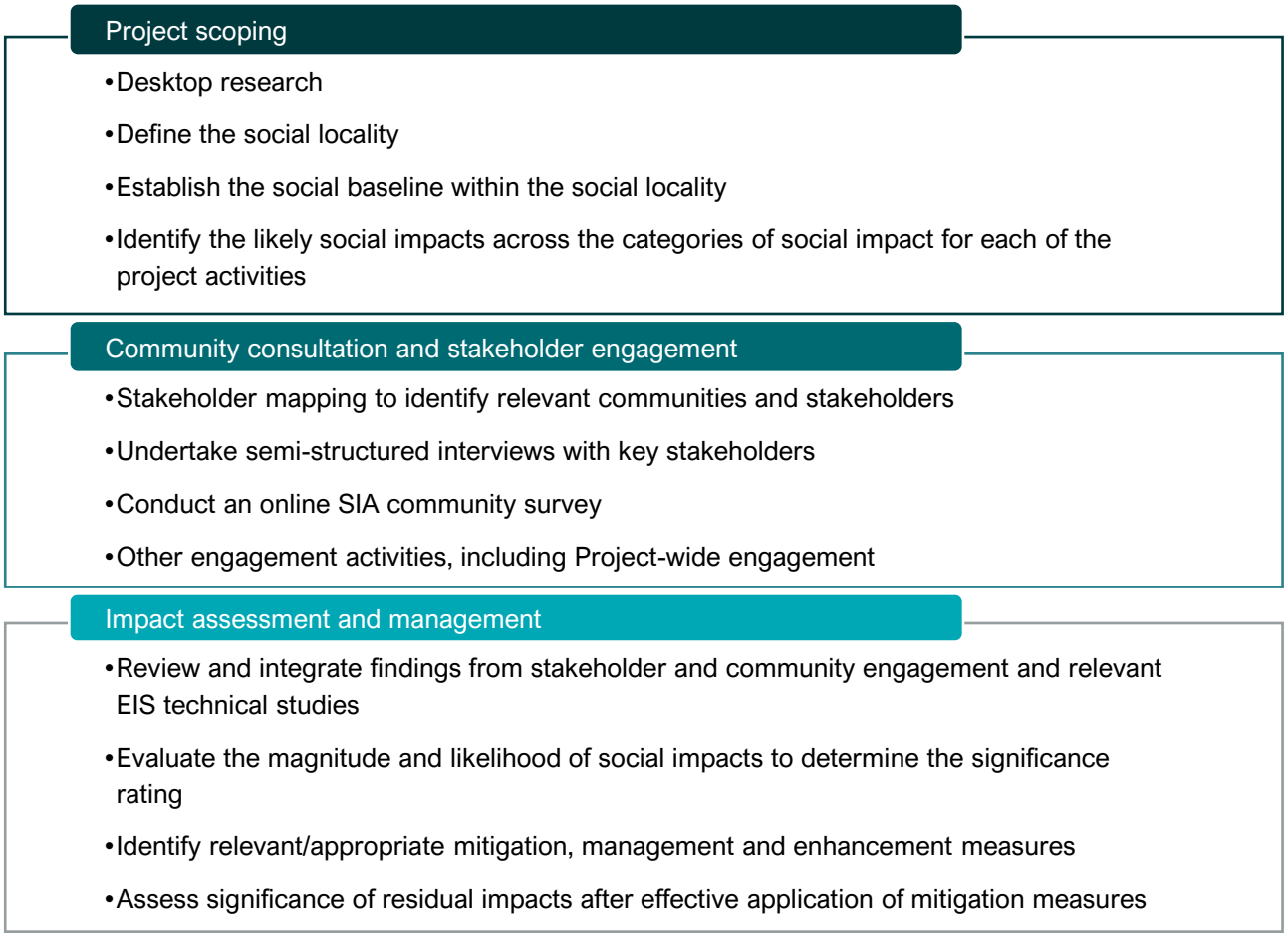

Figure 2-1: Overview of SIA methodology (Adapted from NSW SIA Guidelines and IAIA Guidance Note)

2.2. Project scoping

The scoping SIA of the Project provided initial insight into the Project's social context and the potential positive and negative impacts of the Project. Furthermore, the scoping phase also identified the level of assessments required during the EIS phase against each perceived potential social impacts. The Project scoping phase was undertaken adopting following methodologies:

- Desktop research
- Defining the social locality and establishing the social baseline within the social locality
- Identifying the likely social impacts across the categories of social impact for each of the project activities.

The desktop research component of the SIA involved a comprehensive review of existing documents, data sources, and relevant strategic plans to establish a foundational understanding of the Project context and inform impact assessment. This included a review of the Project's EIS Scoping Report and relevant grey literatures published by Berrigan Shire Council and local Chambers of Commerce.

Social infrastructure mapping was also undertaken, along with the identification of other key projects and developments within the Berrigan LGA and broader region. Socio-economic data from the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics was analysed to assess indicators related to population demographics, employment, industry, income, and housing and accommodation characteristics. In addition, the SQM Research repository

was consulted to determine rental vacancy rates and the number of available vacancies across the relevant localities.

Consistent with the NSW SIA Guideline social impacts were categorised within eight key categories (Table 2-1). These categories provided a framework for identifying potential impacts across the full range of social domains during the Project's social impact scoping phase.

The social impacts identified during the scoping phase have been incorporated to inform this assessment. In addition, the SIA draws on findings from other technical assessments undertaken for the Project and integrates insights gathered through semi-structured interviews as well as broader stakeholder and community engagement activities.

Table 2-1: Social impact categories

Way of life	including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, and how they interact each day
Community	including composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, resilience, and people's sense of place
Accessibility	including how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private, or not-for-profit organisation
Culture	both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, practices, obligations, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings
Health and wellbeing	including physical and mental health especially for people vulnerable to social exclusion or substantial change, psychological stress resulting from financial or other pressures, access to open space and effects on public health
Surroundings	including ecosystem services such as shade, pollution control, erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity
Livelihoods	Including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business
Decision-making systems	Including the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and have access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms

2.3. Community consultation and stakeholder engagement

During the Scoping phase of the Project, one-on-one meetings with near neighbours and other stakeholders were conducted by the Project's engagement team. Similarly, during the Project's EIS phase, 14 people attended the community drop-in consultation held over two days (March 12 and 13, 2025).

In addition, the engagement team conducted targeted consultations with key stakeholders to gain a broader understanding of community expectations and attitudes towards the Project. The SIA team also participated in the two-day community drop-in sessions and met with Berrigan Shire Council officials and other relevant stakeholders, such as Finley Chamber of Commerce, Murray Irrigation, First Nations Representatives and Near neighbours alongside the Project's engagement team.

Targeted SIA consultation and engagement was conducted to inform this assessment. Community consultation and stakeholder engagement activities included:

- Stakeholder mapping to identify relevant communities and stakeholders
- Undertaking semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders
- Conducting an online community survey

Attendance at and review of reporting from Project-wide community consultation activities, conducted by the Project team both during the scoping and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) phases, also informed this assessment. This included:

- *Community Information Sessions:* One, two-days community drop-in sessions held in Finley in March 2025. The information sessions were designed to share information about the Project. NGH's SIA team attended this session to gain a broad understanding of community perspectives on the Project.
- *Other outreach methods:* Emails, posted letters, phone calls, text messages, online briefings were also used to communicate information about the project and seek community feedback.

Details of Project-wide engagement is documented in Chapter 5 of the Project's EIS. These broader consultation activities informed the community's attitudes toward the Project, contributed to the understanding of perceived social impacts, and supported the development of appropriate mitigation measures for this assessment.

2.3.1. Stakeholder mapping

A comprehensive stakeholder identification process informed targeted engagement for the SIA. Identified stakeholders included residents, businesses, and landholders living or working near the Project area; individuals and organisations who use or value resources potentially impacted by the Project; and those with a broader interest in its social, environmental, or economic outcomes (Appendix A).

As the SIA engagement progressed, additional stakeholders were identified through snowball sampling to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive consultation process. This process built on Project-wide stakeholder mapping that was undertaken at the commencement of the EIS phase of the Project to identify stakeholders with an interest in the Project, as well as those directly or indirectly affected by the Project, and any potentially vulnerable or marginalised groups within the community. The stakeholders consulted by the Project's engagement team and further details of Project-wide engagement is documented in Chapter 5 of the Project's EIS.

2.3.2. Semi-structured interviews

Based on the stakeholder mapping carried out, targeted stakeholders were approached for a semi-structured interview. These interviews were designed to provide insights into the local perspectives on the Project and

to understand the communities' views on the potential positive and negative social impacts. The findings of these interviews were also used to inform the social impact evaluation and mitigation and enhancement measures.

A total of fourteen stakeholders were interviewed, including six in-depth interviews specifically conducted to inform the development of the SIA by providing a deeper understanding of the community's perceptions of potential social impacts arising from the Project. During these interviews, efforts were also made to develop a clear understanding of the potential mitigation measures for each identified impact. The interview data was transcribed, and thematic analysis was performed to categorise impacts within the social impact categories reflected in Table 2-1.

2.3.3. Community survey

A short online survey was conducted during both the scoping and EIS phase. The survey was accessible via the Applicant's website and Project Newsletter.

The online survey was administered with the objectives to:

- Understand the general attitude of respondents to the Project.
- Understand key attributes that the community places most value on.
- Identify important social and economic factors, community amenity and infrastructure.
- Inform a broader understanding of where future investment could be prioritised for the benefit of the community.
- Identify the community's preferred engagement methods should the Project progress.

No responses were received during the Scoping phase. During the EIS phase, the survey received three responses, of which only one was fully completed. Considering the small sample size, the survey data was not valid to draw meaningful conclusions from and did not include to inform the SIA.

Multiple factors may have contributed to the low responses for the survey, including potential survey fatigue within the community due to other concurrent consultation processes, a possible lack of interest among the population, and some persons having limited access or motivation to participate.

2.4. Impact assessment and management

Building on the Scoping phase of the Project, determination of impact significance and management was conducted. This included the following:

- Review and integration of findings from stakeholder and community engagement
- Review and integration of findings from relevant EIS technical studies
- Evaluation of the magnitude and likelihood of social impacts to determine the significance rating
- Identification of relevant/appropriate mitigation, management and enhancement measures
- Assessment of the significance of residual impacts after the effective application of mitigation measures

Following the detailed review of relevant inputs including findings from stakeholder and community engagement activities, technical reports prepared for the EIS and insights from comparable studies, the impact evaluation process was conducted. The following technical assessments were consulted to determine the impacts and its significance:

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

- Soil Technical Report
- Preliminary Hazard Assessment
- Traffic Impact Assessment

Although Flood Impact Assessment, and Construction and Operational Noise and Vibration Assessment were also completed as part of technical assessment to inform the EIS, they did not emerge as perceived impacts during the project wide consultation and semi-structured interviews.

The social impacts associated with each Project activity were assessed across the social impact categories outlined in Table 2-1. Both positive and negative social impacts were considered and each potential impact was assessed in terms of its likely effects on people, taking into account whether the impact had been previously investigated, the potential for cumulative effects, and the availability of mitigation or enhancement measures.

The likely significance of each potential impact was then determined by assessing its predicted magnitude and likelihood, consistent with the NSW SIA Guideline Technical Supplement (Table 2-3). To determine the magnitude of each potential social impact, the assessment considered several dimensions in line with the NSW SIA Guideline Technical Supplement. These included: extent (who and where is affected, including vulnerable groups and future generations); duration (the time span of the impact and whether it is temporary or permanent); intensity or scale (the degree of change, from mild to severe); sensitivity or importance (how valued or irreplaceable the affected element is and the community's capacity to adapt); and level of concern or interest (how strongly the community perceives or prioritises the issue, even if technical assessments suggest lower risks).

Magnitude levels were then classified as:

- **Transformational**: where fundamental shifts in community wellbeing, livelihoods, or services occur, including permanent displacement or growth of at least 20% of a population.
- **Major**: substantial long-term impacts on things people highly value, affecting large or dispersed populations.
- **Moderate**: noticeable and extended impacts for specific groups.
- **Minor**: mild and short-lived impacts affecting a small number of generally resilient individuals.
- **Minimal**: negligible or barely perceptible changes in local conditions.

Table 2-2: Social impact significance matrix

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

This approach enabled the identification of social impacts that require the highest level of attention, particularly those with the potential to affect community wellbeing, access to services, housing availability, and local character. The assessment also considered the sensitivity of affected communities, cumulative impacts from concurrent infrastructure projects, and the degree to which impacts could be mitigated through project design or management measures. This structured methodology ensures transparency and consistency in impact evaluation and helps prioritise mitigation strategies aligned with community needs and expectations.

2.5. Assumptions and limitations

This SIA has been prepared using the best available information at the time of writing. The following limitations and assumptions apply:

- The assessment was undertaken using desktop research, data analysis, and a site visit conducted on November 2024 and March 2025.
- Social baseline data was compiled from the most recent publicly available sources, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the council's publications such as strategy documents and annual reports.
- Outcomes from community engagement activities together with semi-structured interviews are integrated within the impacts section of the assessment.
- The report has relied on the accuracy and completeness of information contained in the technical studies.

3. Social Baseline

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic and environmental context relevant to the Project. It begins with an overview of the broader Riverina region, narrows focus to the Berrigan Shire Local Government Area (LGA) and then to the town of Finley. Unless otherwise specified, all population and demographic data referenced are drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 Census.

Table 3-1 provides a comparative summary of key statistics across these localities. The information specific to each locality is discussed in detail in the following subsections. The demographic and industry dataset relating to the social locality is included in Appendix B.

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

Key Statistics	Locality		
	Riverina	**Berrigan Shire LGA**	**Finley (SAL)**
Area (sq km)	80,545	2,066	457.5
Population	163,656	8,665	2,455
Median weekly household income	$1,480	$1,128	$1,066
Unemployment rate	3.8%	3.1%	3.5%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	6.6%	3.0%	4.9%

3.1. Regional and local setting

3.1.1. Riverina Region

The Riverina region, located in southwestern NSW, is one of Australia's most productive agricultural zones, stretching from the foothills of the Snowy Mountains to the flat, arid plains of Hay and Carrathool along the Murrumbidgee River catchment. While the region's population is projected to grow by 14.5% by 2036, this is modest in comparison to NSW's anticipated growth of 25% over the same period (Regional Development Australia, 2018).

The Murrumbidgee River plays a crucial role in sustaining the region, providing water for major food production hubs within the Murrumbidgee and Coleambally Irrigation Areas. These zones contribute more than a quarter of NSW's total fruit and vegetable production and are among Australia's largest exporters of bulk wine (Green et al., 2011). The Riverina's natural resources underpin both dryland and irrigated farming systems, with key agricultural outputs including rice, wheat, canola, and livestock.

The Riverina is the traditional land of the Barapa Barapa, Nari Nari, Ngarigu, Ngunawal, Wolgalu, Wemba Wemba, Wiradjuri, Yita Yita, and Yorta Yorta peoples. It encompasses several local government areas, including Albury, Berrigan, Bland, Carrathool, Coolamon, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Edward River, Federation,

Greater Hume, Griffith, Hay, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera, Snowy Valleys, Temora, and Wagga Wagga (NSW DPE, 2023).

Population

The 2021 Census recorded a resident population of 152,300 in the Riverina region, living in 69,479 dwellings with an average household size of 2.36 people. More recent estimates suggest the population is closer to 180,000, distributed across a combination of regional centres and smaller rural communities (Regional Development Australia, 2024b). Wagga Wagga, the region's largest urban centre, continues to grow steadily, drawing new residents due to its strong educational institutions, health services, and defence sector presence.

Population growth is primarily concentrated in and around regional centres and along the NSW–Victorian border. However, the region faces demographic challenges, including an ageing population, rising unemployment rates despite growing job vacancies, and a persistent shortage of housing, particularly rental accommodation (Edward River Council, 2022). However, many smaller towns across the region are experiencing slower growth or population decline. An ageing demographic is a notable trend, with many LGAs reporting increasing proportions of residents aged 65 years and over (Regional Development Australia, 2024a). At the same time, youth outmigration continues to pose a challenge, often driven by limited local tertiary education or employment opportunities.

These demographic shifts influence service demand, local workforce dynamics, and planning priorities. The Riverina's strategic plans aim to reverse this trend through investment in economic diversification, liveability, and workforce development to support population attraction and retention (Regional Development Australia, 2024a).

Economy, workforce and accommodation

The Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 outlines a comprehensive economic strategy that builds upon the region's agricultural strengths while embracing diversification and innovation (NSW DPE, 2023). As one of Australia's most productive agricultural zones, the Riverina Murray leverages its fertile lands and extensive irrigation systems to support a variety of crops, including cotton, rice, nuts, and fruit. Further, the South West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), located within the Riverina (NSW Government & EnergyCo, 2024), is expected to play a pivotal role in regional development. It is poised to boost employment, enhance energy connectivity and reliability, and support energy-intensive sectors such as high-value agriculture and advanced manufacturing.

The Riverina region is facing an evolving set of workforce challenges, shaped by demographic shifts, economic transition, and industry demand. While unemployment remains comparatively low, skills shortages are affecting key sectors such as health care, aged care, education, construction, and agriculture (Regional Development Australia, 2024a). The workforce has an ageing profile, with fewer young people entering trade or technical careers, and this imbalance is expected to deepen without targeted intervention. As of December 2024, job vacancy data show persistent unmet demand for technicians and trade workers, community and personal service workers, and machinery operators (Regional Development Australia, 2024b).

In response, regional development strategies across the Riverina prioritise workforce attraction, retention, and skill alignment. Initiatives include increasing vocational education and training pathways, enhancing collaboration between TAFEs, schools, and local employers, and supporting career development programs that reflect the needs of both established and emerging industries. Health and social services, along with the

renewable energy sector, are viewed as growth areas that require tailored workforce planning to ensure long-term sustainability. The Riverina Regional Jobs Precinct and the Workforce Development Plan 2022–2026 advocate for a whole-of-community approach. This includes building local capability, reducing reliance on fly-in-fly-out workers, and ensuring training delivery matches the region's economic future (Regional Development Australia, 2024a).

Housing availability and affordability in the Riverina region is an escalating concern, directly impacting workforce attraction, economic growth, and community wellbeing. According to the Regional Development Australia NSW and ACT Housing Workshop Summary Report (RDA NSW & ACT, 2022), regional housing shortages have reached critical levels, exacerbated by bushfires, floods, and the COVID-19 pandemic. A key issue is the mismatch between housing supply and demand, with many regions lacking diverse and affordable housing options to accommodate growing populations, temporary infrastructure workforces, and essential service workers. Vacancy rates in many regional areas remain below the healthy benchmark of 3%, contributing to inflated rental costs and difficulty in securing housing for new workers.

3.1.2. Berrigan Shire LGA

The Berrigan Shire Council lies within the Southern Riverina Region of southwestern New South Wales, approximately 240 km north of Melbourne and 670 km west of Sydney. The LGA is located on the land of the Wiradjuri people. The Murrumbidgee Council area borders it to the north, Federation Council to the east, the Victorian border and the Murray River to the south, and the Murray River Council and the Edward River Council to the west.

Population and demographics

In 2021, Berrigan Shire LGA had a population of 8,665 people. The population of the LGA is forecast to grow, with an projected increase of 10.77% (or 0.68% per annum) from 2020 to 2036 (Berrigan Shire Council, 2020). Around 29% of the population is aged over 65, reflecting the Shire's popularity among retirees and semi-retirees. In contrast, only about 16% of residents are under 15 years of age, suggesting a gradually declining younger population (Berrigan Shire Council, 2023a).

Population growth has remained relatively flat, with slight fluctuations driven by natural attrition and limited migration. The area is characterised by small rural communities including Barooga, Berrigan, Finley, and Tocumwal. These towns support a largely self-sufficient, community-oriented population with strong ties to agriculture. The demographic structure presents challenges for workforce renewal, local services demand, and planning for ageing infrastructure and health services

Economy, workforce and accommodation

The LGA comprises four townships: Barooga, Berrigan, Finley and Tocumwal. This predominantly rural area is primarily used for farming purposes, specifically for sheep and cattle grazing and agricultural farming. In 2022/23, the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries generated a combined output of $173 million, or 43.9% of total value added for the shire, providing 642 (20.3%) of local jobs (.idcommunity, 2023).

Berrigan Shire's economy is grounded in its strong agricultural base, with cropping and livestock grazing forming the backbone of local industry (Berrigan Shire Council, 2023a). Strategic irrigation infrastructure supports this productivity, while Council initiatives seek to diversify the economy and stimulate new investment. The visitor economy, supported by regional assets such as the Finley Saleyards and Tocumwal Aerodrome, offers growth potential (Berrigan Shire Council, 2023a).

The Berrigan Shire Community Strategic Plan 2040 (Berrigan Shire Council, 2024b) presents a vision for a thriving, diversified, and resilient economy. It emphasises that economic growth must be aligned with population sustainability, workforce development, and support for local enterprise. The Plan outlines that community consultation revealed that residents value a strong local economy and see employment opportunities, business support, and infrastructure investment as critical to the Shire's future.

The plan outlines strategic directions to:

- Diversify the economic base, particularly through innovation in agriculture, small business development, and tourism.
- Promote local employment opportunities, especially for young people and professionals.
- Support and retain local businesses, including those in retail and services, by improving the liveability and connectivity of town centres.
- Invest in infrastructure that enables growth, such as transport, communications, and energy.

Importantly, the plan connects economic wellbeing with social cohesion, stating that a sustainable economy is essential for maintaining local services, attracting population, and ensuring long-term community vitality.

Aligned with these broader economic goals, renewable energy has also become a growing focus in the region, particularly in Finley. For instance, the annual report 2023-2024 of Berrigan Shire Council states "promote renewable energy projects and water conservation strategies to build a more sustainable and resilient community for future generations" as one of their 'future direction' (Berrigan Shire Council, 2024a, p. 25). Furthermore, the shire's strategic plan 2040 identifies mitigating the "impacts of climate change through renewable energy and water conservation measures and encourage sustainable living" (Berrigan Shire Council, 2024c, p. 15). Additionally, the strategic planning statement 2020-2040 states that "the Berrigan Shire LGA has substantial economic assets for renewable energy investment and is in close proximity to market sources in Victoria and the city of Melbourne. Cross-border planning will identify efficient strategic links between renewable energy assets and market sources (Berrigan Shire Council, 2020, p. 35).

The Berrigan Shire Community Strategic Plan 2040 (Berrigan Shire Council, 2024b) acknowledges workforce shortages as a key challenge facing the region, particularly in the context of sustaining population growth, local services, and economic development. Community feedback gathered during the plan's development identified "access to qualified staff" as a critical issue that affects local businesses, healthcare, and service delivery. The plan highlights that the Shire needs more people to sustain businesses, field sporting teams, retain services, and build the visitor economy. These statements implicitly reflect concerns about labour shortages in multiple sectors, including health, construction, aged care, education, and hospitality. Residents also prioritised accessible education, training, and employment pathways, suggesting that current systems are not adequately addressing local workforce development needs.

In response, the plan sets strategic goals to attract local employment opportunities, diversify the economic base, and advocate for training access. These actions aim to bridge workforce gaps and ensure that Berrigan Shire is equipped to meet future labour demands.

Housing affordability and availability remain pressing challenges for the Berrigan Shire. Across regional and metropolitan NSW, vacancy rates are generally low. During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2020), rent increases were generally modest or even decreased in some areas, notably in Berrigan, where rents dropped by up to 17.6%. As outlined in the Annual Report 2023-2024, the Shire is prioritising improving housing options through government partnerships, housing organisations, and developers to promote affordable housing projects (Berrigan Shire Council, 2024a).

The Berrigan Shire Council has developed an Affordable Housing for Key Workers policy, which defines the Council's role in supporting the development of affordable housing to promote social and economic growth in the area. The policy emphasises the importance of providing housing for key and essential workers, including those in frontline roles such as healthcare, education, childcare, aged care, emergency services, community services, retail, and hospitality (Berrigan Shire Council, 2023b).

In addition to affordable housing, the Shire is addressing cost-of-living concerns, with the rising prices of groceries, utilities, and housing stress being key issues for residents. Infrastructure improvements are also a pressing priority, particularly in water management and the maintenance of footpaths and roads. Attracting and retaining residents remains a priority for the Shire (Berrigan Shire Council, 2024c), through generating employment, training, and engagement services.

Housing and accommodation supply are critical enablers of workforce attraction and economic resilience. Across Berrigan Shire, affordable and accessible housing stock is constrained, particularly for key workers and seasonal employees. The Council has responded by allocating $500,000 in 2024–2025 to develop new accommodation in Finley, specifically for essential workers (Berrigan Shire Council, 2024d). This complements broader planning efforts to ensure land use, infrastructure, and housing policies align with expected population and employment trends. Demand for housing is being driven not only by workers but also by an ageing population, placing further pressure on existing stock. Council's integrated approach recognises that addressing accommodation needs is essential to retaining a viable workforce and supporting the Shire's long-term economic objectives.

3.1.3. Finley locality

The proposed BESS would be located across approximately 9.36 ha of land including transmission corridor and existing substation for connection works. The project will be located in the northeastern site of the Finley substation, located approximately 5 km west of Finley township.

A list of proximal townships and localities is provided in Table 3-2.

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

Township/ locality	Distance from Project site	Population (2021 Census)
Finley SAL	5 km west	2,455
Berrigan SAL	27 km west	1,264
Deniliquin SAL	52 km east southeast	7,432
Tocumwal SAL	20 km southeast	2,862
Jerilderie SAL	36 km northeast	922

Population and demographics

As of the 2021 Census, Finley SAL had a population of 2,455 people (ABS, 2021). The unemployment rate was at 3.5%, lower than the state average of 4.9%, with dairy cattle farming as the highest industry of employment, employing 7.8% of the workforce. The township is located along the Newell and Riverina Highway, allowing easy access to major regional centres.

Finley, along with Berrigan, is also identified as a "rural service centre with outstanding medical facilities" (Berrigan Shire Council, 2020, p. 46), given their proximity to major highways. The closest largest population centres (over 20,000) include Shepparton, VIC and Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Economy, workforce and accommodation

Irrigated agriculture is the primary industry for the township. Barrigan Shire LGA has irrigation infrastructure to service more than 75% of its landmass, thus, the LGA is the "most intensively irrigated LGA within the Riverina Murray region" (Berrigan Shire Council, 2020, p. 22). However, in recent years, the restructuring of the agricultural industry and the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan (MDBP) have contributed to sluggish growth in the developmentally mature towns of Berrigan and Finley. This has resulted in a two-speed economy, where the faster-growing Murray River towns benefit from economic diversification and development, while the rural-sector-dependent towns of Finley and Berrigan face challenges such as reduced growth and structural adjustments (Berrigan Shire Council, 2020).

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority's Basin Plan Evaluation for the Berrigan-Finley community outlined the trends in social and economic conditions. The evaluation plan reported the following trends for the Berrigan-Finley community between 2001 and 2016 (Murray Darling Basin Authority, 2018a):

- Population decreased by 20.4%
- Total workforce decreased by 39.9% (1,579 FTE)
- Agricultural workforce decreased by 40.4% (369 FTE)
- Agricultural manufacturing workforce increased by 32.1% (43 FTE)
- Non-agricultural private workforce decreased by 57.7% (626 FTE)
- Government services workforce decreased by 8.8% (37 FTE)

The basin plan accounts for a 35% reduction in the farm employment between 2001-2016 according to the basin plan evaluation (Murray Darling Basin Authority, 2018a). At the heart of the basin plan sets the amount of water that can be taken from the basin each year while leaving enough for rivers, lakes and wetlands (Murray Darling Basin Authority, 2025). The effect of the basin plan is also reported by the ABC News, and quotes that *"the community is shrinking, jobs and opportunities for young people are disappearing. It's having a massive impact on the whole community's bottom line….without irrigation in this region….it's a food bowl going to waste"* (King & Gorman, 2019). The basin plan is also blamed for the decrease in enrolments at the pre-school and families leaving the region (Brown & Tomevska, 2019).

The ripple effects of these challenges are impacting local businesses and community organisations. For example, efforts to attract a workforce for other industries are hindered by the population decline. Additionally, the demographic shift further affects the vitality of local schools and sports clubs, which struggle with reduced participation and community engagement. These intertwined issues underscore the far-reaching implications of the MDBP on the social and economic fabric of Finley (King & Gorman, 2019).

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

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

Key economic statistics – Finley SAL	
Top occupation:	1. Managers (19.5%) 2. Community and Personal Service Workers (14.4%) 3. Labourers (13.8%) 4. Professionals (12.5%) 5. Technicians and Trades Workers (12.3%)
Industry of employment:	1. Dairy Cattle Farming (7.8%) 2. Aged Care Residential Services (6.3%) 3. Secondary Education (3.9%) 4. Primary Education (3.7%) 5. Other Grain Growing (3.3%)
Median weekly household income	$1,066

The Project is anticipated to draw on both local accommodation and the regional workforce. However, challenges related to a declining labour force and existing housing pressures must be addressed in project planning. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority reported a significant drop in regional workforce participation, from 36.9 to 27.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers per 100 people between 2011 and 2016 (Murray Darling Basin Authority, 2018b). This trend underscores the importance of considering workforce availability in the development of renewable energy projects.

In light of these pressures, renewable projects in the area may need to collaborate with local councils, community organisations, and government agencies to ensure that adequate housing and supporting infrastructure are available to accommodate any influx of workers. The township of Finley, in particular, has faced a downturn in local business activity, largely attributed to the decline of the farming industry (King & Gorman, 2019). While renewable developments offer economic revitalisation potential, proactive planning is essential to ensure local communities are prepared to meet accommodation and workforce demands effectively.

Accommodation and labour pressures will also be shaped by the timing and scale of other state-significant development projects occurring near Finley. The coincidence of multiple projects could place greater demands on available housing and the regional workforce, intensifying competition for limited resources.

According to SuburbsFinder (2023), a rental vacancy rate of 3% is considered balanced; rates below 2% signal high demand, while those above 4% suggest surplus supply. Across the Finley region and surrounding SALs, including Berrigan, Deniliquin, and Tocumwal, rental markets show varied capacity, as demonstrated by fluctuating vacancy rates (Figure 3-4). These patterns affect the ability of local housing markets to absorb both short- and long-term workforce demands.

Finley, with a vacancy rate of 6.1%, has consistently shown greater housing flexibility, suggesting it is well placed to accommodate temporary workers or support permanent staffing needs during the project's operational phase. The town offers a mix of private rentals, motels, and caravan parks, catering to diverse

housing needs. In contrast, Deniliquin's vacancy rate of 0.1% reflects a tight rental market with limited available capacity. While Deniliquin is a larger service hub with broader housing options, any reliance on this locality for worker housing would necessitate additional planning. Even Finley with healthy rental vacancy rate of 6.8%, corresponds to only 10 numbers.

Tocumwal, though experiencing the highest local rental cost at $250/week (Appendix B), remains well below the NSW median, offering relatively affordable options. However, its vacancy rate has fluctuated, peaking at over 3.0% in Q2 2024 before falling to 1.5%, suggesting only moderate availability, which may not be sufficient during peak construction periods. Berrigan, with a current vacancy rate of 1.1%, has also experienced volatility, from 0% to over 4.5%, likely due to the small size of its rental market and sensitivity to short-term shifts in demand.

Across all four localities, over 45% of homes are owned outright, which reflects a predominantly older, stable population and implies a limited supply of rental housing. This demographic profile, combined with mixed rental availability, highlights the need for early and coordinated accommodation planning, including potential temporary worker housing to ensure the successful implementation of the Project without placing undue strain on local communities.

Table 3-4: Rental vacancy rates of adjoining SAL

Rental Vacancy rates of Finley and adjoining SAL as of April 2025			
SAL	**Postcode**	**Rental Vacancy Rate**	**Description**
Finley	2713	6.8%	The rental vacancy rate has stayed above 1.5% since mid-2018, reaching almost 7% during the first quarter of 2020.
Berrigan	2712	2.2%	The vacancy rate of Berrigan has varied over time. For instance, the vacancy rate was 0% in January 2025, and it was over 4.5% in January 2024. This could mean that either the data is not consistent, or it reflects the inconsistencies of rental vacancies in the SAL.
Deniliquin	2710	0.1%	The SAL recorded 1.5% of rental vacancy rates in the first quarter of 2020, after which the vacancy rate dropped.
Tocumwal	2714	0.7%	The SAL rental vacancy rate experienced an upward trend from the second quarter of 2023, reaching over 3.0% in the second quarter of 2024 before falling again.

Across the region, the local workforce is predominantly employed in agriculture, manufacturing, and transport-related sectors. While these industries offer a base of semi-skilled and skilled workers, specialised roles in construction, engineering, and technical services may need to be filled through external recruitment. Workforce participation is steady, but ageing demographics and regional labour shortages may pose challenges for sourcing adequate local labour.

To enhance local employment outcomes and mitigate accommodation pressures, early engagement with local councils, job service providers, and training institutions is recommended. Workforce planning should also consider commuting arrangements between Finley and surrounding SALs, as well as the potential need for temporary workforce accommodation strategies (e.g. contractor camps or rental housing agreements).

Labour force participation across the localities varies, with Tocumwal SAL recording the lowest rate at 41.4%, and Deniliquin the highest at 54.4% (Appendix B). Notably, Berrigan and adjoining SAL report a lower unemployment rate than the NSW average, suggesting there is minimal immediate pressure from job seekers. Additionally, part-time employment is more prevalent in these areas compared to the state average, particularly in Tocumwal (36.4%) and Finley (32.6%), reflecting a more casualised or potentially seasonal workforce structure.

Traditional Owners and Aboriginal governance

Berrigan Shire is located on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people, who are recognised as one of the largest Aboriginal Nations in New South Wales (.idcommunity, n.d.). The Wiradjuri are often referred to as the “people of the three rivers:” the Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, and Macquarie, which are of deep cultural and spiritual significance. These river systems sustained generations through food, travel, ceremony, and connection to Country, and continue to shape the cultural identity and practices of the Wiradjuri community today.

To the south of the Wiradjuri Nation, areas around Finley and Tocumwal also intersect with the traditional Country of the Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa peoples, whose lands span both sides of the NSW–Victoria border (AIATSIS, 2025). These Nations have longstanding and ongoing connections to the land and waterways of the region. Cultural governance is supported by local Aboriginal organisations such as the Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre, which represents Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa communities and is actively involved in heritage protection, language revival, and youth engagement. Language, in particular, holds a central place in cultural identity, and efforts to reclaim and revitalise traditional languages play a key role in healing and intergenerational knowledge transfer (Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre, 2024). However, communities in southern NSW have historically received limited funding for such initiatives, making ongoing investment and partnerships essential for cultural sustainability.

Aboriginal governance in Berrigan Shire also includes formal structures through the Cummeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC), which is part of a network of nine LALCs across the broader Riverina region (NSW LLS, 2022). LALCs are instrumental in managing land rights, protecting cultural heritage, and advocating for the social, cultural, and economic interests of Aboriginal peoples. The Cummeragunja LALC holds significant land and governance responsibilities and engages with local and regional planning processes, particularly where development intersects with cultural heritage or native title interests.

Recognition of traditional custodianship, ongoing support for Aboriginal self-determination, and meaningful engagement with Aboriginal organisations are essential in ensuring respectful and inclusive planning processes within Berrigan Shire. Aboriginal communities bring rich cultural knowledge and governance

systems that can inform land management, education, economic development, and reconciliation across the region.

3.2. Development context

3.2.1. Socio-economic planning context

Land-use and socio-economic planning in the Riverina Murray region is guided by strategic frameworks developed at both regional and local levels. The Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (see NSW DPE, 2023), establishes a long-term vision to promote resilient, productive, and innovative growth. The Plan focuses on enhancing natural assets, enabling infrastructure development, improving regional connectivity, and supporting emerging industries, particularly renewable energy. Significantly, the Plan embeds Aboriginal cultural values, heritage, and aspirations as central to planning decisions, with goals to protect cultural landscapes and involve Aboriginal communities in future land use and economic development.

Housing is a key policy focus in the Regional Plan. While population growth in the Riverina is uneven, areas along the Murray River corridor, such as Berrigan Shire, are projected to experience increased housing demand due to migration trends, industry diversification, and infrastructure investment. The Plan calls for integrated housing strategies to ensure sufficient affordable and diverse housing options across rural and regional areas, particularly for key workers, families, and ageing populations.

The Plan also supports NSW's broader transition to a net zero emissions economy by 2050, prioritising the development of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs). The South-West REZ, which includes areas of the Riverina and Murray regions, is expected to attract multi-billion-dollar investments in solar, wind, and transmission infrastructure (EnergyCo, 2025). The REZ will not only reshape local land use but also generate thousands of construction and operational jobs, adding pressure on housing, services, and community infrastructure.

At the local level, socio-economic planning is directed by the Berrigan Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) 2020, which outlines six local priorities: (1) sustainable agriculture and agribusiness; (2) enabling infrastructure and services; (3) improved transport and logistics; (4) development of the visitor economy; (5) urban liveability and amenity; and (6) protection and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage (Berrigan Shire Council, 2020). The LSPS recognises that maintaining and expanding diverse housing options is essential to attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, supporting local services, and sustaining vibrant communities.

Several regional initiatives further support the Riverina's transformation into a logistics, manufacturing, and renewable energy hub. The Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct (WWSAP) is a key example (NSW Government, 2023). Situated along the Inland Rail, the precinct is anchored by the Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics (RiFL) hub, connecting regional producers to national and global markets. The WWSAP is projected to create up to 6,000 new jobs across sectors such as food processing, advanced manufacturing, and freight logistics. This project, led by the Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation, is already in the delivery phase and is a catalyst for broader economic activity in the region.

Taken together, these frameworks and projects demonstrate how socio-economic planning in the Riverina Murray region is increasingly shaped by a commitment to sustainable development, inclusive growth, and cultural recognition. The integration of Aboriginal values into planning processes, through collaboration with LALCs and other governance bodies, ensures that Traditional Owner knowledge and priorities are not only respected but leveraged as a strength in regional development.

Given the scale of proposed renewable energy investments, including potential state-significant developments in and around Berrigan Shire, careful planning is required to manage their social impacts. Workforce influxes, pressure on housing markets, and demand for community services must be anticipated and addressed through early and inclusive planning efforts. Alignment between regional and local planning instruments will be critical to ensuring that these projects deliver long-term socio-economic benefits while maintaining community wellbeing.

3.2.2. Renewable energy policy and setting

The South-West Renewable Energy Zone (South-West REZ) was formally declared by the NSW Minister for Energy under Section 19(1) of the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020, with the declaration published in the NSW Government Gazette on 4 November 2022. Although the South Coree BESS is located approximately 180 kilometres southeast of the South-West REZ boundary, the establishment of the South-West REZ is expected to significantly influence renewable energy development across the broader Riverina region, including within the Berrigan Shire Council area. The REZ encompasses key regional centres such as Buronga, Balranald, and Hay (Figure 3-1).

Although Berrigan Shire lies outside the official REZ boundary, it hosts several notable renewable energy projects, including the Finley Solar Farm (operational), the Finley BESS and Berrigan BESS (currently at the application stage). Their close proximity to the REZ, with the REZ core around Hay located approximately 179 kilometres northwest of Finley presents opportunities for alignment with state-led energy priorities and infrastructure investments.

REZs are geographically defined areas designed to support the coordinated development of renewable energy infrastructure. These zones serve as modern equivalents to traditional power stations by integrating:

- New renewable energy generation (e.g., wind and solar farms),
- Energy storage (e.g., battery systems and pumped hydro), and
- High-voltage transmission infrastructure to enable efficient distribution across NSW.

The South-West REZ was selected due to a range of favourable attributes, including the presence of high-quality solar and wind resources, proximity to existing and planned transmission infrastructure (such as the Project EnergyConnect interconnector), land-use compatibility, and a robust pipeline of proposed renewable energy projects. According to NSW Government (EnergyCo, 2025), the REZ is projected to support approximately 2,000 construction jobs and attract up to $2.8 billion in private sector investment.

For Berrigan Shire Council, the concentration of renewable energy development in and around the South-West REZ may bring both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, there is potential for local economic growth and energy diversification; on the other, cumulative impacts from multiple projects may place added pressure on housing, local infrastructure, and workforce availability. These implications highlight the need for integrated land-use planning, cross-sector collaboration, and early community engagement to ensure the benefits of the energy transition are equitably distributed.

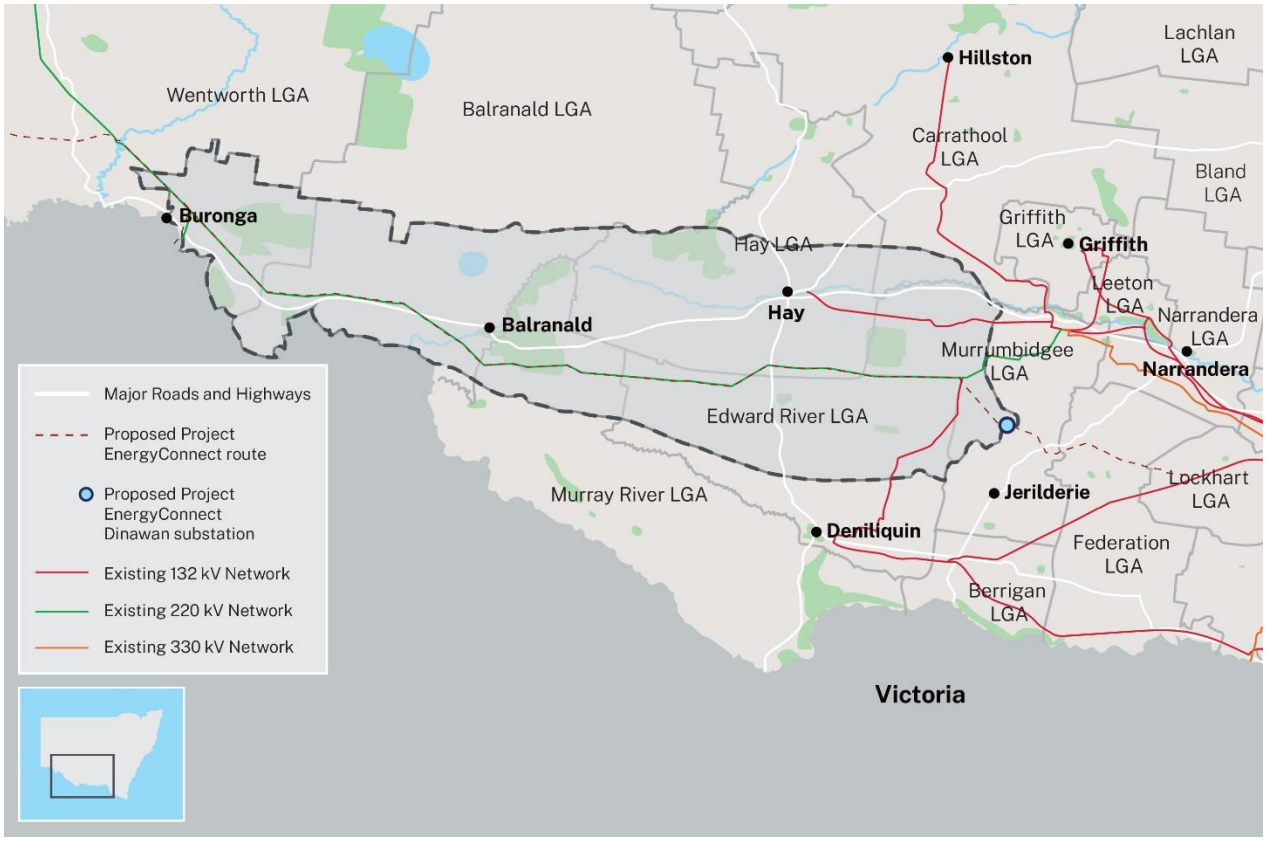

Figure 3-1: South West REZ (source EnergyCo, 2025)

The development of large-scale renewable energy infrastructure in the Berrigan Shire LGA has significant implications for local and regional workforce dynamics, particularly during the construction phases. Three key projects, the Finley Solar Farm, the Finley BESS and the proposed Berrigan BESS present (Table 3-5) different scales of workforce demand, both of which contribute to cumulative impacts on labour markets, accommodation, and local services.

Table 3-5: Proximal State Significant Developments

Project	LGA	Proximity to the Project	Stage of delivery
Finely BESS	Berrigan Shire	325m	Response to Submissions
Berrigan BESS	Berrigan Shire	500m	Prepare EIS
Finley Solar Farm	Berrigan Shire	600m	Approved

The Finley BESS is a proposed energy infrastructure project with a capacity of 100 MWAC / 200 MWh. Construction is expected to commence in early 2026 and span approximately 11 months, requiring a peak construction workforce of up to 55 people. Once operational, the facility will require around 2 FTE staff. The project site is located approximately 325 metres west of the Project, with both situated near Finley in the Berrigan Shire, NSW.

The Finley Solar Farm, located approximately 600m west of Finley, was developed by Gentari and became operational in 2019. The 175 MW solar photovoltaic project required a substantial temporary workforce during its construction phase, with estimates indicating that up to 150 workers were engaged at peak periods. These workers were predominantly employed in civil works, electrical installation, panel mounting, and site logistics.

While some personnel were sourced locally, the specialised nature of utility-scale solar farm construction meant that a portion of the workforce came from outside the region, requiring temporary accommodation in and around Finley and neighbouring towns. During operations, the Finley Solar Farm has minimal staffing requirements, with only a small crew responsible for maintenance, performance monitoring, and occasional troubleshooting, typically fewer than FTE roles.

In contrast, the proposed Berrigan BESS, a 400 MW / 1.6 GWh battery energy storage system developed by Syncline Energy, represents a significantly larger infrastructure footprint than South Coree BESS and is expected to drive more substantial workforce requirements. The project is located approximately 22km east of Finley. During peak construction, the BESS is anticipated to support between 150 and 200 jobs, including civil and electrical contractors, project engineers, environmental managers, safety officers, and support staff. The construction phase, estimated to span 12 to 18 months, will likely necessitate short-term accommodation solutions across Berrigan Shire and surrounding LGAs. Given the growing pipeline of renewable projects across the wider Riverina region, this influx of construction workers may coincide with workforce demands for the Project, further intensifying pressure on housing availability and local infrastructure.

Post-construction, the operational workforce required for Berrigan BESS is expected to be modest, typically limited to periodic maintenance and system monitoring functions. Industry trends suggest a requirement of 5 to 10 FTE roles, some of which may be based remotely with only occasional on-site presence. However, even during the operational phase, ancillary service demands (such as security, landscaping, and infrastructure maintenance) may generate ongoing local employment opportunities.

Collectively, these projects highlight the importance of proactive workforce planning and community engagement to mitigate cumulative impacts, particularly in small rural communities with limited accommodation stock and stretched local services. Strategic coordination between developers, local councils, training providers, and regional planning bodies will be essential to manage peak workforce influxes, support local job creation, and minimise disruption to existing communities. Given the scale and timing of these developments, workforce-related cumulative impacts, particularly around accommodation, transport, and social services should be assessed holistically and integrated into broader regional planning processes.

3.3. Summary

The table below (3-6) summarises key trends and features relevant to the Finley locality, Berrigan Shire, and the wider Riverina region. This includes an overview of demographic patterns, economic structure, workforce characteristics, housing availability, Aboriginal governance, and the renewable energy planning context.

Table 3-6: Overview of Socio-Economic and Environmental Context for the Finley Locality and Broader Region

Context Area	Key Insights
Regional Setting	Riverina is an agriculturally productive region with uneven population growth. Smaller towns face ageing populations and youth outmigration.
Berrigan Shire Demographics	Population of ~8,665 with nearly 30% over age 65. Minimal youth retention and workforce renewal challenges.
Local Economy	Agriculture is the economic base, contributing $173 million annually. Structural shifts due to water policy reforms have led to job losses in towns like Finley.
Workforce	Skills shortages in health, construction, aged care, and trades. Vocational training and employment pathways are under development.
Housing & Accommodation	Mixed rental availability. Finley has relatively high vacancy (6.1%), but surrounding towns like Deniliquin are critically constrained.
Renewable Energy Context	South-West REZ nearby; Berrigan hosting major projects like Finley Solar Farm and proposed Berrigan BESS.
Aboriginal Governance	Traditional Owners include Wiradjuri, Wamba Wamba, and Perrepa Perrepa peoples. Active Aboriginal organisations participate in cultural governance and land use planning.
Planning & Policy Alignment	Regional and local plans support renewable energy, affordable housing, and economic diversification.

4. Social Impact Assessment

This chapter presents the SIA for the proposed Project. The SIA evaluates the anticipated social changes associated with the Project and outlines strategies to enhance benefits and mitigate potential negative impacts for local communities and stakeholders. The assessment aims to understand how the Project may alter the existing social baseline and to ensure that identified impacts are managed transparently and effectively throughout the Project lifecycle.

While response to the online community survey was limited, with no responses during Scoping and only three during the EIS phase, the qualitative insights gained through targeted engagement provided valuable perspectives.

Potential negative impacts were identified through stakeholder feedback, with the most significant concerns raised by neighbours within a 4 km radius of the site. These concerns included visual amenity impacts, perceived health and fire risks related to battery storage, property value impacts, road access and haulage routes, and cumulative development fatigue. In particular, a near neighbour expressed concern regarding visibility of infrastructure.

Opportunities for employment, training, and local economic benefits were consistently emphasised during engagement, with stakeholders calling for meaningful and measurable local participation. Business stakeholders also proposed the establishment of local procurement pathways. Key positive impacts identified included job creation, economic stimulation, vocational training partnerships, and community benefit-sharing initiatives. However, business owners also raised concerns about limited accommodation supply and cited past failures of other renewable projects to deliver on benefit-sharing commitments. Anticipated cumulative impacts included additional pressure on housing and infrastructure, as well as changes to the local landscape character.

Overall, the consultation revealed that the broader community sentiment about the Project has been largely neutral to positive, with stakeholders expressing interest in ongoing involvement and a desire for transparent communication. However, three survey responses that was received reflected varying attitudes towards the proposed Project. One respondent was strongly opposed to the development, another expressed a neutral stance, and the third declined to answer when asked to rate their overall level of support.

By contrast, a balanced and collaborative perspectives were especially evident in discussions with Berrigan Shire Council and the Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation, both of whom acknowledged and appreciated the early engagement efforts undertaken by the Applicant. The Council conveyed a willingness to work constructively with the proponent should the Project be approved, and expressed support for a community benefit model that channels tangible outcomes to Finley and surrounding areas. Murray Irrigation Ltd. indicated no objections to the proposal and offered a cooperative stance on water access and canal infrastructure considerations, requesting to be kept informed of project progress.

The Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation voiced strong interest in exploring employment pathways for First Nations peoples and participating in the cultural aspects of the Project. The stakeholders expressed high interest in the Project and were concerned about potential property devaluation, and visual impacts, as well as changes to agricultural productivity. Their interests in the Project reflect a high level of sensitivity to cumulative impacts, particularly in the context of multiple nearby renewable energy developments.

It is worth noting that stakeholders consulted through interviews and those who attended the community information session during the EIS phase did not mention any perceived impacts in relation to culture.

Additionally, during the construction phase, there may be temporary impacts associated with noise, dust, and air quality for neighbours near the Project site and/or along the proposed access route. These impacts could potentially affect residents' way of life, including their commuting or travel experience, privacy, peace, and quiet enjoyment. During the Project's construction phase, an increased traffic flow is expected. This may potentially affect daily activities such as mail deliveries, the movement of school buses, and may lead to increased wear and tear on local roads, triggering frustration among local road users. However, none of these issues were raised by stakeholders during the consultation process. This observation is reflected here as context for the potential impacts discussed in the following sections.

4.1. Livelihoods

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, livelihoods include "people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19). This assessment identified the following potential impacts relating to 'livelihoods':

- Increased local employment opportunities
- Increased local training opportunities
- Increased local economic activity
- Perceived loss of agricultural land; and
- Potential impacts on property values.

Potential impacts on 'livelihoods' are both positive and negative, as discussed below.

4.1.1. Increased local employment opportunities

Increased local employment was a key aspiration raised by stakeholders during consultation. While there was broad support for the potential jobs that the Project could bring, many expressed doubts about whether these opportunities could genuinely benefit local residents. Concerns centred on the availability of only short-term contracts, which local businesses and workers may be reluctant to pursue due to the risk of losing steady, ongoing work.

Stakeholders also noted that with low unemployment in the region, lower than NSW's 4.9% (Appendix B), most people who want a job already have one, making it difficult to source a significant workforce locally. For instance, a stakeholder commented "…*no latent workforce in Finley to meet job demand for construction works*…"

While these opportunities were seen as important for locals, especially for Aboriginal people, youth, and apprentices, there was concern about whether such benefits would be fully realised. A stakeholder highlighted that First Nations people who already hold the necessary certifications could directly benefit from employment on the Project. For those who do not yet have them, stakeholders emphasised the importance of creating opportunities for training and skills development to support job readiness and long-term employability within the industry.

The potential for ongoing, local employment, particularly for Aboriginal people was seen as a meaningful benefit. Stakeholders expressed that if the Project could help create sustained opportunities for First Nations people to build careers locally, it would represent a significant and valued outcome for the community.

Stakeholders highlighted the need for proactive efforts by the Applicant to support local employment, such as pre-employment training, community outreach, flexible job design, and inclusive hiring practices, to ensure that employment and procurement benefits are not only possible but accessible to those in the region. However, a stakeholder noted a practical challenge, questioning where the workforce required for the Project will be sourced from, given regional labour shortages. It was noted that while jobs may be offered locally, not everyone is able to take them "…*you know these people are offered jobs, but they can't pass the drug tests*..."

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

> *…and we had one civil worker here, for example, complaining about he wasn't gonna get any work. So those types of issues of…you know, we'll be looking for expressions of interest.*

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

Table 4-1: Positive impact significance for increased local employment opportunities

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

4.1.2. Increased local training opportunities

In addition to the increased employment opportunities, the Project presents an opportunity to benefit local people through increased training and development opportunities. Stakeholders who participated in the interview and consultation sessions were positive about the benefits of increased training & education opportunities for local residents should the Project proceed. Stakeholders emphasised the need for training to generate and stabilise employment in the area.

As mentioned earlier, in addition to the low availability of workforce in the region, many of those who are available may not possess the specific skills or qualifications required for the roles associated with the Project. This mismatch between labour availability and job requirements highlights the need for targeted

training, upskilling, and support programs to ensure local people can participate meaningfully in the employment opportunities generated by the Project.

Therefore, to maximise local employment outcomes, stakeholders emphasised the importance of pre-employment programs that go beyond training to include practical, on-the-job experience. They cited examples of other regional projects that successfully mobilised local workforces and, in doing so, built strong social licence and community support. A stakeholder expressed concerns that with available workforce not having a required skill could mean people coming from outside the region:

> *They're just, you know, talking about things like, you know, we would be looking at a first step to employ local if they don't have the skills, then we'd be looking to go somewhere else, you know…you'll know what I mean.*

Thus, the Project has the potential to support more vulnerable groups, such as the long-term unemployed and those facing systemic barriers to employment, by partnering with agencies providing training and embedding inclusive, targeted support measures into its workforce strategy. Another stakeholder's concern was consistent in saying *"…hopefully,…if there's traineeships or whatever...."* and then went on to say that the Project could help leave a legacy by contributing to a long-term employment of the locals. Additionally, a stakeholder questioned whether there was "…*available workforce in the region that could take up opportunities, particularly without a focus on training for potential employees...*" Reinforcing the need for the Project to prioritise up-skilling or organising training for available workforce in coordination with local training providers.

TAFE- Deniliquin is already in the process of developing programs to cater to the needs of skilled professionals as developments of short programs *"…can be done as those programs are non-nationally recognised trainings…we can make them based on the requirements…"* This aligns with the potential benefits of increased training opportunities the Project could bring to the community.

Based on the consultation, the positive impact significance (Table 4-2) for increased local training opportunities is rated as **Medium**

Table 4-2: Positive impact significance for increased local training opportunities

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

4.1.3. Increased local economic activities

An increase in economic activity across local and regional areas was anticipated as a result of the Project, with both direct and indirect benefits expected to enhance local supply chains and direct economic benefit to landholder. The Project could potentially diversify the local economy through increased use of services such as accommodation, service centres and local businesses in Finley and adjoining towns and service centres.

However, some stakeholders raised concerns about the equitable distribution of these benefits, noting the potential for community division if perceived imbalances arise.

Therefore, increase local economic activities is categorised into for key impact themes and discussed:

i. increase in economic activity to local businesses;
ii. diversification of household incomes,
iii. increased economic benefits through community investment, and
iv. distributive inequity.

Increase in economic activity to local businesses

Increased income and spending by construction workers and associated personnel has the potential to further stimulate local economies through multiplier effects. While the overall economic value of these impacts remains unquantified, consultations with local agencies and business representatives reinforced the strong community expectation that the Project should deliver tangible, even if short-term, outcomes for local businesses.

Two stakeholders interviewed focussed their comments on the perceived economic benefits that would potentially flow from this project. One stated that local businesses with required project capabilities should be afforded the *"...opportunity to tender for project work. If the tenders are not competitive, so be it, but we should be given the chance to tender..."*.

An example of an indirect economic benefit was shared by a local stakeholder who recounted how the nearby solar farm's operating hours inadvertently influenced the business practices of the local supermarket. Initially, the store closed at 6:00 pm, which meant workers returning from the solar farm were unable to shop locally. Following a conversation that highlighted this missed opportunity, the store trialled extending its hours to 7:00 pm. The result was a significant and sustained boost in business. Not only did this minor adjustment align with the routine of the project workforce, but it also revealed untapped local demand.

According to the stakeholder, this was pre-covid and five years later, the store continues to operate until 7:00 pm, reflecting an unintended yet positive long-term outcome linked to the presence of the solar project. This story illustrates how local businesses, when adaptive to changes brought about by major projects, can uncover new opportunities that result in lasting economic benefits for the community. The Project has the potential to bring in similar economic benefits to local businesses.

Diversification of household incomes

The Project offers the potential to diversify household income for participating landholders through long-term hosting and neighbour agreements. These payments were consistently identified by stakeholders as the most significant benefit, providing a stable supplementary income that reduces reliance on traditional agricultural activities. For many landholders, this financial support not only enhances household resilience but also contributes to broader rural economic stability.

Increased Economic benefits through community investment

The Project is expected to deliver broader community benefits through targeted investment and sponsorship initiatives. While stakeholders acknowledged and welcomed these efforts, they strongly emphasised the importance of ensuring that benefits are directed primarily toward communities closest to the Project, rather than larger regional centres.

A transparent, inclusive, and locally focused approach to benefit-sharing was seen as essential to maintaining social licence and building long-term community support. Stakeholders highlighted the need for economic benefits to reach beyond host landholders, extending to local businesses, community organisations, and shared infrastructure.

SREA and the Council is developing a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) to identify the areas where the benefit-sharing/community investment could be prioritised. Specific suggestions for community investment included the development of a splash park, enhancements to facilities around the lake, and sponsorship of local football and netball clubs (see EIS Chapter 5).

Perceived distributive equity

Concerns were raised regarding perceived distributive inequity, particularly by neighbouring landholders who do not receive payments despite being in close proximity to the Project site. This imbalance was viewed as a potential source of community tension and social division, especially where the economic benefits of the Project are seen to be concentrated among a small group of landholders.

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of equitable benefit-sharing arrangements to avoid resentment and to ensure that the broader community feels recognised and included in the Project's economic outcomes.

Given the high level of stakeholder interest and the community's desire for local economic gains, the social impact significance is assessed are reflected in the Table 4-3.

Table 4-3: Impact significance of four categories within the increased economic activities

Impacts	Ranking
Increase in economic activity to local businesses	Medium probability for a noticeable increase in the economic opportunity from the Project during the construction work [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Likely**] Social impact significance – **High**
Diversification of household incomes	This impact of host landholder payments is certain to occur diversifying the household income [Magnitude level – **Major**; Likelihood level – **Almost certain**] Social impact significance – **Very High**
Increased economic benefits through community investment	Almost definitely expected to contribute to noticeable improvements in the community development aspects from the Project's contribution to community benefit sharing through supply chains to undertake developmental works. A VPA is being agreed upon between the SREA and the Council and being drafted [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Almost certain**]. Social impact significance – **High**

Perceived distributive inequity	This impact on host and neighbouring landholders has been rated as being **Possible** to occur but of **Minor** magnitude, resulting in a **Medium** impact significance.

4.1.4. Perceived loss of agricultural land

While the potential loss of agricultural land is often a concern in regional development, it was not considered significant for this Project. The site is zoned RU1 Primary Production and classified as Class 3 under the Land and Soil Capability Scheme, meaning it is suitable for a range of crops with moderate management requirements. However, the land has not been used for intensive agriculture in recent years. The Project will occupy only a small portion of the property and will not disrupt the landholder's current horse grazing activities, as sufficient land remains available for ongoing use. Therefore, the Project is not expected to result in a significant loss of productive agricultural land or affect existing operations.

Furthermore, the land where the Project will be located is not identified as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL), nor considered of uniquely high agricultural value to the locality. Agricultural activity within the development footprint is currently limited to grazing, which would temporarily cease during construction, but only the fenced BESS area would remain excluded from use during operation.

The Project is not expected to affect access to or agricultural use of surrounding lands and is not seen as an incompatible land use. While some stakeholders in other regional projects raised concerns about the cumulative loss of farmland to energy infrastructure, community feedback for this Project reflected low concern regarding agricultural land loss. For instance, a Council stakeholder reflected that approximately 92% of land within the local council area is classified as prime agricultural land. In this context, the land required for this Project, *"…occupying only a very small fraction (approximately 0.0000X%)…"* was not considered significant in terms of overall land loss.

However, a Council Planner also noted that *"…the BESS project taking up such a small portion of land should not be a concern…."* Perhaps this was an indication that the developers should carefully reconsider site selection if future projects are proposed on land with high agricultural value. This reflects a balanced view of the Council that, while small-scale land use change may be acceptable, the broader principle of protecting prime agricultural land remains important in strategic planning decisions.

Conversely, a near neighbour expressed a high level of concern in stating:

> *Well, while I know it is the way forward and the progress, we are all looking for, I don't like the idea of it taking the prime agricultural lands…I have been a farmer and been trying to grow sheep and cattle... If farmers discontinue farming, where are we going to get food from?... farmers can't use their paddocks…I don't think much thoughts have gone into developing this by the government.*

Though this was a grave concern expressed by one particular neighbouring landholder, the overall perception regarding the loss of agricultural land was generally low. It is possible that this specific concern reflected broader anxieties about the cumulative impacts of multiple developments in the region, rather than the direct impact of this Project alone. Overall, the issue did not emerge as a significant concern during wider consultation. However, there were also concerns that hosting payments, which was discussed as "diversification of household incomes" might displace agricultural activity, reducing broader contributions to the local economy.

Taken together, rather than expressing concern about direct impacts on agricultural production, stakeholders were more focused on the decommissioning process, particularly regarding who would be responsible for rehabilitating the site if the proponent were to default. This reflects a broader community desire for clear, enforceable commitments around end-of-life site restoration to ensure the land is returned to a usable state. Given that the Project Site is not classified as BSAL, and represents a negligible portion of the region's agricultural land base, the overall loss of agricultural land was assessed as a low-significance impact (Table 4-4), unlikely and of minor magnitude.

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

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

The soil technical report (240676_Soil Tech Report Final v1.0) for the Project site identified poor nutrient status and an unbalanced cation exchange capacity, limiting the soil's ability to support healthy plant growth. According to the report, plant-available phosphorus levels were found to be extremely low in most surface soils, making soil amelioration essential for establishing and maintaining pasture species, particularly after project decommissioning.

The report recommended that to support successful rehabilitation, comprehensive topsoil sampling and analysis must be undertaken prior to vegetation screen establishment to ensure appropriate soil preparation.

4.1.5. Potential impacts to property values

The potential impact of renewable energy developments on surrounding property values remains a recurring source of concern and conflict between project proponents and local residents. This perception align with broader national trends, as reflected in the CSIRO's recent study by McCrea et al., (2024), which found that concerns about property devaluation and compensation fairness are recurring themes in Australian attitudes toward renewable energy development.

However, changes in property values are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, making it difficult to isolate the specific effects of individual projects. At present, there is no definitive research in Australia that confirms whether large-scale renewable energy developments, including BESS, have a consistent or measurable negative effect on nearby property values.

Notably, concerns about visual amenity and associated property value impacts tend to be higher for wind farms and transmission infrastructure than for solar and BESS projects. For this Project, some near neighbours expressed strong apprehension about possible declines in land and property values in saying:

> *… It is right at my front gate. Now, I cannot build a house opposite to it…I know no one will buy my land now… I'm a country person and you are taking my countryness from me…*

It was evident that the neighbouring landholder was distressed and emotional, given the anticipated direct impact on their property and their concerns about potential property devaluation following the development of the Project in the area.

In response, the Applicant took the feedback on board and made several design adjustments to address these concerns. The battery installation was shifted further from the property boundary to allow space for vegetative screening, reducing visual impact. Additionally, site access was relocated to the western side of the proposal to avoid conflict with the landholder's driveway and minimise disturbance to their daily activities.

Given the strong perception of risk among residents and the limited availability of credible supporting evidence, this potential impact has been assessed as being medium (Table 4-5).

Table 4-5: Impact significance of potential impacts to property values

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

4.2. Community

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline, community include "composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, resilience, and people's sense of place" (DPIE, 2023a, p. 19). Within this impact category, potential changes to community cohesion was perceived as an impact.

4.2.1. Potential changes to community cohesion

As discussed in Section 4.1.3., the proposed Project has the potential to create tension within the local community, particularly in relation to perceived distributive inequity. The differing distribution of benefits, such as hosting payments to landholders, may lead to resentment among those who do not receive direct financial compensation.

Additionally, the existence of varying views on renewable energy developments and their associated impacts may further challenge community cohesion. These concerns appear to be exacerbated by the cumulative presence of multiple renewable energy projects in the region and ongoing perceptions of distributive inequity. While these divisions are not unique to this Project, they highlight the importance of open communication, equitable benefit-sharing, and community engagement strategies that foster trust and inclusivity.

There are two clear ends of the spectrum when it comes to community sentiment toward the Project: those who support it and those who oppose it. For instance, one community member strongly opposed the Project in saying *"…but, yeah, I don't like the whole idea of it…it is sitting right opposite to my front gate…"*

However, feedback from some stakeholders suggested that, overall, the level of concern in the community may be limited. For example, the local Council noted:

> *…people of Finley are pragmatic. Even for all the earlier projects, there was not much concern raised by the community…Community hasn't expressed too many concerns we are aware of. May be because the project is located bit further from the town as concerns would have been expressed if the project was closer to the town/settlement.*

This perception of the Council was echoed by a local business representative who stated, *"…I didn't really hear community people expressing concerns about the project…"* These comments suggest that, while opposition exists, it may not be widespread or strongly vocalised in the broader community.

Table 4-6 shows the impact significance of potential changes to community cohesion as a result of the Project.

Table 4-6: Significance impacts of potential changes to community cohesion

Impacts	Ranking
Potential changes to community cohesion	There is a low probability that the Project will disrupt community cohesion. However, considering strong concern from a neighbour living near the Project site, minor disruption could be expected even if their exists broader support for the Project from the community [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.3. Accessibility

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

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

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

4.3.1. Increased pressure on housing and accommodation

The Riverina Murray region, including Finley and the Berrigan Shire Council, is currently experiencing critical housing shortages and limited affordable housing options, with housing costs outpacing income growth over several decades (NCOSS, 2023).

As of April 2025, there were only 14 rental vacancies (SQM Research, 2025) across Finley (postcode 2713), Berrigan (postcode 2712), Deniliquin (postcode 2710), and Tocumwal (postcode 2714) combined, indicating a highly constrained and competitive rental market in the region.

While the Applicant has committed to generating local employment, there is insufficient workforce availability in the region as discussed in the earlier section. Thus, it is anticipated that a substantial portion of the estimated 60 FTE construction workers will need to be sourced from outside the area. Without proactive accommodation planning, this influx of non-resident workers could place additional pressure on the already strained local housing market. Although landlords may benefit economically from increased demand, rental affordability and availability could decline further, particularly when considered alongside cumulative regional impacts.

The Applicant could mitigate impacts by engaging established local contractors who already employ regional workers, limiting the number of workers requiring housing. However, this would require a clear employment strategy to assess local contractor capacity. Furthermore, generating local employment potential has been successful in achieving community support as indicated by a business representative:

> *During the earlier project consultations, there was a slight push back from the communities concerning why local jobs were not created. When explained that first the priority will be given to employ people from the local community and once it is not filled in then workers from the region will be employed. This clarification went well with the communities as there weren't much community push back.*

To address accommodation challenges while maximising local economic benefits, a stakeholder described an innovative model trialled for another project, referred to as a 'virtual farm.' Rather than establishing a central workers' camp, the approach involved booking all available motel rooms across the region based on actual occupancy needs, ensuring no empty beds. A coordinated meal system using a coupon or voucher scheme allowed workers to dine at various local venues throughout the Shire, rather than being restricted to a single on-site canteen. This decentralised approach supported a diversity of local food businesses, ensured spending was distributed across the community, and strengthened the project's local economic footprint. The model was noted to be successful in circulating income locally and was later adopted for another solar farm project at Darlington Point, further demonstrating its flexibility and positive community impact.

While this approach delivered clear economic benefits, stakeholders also noted the importance of planning such arrangements around the region's tourism calendar. Without careful timing, workforce demand for accommodation could compete with tourist bookings, particularly during peak seasons. Therefore, if adopted, this model should be implemented during non-tourism periods to avoid displacing visitors and impacting the local tourism industry.

It must be noted that the construction workforce will peak at 60 FTE for a period of 3-4 months, after which the majority of the construction phase is expected to require only 20-30 FTE. Therefore, the social impact significance of increased pressure on housing and accommodation is rated as medium (Table 4-7).

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

Impacts	Ranking
Increased pressure on housing and accommodation	Pressure on housing and accommodation during the Project's construction phase is definite or almost definitely expected. The intensity of scale or degree of change is expected to be moderate. Thus, a noticeable deterioration in accommodation availability is expected during the Project's construction phase [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.3.2. Increased traffic on local roads

The Project is expected to generate increased traffic, including heavy vehicle movements, during the construction phase, which may cause temporary disruption to local access and amenity. While some discomfort may result, the rural setting of the Project Site means that impacts on local parking and access arrangements are likely to be minimal.

Notably, stakeholders did not raise traffic-related concerns during either the Scoping or EIS consultation phases. One exception was a stakeholder who initially expressed concern about increased traffic along Brookman's Road. However, when it was clarified that construction traffic would primarily use the Riverina Highway and turn onto Canalla Road (the same route as the Finley Solar Farm, as requested by BSC), the stakeholder responded positively, stating, "*Okay, I'm happy*."

Table 4-8 shows the impact significance of increased traffic on local roads, and it is assessed as medium. Though no concerns were expressed, it is assumed that with the likelihood level of the increase in traffic on local road is 'possible.'

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

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

Traffic Impact Assessment report that was undertaken as part of the Project's EIS reported that, construction is expected to generate up to 120 light and 64 heavy vehicle trips per day during peak times, reducing significantly outside of peak periods. The analysis, which included SIDRA intersection modelling and cumulative project reviews, found minimal impact on the local road network.

The assessment report mentioned that the existing infrastructure at the Riverina Highway/Canalla Road intersection already supports B-Double movements and has adequate safety features. Ports of Melbourne and Geelong will be used for BESS component imports, with designated heavy vehicle routes in place. Some minor works, such as hardstands and parking management, may be required to facilitate access for oversize vehicles.

The assessment *"concluded that the proposed access arrangements for the BESS are suitable to accommodate the expected construction vehicle types and traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases of the Project."* The report further stated that a Traffic Management Plan will be developed post-approval to ensure safe, efficient movement and account for cumulative project impacts.

4.3.3. Increased pressure on social infrastructure

Major development projects can lead to demographic shifts due to an influx of non-resident workers during construction, which may place pressure on local social infrastructure and community services. While the Project aims to generate local employment, workforce shortages in Finley and the broader region mean that a significant portion of workers will likely be sourced from outside the area. This influx of non-resident workers may increase demand on local social and community infrastructure, including health and emergency services, particularly when considered alongside cumulative impacts from other large-scale developments in the region.

For this Project, the construction phase is of moderate scale and duration, and the Applicant prioritises local labour where feasible. While the Project will require access to emergency and health services, this was not raised as a concern by stakeholders during consultation. Adverse impacts on local services are expected to be minimal during the operational and decommissioning phases, as maintenance activities will be limited and primarily sourced locally.

On the contrary, one stakeholder described the decline in local community participation, particularly in service clubs such as Rotary, or other volunteer-based community organisations in Finley. The stakeholder stated:

> *…part of Finley's got a great community…as much as we recognise that the service clubs are literally dying not getting members…they're getting older and older and so the money that they're raised is becoming less and less because they don't have the people coming through as they did…*

This sentiment reflects the region's aging and declining population, which may explain the limited concern expressed about increased demand on services. This was further supported by another stakeholder who recalled no issues with local infrastructure even during a previous project that brought over 200 workers into the area, stating: *"…we didn't have any sewage problems..."*

Given these factors, the potential negative impact on social infrastructure has been assessed as medium (Table 4-9).

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

Impacts	Ranking
Increased pressure on social infrastructure	Increased pressure on social services, such as telecommunication, electricity, water, etc., was not highlighted. However, there is a probability of impacts on health care services during the construction period [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.4. Health and wellbeing

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

Health and well-being impacts include impacts on physical and mental health, psychological stress resulting from uncertainty, financial and/or other pressures, and changes to individual and public health. According to Prenzel and Vanclay (2014), development Projects and any conflict contexts surrounding them can create psychological stress, uncertainty, and anxiety in people who oppose the Project and/or are directly impacted.

4.4.1. Increased stress and anxiety to those opposing the Project

Some stakeholders expressed concern about the long-term management and decommissioning of the Project, particularly regarding who will be responsible for site rehabilitation once the Project reaches the end of its operational life. The uncertainty surrounding what will happen in 20 or more years was described as a significant source of stress and anxiety for some community members.

One stakeholder stated:

> *…It really scares me about things like what happens with these things in 20 years' time. It seems to be, let's do this because now we've got it off our plate. It can be someone else's problem then. That's the scary thing.*

This sentiment reflects broader fears around intergenerational responsibility and a lack of trust in long-term accountability. For some, these unresolved questions contribute not only to emotional distress but also to a heightened sense of vulnerability, which may have implications for mental wellbeing, particularly among those living in close proximity to the Project. These concerns highlight the importance of clear, enforceable commitments to decommissioning, site restoration, and long-term stewardship, as well as transparent communication from the outset.

In addition, some stakeholders felt that the concerns of nearby residents, those not receiving direct financial benefits, were being overlooked in the planning process. For instance, one stakeholder remarked:

> *I don't think anyone cared about what other people living nearby the project think…just the landholders who get paid.*

This perception of distributive inequity, particularly among those who may still be affected by visual, amenity, or lifestyle impacts without compensation, can heighten feelings of exclusion, powerlessness, and stress. If not adequately addressed, these dynamics may not only contribute to local resentment but also negatively impact social cohesion and community wellbeing.

Though the Project is not contested and there is widespread community acceptance, some communities, who are immediate neighbour of the Project are subject to mental and emotional distress. Thus, the impact significance of increased stress and anxiety is rated as medium (Table 4-10)

Table 4-10: Impact significance of increased stress and anxiety to those opposing the Project

Impacts	Ranking
Increased stress and anxiety to those opposing the Project	Small groups of individuals opposing the Project are expected to experience increased stress and anxiety. [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.5. Surrounding

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

Two themes emerged within the surrounding impacts categories: change in landscape character and visual amenity, increased fire risks.

4.5.1. Change in landscape character and visual amenity

Concerns about changes to the landscape, surrounding environment, or associated impacts on ecosystem services and visual amenity were not widespread among stakeholders. One stakeholder interviewed for this Project stated they had *"…no issues with well-managed solar and BESS projects in the region…,"* but emphasised that the BESS site would need to be *"…neatly finished and maintained…"* and may require screening plantings to minimise visual impacts and preserve landscape character.

However, a nearby landholder expressed more specific concerns about the visual prominence of the BESS site, noting that it is located directly at their front gate and has constrained their plans to build a house opposite the site. Initially, the Project did not include screening vegetation, but following the landholder's feedback, the Applicant committed to incorporating screening plantings to help reduce visual impacts. The landholder welcomed this response, stating, *"…they did not have any screening in their plan, but after I raised concerns, I think they are planning to put screening, which I think is good."* The landholder also noted ongoing engagement with the Project developer, who confirmed the inclusion of these mitigation measures.

Additionally, some stakeholders raised concerns about overhead powerlines near the site, suggesting that placing powerlines underground would significantly improve local visual amenity. One stakeholder was particularly concerned that additional powerlines associated with the Project could not only worsen visual

impacts but also increase the risk of fire. These concerns were not widely shared across the broader consultation. Therefore, the impact significance is rated low (Table 4-11).

Table 4-11: Impact significance of change in landscape character and visual amenity

Impacts	Ranking
Change in landscape character and visual amenity	There was no widespread concern of the impact and a near landholder was appreciative of the screening that the Applicant committed to [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

It is expected that the powerlines would be underground on the southern side of Broockmanns road, with the easement confined to the Broockmanns Road and Canalla Road corridors. Some sections of the final connection route may be overhead, particularly within and near the Finley substation. However, both above and below ground options are considered as part of this DA and EIS.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment undertaken as part of the EIS for the Project, concluded that the Project would largely blend into the existing visual character of the area due to its modest scale and proximity to existing infrastructure, including the Finley Solar Farm, and associated transmission lines. All 11 non-associated receivers assessed, were rated as having low visual impact after the mitigation measures.

According to the assessment, public views are limited and often filtered by vegetation or built forms. However, screening is proposed along the eastern and southern boundaries to further reduce potential visual impacts and ensure the Project integrates with the surrounding landscape.

4.5.2. Increased fire risks

Concerns were raised by a nearby landholder regarding the potential for fires originating from the battery energy storage system (BESS) and spreading to surrounding farmland. The stakeholder expressed strong views about the risks posed by battery-related fires and the potential consequences for local agricultural operations, particularly given the Project's location in a fire-prone region.

One nearby landholder expressed strong and persistent concern about the potential fire risk associated with the Project, particularly due to the presence of another two BESS project (one in EIS and another in Submission stage) and overhead powerlines. The landholder was specifically concerned about fires originating from the battery system and impacting adjacent farmland, stating, *"…I'm concerned about fires emerging from your battery and impacting the farms…,"* and emphasised, *"Do you know what fires can do?... I know, because I come from a place where fires are prominent."*

The stakeholder expressed a strong opinion that the batteries could pose a serious fire hazard, particularly during the dry season, and highlighted the presence of numerous overhead powerlines near the site as compounding this risk. As mentioned in earlier section, the stakeholder questioned why the powerlines could not be placed underground, suggesting that doing so would both reduce fire risk and improve visual amenity. While these concerns were not widely echoed in broader consultation, they highlight the critical importance of fire prevention and emergency management planning, particularly for residents living in close proximity to high-risk infrastructure. As indicated earlier, underground powerlines are considered.

With a growing number of similar renewable energy projects being developed across the region, a stakeholder remarked that there is a clear need for proactive fire prevention and robust emergency response planning. As the stakeholder said,

> *The capacity of technology to fight fire must be explored and developed…with many similar projects coming along, it is important to develop capacities to prepare for such potential risks.*

These views underscore the importance of integrating proactive fire prevention and emergency response measures into project planning, both at the site level and across the broader region, to ensure that emergency services, local authorities, and communities are equipped to manage emerging risks associated with renewable energy infrastructure.

Though the increased fire risks associated with the Project was not widespread concern, those who expressed had strong perception about the risk. Thus, the impact significance is rated as medium (Table 4-12).

Table 4-12: Impact significance of increased fire risks

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

A Preliminary Hazard Analysis that was completed as part of the Project's EIS concluded that based on the risk acceptance criteria applied, the Project's risk profile is considered tolerable, consistent with the principle of As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP). The analysis stated that most medium-risk events relate to fire incidents, including those arising from battery thermal runaway, flammable material release, transformer failures, or bushfires.

The assessment identified a suite of preventive and mitigation controls, such as a Bushfire Emergency Management and Operations Plan, to reduce the likelihood and consequences of these events. These incidents were rated as very unlikely, meaning they are recognised in the industry but not expected to occur. Given the Project's scale, infrastructure layout, and separation from neighbouring land uses, any exposure to fire-related risks would primarily affect the construction and operational workforce.

The assessment concluded that there is negligible potential for offsite fatalities or injuries, and thus the Project complies with relevant land use planning criteria. Overall, the fire-related risks are deemed acceptable under ALARP conditions.

4.6. Decision-making systems

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

Two themes emerged within the decision-making systems impacts categories: perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making and perceived distributive inequity. Perceived distributive inequity is discussed within the 'Livelihood' impact category as negative impact within the 'increased local economic activities' in section 4.1.3.

4.6.1. Perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making

Throughout the consultation process, some stakeholders expressed a perception that key decisions regarding the Project were already made, and that the opportunities for genuine influence or participation were limited. While many recognised that large-scale renewable energy developments are part of broader government and industry strategies, there was frustration that local input was not always meaningfully considered.

One stakeholder captured this sentiment by stating:

> *"…I know you are gonna win this and will definitely do it, but I want to be heard…"*

This comment highlights a recurring theme: a desire to be acknowledged and listened to, even if the outcome appears inevitable. It reflects concerns about procedural fairness and a perception that decisions are made by authorities and developers without adequate local consultation or involvement. Such views can contribute to feelings of exclusion and undermine trust in both the process and the proponent.

Ensuring procedural fairness requires not only transparency and timely information sharing but also creating clear mechanisms for two-way dialogue, where community feedback can demonstrably influence project planning and design. Stakeholders consistently emphasised the importance of ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and the broader community to enhance positive social outcomes and minimise potential negative impacts.

Community members advocated for regular, meaningful opportunities to engage with the proponent, noting a preference for personal, face-to-face interactions. Several residents stressed the need for a dedicated point of contact throughout the construction phase, enabling timely responses to questions and concerns as they arise. There was a desire for community input not only on general project matters but also on more substantive decisions such as infrastructure placement and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

With the increasing number of renewable energy projects being proposed and developed, there is a risk, real or perceived, that community members, particularly near neighbours and locally relevant stakeholders, may be excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making processes. This can undermine people's ability to make informed decisions and may contribute to reduced trust in project proponents and the overall development process.

The significant impact of the perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making is rated as high (Table 4-13).

Table 4-13: Impact significance on perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making

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

4.7. Cumulative impacts

The NSW Guideline for Cumulative Impact Assessment (DPIE, 2022) emphasises the importance of assessing cumulative impacts, particularly when multiple projects are proposed within the same locality. The guideline states that cumulative impacts are the "assessment of environmental, social, economic and other impacts which result from a project when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future projects" (p. 1).

For the Project, cumulative impacts are relevant given that the Finley Solar Farm has been completed, with the community already having experienced the impacts of accommodating a large influx of workers during its construction. At present, the Berrigan and Finley BESS Project, planned in close proximity to the Project site is in the planning stage. While cumulative impacts were not frequently raised during consultation for the Project, their consideration remains important.

This is because the community has already encountered significant construction-phase impacts from the Finley Solar Farm, and with both the Finely and the Berrigan BESS Project now proposed nearby the Project, there is potential for combined impacts in the future. Even though renewable energy development is still emerging in the Berrigan LGA, compared to more established Renewable Energy Zones, these overlapping timelines highlight the need for integrated and coordinated planning to manage any cumulative social, environmental, and amenity impacts effectively.

4.8. Summary of social impacts

While the evaluation of social impacts has been guided by standard impact categories outlined in the NSW SIA guidelines, it is important to acknowledge that some concerns raised by stakeholders do not fit neatly within these defined categories. These broader concerns reflect underlying values, perceptions of fairness, and critiques of the wider energy transition framework; issues that are nonetheless relevant to the Project's social licence and long-term acceptance.

Some stakeholders raised concerns about the long-term planning associated with renewable energy projects, particularly in relation to waste management, land use, and the perceived inefficiencies or inequities in how electricity is distributed and sold. A number of concerns reflected a sense of missed opportunity and scepticism around whether these developments serve the broader community.

For instance, one stakeholder expressed:

> *…In other words, no Council that I know of wants to take any of that waste from solar or wind farms. Personally, I see these projects as pretty short-sighted. I'd rather see investment in fusion or fission energy…something cleaner in the long run. It might not be palatable for governments now, but to me, it just makes sense. What do you do with the panels when they're finished? How is the farm put right after that? It seems ridiculous to use up valuable land when the population isn't shrinking. There must be better places to build these…Australia is huge, flat, and hot. To me, it's about more than just convenience.*

The statement indicates a genuine concern raised around the long-term recyclability of renewable infrastructure, particularly solar panels. While the Applicant has not proposed a solar development, this concern reflects broader uncertainty about the sustainability of renewable technologies. In response to similar concerns about energy storage, the Applicant has committed to battery recycling and responsible end-of-life management, which is detailed in the Environmental Impact Statement.

This concern was echoed by another stakeholder, who questioned the broader energy strategy and fairness of benefit distribution. While Council representatives acknowledged this view, they also recognised the commercial logic, noting that energy would naturally be sold to areas offering higher market returns, which is understandable from a business perspective. However, Council noted that selling it to the community instead of the grid "*could be viewed more favourably by the community*."

Further concerns included frustration about land use and doubts about the roles of public versus private actors in energy storage and distribution. One stakeholder stated: *"Where is the power going if it's not being stored?"* another said,

> *Why aren't Transgrid or the government building their own BESS if they're selling it at a cheaper rate to private companies and then buying the same thing back at a higher rate?*

These perspectives point to a deeper critique of perceived inefficiencies, lack of transparency, and the broader equity of the energy transition, suggesting that without clearer communication and more inclusive planning, renewable projects may face resistance not because of their goals, but because of how they are implemented and explained.

A summary of the impact evaluation of potential positive and negative social impacts is provided in Table 4-14 and 4-15, respectively. The tables outline the impact category in line with the SIA Guideline (DPIE, 2023b), the perceived potential impacts on people, the Project aspect that may cause the impact, the stakeholder group that may be affected by the impact, the phase of the Project in which the impact may occur, and the likelihood and magnitude rating alongside the resulting impact significance.

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

Table 4-14: Social Impact Assessment Summary - Positive Social Impacts

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Enhancement Measure	Residual Significance
Livelihoods	Increased local employment opportunities	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	Broader Community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Continue to foster the use of local contractors and suppliers	**High**
	Increase in training opportunities			Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Liaise with local training providers and tailor the training needs to develop the required skills	**High**
	Increase in economic activity to local businesses	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	Broader Community, Local service providers and businesses	Moderate + Likely **High**	Continue to foster the use of local contractors and suppliers. Coordinate efforts and liaise with key stakeholders to coordinate the provision of accommodation and other services or suppliers, including opportunities for local contractors and services.	**High**
	Diversification of household incomes	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	Landowner	Major + Almost certain **Very High**	Payments to host landholders via neighbour agreements result in financial contributions to the local community.	**Very High**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Enhancement Measure	Residual Significance
	Increased economic benefit through community investment	Community benefit fund generating economic activities	Broader community, Local service providers, Community groups, Local government, Vulnerable community members	Moderate + Almost Certain **High**	Indirect benefits to local services through the construction and operation phases. A community benefit-sharing program will include a component to fund community benefit and employment programs. Promote training and upskilling opportunities in the local community.	**High**

Table 4-15: Social Impact Assessment Summary - Negative Social Impacts

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
Livelihood	Perceived distributive inequity	Establishment and operation of Project Infrastructure	Proximal landholders	Minor + Possible **Medium**	Continued engagement with host and proximal landholders and the broader community. Continued implementation of Host landholder and neighbour agreements.	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
	Perceived loss of agricultural land	Establishment, operation, and decommissioning of Project infrastructure	Landholders and the broader community for farm production	Minor + Unlikely Low	Continued implementation of landholder and neighbour agreements. The soil technical report identified poor nutrient status, limiting the soil's ability to support healthy plant growth.	**Low**
	Potential impacts to property values	Establishment, operation, and decommissioning of Project infrastructure	Near neighbours	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Further engagement with the broader community and pursue current market structure to inform the community.	**Medium**
Community	Potential changes to community cohesion	Payments to host landholders and difference in attitude towards the Project	Host landholders, near neighbours and the broader community	Minor + Unlikely **Low**	Further engagement with the broader community and strategies to increase social acceptance, such as through community benefit investment and funding.	**Low**
Accessibility	Increased pressure on housing and accommodation	Establishment and construction of	Accommodation providers and	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Develop Employment and Accommodation Strategy with the following strategies:	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
		Project infrastructure	the Broader community		• Continue to foster the use of local contractors and suppliers. • Coordinate efforts and liaise with key stakeholders to coordinate the provision of accommodation and other services or suppliers. • Collaboration with other renewable energy Applicants.	
	Increased traffic on local roads	Movement of construction materials & increased traffic due to workforce travel	Broader Community and road users	Minor + Possible **Medium**	Traffic impact analysis, including SIDRA intersection modelling and cumulative project reviews, found minimal impact on the local road network. Development and implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), including traffic management measures. Develop and implement Traffic Management Plan reflecting planning of transport routes with public safety considerations and information disclosure, notifying residents	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
					and considering any sensitive user groups.	
	Increased pressure on social infrastructure	Establishment and construction of Project infrastructure	Health providers	Minor + Possible **Medium**	Finalised Planning Agreements with host Councils. Collaboration with other renewable energy Applicants. Explore the potential of recruiting health workers to cater to the Project's needs.	**Low**
Health and Wellbeing	Increased stress and anxiety to those opposing the Project	Establishment and construction of Project infrastructure	Proximal landholders and the broader community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Continued engagement with host and proximal landholders and the broader community. Implement measures outlined in the EIS relating to hazard and risk management.	**Low**
Surrounding	Change in landscape character and visual amenity	Establishment of Project infrastructure	Proximal landholders, nearby residents, tourists, and tourism operators	Minor + Unlikely **Low**	The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment concluded that the Project would largely blend into the existing visual character of the area due to its modest scale and proximity to existing	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
					infrastructure, such as Finley Solar Farm and transmission lines. Further screening would ensure the Project integrates with the surrounding landscape. Continued implementation of Host landholder and neighbour agreements. Targeted vegetation screening is to be planned in collaboration with affected landholders.	
	Increased fire risks	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure	Proximal landholders, and the Broader community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	The Preliminary Hazard Analysis found the Project's risk profile is considered tolerable, consistent with the principle of As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP). Recommendations include integrating findings into fire safety plans, maintaining Asset Protection Zones, and ensuring compliance with design and fire safety standards.	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
					Develop management and emergency response plan in consultation with FRS	
Decision-making systems	Perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making	Community and stakeholder engagement activities	Broader Community	Major + Likely **High**	Continued community engagement and community drop-in sessions throughout construction and operation. Continue proactive personal engagement with community members and proximal residents.	**Low`**

5. Social Impact Mitigation and Management

Social impact management planning is a key component of SIA, ensuring that the impacts identified through the SIA process and community consultation are effectively managed throughout the life cycle of the development.

This section outlines a framework for addressing social impacts and enhancing social benefits. It details the strategies proposed in response to the Project's predicted significant social impacts: both positive and negative. While the strategies aim to address multiple potential impacts holistically, Tables 4-14 and 4-15 outline targeted measures for specific impacts. These enhancement and mitigation strategies were informed by community consultation activities, including semi-structured interviews, as well as the social team's experience conducting SIAs for similar projects across Australia.

According to the NSW SIA Guideline (DPIE, 2023b), mitigation measures may be:

- Performance-based – aimed at achieving a desired social outcome without prescribing a specific method;
- Prescriptive – requiring the use of specific technologies, designs, or practices;
- Management-based – involving known approaches that can satisfactorily mitigate or avoid impacts.

Based on these principles, the Project's mitigation and enhancement strategies are broadly grouped into three categories:

- Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (CSES)
- Community Benefit Sharing Program (CBSP) implemented through VPA
- Environmental Management Strategies
    - Accommodation and Employment Strategy (AES)
    - Traffic Management Plan
    - Bushfire Emergency Management and Operation Plan

5.1. Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Community consultations undertaken through drop-in sessions, meetings, and stakeholder interviews, highlighted the importance of continued and meaningful engagement to foster social acceptance of the Project and to ensure that local communities remain involved in decision-making throughout the Project's development.

The following key engagement needs have been identified for stakeholder and community engagement in the upcoming phases of the Project:

- Ensure open, transparent, timely, and accessible communication of Project information to reduce uncertainty and address community concerns.
- Proactively address both real and perceived concerns about potential amenity and safety impacts, including traffic, noise, visual changes, and environmental impacts.
- Maintain regular engagement with local councils, particularly during the construction phase, to monitor, discuss, and adaptively respond to emerging concerns from the community and local businesses.

- Develop accessible and responsive grievance and remedy mechanisms to ensure that community concerns and complaints are handled appropriately and fairly.
- Clearly communicate accommodation arrangements for construction workforces.
- Provide robust engagement with the community to address and alleviate concerns based on perception as well as technical realities.
- Establish a Community Benefit Sharing Program (CBSP) that could be implemented through the VPA, ensuring these initiatives offer ongoing opportunities for meaningful community involvement and decision-making.
- Collaborate with local councils and relevant regional stakeholders to support initiatives that promote regional economic and social development.
- Engage economic development agencies to share and promote the Project's positive outcomes, showcasing the renewable energy industry's contribution to the region.

5.2. Community Benefit Sharing Program

The CBSP that will be implemented through VPA will aim to maximise benefits for local community members throughout the Project lifecycle. The Applicant has committed to entering into VPA for the Project with the Council.

In addition to the CBSP, the Applicant will explore opportunities to support local initiatives through community sponsorships. To ensure that both the CBSP and community sponsorships deliver meaningful and lasting impact, the Applicant could:

- Continue to consult with local communities to identify needs and priorities, and tailor CBSP initiatives accordingly over the life of the Project.
- Collaborate with other renewable energy developers and industry stakeholders to ensure coordination and complementarity of benefit programs across the region, reducing the risk of duplication and improving effectiveness.

The potential areas of community benefits, as identified by local stakeholders during the consultation process, are outlined in Chapter 5 of the EIS report. These reflect the community's priorities and expectations regarding how the Project can deliver meaningful and lasting contributions to the region.

5.3. Environmental Management Strategies

Based on the community-wide consultation and in alignment with the findings of technical assessment reports, this SIA recommends the development of three key plans and strategies to manage the Project's potential impacts.

First, an AES should be developed and implemented to support local workforce participation, address skill gaps, and minimise housing pressures during peak construction. Second, a Traffic Management Plan is essential to ensure that increased vehicle movements, particularly during peak construction, do not compromise road safety or disrupt local traffic patterns. Finally, a Bushfire Emergency Operations Plan is recommended to enhance preparedness and response capacity, safeguarding both the workforce and the

surrounding community from fire-related risks. These strategies are critical to managing risks proactively while maximising local benefits throughout the Project lifecycle.

Accommodation and Employment Opportunities

Historical evidence from the Finley Solar Farm shows peak construction workforces were successfully housed across these localities with bused transfers to site. The Project estimates generation of 60 FTE during the peak construction period as compared to 200 FTE that was required for the construction of Finley Solar Farm which was commissioned in 2019. It is also noted that 60 FTE are expected for a relatively short time (three to four months), with the remainder and majority of the construction period expected to require around 20-30 FTE.

To reduce accommodation pressure, the Applicant will prioritise hiring local contractors and workers. This strategy is expected to reduce the need for accommodation. However, considering the insufficient workforce availability in the region, it is anticipated that a substantial portion of the estimated 60 FTE construction workers will need to be sourced from outside the area.

To mitigate potential impacts on housing and accommodation within the Project's social locality, it is recommended that an AES be developed in consultation with local Councils and key stakeholders. The AES should:

- Propose measures to ensure an adequate supply and availability of accommodation for both construction and operational workforces.
- Prioritise accommodation options that minimise adverse social impacts on local communities, particularly those related to housing affordability and availability for existing residents.
- Collaborate with the Council and local stakeholders to undertake an inventory of under-utilised buildings that could be repurposed as temporary workforce accommodation.
- Facilitate the employment of local residents wherever feasible, including through the use of locally registered contractors who may already employ a local workforce. This approach can reduce the need for importing labour and minimise accommodation pressure.
- Engage with education and training providers such as TAFE to identify local skills gaps and sponsor upskilling or certification programs aligned with Project workforce needs, contributing to regional capacity building.
- Develop and implement workforce behaviour and safety policies, including clear expectations for conduct while in transit, on-site, in accommodation, and when interacting with local communities.
- Where possible, coordinate with community liaison officers or representatives from other renewable energy or major infrastructure projects in the region to ensure a harmonised approach to workforce management and minimise cumulative impacts on local housing, services, and businesses.

The AES would be informed through:

- Desktop analysis of ABS and SQM Research data and grey literature to develop social baselines; understand the occupancy and rental vacancy rates within the region.
- Three to five semi-structured interviews with accommodation providers, real estate, Council, First Nations, and business communities.

The AES will explore the following and reflect commitments from the Applicant:

- Review existing demographic, workforce, and housing data for the Berrigan Shire LGA, and adjoining towns and localities.
- Analysis of available housing and accommodation stock, including hotels, motels, caravan parks, and informal options (e.g., short-term rentals, private dwellings).
- Assess the regional labour market capacity, including current skills availability, unemployment rates, and local business capabilities.
- Define expected workforce numbers for each phase of the Project (construction, operation, decommissioning).
- Consult with local councils, service providers, Chambers of Commerce, housing managers, and community organisations to:
  - Understand current constraints and opportunities
  - Gauge community concerns and aspirations
  - Identify existing workforce development initiatives or partnerships
- Assess the cumulative impacts on workforce accommodation and employment.
- Analyse peak workforce demands and how it compares with other projects approved or in planning stage in the region.
- Develop and recommend workforce accommodation and mitigation strategies.

Traffic Management Plan

Though, Traffic Impact Analysis, including SIDRA intersection modelling and cumulative project reviews, found minimal impact on the local road network, it recommended a development of Traffic Management Plan. The recommendation was drawn to ensure safe, efficient movement and account for cumulative project impacts.

The Traffic Management Plan should:

- Identify designated haulage routes that minimise disruption to residential areas and sensitive land uses, using roads rated for B-Double vehicles.
- Schedule construction traffic movements to avoid peak local traffic hours, particularly during school times and commuting periods.
- Implement signage and speed restrictions near the Project site and along key access roads to enhance safety for road users and construction personnel.
- Coordinate with local councils and transport authorities (e.g. Berrigan Shire Council, Transport for NSW) to align with regional infrastructure planning and road maintenance schedules.
- Monitor and manage cumulative traffic impacts, particularly from other nearby developments such as the Berrigan and Finley BESS projects.
- Develop a communication plan to inform local residents and road users about traffic changes, including advance notice of major vehicle movements.
- Include measures for emergency vehicle access and unimpeded travel during all construction phases.

The Traffic Management Plan should be reviewed and updated regularly, subject to the Project's refinements and changes in the community structure and vehicular traffic during the construction, operation and decommission phase of the Project.

Bushfire Emergency Management and Operation Plan

The Preliminary Hazard Assessment concluded that given the Project's scale, infrastructure layout, and separation from neighbouring land uses, any exposure to fire-related risks would primarily affect the construction and operational workforce. The assessment concluded that there is negligible potential for offsite fatalities or injuries, and thus the Project complies with relevant land use planning criteria. Overall, the fire-related risks are deemed acceptable under ALARP conditions.

However, the analysis recommended for the development of Bushfire Emergency Management and Operation Plan. The management plan should:

- Detailed measures to prevent or mitigate fires igniting
- Work that should not be carried out during total fire bans
- Availability of fire-suppression equipment, access and water
- Storage and maintenance of fuels and other flammable materials
- Notification of the local NSW RFS Fire Control Centre for any works that have the potential to ignite surrounding vegetation, proposed to be carried out during a bush-fire fire danger period to ensure weather conditions are appropriate
- Appropriate bush fire emergency management planning.

6. Conclusion

The SIA has included the development of a social baseline profile for the Project area, consolidated the outcomes of community consultation to inform the assessment of Project-related social impacts and opportunities, and provided preliminary social impact management planning. The impact evaluation has supported ongoing refinement of Project design with the aim of minimising negative impacts and maximising positive social outcomes.

The Project aligns with NSW's broader renewable energy policy directions and seeks to contribute to the State's clean energy transition. The SIA has concluded that identified negative social impacts, such as increased pressure on accommodation services due to incoming construction workforces, concerns about road safety, concerns about risks of fire, and visual changes, can be mitigated through appropriate management measures. At the same time, there are opportunities to enhance positive impacts, such as employment generation, diversifying local economy, and upskilling the local workforce.

SREA has already initiated several key social impact management measures, including the development of a Community Benefit Sharing Program and a commitment to prepare an Accommodation and Employment Strategy. Should the Project proceed, additional strategies will be required to manage traffic and access disruptions during construction.

It is important to acknowledge that many of the social impacts identified are cumulative in nature. Their effective management will require ongoing collaboration with key stakeholders, such as relevant state agencies, local councils, community groups, service providers, and other renewable energy developers active in the region.

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Appendix A: Stakeholder mapping undertaken for the Project

Stakeholder category	Organisation	Outcome
First Nations	Cummeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council	First Nations representative from the Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation was consulted by the Project engagement team and interviewed during the scoping phase.
	Bangerang Aboriginal Corporation (BAC)	
Industry	Finley Chamber of Commerce (FCC)	Project engagement and SIA team met with representatives of Finley Chambers of Commerce. Engagement team also consulted Murray Irrigation
	NSW Department of Primary Industries	
	NSW Office of Water	
	NSW Farmers Association	
	National Parks and Wildlife	
	Murray Irrigation	
	Department of Agriculture	
Regulators and Elected Members	Berrigan Shire Council	Project engagement and SIA team consulted with officials from the Berrigan Shire Council, both during the scoping and EIS phase. Representative was also interviewed during the Project's scoping phase.
	Local MP	
	Federal MP	
Service Deliverers	Sureway Employment and Training	Approached TAFE Finley and Schools for interview. A representative from TAFE NSW was interviewed to identify the potential of upskilling courses.
	CGVT Australia	
	Southern Riverina News	
	Edge FM 102.5	
	TAFE Finley	
	Finley High School	
	Finley Public School	
	St Joseph's Primary School	
	Rural Fire Service	
NGOs and Interest Groups	Finley Men's Shed	Emailed President of Rotary Finley through their 'contact us' page. Tried to reach out to Lions Club but received no responses.
	Rotary Club	
	Lions Club	
	Cobram Barooga Business and Tourism	
	Apex Club	
	Country Women's Association	
	Finley Football and Netball Club	

Stakeholder category	Organisation	Outcome
Impacted Landholders		Project engagement and SIA team consulted near neighbours during the scoping as well as EIS phase.

Appendix B: Community Profile Data Set

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

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin SAL	Berrigan SAL	Finley SAL	Tocumwal SAL	Berrigan Shire LGA	NSW
Population (n)	7,432	1,264	2,455	2,862	8,665	8,072,121
Female (%)	51.4	51.4	50.9	50.9	50.8	50.6
Male (%)	48.6	48.6	49.1	49.1	49.2	49.4
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population (%)	5.3	2.8	4.9	2.1	3.0	3.4
Median age (years)	47	55	51	59	52	39
0-14 years (%)	16.6	13.6	16.2	14.1	15.4	18.2
65+ years (%)	25.9	33.3	30.1	39.9	32.6	17.6
Country of birth (Australia) (%)	83.7	83.5	79.8	73.5	82.1	65.4
English only used at home (%)	87.7	88.1	84.3	87.6	87.2	67.6

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin SAL	Berrigan SAL	Finley SAL	Tocumwal SAL	Berrigan Shire LGA	NSW
Households - non-English language is used (%)	3.8	3.3	4.4	3.2	4.1	29.5
Mental health condition	10.4	9.7	11.7	9.4	10.0	8.0
No long-term health condition(s) (%)	49.7	46.4	42.2	45.5	47.4	61.0
Year 12 or equivalent (%)	10.2	9.8	10.5	9.6	10.5	14.5
Certificate 3-4/Diploma (%)	16.7	15.4	16.3	18.4	17.1	12.2
Bachelor degree and above (%)	11.7	9.9	10.8	9.5	10.5	27.8
Family households (%)	63.3	65.6	63.2	65.2	66.3	71.2
Single (or lone) person household (%)	34.3	32.9	34.4	32.7	31.6	25.0
Median household income ($/week)	$1,221.00	$980	$1,066	$1,067	$1,128	$1,829.00

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin SAL	Berrigan SAL	Finley SAL	Tocumwal SAL	Berrigan Shire LGA	NSW
Separate house (%)	89	89.2	91.1	90.6	90.2	65.6
Owned outright (%)	40.4	48.0	45.0	52.2	46.5	31.5
Owned with a mortgage (%)	29.7	24.2	29.3	25.0	28.0	32.5
Rented (%)	25.9	20.5	21.8	16.3	19.5	32.6
Median mortgage repayment ($/month)	$1,083.00	$933	$953	$1,300	$1,207	$1,863.00
Median rent ($/week)	$230.00	$173	$175	$250	$225	$420.00
IRSAD decile**	3	2	2	3	4	N/A
In the labour force (%)	54.4	45.7	50.9	41.4	48.7	58.7
Employed full-time (%)	57.8	58.1	56.3	54.7	55.5	55.2
Employed part-time (%)	32.1	31.0	32.6	36.4	34.3	29.7
Unemployed (%)	3.9	3.4	3.5	2.7	3.1	4.9
Professionals (%)	15.6	9.7	12.5	13.1	12.4	25.8

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Deniliquin SAL	Berrigan SAL	Finley SAL	Tocumwal SAL	Berrigan Shire LGA	NSW
Managers (%)	13.5	22.9	19.5	17.6	19.0	14.6
Clerical & administrative workers (%)	11.9	10.1	9.9	10.5	10.7	13.0
Technicians & trades workers (%)	14.0	12.2	12.3	15.8	13.5	11.9
Labourers (%)	11.3	15.7	13.8	14.2	14.9	8.2
Community & personal services workers (%)	14.6	9.9	14.4	10.6	11.8	10.6
Sales workers (%)	8.7	5.4	6.8	8.1	7.3	8.0
Machinery operators & drivers (%)	7.3	11.2	8.6	8.1	8.5	6.0

*For the UCLs and SAL 4, the SAL deciles have been provided.

**IRSAD: Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage; IEO: Index of Education and Occupation; decile 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest)

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

Indicator (%) ABS 2021 Census	1	2	3	4	5

Deniliquin SAL	Other Social Assistance Services (4.8)	Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals) (3.9)	Supermarket and Grocery Stores (3.6)	Primary Education (3.4)	Local Government Administration (3.0)
Berrigan SAL	Aged Care Residential Cervices (7.0)	Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming (6.4)	Other Grain Growing (5.0)	Local Government Administration (5.0)	Sheep Farming (Specialised) (3.3)
Finley SAL	Dairy Cattle Farming (7.8)	Aged Care Residential Cervices (6.3)	Secondary Education (3.9)	Primary Education (3.7)	Other Grain Growing (3.3)
Tocumwal SAL	Supermarket and grocery stores (4.9)	Aged Care Residential Cervices (3.8)	Cheese and Other Dairy Product Manufacturing (3.5)	Accommodation (3.0)	Local Government Administration (3.0)
Berrigan Shire LGA	Aged Care Residential Services (4.8)	Supermarket and Grocery Stores (3.4)	Cheese and Other Dairy Product Manufacturing (3.3)	Dairy Cattle Farming (3.2)	Primary Education (3.0)
NSW	Hospitals (except Psychiatric Hospitals (4.2)	Supermarket and grocery stores (2.5)	Other Social Assistance Services (2.4)	Computer System Design and Related Services (2.3)	Aged Care Residential Services (2.2)

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