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Prepared for Mangoplah BESS Pty Ltd

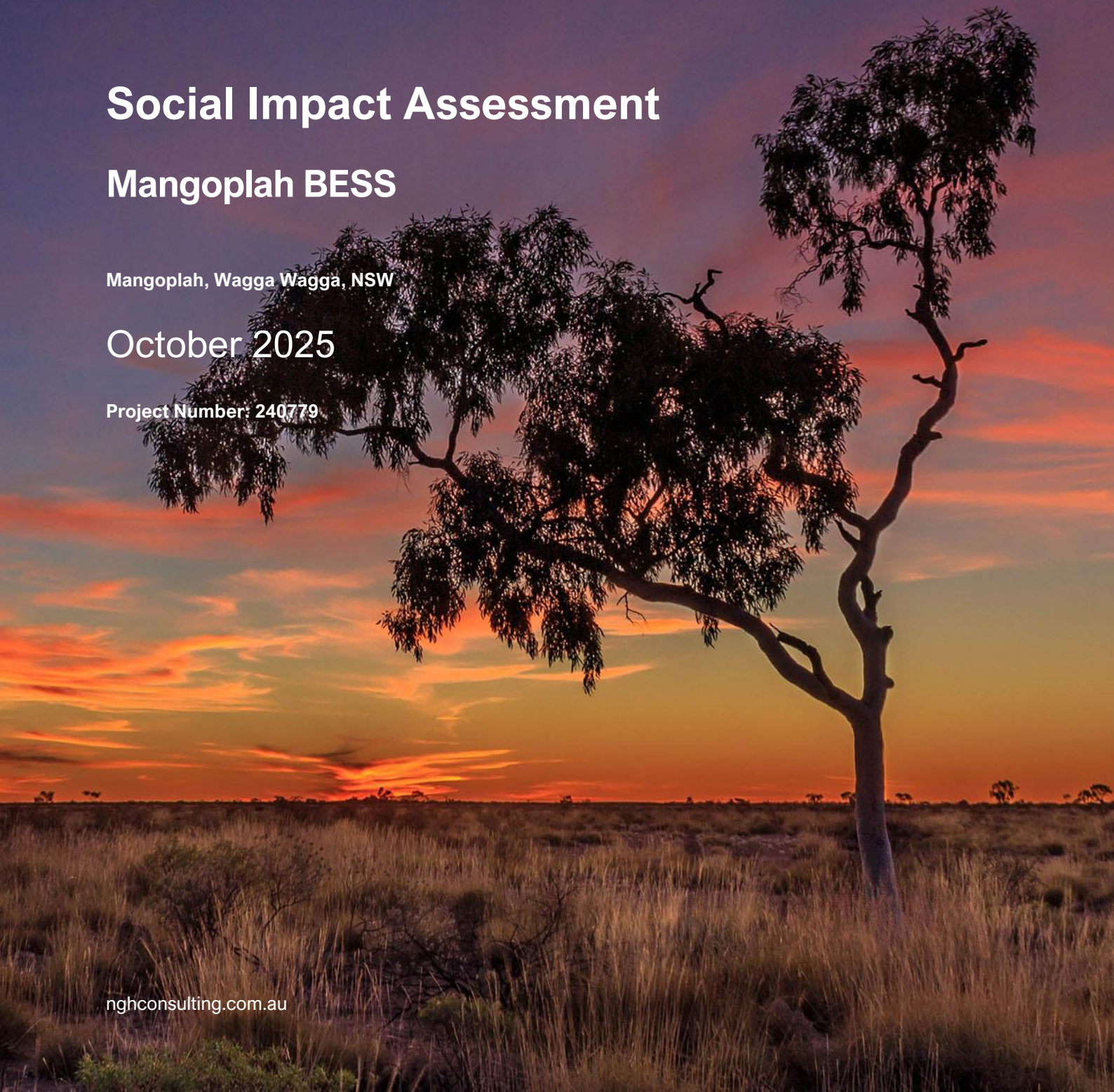
Social Impact Assessment

Mangoplah BESS

Mangoplah, Wagga Wagga, NSW

October 2025

Project Number: 240779



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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
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW)
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (NSW) (formerly DPE)
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
EIS	Environmental impact statement
EP Act	*Environmental Protection Act 1994* (Qld)
EP&A Act	*Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
EPBC Act	*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth)
ha	hectares
km	kilometres
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LGA	Local government area
m	metres
MW	Megawatt
NEM	National Electricity Market
P&E Act	*Planning and Environment Act 1987*
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
SAL	Suburbs and Locality
SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SREA	Samsung C&T Renewable Energy Australia
UCL	Urban Centres and Locality

Executive summary

The Mangoplah Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (the Project) is proposed by Samsung C&T Renewable Energy Australia Pty Ltd (SREA) as part of New South Wales' broader clean energy transition. The Project is located in Mangoplah in the Wagga Wagga Local Government Area, NSW, and will have a storage capacity of 100 MW/400 MWh. It is proposed in a predominantly rural, agriculturally-focused community characterised by strong intergenerational ties, productive farmland, and a high value placed on landscape amenity and social cohesion.

The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) establishes a baseline profile for the project area, draws on extensive community consultation, and evaluates the potential social changes and opportunities across the project lifecycle.

Approach

The SIA process followed NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure guidelines, combining desktop research, demographic analysis, and qualitative and quantitative community engagement. Surveys, interviews, and community information sessions were used to capture local perspectives on livelihoods, community cohesion, accessibility, health and wellbeing, environmental surroundings, and decision-making systems. The assessment also considered cumulative impacts arising from other current and planned developments in the region.

Social Impacts

The assessment found that the most significant potential impacts for the Project relate to livelihoods, community cohesion, landscape character, and perceptions of fairness in decision-making and benefit-sharing. On the positive side, the Project presents opportunities for local employment, skills development, economic stimulus, and regional investment. However, concerns remain about cumulative effects from multiple nearby renewable projects.

Employment impacts were noted during the stakeholder discussions. The Project is expected to create approximately 60 jobs during construction and 1–2 ongoing operational roles, yet there is community scepticism about whether these positions will be filled by local residents. The temporary nature of most roles, combined with a limited local pool of skilled labour, may limit direct benefits. Additional barriers include substance testing requirements and mismatches between available skills and project needs. Nonetheless, stakeholders identified opportunities for targeted training and work-readiness programs, particularly for Aboriginal people, youth, and the long-term unemployed, to maximise local participation.

Economic diversification and resilience were emphasised as important community priorities. The Project could generate indirect benefits through increased demand for accommodation, food services, retail, and logistics, providing flow-on effects to local businesses. However, equitable access to these opportunities is a concern. Stakeholders called for transparent procurement processes and prioritisation of local suppliers. There is also the risk of community division if benefits are perceived to accrue primarily to a small group of landholders or businesses. Inclusive and accountable benefit-sharing arrangements were seen as critical for avoiding resentment and fostering community trust.

Housing availability and affordability were identified as key pressures. While some rental capacity exists in Wagga Wagga, surrounding rural areas have low vacancy rates. An influx of non-local workers, especially if construction coincides with other projects in the region, could increase competition for limited accommodation and displace vulnerable residents. Early planning for temporary workforce housing and engagement with local councils and housing providers were identified as necessary measures to prevent negative housing impacts.

Community wellbeing concerns centred on traffic disruption, fire and flood risks, and the cumulative mental health impacts of ongoing development. While not widely perceived, these concerns reflect broader unease about changes to rural character and lifestyle. Residents close to the site raised specific objections to the visual impact of the Project and its potential to devalue properties. They also expressed concerns about the risk of fire emerging from the batteries and spreading outward, as well as the implications for insurance should a fire from adjoining properties affect the Project. In addition, residents noted that the site is prone to flooding and were concerned that floodwaters could spread contamination from the facility to surrounding areas. Collectively, these issues are perceived by the community to contribute to a potential reduction in surrounding property values. Addressing these issues will require careful landscape design, effective communication, and accessible grievance mechanisms.

Perceptions of procedural fairness were another area of high sensitivity. Several community members reported consultation fatigue, having participated in multiple engagement processes for different projects without perceiving tangible local benefits. They emphasised the need for transparent decision-making, clear timelines, and consistent follow-through on commitments. Genuine involvement in planning and implementation phases is regarded as essential to maintaining the Project's social licence to operate.

Social Impact Management

To mitigate identified risks and enhance positive outcomes, mitigation and management measures is proposed. These include the preparation of a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to ensure ongoing, transparent, and responsive dialogue with residents, local councils, service providers, and other stakeholders.

Development of specific strategies such as an Accommodation and Employment Strategy, Traffic and Access Management Plan, Bushfire Emergency Operations Plan, and Flood Risk and Containment Management Plan will help to maximise local participation and manage potential project-related impacts.

While the Project has the potential to generate benefits for the Mangoplah region particularly in local employment, training, and supply chain opportunities, as well as community benefits consistent with local priorities to be instituted through a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA), it also presents risks relating to housing pressures, visual amenity changes, cumulative fire and flood concerns, and community cohesion. Managing these risks will require early engagement, transparent decision-making, and tailored mitigation strategies to ensure benefits are distributed fairly and equitably across the community.

1. Introduction

NGH has been engaged by Samsung C&T Renewable Energy Australia (SREA) on behalf of Mangoplah BESS as Trustee for Mangoplah BESS Pty Ltd (The Applicant) to complete a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the Mangoplah 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). The Applicant is seeking approval under the EP&A Act and Schedule 2 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021 to construct and operate the Project.

This SIA responds directly to the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued for this Project by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) on 27 November 2024, which state the following is required (DPHI, 2024, pp. 7 & 8):

> "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, local workforce 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 to the Benefit Sharing Guideline 2024 and Private Agreement Guideline 2024."

The SIA is analysed within the eight broad categories identified in the SIA Guidelines (DPHI, 2025a, 2025b), and the economic assessment is discussed as part of the SIA in relation to the potential impacts of the Project on economic diversification and employment generation.

1.1. Project description

SREA is pursuing development approval for a 100 MW BESS located 4178 Holbrook Road, Mangoplah NSW 2652. The Project is located approximately 30.6 km south of Wagga Wagga within the Wagga Wagga Local Government Area (LGA). 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.

The proposed Project involves the construction, operation, and decommissioning of a BESS with a capacity of up to approximately 100 megawatts (MW) / 400 megawatt-hours (MWh), providing up to four hours of storage. The BESS would supply electricity to the National Electricity Market (NEM), primarily during peak demand periods.

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 be required.

1.1.1. Project location

The Project Site is not located within a designated Renewable Energy Zone (REZ); however, it lies approximately 200 kilometres southeast of the Southwest REZ. The town of Mangoplah, situated 3.1 kilometres west of the Project Site, sits on the eastern periphery of the Southwest REZ and is one of the closest settlements to its boundary. Other nearby localities include The Rock (17.8 km northwest), Big

Springs (13.1 km northeast), and Westby (15.4 km southeast). Livingstone National Park is situated approximately 2.5 kilometres northeast of the Project Site (Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2).

The Project will have a total development footprint of approximately 13.5 hectares, with the operational Project facility occupying less than 4 hectares. There are no state-listed heritage items within the immediate vicinity of the Project Site. However, the historic Scots Uniting Church, a locally listed heritage item, is located in Mangoplah. The site is currently used for agricultural activities, primarily cropping.

According to the NSW Land and Soil Capability (LSC) Scheme (DPHI, 2025a), the entire Project Site and surrounding area is classified as Class 4 land. This classification denotes 'moderate capability land.' This category is described 'Moderate capability land' which is "Land has moderate to high limitations for high-impact land uses. Will restrict land management options for regular high-impact land uses such as cropping, high-intensity grazing and horticulture. These limitations can only be managed by specialised management practices with a high level of knowledge, expertise, inputs, investment and technology" (see NSW OEH, 2012, p. 10).

1.1.2. Project stages and timing

The Project will be undertaken in four distinct phases: site-establishment, construction, operation and decommissioning.

The construction period is expected to commence in 2027 and take approximately 12-15 months, with the peak construction of battery infrastructure expected to approximately take six months. The Project is expected to be in operation from 2028 for approximately 20 years, after which it will either be repowered or decommissioned, and the land will be restored.

1.1.3. Workforce

The Project is expected to generate 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 Project is anticipated to sustain up to two ongoing full-time equivalent (FTE) roles, as it will primarily be remotely operated.

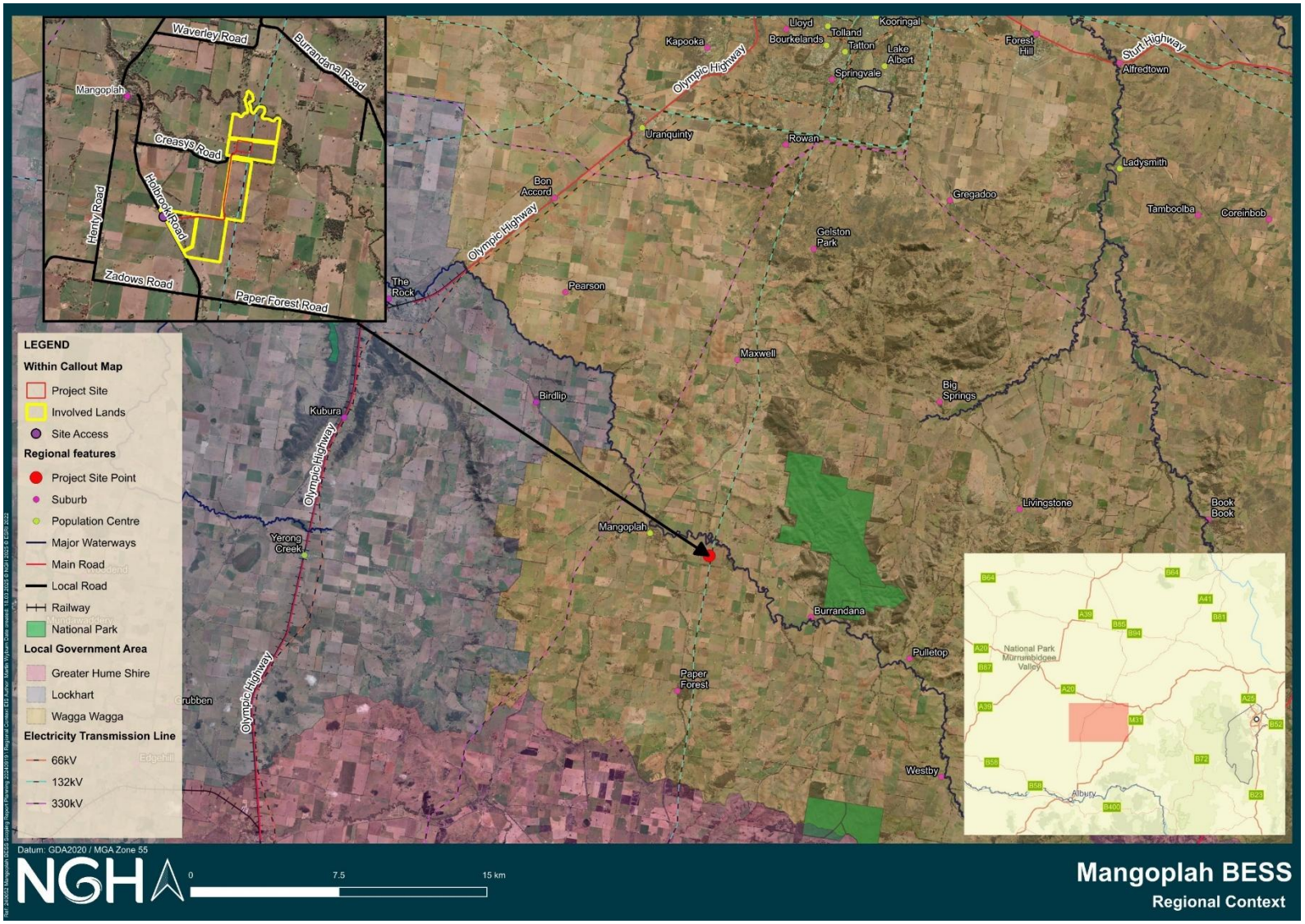

Figure 1-1 Map showing Project location in the region with adjoining towns and suburbs

Figure 1-2 Map showing social locality

1.2. Structure of SIA

Consistent with the principles set out in the NSW SIA Guideline, 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 Evaluation** – 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.

1.3. Limitation

This SIA has been prepared using the best available information at the time of writing. However, this SIA is subject to several limitations relating to data availability and the evolving nature of social and economic conditions within the region:

- The assessment was undertaken using desktop research, data analysis, and a site visit conducted in March 2025.
- The baseline context presented in this report is derived primarily from publicly available grey literature, including strategic plans, community profiles, and reports published by the local Council and other relevant regional agencies.
- Statistical data are primarily drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 Census. While these data provide a useful reference point, they may not accurately reflect the current socio-economic conditions and should be interpreted as indicative only.
- Where more recent data were available at the time of writing, such information has been included in the report and appropriately cited.
- Rental vacancy rates and rental cost data presented in the assessment reflect conditions at the time of writing and are based on monthly data maintained by SQM Research. These figures are subject to regular fluctuation and may not represent longer-term trends.
- Identified social impacts are based on qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews and community engagement activities conducted during both the Scoping Phase and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Phase of the Project. While this provides valuable insight into community perspectives, the findings may not be exhaustive or fully representative of all views within the affected population.
- The SIA relies on the accuracy and completeness of information contained in the technical studies completed for the Project EIS. As such, any inaccuracies or omissions in those documents may influence the findings presented in this assessment.

These limitations should be considered when interpreting the assessment findings and their implications for social impact management.

2. Methodology

The approach to conducting this SIA is aligned with the NSW SIA Guideline (DPHI, 2025a) and accompanying Technical Supplement (DPHI, 2025b). This section describes the methodology used to assess social impacts associated with the proposed Project.

2.1. Overview of approach

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'*

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 methodology followed a structured, multi-stage approach consistent with best-practice guidelines and regulatory requirements. Three interrelated phases: establishing the social baseline and defining the locality; undertaking targeted community consultation and stakeholder engagement; and conducting impact assessment and management, as shown in Figure 2-1, informed the findings and recommendations of this SIA.

Each phase built on the outcomes of the previous, ensuring the findings were evidence-based, locally relevant, and reflective of community perspectives. An impact significance matrix was applied to assess social impacts, taking into account the nature, scale, duration, and reversibility of change, along with the vulnerability and resilience of affected communities. The assessment also considered cumulative, indirect, and perceived impacts.

The methodology was guided by the NSW SIA Guidelines and aligned with best-practice principles of inclusivity, transparency, and responsiveness to local context. The detail of each phase is described in the sections that follows.

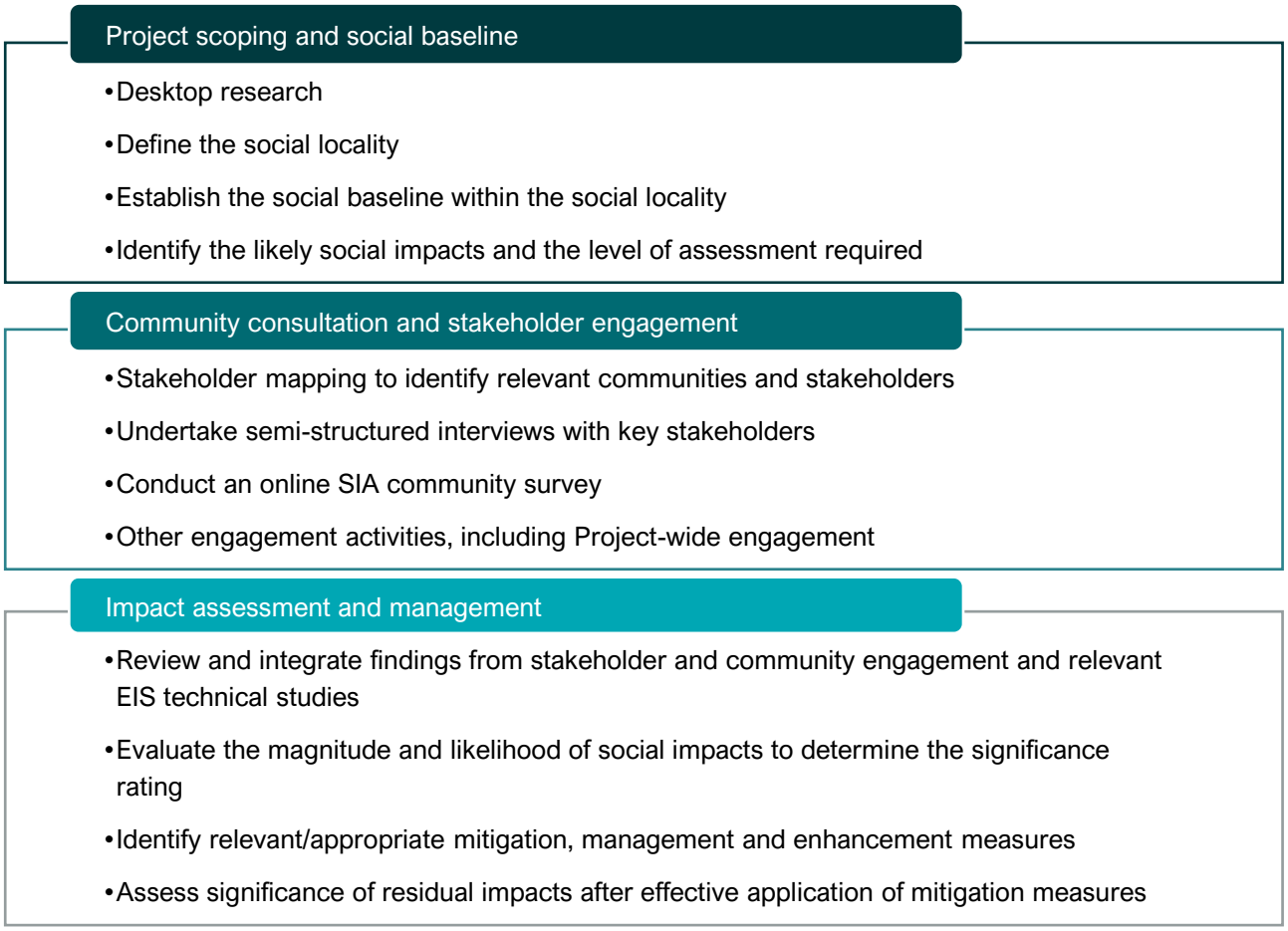

Figure 2-1 Overview of SIA methodology (*Adapted from NSW SIA Guidelines and IAIA Guidance Note*)

Aligned with the structure presented in Figure 2-1, the SIA applied a mixed-methods approach that integrated desktop research, community engagement, observational insights, and quantitative data analysis (Figure 2-2).

Baseline information was primarily sourced from publicly available grey literature, including ABS (2021) data, local council reports, and regional planning documents. Where more recent data was available at the time of reporting, such as housing trends and rental vacancy rates, it was incorporated to improve relevance and accuracy.

Quantitative data complemented qualitative insights, particularly in identifying what communities value, their overall attitudes toward the Project, and their views on benefit-sharing mechanisms. This included survey findings and available social research to understand community priorities, expectations, and areas of concern.

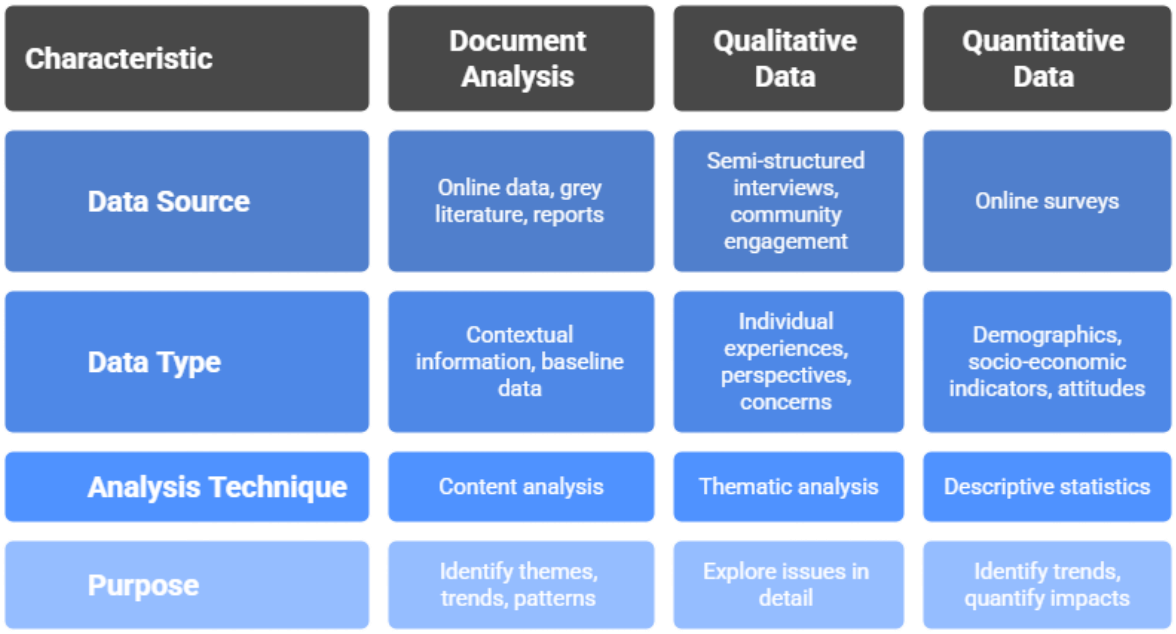

Figure 2-2 Data collection and analysis methods adopted for the assessment

Consistent with the NSW SIA Guideline, perceived potential social impacts identified during the assessment were assigned to eight key categories (Table 2-1). Each category captures a specific dimension of social life potentially affected by the Project, allowing for a structured and comprehensive analysis of impacts. This categorisation ensures that both tangible and intangible effects on individuals, communities, and their environments are systematically considered and assessed.

Table 2-1 Social impact categories

Social impact categories	Description
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.

Social impact categories	Description
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.

2.1.1. Project scoping and social baseline

The Project scoping phase (August to November 2024) provided initial insight into the Project's social context and the potential positive and negative impacts of the Project. Furthermore, the scoping phase identified the level of assessment required during the EIS phase against each perceived potential social impacts. The key potential benefits and impacts of this Project and their associated level of assessment to be undertaken as part of this full SIA were identified in the Project scoping phase.

During scoping, the level of assessment required was identified as a split between **standard** and **detailed** assessment against each potential impact, requiring the collection and analysis of the following secondary data and primary data in conducting the social baseline for this assessment:

- Desktop research and a comprehensive review of existing documents, data sources, and relevant plans and strategies to establish a foundational understanding of the Project context, defining the social locality, the social baseline and to inform the impact assessment.
- Targeted SIA consultation, as well as Project-wide community consultation activities, with findings integrated into the assessment. These consultation activities contributed to an understanding of the community's attitudes toward the Project, perceived social impacts, and supported the development of appropriate mitigation measures for this assessment.

In addition, the assessment draws on findings from the following technical assessments undertaken for the Project EIS informed this assessment:

- Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
- Bush Fire Assessment Report
- Flood Impact Assessment
- Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment
- Construction & Operational Noise & Vibration Assessment
- Preliminary Hazard Assessment
- Social Technical Report
- Traffic Impact Assessment
- Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report.

Social Locality

The social locality, or sphere of influence, defines the geographic and social boundaries within which the social baseline is completed, and 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 (DPHI, 2025a).

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.

Consistent with Project scoping, the following localities are considered of high importance to the Project and form the key areas of focus within the social baseline and impact assessment:

- Host and adjacent/near neighbour properties.
- Localities/townships likely to be impacted and/or benefit from the Project: Mangoplah Suburbs and Locality (SAL)
- Wagga Wagga City Council LGA
- Major towns/cities providing core services to these localities/townships: Wagga Wagga City
- The existing networks of travel, the main transportation corridors, and infrastructure and service hubs in the region.

2.1.2. Community consultation and stakeholder engagement

Targeted SIA community consultation and stakeholder engagement activities undertaken 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 EIS phase, also informed this assessment. This included:

- *Scoping engagement sessions:* Feedback was gathered and analysed over an eight-week period through multiple channels, including in-person conversations with approximately 10 community members across three property visits, two meetings with Council and the Wagga Business Chamber, and two online meetings with Members of Parliament
- *Community information sessions:* One community drop-in session held in Mangoplah on Tuesday, 01 April and Wednesday, 02 April 2025 (approximately 70 attendees). The information sessions were designed to share information about the Project. 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 EIS.

Stakeholder mapping

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

This process expanded upon the Project-wide stakeholder mapping conducted at the outset of the EIS phase, which aimed to identify stakeholders with an interest in the Project, those who may be directly or indirectly impacted, and any potentially vulnerable or marginalised groups within the community (refer to Chapter 5 of the Project EIS for further detail).

Table 2-2 Targeted SIA stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder category	Organisation	Engagement approach
Impacted landholders		Interviews conducted with impacted landholders.
First Nations	Mewang Gaway	Three First Nations stakeholders were interviewed during the scoping phase. One First Nations stakeholder interviewed in the EIS Stage.
	Bundyi Cultural Tours	
	Bidya Marra Consultancy	
	Wagga Local Aboriginal Land Council	
	Education Services International Supply Group Pty Ltd (ESI)	
Industry	NSW Department of Primary Industries	One stakeholder was interviewed during the scoping phase. Two stakeholders interviewed in the EIS Stage.
	NSW Office of Water	
	NSW Farmers Association	
	Industry Capability Network	
	Department of Agriculture	
	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	
Regulators and elected members	Local Member of Parliament	Attended a meeting with a local Member of Parliament, together with the Project's engagement team.
	Federal Member of Parliament	
	Wagga Wagga City Council	
Service deliverers	TAFE Wagga	Two stakeholders were interviewed during the scoping phase.
	Charles Sturt University	
	Wagga Wagga High School	
	Mount Austin High School	
	Indi School	
	Riverina Anglican College	
	Kooringa High School	
	Rural Fire Service	
NGOs and interest groups	Solar Professionals	Two stakeholders were interviewed during the scoping phase.
	Riverina Sustainable Food Alliance	

Stakeholder category	Organisation	Engagement approach
	Eunony Valley Association	
	Wagga Men's Shed	
	Lion Club	
	Subset Probus Club	
	Apex Club	
Vulnerable groups	Country Women's Association	

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, as well as to inform the social impact evaluation, mitigation and enhancement measures.

Interview data from scoping phase as well as EIS phase is analysed to identify the potential social impacts of the Project. A total of 11 stakeholders were interviewed at scheduled appointment times to inform an in-depth understanding of the perceived potential social impacts of the Project. Additional stakeholders were also interviewed at the community information sessions attended by the assessment team.

Interview data was transcribed, and thematic analysis was performed to categorise impacts within the social impact categories shown in Table 2-1.

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 between 27 March 2025 and 30 April 2025, for the EIS phase.

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.

A total of 56 survey responses were received.

2.1.3. Impact assessment and management

Following the detailed review of relevant inputs including findings from stakeholder and community engagement activities, technical reports prepared for the Project EIS and insights from comparable studies, the impact evaluation process was conducted, including 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.

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 (Table 2-3). 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.

This structured methodology allows for transparency and consistency in impact evaluation and helps prioritise mitigation strategies aligned with community needs and expectations.

Table 2-3 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	Low	Medium	High	High
D	**Unlikely**	Negligible	Low	Low	Medium	High
E	**Very unlikely**	Negligible	Negligible	Low	Medium	Medium

3. Social baseline

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic and environmental dynamics of the Riverina region. It begins with an overview of the broader regional context, narrows to the Wagga Wagga City Local Government Area (LGA), and concludes with a focused profile of Mangoplah. Unless otherwise specified, all population and demographic data are sourced from ABS (2021) Census.

Table 3-1 presents key comparative statistics for the Riverina region, Wagga Wagga City LGA, and the locality of Mangoplah. It provides an overview of key statistics between the broader region and Mangoplah. The data highlight Mangoplah's significantly smaller population and geographic scale, as well as its notably higher median income and absence of recorded unemployment at the time of the 2021 Census. These figures offer a contextual baseline for understanding the social and economic characteristics of the study area.

Table 3-1 Key statistics of the Riverina region, Wagga Wagga City LGA, and Mangoplah (SAL)

Key Statistics:	Locality		
	Riverina	**Wagga Wagga City LGA**	**Mangoplah (SAL)**
Area	80,545 sq km	2,066 sq km	220 sq km
Population	163,656	67,609	291
Median weekly household income	$1,480	$1,638	$2,075
Unemployment rate	3.8%	4.0%	0.0%
Indigenous population	6.6%	6.6%	3.4%

Together, these dynamics highlight a region that is both economically strategic and socially complex. The interplay between agricultural legacy, demographic transitions, Aboriginal inclusion, and infrastructure-led growth shapes the baseline conditions for social impact in the Riverina region.

3.1. Regional Context: Riverina Region

The Riverina region in southern NSW encompasses a vast area of approximately 80,000 square kilometres, characterised by a mix of rural towns, agricultural plains, and strategic transport corridors. The region includes numerous LGAs such as Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Albury, and others defined by the Murray River to the south and the Murrumbidgee River running through its centre. As one of Australia's key agricultural and freight hubs, its central location between Sydney, Melbourne, and Canberra reinforces its strategic importance to both regional development and national logistics networks (DPE, 2023).

Economically, the Riverina is a diverse and productive region. The Gross Regional Product (GRP) of Riverina and Murray Region was $12.01 billion in the year ending June 2024, growing 1.4% since the previous year (.idcommunity, 2025a), supported primarily by agriculture, food manufacturing, education, health care, construction, and a growing renewables sector (NSW Planning & Environment, 2017). The Riverina is a major agricultural region extending from the Snowy Mountains' foothills northwest through the Murrumbidgee River catchment to the plains of Hay and Carrathool. It is one of the most productive agricultural zones in NSW, underpinned by extensive dryland and irrigated farming. The Murrumbidgee River is central to this

productivity, supporting the Murrumbidgee and Coleambally Irrigation Areas (MIA and CIA), which together contribute over a quarter of NSW's fruit and vegetable output and are among Australia's leading bulk wine exporters. Key agricultural activities include rice cultivation, wheat and canola production, and livestock grazing.

3.1.1. Socio-economic planning context

The regional economy is undergoing structural transitions. Traditional sectors like broadacre farming and livestock continue to underpin the local economy, but there is increasing diversification into value-added agriculture, food technology, education, and renewable energy. Notable projects such as the Inland Rail and associated Special Activation Precincts (SAPs) are fostering investment in freight, logistics, and industrial development. In particular, the Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics (RiFL) hub in Wagga Wagga is a transformative project, enhancing the region's connectivity to ports and national markets (NSW Government, 2023).

Additionally, the establishment of the South-West Renewable Energy Zone (SW REZ) is positioning the region as a key player in the transition to low-carbon energy infrastructure, with associated infrastructure investments such as EnergyConnect and HumeLink further enabling this growth (DPE, 2023).

Land-use planning across the region is guided by the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (DPE, 2023), which seeks to enable productive and innovative growth through the protection and enhancement of natural assets, improved transport and infrastructure connectivity, and investment in emerging industries such as renewable energy.

The plan also prioritises the integration of Aboriginal culture, heritage, and aspirations into local planning processes. Housing affordability and supply are highlighted as critical issues, particularly in light of anticipated population growth along the Murray River corridor. The plan supports the region's transition to a net zero carbon future by 2050, including the establishment of the South-West Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). Objective 13 of the plan explicitly emphasises support for this transition as a regional priority (p. 58).

Demographically, the region is home to 163,656 residents (ABS, 2021), with a projected population growth of 14.5% by 2036 (Regional Development Australia, 2018). While some towns and peri-urban centres are growing, much of the region faces challenges associated with an ageing population and rural depopulation, particularly in smaller agricultural communities. These demographic shifts have implications for regional service delivery, workforce availability, and housing demand. Population growth is largely concentrated around regional centres and the NSW–Victorian border, although the region faces notable demographic challenges, including an ageing population, rising unemployment, persistent job vacancies, and an acute shortage of rental housing (Edward River Council, 2022).

The region holds strong Aboriginal cultural significance. It is home to several Traditional Owner groups, including the Wiradjuri, Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wamba, Barapa Barapa, and Mutthi Mutthi peoples. The Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041 (DPE, 2023) explicitly recognises Aboriginal aspirations, aiming to embed culture, heritage, and self-determination into planning and land use decision-making.

Additionally, there are several regional Aboriginal Organisations and services in the region, including: The Riverina Aboriginal Medical & Dental Service, Aboriginal Legal Service – ACT/NSW Legal Services, Australian Unity – Aboriginal Home Care Provider, Wagga Wagga Local Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group, Clontarf Program for Boys – Mount Austin High School, Ashmont Community Centre, Ngurra Community Hub, Tolland Neighbourhood Centre and the Kooringal Neighbourhood Centre (Riverina Murray Regional Alliance, n.d.). These organisations oversee matters related to Aboriginal communities residing within the LGA and manage land holdings in alignment with the revitalisation and preservation of cultural heritage and values (DPE, 2023).

The Riverina is experiencing tightening housing markets. Rental vacancy rates have dropped below 1% since 2020 across many towns, including Wagga Wagga and Griffith, with increasing weekly rents and pressure on available housing stock (SQM Research, 2025). These pressures are exacerbated by workforce shortages across healthcare, construction, and education sectors. According to RDA Riverina (2023), labour shortages and skill mismatches are among the most pressing issues, with ageing populations and regional out-migration further constraining the labour pool.

3.2. Local Context: Wagga Wagga City LGA

Wagga Wagga is the largest inland regional city in NSW and the principal urban centre of the Riverina region. It is located approximately 455 kilometres south-west of Sydney and 452 kilometres north-east of Melbourne (City of Wagga Wagga, 2024a). Wagga Wagga serves as a strategic hub for commerce, logistics, education, and health for the region.

The LGA spans 4,825 square kilometres with broad-based and resilient economy, anchored by defence, agribusiness, education, healthcare, and public administration, with growing momentum in advanced manufacturing, renewables, and tourism. Culturally, Wagga Wagga is situated on Wiradjuri Country and has a strong First Nations presence, supported by active reconciliation commitments, cultural centres, and community initiatives. The city's identity is deeply intertwined with its natural environment, including the Murrumbidgee River, open parklands, and growing investments in amenity and active transport. Annual events, cultural festivals, and an expanding culinary scene contribute to a vibrant community life.

The socio-economic planning context of the Wagga Wagga LGA is shaped by a comprehensive alignment of regional, local, and sector-specific strategic frameworks aimed at fostering inclusive growth, enhancing infrastructure, and diversifying the economy. The LGAs 'Local Strategic Planning Statement: Planning for the future Wagga Wagga 2040' sets out the strategic priorities for the LGA within the eleven guiding principles grouped under three strategic themes: the environment, a growing economy, and community place and identity. The plan refers to Wagga Wagga as the 'capital of Southern NSW' (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2020, p. 29) and anticipates that the LGAs population will rise to 100,000 by 2038, and require an additional 14,000 homes to meet the expected population growth (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2020).

A cornerstone of the city's economic planning is the *Wagga Wagga Special Activation Precinct* (WWSAP), strategically located on the Inland Rail corridor. This initiative aims to transform Wagga Wagga into a nationally significant freight, agribusiness, and advanced manufacturing hub through the integration of the Riverina Intermodal Freight and Logistics (RiFL) Hub. The precinct is forecast to support the creation of up to 6,000 new jobs, with development progressing through the delivery phase under the guidance of the Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation (NSW Government, 2023).

According to the Council's 2023 Economic Snapshot, more than $15 billion of infrastructure projects are slated for construction in the Wagga Wagga LGA and the surrounding Riverina/Murray region over the next 5 to 10 years. Some of the projects include Hume Link (electricity transmission upgrade from Wagga to near Goulburn), Energy Connect (electricity interconnect to South Australia), parts of Snowy Hydro 2.0, the Inland Rail Project, East/West Riverina renewable energy parks (wind and solar) and the WWSAP (City of Wagga Wagga, 2023). This high volume of major projects may indicate that it will be competitive to hire locally in the region due to major infrastructure projects targeting similar skills.

The 2023 Economic Snapshot further highlights Wagga Wagga's Gross Regional Product at $5.64 billion, with health care, construction, and education identified as the dominant employment sectors (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2023). Wagga Wagga functions as a key demographic centre for regional economic development. Its strategic position and growing service profile underscore its importance in shaping the socio-economic trajectory of the Riverina.

However, its rapid development trajectory also raises key social considerations including housing availability, equitable service delivery, cultural preservation, and governance inclusivity. The following sections explore the LGA's social baseline in terms of demographics, livelihoods, infrastructure, community identity, and environmental setting.

3.2.1. Demographic and Settlement Characteristics

Wagga Wagga City LGA is the most populous jurisdiction in the Riverina region, recording 67,609 residents at the 2021 Census (ABS, 2021) and increased to 68,716 as of 2023 (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2024). The population is projected to increase by nearly 20% by 2050 (City of Wagga Wagga, 2025a). This accounts for over 40% of the Riverina's total population, reinforcing the city's role as both a demographic and service nucleus for southern NSW. However, the population growth rate of the Wagga Wagga LGA between 2023 and 2024 was estimated at 0.36%, which is much lower than the NSW state of 1.06% over the same period (.idcommunity, 2025b).

Notably, the city has a younger demographic profile compared to the broader region, with a median age of 35 years versus 39 years across NSW and national median of 38 years (ABS, 2021). This relatively younger population is shaped by the city's educational institutions, defence training presence, and health sector employment, all of which attract students, early-career professionals, and skilled tradespeople. Settlement patterns within the LGA are concentrated in the urban core of Wagga Wagga, which houses the majority of the population, services, and institutions. However, this core is complemented by a diverse locality of smaller rural areas and villages such as Collingullie, Currawarna, Galore, Humula, Ladysmith, Mangoplah, Oura, Tarcutta, and Uranquinty (City of Wagga Wagga, 2024). These peripheral areas reflect the city's dual identity: an urban centre embedded within a largely agricultural and low-density landscape. This peri-urban dynamic also creates planning and infrastructure challenges, particularly in balancing urban consolidation with the preservation of rural character and services.

Culturally and historically, Wagga Wagga is located on Wiradjuri Country, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population constitutes a growing proportion of the community. As of 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 6.6% of the LGA's population, well above the state average of 3.4% (ABS, 2021).

Overall, Wagga Wagga's demographic and settlement profile is defined by sustained population growth, youthful composition, spatial diversity, and strong cultural heritage. These characteristics provide both opportunities and complexities in terms of future urban planning, service delivery, and community cohesion.

3.2.2. Economic Activity and Livelihoods

As of 2024, Wagga Wagga had an estimated population 6,079 local businesses and a total of 37,553 employed residents. The number of local jobs was recorded at 39,530. The Gross Regional Product (GRP) of the LGA in 2024 was $5.64 billion (.idcommunity, 2025b). Wagga Wagga recorded a total workforce of approximately 34,679 people, with an unemployment rate of 4.0% in the 2021 Census, lower than the state average of 4.9% (ABS, 2021).

In 2023/24, Manufacturing was the leading export sector in Wagga Wagga City, generating an estimated $949 million in total exports (.idcommunity, 2025b). Export figures includes both domestic and international exports. The strength of manufacturing exports highlights the sector's significant role in the regional economy and its contribution to trade beyond local boundaries.

In the same year, Manufacturing also accounted for the highest total imports by industry, valued at approximately $1,522 million. The high volume of manufacturing imports indicates the sector's strong

dependence on external supply chains to support local production and economic activity. The LGAs Gross Regional Product in 2024 was $7.217 billion.

The residents in the LGA have a median household income of $1,638, less than the NSW average of $1,829. The ABS's Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) provides a rating of the socio-economic conditions of LGAs across Australia. Wagga Wagga City received a score of 7 (out of a possible 10) in the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, where 1 is the lowest rating. This indicates that the LGA is in the top 30% of LGAs in Australia in terms of socio-economic advantage.

The largest industry overall, by employment, is Health Care and Social Assistance. Health Care and Social Assistance accounts for 7,417 local jobs or 18.8% of all employment in 2023/24 (.idcommunity, 2025b). In total, the three largest industries, Health Care and Social Assistance, Construction (4,413 jobs or 11.2%), and Education and Training (4,385 jobs or 11.1%), comprised 41.0% of the city's workforce. It must be noted that similar data presented in Appendix A may not be consistent with those presented here as it is based on the ABS (2021) data.

Table 3-2 compares the concentration of employment across key industry sectors in Wagga Wagga City with the NSW average and summarises recent workforce growth trends. Wagga Wagga shows a higher share of employment in essential services and public sector roles, and a lower share in professional and financial services compared to the state average. Between 2018/19 and 2023/24, the largest employment gains were recorded in Health Care and Social Assistance, Construction, and Education and Training, reflecting strong growth in service-based and skilled trade sectors (.idcommunity, 2025b).

Table 3-2 Comparison of Wagga Wagga LGA and NSW employment

Industry	Wagga Wagga	NSW
Health Care and Social Assistance	18.8%	15.3%
Construction	11.2%	9.7%
Education and Training	11.1%	8.5%
Public Administration and Safety	10.5%	6.1%
Professional and Insurance Services	4.1%	10.1%
Financial and Insurance Services	1.4%	5.3%

3.2.3. Housing and Accommodation

According to the NSW Council of Social Service (DPIE, 2023), the Wagga Wagga region faces critical housing shortages and limited affordable housing options. Housing costs in Australia generally have increased at a greater rate than incomes for decades, exacerbating the issue.

Since SQM Research (2025) does not maintain rental vacancy rate data at the LGA level, trends have been assessed using two geographic proxies: the broader Riverina region and Wagga Wagga (postcode 2650):

- In the Riverina, the rental vacancy rate fell from 2.0% (approximately 500 vacancies) in January 2021 and has remained below 1.0% since, reaching 0.9% (207 vacancies) in June 2025.
- In Wagga Wagga (Postcode 2650), the vacancy rate was 1.5% (100 vacancies) in January 2021. It has since remained under 1.5%, falling to 0.6% (52 vacancies) by June 2025.

These persistently low vacancy rates reflect sustained pressure on the rental market and a chronic shortage of available housing in the region.

The weekly rents in the Riverina region have shown a steady upward trend since 2010, with more rapid increases observed from 2020 onward (SQM Research, 2025). As of July 2025, the average weekly rent was $497.40 for “all houses” and $397.90 for “all units.” In Wagga Wagga (postcode 2650), rents were slightly higher than the regional average, with weekly rents of $538.70 for “all houses” and $432.00 for “all units.” The trajectory of rent increases in Wagga Wagga has closely mirrored the broader pattern across the Riverina, reflecting tightening rental supply and growing housing demand.

Property prices have also surged. Weekly asking property prices in the Riverina region remained relatively stable for over a decade before experiencing sharp increases in recent years. From 2010 to 2022, the median asking price for “All Houses” stayed below $300,000. However, from 2022 onwards, prices rose rapidly, reaching $649,627 by July 2025. Similarly, the price for “All Units” remained within $200,000 until 2022, after which it increased sharply to $405,909.60 by July 2025. These trends reflect tightening housing supply and rising demand across the region.

3.2.4. Social Infrastructure and Services

Wagga Wagga functions as a critical regional centre within the Riverina, with the tourism, education, and health sectors forming integral components of its socio-economic fabric. The LGA has articulated a clear ambition to enhance its position as a premier inland destination through the expansion of its visitor economy.

In 2024, Wagga Wagga recorded approximately 1.2 million visitors and $374 million in direct visitor expenditure (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2024). The release of the *Plan your 2025 Wagga Wagga + Surrounds visit* (City of Wagga Wagga, 2024b), encompassing over 160 tourism listings, along with targeted marketing campaigns, reflects an active effort to diversify and strengthen the tourism offering, including nature-based attractions, Wiradjuri cultural experiences, boutique retail, and food and wine trails. These initiatives align with strategic goals outlined in the Destination Management Plan 2025–2034 (City of Wagga Wagga, 2025b), which sets an aspirational target of 1.55 million annual visitors.

At present, an estimated 1,946 jobs are supported by the tourism sector, primarily within the accommodation and food services industries. In parallel, Wagga Wagga serves as a key regional education hub, comprising approximately 138 educational institutions, including four university campuses, nine high schools, 29 primary schools, 35 pre-schools, and 61 childcare services (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2023).

Notable institutions include Charles Sturt University, TAFE NSW, the University of New South Wales, and a range of Defence-affiliated education and training centres. The LGA’s investment in workforce development is evidenced by its employment of 28 apprentices, trainees, and cadets in 2023/24, and the promotion of vocational pathways through school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2024). In the domain of health, Wagga Wagga’s significance is underscored by its central role in the Murrumbidgee Health and Knowledge Precinct and the ongoing Health Service Redevelopment. Initiatives such as the inaugural Regional Health Innovation Showcase and a suite of community health programs, including mental health training, aquatic safety education, and family wellbeing activities, illustrate the city’s commitment to fostering a resilient, inclusive, and health-supportive environment.

3.2.5. Cultural Values and Community Identity

Wagga Wagga is situated on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri people and maintains a vibrant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community (AIATSIS, 2025). The name of the City was derived from the language of the Wiradjuri people, the largest Aboriginal Nation in NSW (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2021).

Additionally, Wagga Wagga has many local significant sites including Wollundry Lagoon & Tony Ireland Park, Wiradjuri Reserve & Gobba Beach, Bomen Lagoon, Bomen Axe Quarry and Flowerdale Lagoon. They have all been declared Aboriginal Places by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) in the Wagga Wagga

area (Riverina Murray Regional Alliance, n.d.). Furthermore, Wagga Wagga has a delegate in the Riverina Murray Regional Alliance (RMRA), a regional governance structure to coordinate the provision of Aboriginal services in the Riverina Murray Region as a response to the closing of Aboriginal affairs in Wagga Wagga (Riverina Murray Regional Alliance, n.d.).

The cultural life of the city is rich and multifaceted. Community identity is reinforced through public investment in arts, culture, and events. Key institutions include the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, Museum of the Riverina, and Civic Theatre, which host diverse programming and exhibitions year-round (City of Wagga Wagga, 2025b).

Community festivals, including multicultural celebrations, NAIDOC Week, and local markets, help foster cohesion and a sense of belonging across Wagga's increasingly diverse population. The LGA is also home to a growing number of residents born overseas, with over 12% of the population speaking a language other than English at home (ABS, 2021).

Sport also plays a central role in community life, with rugby league, cricket, and AFL particularly prominent. Wagga Wagga's identity as the "City of Good Sports" is reinforced by its history of producing elite athletes and its investment in community-level sporting infrastructure.

These expressions of identity are closely tied to place. The Murrumbidgee River, local parks, and bushland reserves provide spaces for social connection, cultural practices, and recreation, contributing to a strong sense of place. As the city grows, cultural heritage and community character remain central considerations in planning, governance, and infrastructure investment.

3.2.6. Surrounding: Environment, Amenity and Public Safety

Wagga Wagga's environment and amenity play a critical role in shaping the wellbeing, identity, and liveability of the community. The city is located on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River and features an extensive natural landscape of riparian corridors, wetlands, urban forests, and green open spaces. These environmental features support recreational opportunities, biodiversity, urban cooling, and visual amenity.

The city also includes prominent open space assets such as Lake Albert, Willans Hill Reserve, and the Wiradjuri Trail, a 42km walking and cycling track that loops around the city and riverfront. These natural and constructed assets contribute to both environmental values and residents' quality of life. The Destination Management Plan highlights the potential for nature-based tourism and regional trails as part of broader amenity strategies (City of Wagga Wagga, 2025b).

Environmental risks remain a consideration in the LGA. These include flood hazards, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and urban heat island effects. The city is exposed to flooding along the Murrumbidgee floodplain, requiring active riverbank stabilisation, stormwater upgrades, and integrated floodplain management strategies (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2024). Council's actions align with broader state policy directions under the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041, which emphasises landscape resilience, sustainable land use, and the protection of environmental assets.

As Wagga Wagga continues to grow, planning for environmental and amenity outcomes is increasingly integrated into local governance. Ensuring equitable access to high-quality public spaces, protecting biodiversity corridors, and mitigating climate risks are recognised as essential for maintaining liveability and community resilience. However, public safety in Wagga Wagga presents a mixed picture.

According to the Wagga Wagga 2050 Community Strategic Plan, "reduction in crime" (City of Wagga Wagga, 2025a, p. 31) is reported as one of the important component of "what people want to see in the future." Wagga Wagga's public safety landscape reflects a mix of positive trends and emerging concerns. While several categories of property and drug-related crime show downward trends, certain offences remain elevated compared to the NSW average, suggesting a need for targeted local responses (BOCSR, 2025).

For instance, domestic violence-related assaults remain stable but occur at a rate 1.6 times the NSW average. Sexual assaults have increased by 6.7% annually over the past decade, with intimidation, stalking, and harassment growing by 14.5% in the past two years according to the data maintained by NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSR, 2025). In contrast, property crimes such as break and enter (–11.5%) and motor vehicle theft (–6.7%) have declined, yet malicious damage to property rose by 7.0% and is nearly double the state average.

Community safety also plays a significant role in shaping environmental amenity and perceptions of liveability. Wagga Wagga City Council has invested in enhancing public safety through initiatives such as the Safer Cities Program, which includes lighting upgrades, CCTV installations, and public space improvements (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2024). The city also benefits from strong emergency response systems, including multiple police stations, a regional fire service, and State Emergency Service (SES) operations. Community-led programs and neighbourhood initiatives further support social cohesion and local resilience in the face of natural and social risks.

3.2.7. Governance and Decision-Making Systems

Public engagement is a core part of the city's planning approach. Mechanisms for community input include online surveys, town hall sessions, planning exhibitions, and stakeholder forums. According to the Wagga Wagga 2050 Community Strategic Plan, community satisfaction survey indicated that 80% of residents were satisfied with Council's communication and engagement, with slightly lower levels of satisfaction in areas related to responsiveness and transparency at 74% (City of Wagga Wagga, 2025a). This highlights both strong community interaction and areas for continuous improvement.

As Wagga Wagga continues to grow amid infrastructure pressures and demographic change, its governance systems are increasingly focused on inclusivity, transparency, and regional collaboration. The community strategic plan indicates that the Council is involving communities in decision-making with 67% of the respondent's expressing satisfaction with community input in Council decision-making.

3.3. Locality Context: Mangoplah SAL and Surrounding Areas

Mangoplah is a small rural locality situated approximately 30 kilometres south of Wagga Wagga in the Riverina region of NSW. With a population of 291 recorded in the 2021 Census, Mangoplah is characterised by its strong agricultural identity, close-knit community, and proximity to other regional centres. It lies 3.1 kilometres west of the proposed project site, making it the most immediately adjacent settlement.

Other localities in the surrounding area include Big Springs to the northeast and The Rock to the northwest, both of which are small in scale, as well as the larger urban centres of Wagga Wagga and Albury-Wodonga. Table 3-3 provides an overview of the township and locality populations within the vicinity of the Project Site, along with their respective distances from it.

Table 3-3 Proximal townships and localities, and population

Township/Locality	Distance from Project Site	Population (2021)
Mangoplah SAL	3.1km west	291
Big Springs SAL	13.1km northeast	135
The Rock SAL	17.8km northwest	1,347
Wagga Wagga UCL	30.6km north	49,686
Albury-Wodonga	80.91km south	97,793

While the social and economic conditions of all surrounding townships and localities, including Mangoplah, could have been addressed collectively under the broader assessment of the Wagga Wagga Local LGA, a separate analysis has been undertaken for Mangoplah given its proximity to the proposed Project site.

Accordingly, a brief assessment of Mangoplah is provided, alongside an accommodation overview for each of the proximal townships and localities, to offer a broader understanding of housing availability and workforce-related infrastructure in the immediate region.

3.3.1. Demographic and Settlement Characteristics

The community is relatively older than the broader LGA and regional averages, with a median age of 47 years compared to 35 in Wagga Wagga and 39 in the wider Riverina region and statewide (Appendix A). This demographic pattern suggests a degree of ageing in place, consistent with trends observed in many small regional communities across Australia.

The area has an average household size of 2.8 people, and an average of 2.9 motor vehicles per dwelling, reflecting a car-dependent, regional lifestyle. Indigenous Australians comprise 3.4% of the population, aligning with regional patterns, as per the ABS (2021) data. Most households are family-based, and English is overwhelmingly the dominant language spoken at home, with 95.8% of residents reporting exclusive use of English. Over 93% of the population was born in Australia, suggesting a relatively homogenous cultural profile in contrast to more diverse urban centres (ABS, 2021).

Despite its small size, Mangoplah contributes to the broader agricultural productivity of the Riverina. Its settlement characteristics, such as low density, ageing population, high homeownership, and limited-service base, underscore its role as a traditional rural locality within the peri-urban fabric of Wagga Wagga. These attributes also imply potential vulnerabilities, including ageing workforce, declining youth retention, and limited local access to services, which are important considerations for future planning and social impact assessment.

3.3.2. Economic Activity and Livelihoods

Mangoplah is a small, agriculturally rooted community. Table 3-4 presents key economic statistics for Mangoplah SAL, highlighting the primary occupational and industrial characteristics of the locality. The data show a predominantly agricultural workforce, with the largest proportion of residents employed as Managers (36.9%), many of whom are likely engaged in family-owned or operated farms.

Key industries of employment include specialised beef cattle farming, sheep farming, and grain-livestock mixed farming, underscoring the locality's strong dependence on primary production.

The median weekly household income in Mangoplah is relatively high at $2,075, well above the NSW figure of $1,829, reflecting the economic contribution of agricultural enterprises and associated occupations. Together, these statistics paint a picture of a mature, higher-income rural community, characterised by strong agricultural ties and stable housing expenditure.

Table 3-4 Key economic statistics Mangoplah SAL (ABS, 2021)

Key economic statistics – Mangoplah SAL	
Top occupation:	1. Managers (36.9%) 2. Professionals (18.1%) 3. Machinery Operators and Drivers (10.6%) 4. Labourers (10.6%)

	5. Technicians and Trades Workers (10.0%)
Industry of employment:	1. Beef Cattle Farming (Specialised) (10.0%) 2. Sheep Farming (7.5%) 3. Grain-Sheep or Grain-Beef Cattle Farming (5.6%) 4. Road Freight Transport (4.4%) 5. Sheep-Beef Cattle Farming (3.8%)
Median weekly household income	$2,075

3.3.3. Housing and Accommodation

At the time of the 2021 Census, Mangoplah recorded a total of 117 private dwellings, of which 13 were unoccupied. Residential vacancy rates in the township, identified under postcode 2652, have remained low since 2017, fluctuating between 0% and 3.2%.

As of June 2025, the vacancy rate stood at 2.4% (SQM Research, 2025), corresponding to an estimated four unoccupied dwellings. Although this represents a comparatively higher vacancy rate than that of the nearby urban centre of Wagga Wagga (postcode 2650), where the rate was 0.6% in the same period, the absolute number of available dwellings in Wagga Wagga was significantly higher, with 52 properties listed as vacant. This contrast reflects the limited housing stock in Mangoplah and suggests a tighter accommodation market in absolute terms, despite the proportionally higher vacancy rate.

Table 3-5 provides a comparative overview of unemployment rates and rental vacancy trends across selected townships and localities proximal to the project area. This summary, extracted from ABS (2021) and SQM Research (2025) offers contextual insight into local labour market conditions and housing availability, both of which are critical for understanding community capacity and potential pressures associated with workforce accommodation.

Table 3-5 Rental vacancy rates and vacancies of proximal township/locality

Township/Locality	Postcode	Unemployment	Rental Vacancy
Mangoplah SAL	2652	0%	Mangoplah's residential vacancy rate peaked at 3.2% in January 2017, after which it fluctuated but generally remained below 2.4%. Temporary increases above this were observed in February and April 2018, and more recently in May 2025. As of June 2025, the vacancy rate was 2.4%, corresponding to an estimated four vacant dwellings.
The Rock SAL	2655	2.5%	The residential vacancy rate has not followed a consistent pattern over time, instead exhibiting irregular fluctuations. At times, the rate has spiked to around 4% for instance, in parts of 2019, while in other months it has dropped sharply to 0%. This volatility includes instances where the vacancy rate rose to 3% in one month and fell to 0% the next, reflecting the locality's small and sensitive rental market. As of June 2025, both the vacancy rate and the number of vacant dwellings stood at 0.

Big Springs SAL	2650	0%	Since January 2018, when the residential vacancy rate reached a high of 4.5%, the rate has shown a consistent downward trend, remaining below 1.5% for the majority of the period. As of June 2025, the vacancy rate stood at 0.6%, corresponding to 52 available dwellings, indicating a persistently tight rental market despite a relatively large housing stock.
Wagga Wagga UCL		4.6%	
Albury UCL	2640	4.2%	Since 2018, when the residential vacancy rate was recorded at 3.0%, it experienced a steady decline, reaching a low of 0.6% in February 2022. Following this period, the vacancy rate began to gradually rise. As of June 2025, the vacancy rate stood at 1.0%, equating to approximately 52 available rental properties.
Wodonga	3690	4.7%	The vacancy rate peaked at 2.4% in February 2016, after which it gradually declined, reaching an all-time low of 0.4% in July 2020. Since then, the vacancy rate has remained consistently below 0.8%, reflecting sustained pressure in the rental market. As of June 2025, the vacancy rate stood at 0.5%, corresponding to approximately 25 vacancies.

More recent data on the labour force in the Wagga Wagga City LGA indicates that 1.4% of residents were unemployed and actively seeking full-time employment as of 2025 (REMPLAN, 2025). While this suggests relatively low unemployment in the region, there is limited publicly available information on the specific skill sets present in the local workforce. This gap presents challenges for assessing the alignment between available labour and potential project-related employment opportunities, particularly in specialised or technical roles.

3.3.4. Social Infrastructure and Services

The spatial structure of Mangoplah reflects its historic development as an agricultural service locality, with key facilities including a community hall, recreational grounds, and basic services supporting a dispersed population.

While services are limited locally, residents typically rely on Wagga Wagga for access to education, health, retail, and other essential services. Daily travel for work, schooling, and supplies is thus common, illustrating a dependence on regional centres for socio-economic functioning.

Community identity in Mangoplah is expressed through informal support networks, longstanding volunteerism, and collective participation in local institutions such as the Mangoplah Hall, the Mangoplah-Cookardinia United-Eastlakes Football & Netball Club, and rural fire services (Wagga Wagga City Council, 2024). These institutions serve as key anchors for social interaction, reinforcing a sense of belonging and intergenerational continuity. Events hosted at the community hall and sporting grounds not only foster local cohesion but also link residents to neighbouring localities, reinforcing regional rural solidarity. The presence of active sporting and volunteer groups also reflects Mangoplah's broader contribution to the civic life of the Wagga Wagga LGA.

3.3.5. Cultural Values and Community Identity

Mangoplah exhibits a strong rural identity rooted in its agricultural history, generational land ownership, and tight-knit social networks. As a long-established farming community, the locality's cultural values are closely aligned with the rhythms of land-based livelihoods and community resilience.

The social fabric of the village is deeply embedded in collective memory, family ties, and shared community spaces, reflecting a settled population that is closely connected through place-based identities and shared histories.

3.3.6. Surrounding: Environment, Amenity and Public Safety

Land use in Mangoplah is primarily zoned for agricultural purposes, with low environmental disturbance due to the absence of industrial development or major transport infrastructure. This rural setting contributes significantly to the locality's amenity, offering residents clean air, low noise levels, and access to open spaces that reinforce perceptions of tranquillity and quality of life.

The local topography offers elevated views, farming landscapes, and native bushland, contributing to the visual appeal of the locality. While formal recreation infrastructure is limited, natural amenity supports a range of informal activities such as walking, bush recreation, and rural sports. Although the environmental conditions are generally favourable, Mangoplah, like many rural settlements is exposed to natural hazards, particularly bushfire and drought.

Emergency response services in Mangoplah are primarily provided through local volunteer-based networks, commonly including a Rural Fire Service presence, though an official listing for Mangoplah RFS is not directly published by the NSW RFS.

3.4. Renewable Energy Development in Wagga Wagga Development

Strategically, the Riverina hosts the Southwest Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), which is expected to generate significant employment, enhance energy reliability, and support energy-intensive sectors such as advanced agriculture and manufacturing.

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

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

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

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

The REZ declaration will likely further concentrate renewable energy development in the Riverina region. Already, there are several solar and wind developments in the area, including the Gregadoo Solar Farm, Livingstone Solar Farm, Belhaven BESS and Bomen Solar Farm (operational).

State-significant Projects within the Wagga Wagga City Council Area are outlined in Table 3-6. It presents a selection of major energy and infrastructure projects located within or near the Wagga Wagga Local LGA that are relevant to the broader development context of the Project. These projects include solar farms, transmission upgrades, interconnector developments, and freight infrastructure initiatives. Their proximity to the proposed Project Site ranges from 21 to 40 kilometres, with most currently in various stages of environmental assessment or determination.

The Table 3-6 highlights the cumulative development landscape in which the Project will be situated, indicating the growing regional momentum toward renewable energy and infrastructure integration. It must be noted that section 7 of the Project's EIS lists 13 projects within the 50km of the Project sites, two of which are reflected as withdrawn.

Table 3-6 Proximal State Significant Developments

Project	LGA	Proximity to the Project	Stage of delivery (As of June 2025)
Gregadoo Solar Farm	Wagga Wagga City	25km	Determination
Livingstone Solar Farm	Wagga Wagga City	21km	Prepare EIS
Hume Link	Wagga Wagga City	n/a	Determination
Belhaven BESS	Wagga Wagga City	24km	Prepare EIS
Project EnergyConnect	Balranald Shire - Wagga Wagga City	n/a	Determination
Inland Rail - Albury to Illabo	Albury - Greater Hume Shire – Wagga Wagga City - Junee	n/a	Determination
Bomen Solar Farm	Wagga Wagga City	40km	Operational
Arundle BESS	Wagga Wagga City	40km	Scoping
Wagga North BESS	Wagga Wagga City	50km	Exhibition
Burkes Creek Solar Farm	Wagga Wagga City	25km	Approved
Maxwell Downs Solar Farm	Wagga Wagga City	25km	Scoping

4. Social Impact Evaluation

This section presents the SIA for the proposed Project. The SIA evaluates the anticipated social changes that may result from the Project and identifies strategies to enhance potential benefits while avoiding, minimising, or mitigating adverse impacts for local communities and stakeholders. The assessment considers both direct and indirect impacts across all stages of the Project lifecycle, from planning through construction, operation, and eventual decommissioning. It aims to ensure that changes to the existing social baseline are managed transparently, equitably, and in a way that supports long-term community wellbeing and trust.

The social context of the proposed Project is defined by a community whose identity is deeply rooted in the land, agricultural livelihoods, and close-knit social networks. Engagement feedback and survey responses highlight pride in productive farming, multi-generational family ties, mutual assistance, and the stewardship of natural resources. These attributes promote a strong sense of place, resilience, and self-reliance, while also shaping how potential changes are interpreted and acted upon.

The demographic profile of survey respondents, dominated by residents living within 10 km of the site and with more than two-thirds aged 45 or older, reflects enduring connections to place and lived experience of rural change. The community places high value on open landscapes, native vegetation, and prime agricultural land, recognising these as vital not only for their economic returns but also for their ecological, cultural, and aesthetic importance.

Overall, 91% of survey respondents expressed some level of opposition to the Project, with the majority (84%) strongly opposing it. Only one respondent (N=56) expressed strong support, while 6% were neutral (Figure 4-1).

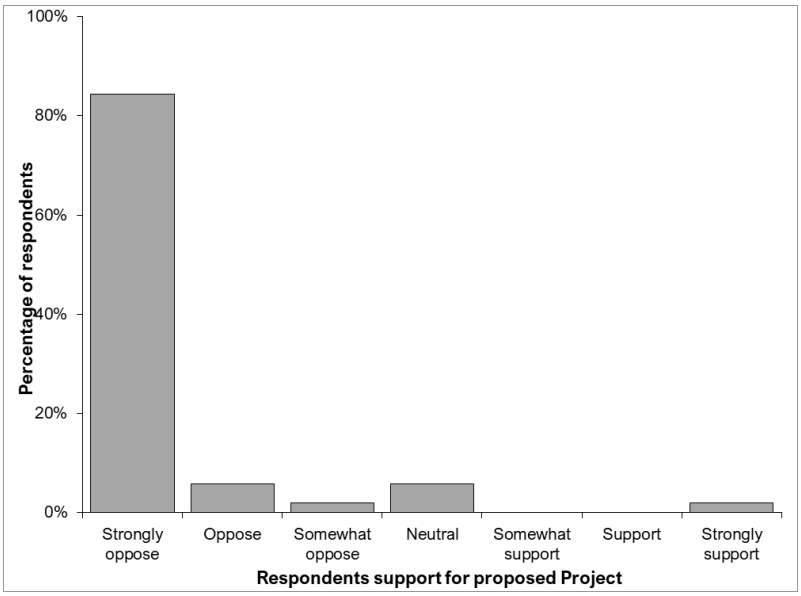

Figure 4-1 Survey respondents' opinion about the Project

Among those strongly opposing the Project, all respondents living more than 10 km from the site expressed strong opposition, compared with ~66% of those living within 1–5 km and ~64% of those living within 5–10 km (Table 4-1). Notably, the data suggest that, proportionally, respondents living further from the Project site were more likely to strongly oppose it than those living closer. All those with a neutral opinion were located within 1–10 km of the Project site.

Table 4-1 Survey respondents by proximity to the Project site and number strongly opposing the Project

Location of respondents from Project site	Number of Respondents	
	Total	Strongly Oppose
Less than 1 km	6	4
1-5 km	22	14
5-10 km	17	15
More than 10 km	8	8
Other	3	2

Against this backdrop, concerns extend beyond tangible economic or environmental effects to include perceived threats to rural character, lifestyle, and intergenerational continuity. Property values, farming viability, biodiversity, waterways, and visual amenity are recurrent priorities, alongside broader apprehensions about industrialisation and the erosion of local autonomy. Levels of trust in the proponent are low, and many residents feel excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making.

The word cloud (Figure 4-2) visualises attributes respondents are "most proud of within" their locality. Overall, it illustrates the community that values productive agriculture, familial support, and environmental stewardship, and one that is likely to engage with development proposals through the lens of social resilience and place-based identity.

Prominent terms such as "farming," "community," "family," "land," and "agriculture" reflect the deep-rooted importance of rural livelihoods, intergenerational ties, and land-based identity. Furthermore, words such as "resilience," "support," "together," and "help" suggest a close-knit, cooperative community characterised by mutual assistance and social cohesion.

Figure 4-2 Word cloud illustrating the attributes respondents are most proud of within their community

As such, the potential for social impacts is greatest when the Project is perceived to affect core community values, highlighting the need for respectful engagement, clear communication, and benefits that align with local priorities. The impacts, which are categorised within the eight impact categories, are discussed in the section that follows. Though some respondents expressed concern about cultural heritage (Figure 4-3), this appears to be a general sentiment. Further probing during follow-up interviews did not reveal any specific cultural heritage issues, nor did any open-ended survey responses provide additional detail or examples. This suggests that while the topic registered as a concern for some participants, it was not substantiated through qualitative feedback in the consultation process.

The way of life impact category is not presented as a standalone topic in this report but is instead integrated within the livelihood, health and wellbeing, community, and accessibility categories. Together, these categories encompass the key dimensions of way of life, including the ability to maintain daily routines, access essential services, preserve community cohesion, and sustain economic and social activities central to residents' lifestyles.

It must be noted that an organised group of community members, known for attending community information sessions for renewable energy developments across the Wagga region with the intention of opposing such projects, was present at the broader project-wide community information session. While the assessment has taken steps to ensure that its findings are not biased by the perspectives of this group, it is likely that some impact significance ratings have been heightened by sentiments expressed during this session. Furthermore, there is no control over the categories of survey respondents, which means the results may not accurately represent the broader community's sentiments.

4.1. Livelihoods

According to the Social Impact Assessment Guideline livelihoods include "people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business" (DPHI, 2025a, p. 13). The Table 4-2 shows community perceptions of the importance of various social and economic considerations in relation to "livelihood" related to the Project.

The data indicates that an overwhelming importance placed on potential impacts to property values, with the vast majority rating it as "very important." In contrast, securing employment or business opportunities from the Project is viewed as largely unimportant, while opinions on the potential for diversification of land use and income streams are more evenly distributed, indicating mixed levels of importance among respondents.

Table 4-2 Survey respondents' ratings of the importance of selected social and economic considerations (Livelihood) related to the Project.

Social and economic considerations	Levels of Importance (% of n)				n
	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	
Potential for diversification of land use/income streams	29.2	10.4	18.8	41.7	48
Securing employment or business from the project	4.3	8.5	10.6	76.6	47
Potential impacts to property values	91.8	6.1	-	2.0	49
Community benefit opportunities from the project	6.7	15.6	17.8	60.0	45

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

Stakeholder views on the Project's potential to generate local employment are mixed, with a clear divide between those who see some potential benefits and those who believe the claims are overstated. On one hand, some participants recognise that any effort to recruit locally would be positive, particularly in a region where the unemployment rate is just over 1%. As one person noted, *"The more that you can employ locally, the better it is."* They acknowledge, however, that such benefits may be constrained by the nature of the local labour market, where a portion of those unemployed face significant barriers to work:

> *Those people that haven't got a job just can't get a job… there's 5% of people that are just totally unemployable.*

On the other hand, many stakeholders expressed strong scepticism that the Project will deliver meaningful local jobs. This was consistent with the survey respondents, where ~76% of respondents rated securing employment as not important (Table 4-2). Several believe that the scale and type of work involved means that specialist crews will be brought in from outside, limiting opportunities for local residents. One participant was blunt:

> *The jobs are just an absolute… outright lie pushed forward to make it look as if this is great for Australia in general. It's not. These are small, hand-picked crews that come in and come out."* Another added, *"You can't go down there and say I need a crew to build a solar factory. It doesn't happen… they are handpicked crews who know what they are doing, and they get moved around the countryside.*

Interview participants' scepticism is reinforced by experiences with similar projects in the region. Some stakeholders pointed to examples where large-scale renewable energy developments promised significant local employment but ultimately relied on imported labour. In these cases, they said, any broader benefits to the community were negligible:

> *Make no mistake, there are two winners only in these renewable projects: one landholder and the company itself. You've got a lot more losers than winners.*

While a few participants conceded there may be short-term construction roles, the prevailing view among critics is that these will be temporary, limited in number, and unlikely to draw from the pool of local job seekers. For these stakeholders, the perceived mismatch between public claims and likely outcomes undermines confidence in the Project's stated economic benefits. While there is cautious optimism from some about the potential for local hiring, the dominant narrative from consultation is one of doubt. Past experiences, the specialist nature of the work, and reliance on mobile, pre-formed crews all contribute to a widely held view that the Project's contribution to local employment will be far smaller than its proponents suggest.

Taken together, the positive impact significance (Table 4-3) for increased local employment opportunities is rated as **Low.**

Table 4-3 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 – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Possible**] Social impact significance – **Low**

4.1.2. Increased local training opportunities

Stakeholders identified the potential for the Project to strengthen local training pathways, particularly through collaboration with existing Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs. These programs could offer structured work placements during both construction and maintenance phases, providing practical, on-the-job experience. One participant explained:

> *Looking at the VET courses that we run, there are options for them to do work placement… to go out and work with crews out there in the construction and maintenance.*

Job-link events were also noted as a way to connect job seekers, including multicultural communities, to available roles, while apprenticeships and pre-employment programs could help residents gain the skills and certifications required for renewable energy projects. As one employment service provider noted,

> *Job-link events bring job seekers and employers together in one place to help both parties… apprenticeships and traineeships are also coordinated.*

It was suggested that working backwards from the Project's timeline to map the skills and certifications needed could ensure local people are prepared for opportunities when they arise. *"Identify the kinds of jobs that will be created and the certifications required, then work backwards from there,"* advised one industry contact.

Furthermore, from a schools' perspective, the Project could create unique educational benefits. One educator commented:

> *It could provide incredible learning opportunities for the students during construction and after… so they can learn about renewable energy sources and storage, because it's going to be high on everyone's priority moving forward.*

While broader employment benefits remain contested, there is agreement that, if implemented effectively, these training and learning initiatives could deliver lasting capacity-building for the local workforce and community.

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

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

Impacts	Ranking
Increased local training opportunities	Potential to increases in the skill training opportunities as well as educational benefits for students [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**] Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.1.3. Increased local economic activity

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. Consultation suggests that the Project could stimulate local economic activity through short-term demand for goods and services during construction, procurement opportunities for local contractors, targeted community benefit initiatives, and associated infrastructure works. 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

Some participants anticipate a lift in trade linked to construction activity, noting there *"…may be some short-term lodging benefits for motels in Wagga because you've got crews,"* and emphasising the importance of keeping spending local: *"…the more that you can employ locally, the better it is."*

On supplier opportunities, one industry contact urged developers to provide certainty so locals can participate:

> *You are really gonna need to come to town with a great level of surety for the contractors that they are not going to get treated as contractors have often got treated in private projects.*

An example of inclusive procurement efforts, with proponents being encouraged to link with Aboriginal-owned businesses was also stated by one of the stakeholders: *"Martinus is engaging with Aboriginal companies… bring them on board,"* and offers to connect the project team to *"the local Aboriginal labour hire company."*

However, scepticism was strong among others who believed that most spending would be minimal or flow to outside suppliers. As one respondent noted, *"…money goes overseas, doesn't stay in Australia,"* and another added, *"…if you have been 12 hours on the site… you are not usually likely to go out…."*

Diversification of household incomes

The Project offers the potential to diversify household income for the participating landholder through long-term hosting 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

Increased community investment through community benefits could also increase local economic activity. Community benefits were discussed in practical terms rather than as cash handouts. Notes from a council meeting indicate interest in benefits that "add value to the community," with funds to "go straight to community group to implement" and suggestions such as *"upgrades to local playground and hall… park benches, bins…"* Infrastructure needs tied to project access were also raised, including *"…site access to Holbrook Road needs upgrading…"* and *"…the road upgrade must be made flood proof."* These ideas reflect a preference for visible, place-based benefits that circulate spend locally and leave lasting assets for community use.

However, community benefit programs themselves were not immune from criticism, with comments such as *"…the community does not need your money…," "…you can't buy communities…,"* and *"…community benefit is like a pay-out* [bribery]*…"* These views suggest that unless benefits are transparently designed, locally governed, and clearly tied to public value, they risk being perceived as compensatory rather than developmental. For instance, 60% of the survey respondents rated that community benefit as "not important" for them (Table 4-2).

While there is a pathway for the Project to deliver positive local economic outcomes through inclusive procurement, targeted community projects, and infrastructure improvements, trust is fragile, and the prevailing sentiment is that commitments must be tangible, enforceable, and demonstrably beneficial to the broader community to be seen as credible.

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. For instance, one respondent stated that:

> *…there are two winners only in these renewable projects…one, landholder and the company itself… a lot more losers than winners…*

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 and are reflected in the Table 4-5.

Table 4-5 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 – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Possible**] Social impact significance – **Low**

Diversification of household incomes	This impact of host landholder payments is certain to occur diversifying the household income [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Almost certain**] Social impact significance – **Medium**
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 [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Almost certain**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**
Perceived distributive inequity	This impact on host and neighbouring landholders has been rated as being **Possible** to occur but of **Minor** magnitude. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.1.4. Perceived loss of agricultural land

A consistent theme across consultation feedback is strong opposition to the use of productive farmland for the Project. Many respondents view the site's agricultural value as irreplaceable and believe its conversion to industrial use represents a permanent loss. References to "prime agricultural land" and "productive farming land" were common (see Figure 4-2), with one submission stating, *"…leave this…productive agricultural land as is…,"* and another adding, *"…retaining all productive agricultural land and not allowing it to be used for non-agricultural purposes...."*

Several participants linked the issue directly to food security, questioning the prioritisation of energy infrastructure over farming. As one community member put it, *"…do we want power or food?..."* Others expressed concern that the Project is *"…destroying family farms they have dedicated years of hard work to get to the quality where it is currently producing."*

Participants also emphasised that the agricultural character of the area is central to local identity and livelihoods. Comments such as *"…we live in one of the most productive and picturesque parts of NSW…"* and *"…everything about farming…"* reflect the depth of this connection. The permanence of the change was a recurring concern, as noted by one respondent, *"…the landscape can't go back to the original state when you build on it…"*

Overall, the feedback reflects a strong perception that the Project would result in the irreversible loss of high-quality farmland, undermining both local agricultural production and the community's connection to its rural landscape. It is possible that this specific concern reflects broader anxieties about the cumulative impacts of multiple developments in the region, rather than the direct impact of this Project alone. While the footprint of the Project itself is relatively small, several respondents referred to *"…solar following the battery…"* and expressed fears that future development would extend the Project's footprint and further impact the agricultural productivity of the land.

According to the 'Soil Technical Report,' the site is currently used for dryland cropping (with a self-sown canola crop at the time of observation) and has historically supported cropping and grazing on all sides. Overstory vegetation is limited to fence lines, and approximately 90% of the soil surface is vegetated. This clearly situates the land within an active agricultural production context.

Soil testing and classification show that the Project footprint is mapped largely as Land and Soil Capability (LSC) Class 4 – moderate capability land – with parts of the access track intersecting Class 3 (good capability) and Class 5 (low capability) soils. Laboratory analysis indicates low nutrient status, low organic carbon, and phosphorus deficiency, which suggests that while the land is productive, it has agronomic constraints and would require ongoing inputs to maintain yield potential. Nevertheless, it remains viable farmland. Therefore, conversion of the site to accommodate the Project could mean a temporary removal of agricultural land from production for the life of the Project.

Since these concerns are largely linked to potential subsequent developments rather than direct effects of this Project, the impact on agricultural land from the Project itself is rated as **Low** (Table 4-6).

Table 4-6 Impact significance on loss of agricultural land

Impacts	Ranking
Loss of agricultural land	Considering the small footprint of the Project, the impact is rated as low probability [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Unlikely**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

4.1.5. Potential impacts on property values

Concerns about potential reductions in property values emerged strongly during consultation. As shown in Table 4-2, ~92% of the survey respondents, rated potential impacts on property values as their most important concern.

Several landholders reported direct experiences or professional advice indicating a negative effect from similar developments. One participant stated, *"…my property value is saying that I would have had about a 30% reduction in asset value because of the… proposal went ahead."* Another described the effect on buyer interest, noting that a property which previously attracted "8 or 10 genuine inspections" would now get "three or four."

Participants also expressed apprehension that the presence of large-scale energy infrastructure could deter potential buyers. Others linked these concerns to the perceived permanence of the development and its visual and land use changes, with one community member stating that the Project would *"…reduce the value of properties significantly as it destroys the natural landscape views..."*

These views reflect a consistent belief among many respondents that the Project, if approved, would contribute to a decline in surrounding property values, both by affecting the desirability of the area for prospective buyers and by altering the landscape qualities that underpin current market appeal.

Given the strong perception of risk among residents, however with the limited availability of credible supporting evidence, this potential impact has been assessed as being **Medium (**Table 4-7**).**

Table 4-7 Impact significance of potential impacts to property values

Impacts	Ranking
Potential impacts to property values	Perceived possible noticeable deterioration in property values for those properties adjacent to the Project 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" (DPHI, 2025a, p. 12). Within this impact category, potential changes to community cohesion were perceived as an impact.

The word cloud (Figure 4-2) provides insight into how residents perceive and experience community cohesion. Prominent terms such as *"community," "family," "support," "together,"* and *"help"* highlight the value placed on strong social networks, mutual assistance, and a shared sense of belonging. The appearance of words like *"resilience"* and *"protection"* suggests a collective commitment to looking after one another and safeguarding local values, livelihoods, and the environment. This was consistent with survey respondents, wherein ~75% and ~89% of the respondents rated disruption to community cohesion and engagement with near neighbours as very important (Table 4-8).

These attributes indicate that community cohesion is closely tied to both social relationships and the rural setting in which they are embedded. Together, the terms in the word cloud reflect a community that draws strength from intergenerational ties, cooperative relationships, and a unifying commitment to place, all of which shape how residents engage with and respond to proposed developments.

Table 4-8 Survey respondents' ratings of the importance of selected social and economic considerations (community) related to the Project

Social and economic considerations	Levels of Importance (% of n)				n
	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	
Engagement with near neighbours	89.8	8.2	2.0		49
Disruption to community cohesion	75.0	18.8	6.3		48

4.2.1. Potential changes to community cohesion

Consultation feedback indicates strong concern that the Project could disrupt the close-knit nature of the local community. Many respondents described their locality as *"a close knitted community where everyone looks out for one another"* and *"…a community that is proud of its farming history."*

Several participants expressed that renewable energy projects in the region have already created social division. One respondent stated:

> *Renewable energy sites and battery storage sites are creating a lot of angst and divide amongst the community. Family's that have been friends for generations have been torn apart because of opposing views on issues such as this.*

Another said:

> *The community has come together to fight against the solar industry destroying our land, our jobs, our culture, from the subsidised overseas companies.*

These comments suggest that the Project has the potential to alter existing social dynamics, eroding the trust, cooperation, and solidarity that underpin community cohesion. For some, opposition to the Project is seen as a collective effort to protect shared values and livelihoods, while for others, differing positions risk deepening fractures within the community. Overall, the feedback reflects a perception that the Project could undermine long-standing relationships and the cooperative spirit that residents value.

Table 4-9 shows the impact significance of potential changes to community cohesion as a result of the Project.

Table 4-9 Significance impacts of potential changes to community cohesion

Impacts	Ranking
Potential changes to community cohesion	There is a medium probability that the Project will disrupt community cohesion. However, considering strong concern from broader community, noticeable disruption could be expected [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

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" (DPHI, 2025a, p. 13).

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 within the impact Livelihoods impact category.

Figure 4-3 shows that concern levels for waste, health, traffic, and accommodation are generally high, though the intensity varies between issues. For instance, waste recorded the strongest response, with around 80% of respondents rating "very concerned" and a further 10% "concerned," leaving only a small proportion neutral or not concerned. Health and traffic also ranked high, with approximately 75–80% "very concerned" and around 15% "concerned," indicating strong anxiety about these potential impacts. Accommodation, while still a majority concern.

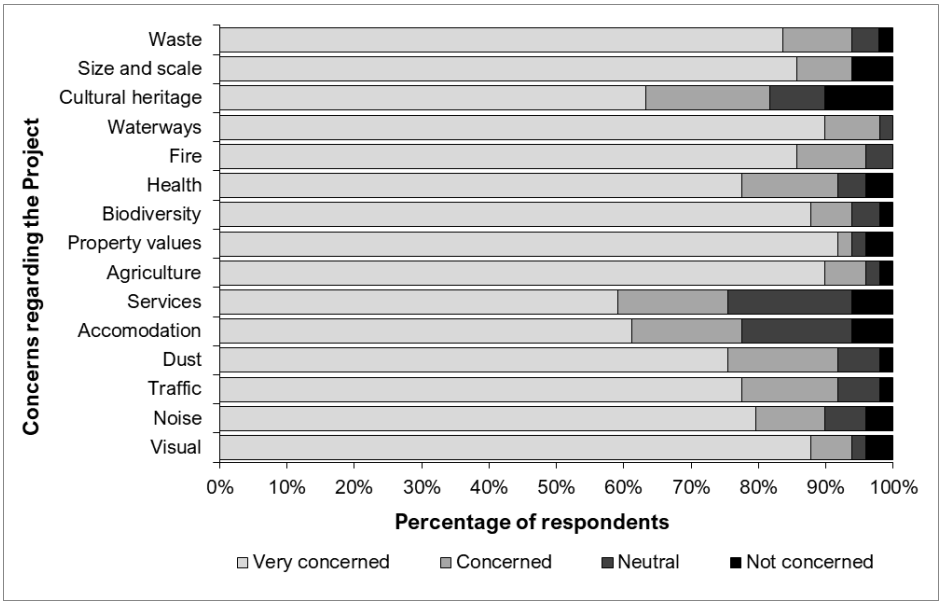

Figure 4-3 Levels of respondents' concern regarding the Project in relation to various potential impacts

4.3.1. Increased pressure on housing and accommodation

As show in Figure 4-3, accommodation emerged as one of the issues where concern was most prominent, with the majority of survey respondents indicating they were "very concerned" or "concerned" about potential impacts. This suggests that housing availability is seen as a tangible pressure point in the context of project-induced population changes.

Concerns were raised that if the Project cannot source its workforce locally, it will likely lead to an influx of temporary workers requiring accommodation, placing additional pressure on local housing availability. One participant noted, *"The more that you can employ locally, the better it is because housing wise…"*

Others pointed to the scale of workforce camps associated with other major projects, highlighting that *"Secure Energy's got six workers camps"* and that *"for the transmission lines, they are setting up workers camps."* Perhaps the temporary accommodation may be being put in place due to the likely constraints of housing in the region as some stakeholders made reference to existing accommodation constraints in the region: *"…and there is no accommodation in Wagga…,"* with examples such as major projects booking out motels, creating tension with tourism operators – "…*so the local tourist guys get the shits…."*

These comments indicate a perception that the Project could contribute to housing and accommodation pressures already experienced in the region, particularly during peak construction periods, and that these effects could also have cascading impacts for other local industries such as tourism.

Concerns about housing and accommodation pressures emerged in relation to the likely influx of temporary workers. One participant remarked that *"the more that you can employ locally, the better it is…housing wise…"*, highlighting the risk of exacerbating shortages if external crews are brought in.

Rental market data for the localities surrounding the Project indicates that housing availability is already constrained. As indicated in Table 3-5, Mangoplah's rental vacancy rate has generally remained below 2.4% since 2017, and as of June 2025, the vacancy rate was 2.4%, equating to an estimated four available dwellings. The Rock shows even tighter conditions, with a vacancy rate of 0% in June 2025 and historically volatile shifts due to its small market size.

Given these tight market conditions, any influx of non-resident workers could exacerbate housing stress. Temporary accommodation may need to be established to avoid displacement or competition with local residents.

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 4-10).

Table 4-10 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. This is consistent with ~90% of survey respondents rating (Figure 4-3) that they were concerned about the impacts the Project could have on traffic. 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.

These concerns primarily relate to safety, road capacity, and the ability of existing infrastructure to cope with an increase in heavy and light vehicle movements during construction and operation. The community described Mangoplah's Road network as already facing challenges, with narrow and sometimes unsafe sections in high-traffic areas. For instance, one resident stated: "*…road infrastructure… create safer roads…it is a high traffic area, and the roads need to be wider...*"

Another emphasised that the impacts of changes to access routes could extend beyond congestion:

> *By changing the road of entry, it will alter the water flow & level on our land property & the sheds & our home. The view of the landscape will change & the traffic will increase, A LOT, which will upset the wildlife.*

The perception is that Project-related traffic, especially during construction, could place additional strain on local infrastructure not designed for sustained heavy use. Concerns go beyond inconvenience: respondents state on road safety, the potential need for widening and upgrading, and possible environmental changes resulting from altered access and drainage patterns.

The combination of high concern levels and specific calls for infrastructure upgrades indicates that the community will expect clear, visible measures to manage construction-related traffic. This may include designated haulage routes, intersection improvements, and early engagement with council and residents to ensure road safety and amenity are not compromised.

The Traffic Impact Assessment completed for the Project indicates that traffic impacts will be most noticeable during construction, beginning in 2027 and lasting 12–15 months, with a three-month peak period. The report

estimated that at peak, approximately 120 light and 64 heavy vehicle trips per day, or approximately 64 trips per peak hour could occur, reducing to 22 trips per peak hour [outside the peak Project timeline].

The assessments states that Holbrook Road can accommodate this increase, even with cumulative traffic from other major projects. Operational traffic will be minimal, averaging eight vehicle movements per day, and decommissioning traffic will be similar to construction levels. However, the assessment stated that a Traffic Management Plan would be developed prior to construction to mitigate potential impacts and ensure safe, efficient vehicle movements throughout the project lifecycle.

Table 4-11 shows the impact significance of increased traffic on local roads, and it is assessed as **Medium**.

Table 4-11 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, it will be significantly lower during the operational phase [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

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 Mangoplah 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. Survey identified health and waste management as key areas of concern in relation to the Project's potential impacts on local infrastructure (Table 4-8). The high level of concern over waste management reflects apprehension about how materials, by-products, or potential contamination from the Project would be managed, particularly in a rural context where waste disposal infrastructure is limited.

Similarly, given the small population base in Mangoplah and surrounding localities, health service capacity is already limited, meaning any incident or health-related demand from the Project could place additional strain on existing resources. This is particularly relevant during the construction phase, when an influx of workers could lead to increased demand for local medical facilities.

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 widely 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.

Given these factors, the potential negative impact on social infrastructure has been assessed as **Medium** (Table 4-12).

Table 4-12 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 and waste management infrastructure during the construction period [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; 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" (DPHI, 2025a, p. 13).

The Figure 4-3 show health impacts as one of the highest areas of worry among respondents. A majority expressed being very concerned about health, suggesting that perceived risks to physical wellbeing (such as air quality, contamination, or emergency hazards) are strongly tied to heightened anxiety and stress among project opponents.

4.4.1. Increased stress and anxiety to those opposing the Project

Community feedback indicates that for some residents, the Project is a significant source of emotional strain, with concerns extending beyond physical impacts to deeply affect mental wellbeing. Several respondents describe feelings of *"distress"*, *"angst"*, and division within the community. For example:

> *Renewable energy sites and battery storage sites are creating a lot of angst and divide amongst the community…family's that have been friends for generations have been torn apart because of opposing views on issues such as this...*
>
> *The proposed battery site… is causing distress as the community is worried that it will impact the ongoing work to restore the biodiversity to the landscape among other valid reasons.*

These concerns point to both direct stresses, linked to fears about environmental and land-use change, and indirect stress, arising from interpersonal conflict and erosion of social cohesion. The fracturing of long-standing relationships, as reflected by the word cloud (see Figure 4-2) in a small, tight-knit rural community is a particularly significant stressor, as it undermines social support networks that residents often rely on during times of change or uncertainty.

Overall, the combination of perceived threats to health, division within the community, and fears of irreversible change is contributing to a heightened sense of unease for those opposed to the Project. This emotional toll is not just a by-product of the development process, but a potential long-term social impact if left unaddressed. Taken together the impact significance is rated as **Medium.**

Table 4-13 Impact significance of increased stress and anxiety to those opposing the Project

Impacts	Ranking
Increased stress and anxiety to those opposing the Project	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" (DPHI, 2025a, p. 13).

Four themes emerged within the surrounding impacts categories:

- change in landscape character and visual amenity,
- increased fire risks,
- increased flood risks and associated environmental impacts, and
- increased risk to biodiversity, ecology and species.

4.5.1. Change in landscape character and visual amenity

Community sentiment shows a strong attachment to the existing rural landscape and open views, with many respondents expressing deep concern that the Project would permanently alter these valued characteristics. The Figure 4-3 indicates that visual amenity ranks among the highest areas of community worry, with the majority of respondents marking themselves as very concerned.

Additionally, stakeholders and survey participants frequently referred to the visual and aesthetic qualities of the area, describing them as an integral part of local identity and quality of life. For example:

> *The views are incredible in the community, real natural beauty...*
>
> *Our local Livingstone National Park. Our undulating hills with distinct tree lines harbouring our native fauna…*

Several comments highlighted fears that large-scale infrastructure would disrupt these landscapes, replacing them with industrial-scale energy facilities. This concern was often linked to a broader sense of loss, with stakeholders stating that *"…the project will also reduce the value of properties significantly as it destroys the natural landscape views."*

It must be noted that the potential for visual changes was not framed solely as an aesthetic issue, but as one with cascading social and economic implications. Loss of rural character was seen as undermining the community's identity, agricultural heritage, and appeal to both residents and visitors.

Taken together, the high level of visual concern as expressed by the survey respondents in addition to the strong, emotive language through additional comments suggests that landscape character and visual amenity are central issues for the Mangoplah community. The anticipated shift from open, agricultural landscapes to one dominated by energy infrastructure is perceived not only as a visual intrusion, but as a fundamental transformation of place.

The Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment found impacts from the Project to be minimal, with public views largely screened by distance, topography, and existing vegetation. The assessment reported that key landscape features, including Livingstone National Park ridgelines, could be unaffected. Visual impacts are limited to nearby private properties, where existing vegetation already limits views. The assessment, did not recommend additional mitigation, given the low level of impact and natural vegetation cover, and all nearby properties were rated as experiencing low visual impacts. However, the applicant has proposed screening along the western boundary to further reduce any potential concerns.

Therefore, the impact significance is rated as **Medium (**Table 4-14).

Table 4-14 Impact significance of change in landscape character and visual amenity

Impacts	Ranking
Change in landscape character and visual amenity	There was widespread concern of the impact on visual amenity and change in landscape character of the land, in addition to the visual impacts for those living in the immediate vicinity of the Project location [Magnitude level – **Moderate**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Medium**

4.5.2. Increased fire risks

Concerns about fire risk emerged strongly in community feedback, with many participants explicitly linking the proposed Project to heightened fire hazards. The Figure 4-3 show that the concern levels in relation to fire risk ranked among the top issues, with a significant proportion of respondents indicating they were very concerned.

Residents described the Mangoplah area as inherently fire-prone, with the presence of a large battery system perceived as exacerbating the danger. Several comments highlighted both the likelihood of fire and the severity of potential consequences. Statements such as, *"…fire is a major risk here at any time. But with batteries the risk is higher…"*

The perceived increase in fire risk is heightened by concerns that a battery-initiated fire could not be effectively suppressed. As one respondent noted, *"…not able to put out a fire at the batteries, due to batteries overheating or malfunction, or this area by lighting or grass fire..."*

These fears were compounded by perceptions of inadequate local firefighting capacity to respond to battery-related incidents. As one respondent highlighted, the *"…local fire brigade does not have the capacity to fight a fire of this nature…"*, raising concerns that an uncontrolled battery fire could have catastrophic impacts on property, the environment, and community safety. This is because, there was also apprehension about the environmental and health impacts of such incidents, including contamination and chemical release:

> *…contaminated by batteries exploding or catching fire and contaminants flow into water ways.*

In some cases, these fears extended beyond the immediate Project site to the potential devaluation of surrounding land and long-term loss of amenity, suggesting that fire risk was viewed not just as a safety issue but as a threat to livelihoods, environmental quality, and community resilience.

Overall, fire risk is regarded as a critical social impact, amplified by both the physical characteristics of the locality and the scale and nature of the proposed infrastructure. This concern is rooted in lived experience of

rural fire hazards, a strong local identity tied to the landscape, and perceived limitations in mitigating or responding to battery-related fires.

The bushfire assessment report of the Project concludes that the Project is located on bushfire-prone land but can be designed to meet the requirements of Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019 and achieve compliance with the SSD approval standards. Some of the key recommendations included establishing Asset Protection Zones, sufficient to limit radiant heat exposure for critical infrastructure, upgrading Holbrook Road entrance and providing a perimeter road for emergency access. Furthermore, a Bushfire management and operation plan is recommended for both construction and operational phase.

Therefore, the impact significance is rated as **Medium (**Table 4-15**).**

Table 4-15 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**

4.5.3. Increased flood risks and associated environmental impacts

Flood risk was a consistent topic of discussion during the project-wide consultation sessions. Attendees voiced concerns that the Project could alter local water flow patterns, increasing the likelihood of flooding for nearby properties and causing environmental harm.

Survey findings support this sentiment: the Levels of Concern reflected in Figure 4-3 shows that a significant proportion of respondents were “very concerned” about environmental risks, with flood and runoff impacts frequently raised alongside broader environmental issues. Flood risks were often linked to the potential for contaminated runoff from the battery site during flood events. For instance, one respondent stressed the importance of proactive management in stating that *“…making sure runoff from Project does not seep into waterways…build runoff dams around Project to prevent runoff into creeks.”*

Such statement shows that concerns extend beyond direct property damage to include the possible degradation of soil health, biodiversity, and aquatic ecosystems. The proximity of farmland and the reliance on natural drainage systems heighten sensitivity to these impacts.

Overall, community members view flood risk as both a safety issue and an environmental management challenge. Expectations include robust mitigation measures such as engineered drainage systems, containment infrastructure, and ongoing monitoring to ensure water quality and environmental values are safeguarded during and after extreme weather events.

It must be noted that the flood risk is not perceived as the Project increasing the likelihood of floods in the community. Rather, community members are concerned that when flooding does occur, it could carry chemicals from the Project site through local waterways, contaminating the wider area. The perceived potential of floodwater carrying harmful chemicals from the Project is rated as **Medium** (Table 4-16). This reflects community concerns that, while the Project is not expected to increase the likelihood of flooding, any future flood event could mobilise contaminants from the site, allowing them to spread through waterways and impact a wider area.

The Flood Impact Assessment completed for the Project found the site to be located outside the floodway, subject only to very shallow inundation (<30 mm) and low hazard levels (H1). According to the assessment, modelling indicated no meaningful impact on flood behaviour, or off-site floodplain and waterways.

The assessment recommended that a Flood Emergency Response Plan be prepared for both construction and operational phases. The development is considered compliant with SEARs and meets Environmental Impact Statement flood risk management requirements.

Table 4-16 Impact significance of increased flood risks

Impacts	Ranking
Increased flood risks and associated environmental impacts	There is a perceived high probability of flood risks due to the Project's location in a flood-prone area. Community members believe that flooding could lead to environmental pollution, with floodwaters potentially carrying contaminants from the Project site into surrounding land and waterways. 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**

4.5.4. Increased risks to ecology, biodiversity and species

Figure 4-3 shows that substantial proportions of respondents were very concerned about biodiversity risks. Community members expressed strong concerns that the Project could harm local ecology, biodiversity, and species, both directly and indirectly. Concerns were focused on risks to native vegetation, wildlife habitats, and connectivity between ecosystems.

Respondents mentioned specific habitats in the surrounding area, such as native forests, local creek systems, and breeding or nesting sites, cautioning that even small-scale clearing could have lasting ecological consequences. One participant during the community session cited their involvement in a "squirrel glider protection program through National Parks and Wildlife Services" and feared the Project could jeopardise this work. Others highlighted the presence of important amphibian habitats, with one respondent noting: *"Frogs in most winters big breeding area…."*

Some respondents framed their concerns in broader terms. One comment connected biodiversity loss to wider environmental degradation, warning that the Project could *"…leave toxic waste behind killing the natural habitat, native animals and bankrupting neighbours."* Others linked potential impacts to bird nesting areas and the disruption of natural water flows, with one comment stating: *"…lost food production…bird nesting…flow of water in creek…"*

The Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) completed for the Project, identified two threatened ecological communities within the site: Grey Box Grassy Woodland and Box Gum Woodland. Seven threatened fauna species were also recorded within the Project site. While the development footprint is largely located on historically cleared cropping land, five hollow-bearing trees that provide habitat for native fauna will be removed, requiring offset through species credits. A referral under the EPBC Act (EPBC2025/10220) determined the Project is not a controlled action.

Though, there were concerns expressed in relation to the potential of impacts on ecology and biodiversity, it was not a widely expressed concerns, which was consistent with the BDAR report. Taken together, the impact significance is rated as **Low** (Table 4-17).

Table 4-17 Impact significance of increased risk to ecology, biodiversity and species

Impacts	Ranking
Increased risk to ecology, biodiversity and species	There is a perceived medium probability of Project impacting the biodiversity especially breeding grounds of frogs and bird nesting sites from the Project. However, these concerns were not widely expressed [Magnitude level – **Minor**; Likelihood level – **Possible**]. Social impact significance – **Low**

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" (DPHI, 2025b, p. 13).

The Figure 4-4 illustrates community perceptions of engagement across three key measures: whether their opinions are listened to and respected, whether their views are valued, and whether they feel included in decision making.

Across all three, a substantial proportion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, with "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree" responses making up the largest share. This indicates that many participants do not believe the engagement process is meeting expectations for meaningful dialogue and inclusion. A smaller proportion selected "Slightly disagree" or "Slightly agree," suggesting some felt partially acknowledged but still not fully satisfied. Very few respondents reported strong agreement, with only a small number choosing "Agree" or "Strongly agree."

While "Inclusion in decision making" attracted slightly more positive responses than the other two measures, overall disagreement remains dominant. These data point to a significant perception gap between the Project team and the community, highlighting the need for improved strategies to build trust, actively listen to feedback, and ensure that community members feel their input is both valued and incorporated into decisions.

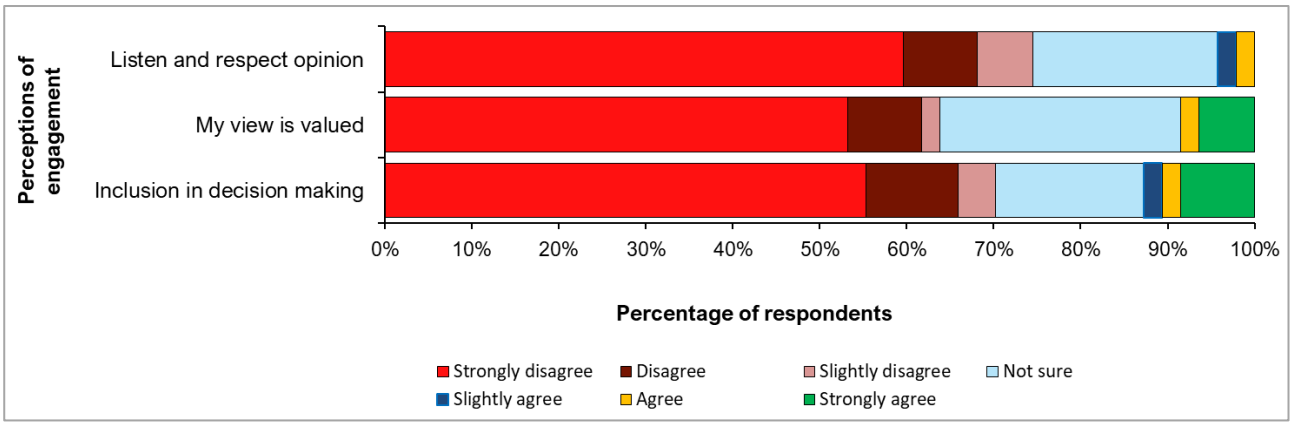

Figure 4-4 Respondents' perception of engagement in the Project

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

Feedback during the Project-wide engagement process indicates a widespread perception among attendees, especially the group, that they have been excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making about the Project. This perception was consistent with the survey results (Figure 4-4), perhaps highlighting a significant trust gap and suggest dissatisfaction with how engagement has been conducted to date.

Community members expressed frustration at what they perceived as a one-way information flow rather than a genuine two-way exchange. One respondent described the process as *"tick the box consultation,"* reflecting a belief that engagement activities were being undertaken as a procedural requirement rather than to genuinely influence outcomes. Others noted that decisions appeared to be predetermined, leaving little room for local perspectives to be incorporated.

The perceptions of exclusion were not limited to a single aspect of engagement but extended across respect for opinions, the value placed on views, and the ability to influence outcomes. While a small proportion of participants expressed partial agreement, indicating they felt somewhat acknowledged, strong agreement was rare, and most comments pointed to a lack of procedural fairness.

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 4-18).

Table 4-18 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).

The Mangoplah community is situated within an area experiencing multiple concurrent and planned renewable energy and infrastructure developments. In addition to the Project, Mangoplah is within 50 km of at least 14 other projects (Refer to Section 7 of Project's EIS) in various stages of planning, approval, construction, and operation. These include large-scale solar farms, other BESS facilities, a lithium-ion battery recycling plant, and infrastructure projects such as the Riverina Storage Pipeline.

This concentration of projects (see Table 3-6) raises the potential for cumulative social impacts, particularly in relation to increased traffic, amenity changes, environmental pressures, and ongoing community division over land use.

Traffic emerged as a prominent concern during project-wide consultation for the Project, and the potential for overlap with construction traffic from neighbouring developments heightens this concern. Respondents highlighted risks from “increased heavy vehicle movements” and “making the roads more unsafe for local residents.”

Given the indicative timeframes for other projects, simultaneous construction phases could intensify demand on regional road networks, particularly along rural access roads not designed for sustained heavy vehicle use. This cumulative effect could extend travel times, increase road maintenance costs, and raise safety concerns, especially during harvest and peak agricultural periods.

Additionally, the concentration of renewable energy infrastructure within the region could lead to progressive and widespread changes to landscape character. Consultation indicates that residents already perceive the Project as contributing to “loss of valuable farmland” and “intrusive industrial infrastructure” in a traditionally agricultural landscape.

Cumulatively, the visibility of multiple developments, risks a transformation of the rural visual identity. Some community members expressed concern that “once the landscape is changed, it can’t be undone,” pointing to a sense of permanent alteration. The perceived impacts of renewable energy developments in the Mangoplah region appear to be heightened by the presence of an organised group attending community information sessions [this group attend information session for other projects irrespective of where they are located within the Wagga Wagga region] with the stated intention of opposing any renewable developments in the region.

Community members linked the Project specifically to increased division within the community. Comments such as “family’s that have been friends for generations have been torn apart” illustrate the social strains arising from differing views on renewable energy projects. The cumulative presence of multiple developments may exacerbate these divisions, particularly if community members perceive inconsistent or inadequate engagement across projects. Procedural fairness and genuine inclusion in decision-making were noted as ongoing concerns.

While cumulative impacts may include negative effects, the presence of multiple projects in the region also has the potential to create opportunities for local business engagement and employment. With numerous developments planned or underway, there is potential overlap in labour demand, particularly for civil works, electrical installation, and operational maintenance. However, community feedback reflects scepticism about the extent to which these opportunities will translate into tangible local benefits. As one respondent observed, *“most of the companies involved with renewable energy are owned by offshore companies so any profit it’s going overseas,”* highlighting concerns that cumulative investment may not necessarily result in cumulative economic gains for the local area.

4.8. Summary of social impacts

The Mangoplah community may experience a broad range of changes as a result of the Project. These span livelihoods, community cohesion, accessibility, health and wellbeing, environmental values, decision-making systems, and the cumulative effects of multiple nearby developments. Employment and economic opportunities are contested. While some see potential for local hiring, most are sceptical, citing previous projects that relied on specialist non-local crews. Training linked to Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs could offer longer-term benefits if prioritised, but there is uncertainty about whether this will occur.

While construction may boost local business activity and diversify income especially for host landholders concerns remain about equitable benefit distribution, with many fearing profits will largely flow offshore and to a few landowners. The potential loss of productive agricultural land, even in small amounts, is viewed as an irreversible impact on both farming livelihoods and local identity.

Residents value a close-knit, cooperative social fabric rooted in agricultural heritage, but consultations indicate renewable projects have already caused divisions, with some families fractured over differing views. The Project could deepen these tensions, especially given the proximity of other large-scale developments. Housing pressures from non-local workers, increased traffic from heavy vehicle movements, and strains on local services such as health and waste management were raised repeatedly. With tight rental markets, an influx of workers could exacerbate shortages. Road safety and capacity are ongoing concerns, as are the increased demands on limited health and emergency services during peak construction periods.

Opponents of the project report heightened stress and anxiety tied to fears of environmental harm, landscape change, and social division, which are intensified by a lack of trust in engagement processes. The rural landscape, biodiversity, and agricultural character are highly valued, and the project is seen as a permanent visual intrusion. Fire risk is a major concern, especially battery fires beyond the capacity of the local rural fire brigade to manage. Flood events are feared to mobilise contaminants from the site into waterways, posing risks to soil health, biodiversity, and agricultural productivity. Some residents also voiced concerns about potential impacts on wildlife, including frogs and bird species.

A perceived lack of procedural fairness and exclusion from decision-making emerged as a significant theme, with many believing that consultation is tokenistic and outcomes predetermined. Mangoplah lies within 50 km of at least 14 other large-scale developments, and this clustering raises concerns about overlapping construction traffic, progressive industrialisation of the landscape, increased environmental risks, and deepening community division. While the combined presence of multiple projects could create shared economic opportunities, scepticism remains over whether benefits will be distributed fairly.

Overall, perceived social impacts particularly division, procedural unfairness, and loss of rural identity may outweigh potential economic or infrastructure benefits unless the project delivers tangible, equitable outcomes and adopts engagement practices that build trust and demonstrate genuine inclusion in decision-making.

Table 4-19 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	Minor + Possible **Low**	Continue to foster the use of local contractors and suppliers	**Low**
	Increase in training opportunities			Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Liaise with local training providers and tailor the training needs to develop the required skills	**Medium**
	Increase in economic activity to local businesses	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	Broader Community, Local service providers and businesses	Minor + Possible **Low**	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.	**Medium**
	Diversification of household incomes	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	Landowner	Minor + Almost certain **Medium**	Payments to host landholders via neighbour agreements result in financial contributions to the local community.	**Medium**
	Increased economic benefit through	Community benefit fund generating	Broader community, Local service	Minor + Almost Certain	Indirect benefits to local services through the construction and operation phases. A	**Medium**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Enhancement Measure	Residual Significance
	community investment	economic activities.	providers, Community groups, Local government, Vulnerable community members	**Medium**	community benefit-sharing program will include a component to fund community benefit and employment programs. Promote training and upskilling opportunities in the local community.	

Table 4-20 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 **Low**	Continued engagement with host and proximal landholders and the broader community. Continued implementation of Host landholder and neighbour agreements.	**Low**
	Perceived loss of agricultural land	Establishment, operation, and decommissioning	Landholders and the broader community for farm production	Minor + Unlikely **Low**	Continued implementation of landholder and neighbour agreements. The soil technical report identified low nutrient	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
		of Project infrastructure.			status, limiting the soil's ability to support healthy plant growth.	
	Potential impacts to property values	Establishment, operation, and decommissioning of Project infrastructure.	Near neighbours	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Further engagement with the broader community through the establishment of grievance mechanism, providing a clear process for residents to raise concerns and increasing awareness of existing studies for those who seek information.	**Medium**
Community	Potential changes to community cohesion	Payments to host landholders and difference in attitude towards the Project. Differences in attitude towards the Project.	Host landholders, near neighbours and the broader community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	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 Project infrastructure.	Accommodation providers and the Broader community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Develop Employment and Accommodation Strategy with the following strategies: • Continue to foster the use of local contractors and suppliers.	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
					• 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	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	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 and considering any sensitive user groups.	**Low**
	Increased pressure on social infrastructure	Establishment and construction of Project infrastructure.	Health providers	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	Finalised Planning Agreements with host Councils. Collaboration with other renewable energy Applicants.	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
					Explore the potential of recruiting health workers to cater to the Project's needs.	
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	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment found visual impacts from the Project to be minimal, with public views largely screened by distance, topography, and existing vegetation. Visual impacts are confined to nearby private properties, where existing vegetation already limits views. Though, the visual impact assessment, did not recommend additional mitigation, given the low level of impact and natural vegetation cover. The applicant has proposed screening along the western boundary to further reduce any potential concerns.	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
	Increased fire risks	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure	Proximal landholders, and the Broader community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	The bushfire assessment for the Project concludes that the Project is located on bushfire-prone land, but can be designed to meet the requirements of *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019* (PBP 2019) and achieve compliance with State Significant Development (SSD) approval standards. Recommendations include integrating findings into fire safety plans, maintaining Asset Protection Zones, and ensuring compliance with design and fire safety standards. Develop management and emergency response plan in consultation with FRS.	**Low**
	Increased flood risks and associated environmental impacts	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	Proximal landholders, and the Broader community	Moderate + Possible **Medium**	The Flood Impact Assessment of the Project found the site to be located outside the floodway, subject only to very shallow inundation (<30 mm) and low hazard levels (H1). Develop Flood Emergency Response Plan.	**Low**

Social Impact Category	Potential Social Impact	Project Aspect/Activity	Affected Stakeholder Group	Evaluated Impact Significance	Existing and Potential Mitigation Measure	Residual Significance
	Increased risks to ecology, biodiversity and species	Establishment, construction, and operation of Project infrastructure.	Broader community	Minor + Possible **Low**	Retention of key habitat features, protection of riparian zones, and timing works to avoid critical breeding or migration periods are important to mitigate risks.	**Low**
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, Table 4-19 and Table 4-20 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.

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)
- Development of Environmental Management Strategies

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 workforce.
- 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, 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 Community Benefit Sharing Program (CBSP) will be instituted through VPA with an objective 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, with a priority focus of benefits to the Mangoplah region.

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 management strategies to manage the Project's potential impacts. A list of strategies is presented in section 8.5. Compliance and Monitoring of the Project's EIS report.

Though a range of environmental management strategies outlined in the Project's EIS will contribute to mitigating perceived social impacts, these falls outside the scope of SIA as they are technical in nature. The SIA will therefore focus on the Accommodation and Employment Strategy, which directly addresses workforce needs and housing pressures.

An AES should be developed and implemented to support local workforce participation, address skill gaps, and minimise housing pressures during peak construction. Some of the components that must be covered by AES are outlined below:

Accommodation and Employment Opportunities

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.

- Explore partnerships with existing accommodation providers. In doing so, care should be taken to avoid negatively affecting other industry sectors such as tourism, which may rely on the same accommodation stock.
- 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 Wagga Wagga 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.

6. Conclusion

The SIA for the Project has developed a comprehensive social baseline profile for the project area, drawing on demographic, economic, housing, and service delivery trends. It has consolidated insights from community consultation, including surveys, open-ended responses, and stakeholder meetings, to assess both potential social impacts and opportunities. This process has informed preliminary social impact management planning and supported refinement of project design with the aim of minimising adverse impacts and enhancing positive outcomes.

The Project is consistent with NSW's broader renewable energy policy objectives and contributes to the State's clean energy transition. The SIA has identified potential negative social impacts, such as pressure on accommodation services from incoming construction workforces, concerns over road safety and traffic volumes, perceived risks of fire, changes to landscape character, and potential environmental contamination in flood events, as well as opportunities including employment generation, local economic diversification, and workforce upskilling. These impacts are not uniform in intensity; some are short-term and construction-related, while others relate to ongoing perceptions of safety, fairness, and change to community character. Importantly, many impacts are cumulative in nature due to several projects, that are either planned or on-going, within the wider region.

SREA has already initiated key social impact management measures, such as a Community Benefit Sharing Program and a commitment to prepare an Accommodation and Employment Strategy. Additional strategies will be required to address traffic and access disruptions during construction, ensure transparent engagement, and maintain trust through timely, accessible communication. The SIA notes that perceived cumulative impacts, particularly in relation to community division, procedural fairness, and environmental risk, require a coordinated, multi-project approach. Ongoing collaboration with relevant state agencies, local councils, community groups, service providers, and other renewable energy developers will be critical to ensure impacts are not simply shifted between projects and that positive benefits are realised at a regional scale.

Overall, while the Project has the potential to deliver local and regional benefits through local employment generation and diversification of local economy during the construction phase of the Project, these will depend on the effectiveness of its social impact management strategies, particularly in addressing community concerns, demonstrating procedural fairness, and ensuring benefits are equitably distributed. By maintaining proactive engagement and embedding cumulative impact considerations into planning and operations, the Project can strengthen its social licence and contribute positively to the future of the Mangoplah community and the surrounding region. Additionally, the institution of CBSP, implemented through a VPA, could ensure that the Project contributes to meeting community needs as prioritised by local residents throughout its lifespan.

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Appendix A Community Profile Data Set

Table A-1 Comparative Community Profile: Proximal LGAs, Regional Context, and State-Level

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Mangoplah SAL	Lockhart Shire LGA	Wagga Wagga City LGA	Riverina Region	NSW
Population (n)	291	3,319	67,609	163,656	8,072,163
Female (%)	46.5	50.3	51.4	50.3	50.6
Male (%)	53.5	49.7	48.6	49.7	49.4
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population (%)	3.4	4.9	6.6	6.6	3.4
Median age (years)	47	46	35	39	39
0-14 years (%)	13.5	20.7	20.34	19.6	18.2
65+ years (%)	16.0	24.3	16.6	19.2	17.7
Country of birth (Australia) (%)	86.9	86.9	76.1	81.0	65.4
English only used at home (%)	90.4	90.4	85.3	83.0	67.6
Households - non-English language is used (%)	0.0	2.5	9.5	10.7	29.5

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Mangoplah SAL	Lockhart Shire LGA	Wagga Wagga City LGA	Riverina Region	NSW
Mental health condition	6.9	10.4	10.3	9.2	8.0
No long-term health condition(s) (%)	57.4	51.9	56.9	55.3	61.0
Year 12 or equivalent (%)	13.4	11.1	13.9	12.7	14.5
Certificate 3-4/Diploma (%)	19.5	21.3	20.5	19.9	15
Bachelor degree and above (%)	16.3	11.2	19.5	15.0	27.8
Family households (%)	83.2	70.5	68.5	69.0	71.2
Couple family with children (%)	48.8	37.4	42.5	40.6	44.7
One parent family (%)	10.0	14.3	17.4	16.3	15.8
Single (or lone) person household (%)	13.7	26.8	27.7	28.0	25.0
Median household income ($/week)	2,075	1,295	1,638	1,480	1,829
Separate house (%)	97.9	96.3	85.5	88.1	65.6
Owned outright (%)	40.4	49.2	29.5	35.8	31.5

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Mangoplah SAL	Lockhart Shire LGA	Wagga Wagga City LGA	Riverina Region	NSW
Owned with a mortgage (%)	38.3	29.2	34.1	30.8	32.5
Rented (%)	17.0	15.0	32.7	28.7	32.6
Median mortgage repayment ($/month)	1,213	1,192	1,517	1,387	2,167
Owner with mortgage households with mortgage repayments greater than 30% of household income	11.1	11.1	9.3	9.4	17.3
Median rent ($/week)	200	200	300	270	420
Renter households with rent payments greater than 30% of household income	37.5	20.6	28.3	26.3	35.5
In the labour force	66.3	55.1	64.4	60.6	58.7
Employed full-time (%)	71.8	62.3	60.3	60.7	55.2
Employed part-time (%)	23.3	28.7	30.3	29.8	29.7
Unemployed (%)	0.0	3.0	4.0	3.8	4.9

Indicator ABS 2021 Census	Mangoplah SAL	Lockhart Shire LGA	Wagga Wagga City LGA	Riverina Region	NSW
Professionals	18.1	12.1	20.7	16.2	25.8
Managers	36.9	26.7	12.2	15.6	14.6
Clerical & administrative workers	2.5	8.9	11.2	10.7	13.0
Technicians & trades workers	10.0	14.0	15.0	14.0	11.9
Labourers	10.6	10.4	10.1	13.9	8.2
Community & personal services workers	5.6	11.3	14.5	12.4	10.6
Sales workers	4.4	6.5	9.1	8.1	8.0
Machinery operators & drivers	10.6	8.8	5.4	7.1	6.0

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