



# Wanganella Wind Farm

## Preliminary Social Impact Assessment Phase 1

Prepared by ATX Consulting for Equis Wind Australia Pty Ltd

20 November 2024

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# Qualifications of report author

The SIA Guideline requires that authors are 'suitably qualified persons' who hold appropriate qualifications and have relevant experience in social science or related areas. The lead author's qualifications, experience and demonstrated understanding of social impacts is outlined below.

## Steve Rossiter

### Qualifications

- Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning, University of Texas, Austin (2004)
- Graduate Diploma of Education, University of Sydney (1993)
- Bachelor of Arts (Psychology and History, University of New South Wales (1992)

### Experience

Conducted multiple SIAs of all scales.

While at Elton Consulting engaged by DPE to assist with the preparation of the SIA Guideline for State Significant Development through Dr Richard Parsons

Relevant employment experience includes:

- Director of Social Sustainability at Elton Consulting (2004-2019)
- Director of Social Strategy and Outcomes at WSP (2019-2022)
- Director, ATX Consulting (2022 to present)

The author confirms that all efforts have been made to include all relevant information, that none of the information included is intentionally false or misleading and that the author's stated qualifications and experience are true and correct



Date: 20 November, 2024

# 1.0 Introduction

This preliminary Social Impact Assessment (SIA) Report has been prepared to inform the preparation of a development application (DA) for the Wanganella Wind Farm project, as developed by Equis Wind Australia Pty Ltd (Equis). The DA for the project is considered to be a State Significant Development (SSD). A wind energy project is State significant if it requires development consent and has:

- A capital investment value of more than \$30 million, or
- A capital investment value of more than \$10 million and is located in an environmentally sensitive area of state significance.

All DAs for SSD projects must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The purpose of the EIS is to help the community, councils, government agencies and the consent authority understand the impacts of a project so they can make informed submissions or a decision about a project's merits. The EIS must be prepared in accordance with the Secretary's Environment Assessment Requirements (SEARs). The SEARs identify the information that must be provided in the EIS and the community engagement that must be carried out.

To enable the department to issue SEARs, the applicant must submit a Scoping Report that provides a clear overview of the project (for example, its location, proposed layout and proximity to important features, protected areas and neighbours) and identifies the key environmental assessment issues including a preliminary assessment of visual and landscape impacts. The Scoping Report also includes preliminary studies on acoustics, biodiversity, visual impact, cultural heritage and a community engagement strategy. This preliminary SIA (Phase 1) is one of the requirements of the broader Scoping Report.

## 1.1 Social Impact Assessment

The classification as SSD triggers the requirement for a SIA to be undertaken in accordance with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment<sup>1</sup> (2023) *Social Impact Assessment Guideline*. This Scoping Report is Phase 1 of the SIA. The full SIA will be undertaken after the outcomes of this Scoping Report have been assessed and SEARS are issued by the Department.

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is defined by the International Association for Impact Assessment<sup>2</sup> as:

The process of analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions. Its primary purpose is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment (p. 5).

### 1.1.1 Purpose of SIA scoping report

The *Social Impact Assessment Guideline* is the key guiding document for the conduct of a SIA in New South Wales. This document (referred to from now as the *SIA Guideline*) states that the first phase of a SIA involves "scoping and initial assessment, refining and planning". The purpose of this *SIA Scoping Report* is to document the first phase assessment. The *SIA Scoping Report* will assist with the identification of likely social impacts and make an initial assessment of their likely size and scale.

The *SIA Guideline* identifies the purpose of the SIA scoping phase as to:

- Gain an initial understanding of the project's social locality (based on the scale and nature of the Project and the likelihood of potential impacts. There is no precise definition of the social locality as it changes for each project. It is sometimes referred to as the 'area of social influence')
- Gain an initial understanding of the characteristics of the communities within the project's social locality (described as the social baseline)
- Conduct an initial evaluation of the likely social impacts for different groups in the social locality and the level at which these impacts need to be assessed

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<sup>1</sup> Now Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)

<sup>2</sup> International Association for Impact Assessment (2015), *Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing social impacts of project*

- Consider potential refinements or approaches in response to likely social impacts
- Consider the remainder of the SIA tasks, including engagement.

## 1.1 The Project

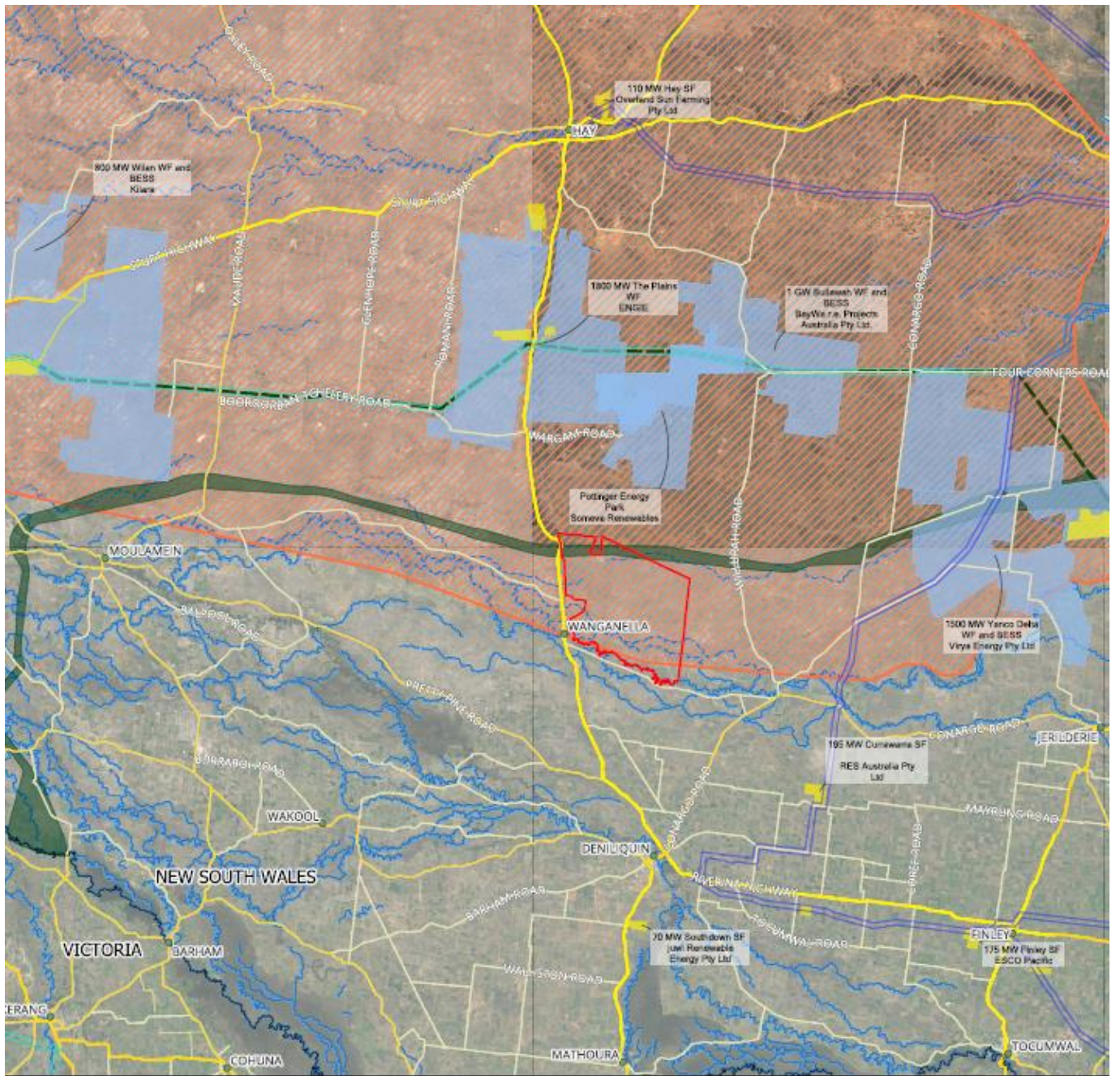
The Wanganella Wind Farm project includes a major wind farm, with a capacity of approximately 840MW, featuring up to 105 turbines and associated infrastructure and works. In addition to the wind farm, the Project includes a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of approximately 600/2,400MWh. The Project is located on the proposed VNI West Transmission line which runs through the site (See Figure 1 over the page for location map).

Based on early designs, the wind farm is planned to comprise the use and development of land for:

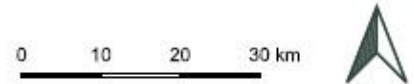
- Wind turbine generators including hardstands
- Internal access tracks, and car parking
- Substation and switchyard
- Internal electrical reticulation network and cabling
- On site buildings including office, amenities, and storage workshop
- On site temporary accommodation (still under investigation)
- Fencing and signage
- Grid connection infrastructure
- Temporary construction yards, storage compound and concrete batching plant
- Local road upgrades, if required
- Other associated uses, facilities and works as required.

The project is located within the South West Renewable Energy Zone (SWREZ). The SWREZ occupies a large area in south western New South Wales. It is centred around the towns of Hay and Balranald. The area was chosen as a REZ due to its strong renewable energy resource potential, proximity to the existing electricity network, and consideration of potential compatible interactions with existing land uses, including agricultural lands and biodiversity conservation.

Figure 1 Location Map



**Legend**



- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Site Boundary                    | <b>Proposed Infrastructure</b>  |
| 132 kV Line                      | Proposed Solar Projects         |
| 220 kV Line                      | Proposed Wind Projects          |
| Roads                            | VNI West (May 2024)             |
| South West Renewable Energy Zone | Project Energy Connect (330 kV) |
| Waterways                        |                                 |

**cogency**  
**Regional Context Plan**

2411 - Equis Wanganelia WF

Date: 11/10/2024

## 1.2 The Proponent

Equis is a renewable energy developer with an established track record of delivering renewable energy projects. Equis has developed over 240 renewables projects across the Asia Pacific since its inception in 2010. Equis is currently focused on and has offices in Australia, Japan, and Korea. Equis Australia is headquartered in Melbourne, and has projects across New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania.

## 2.0 Guidelines and policy documents

SIA has become increasingly recognised as a critical component of project planning and assessment. As a result of this recognition in Australia and overseas, a number of tools to assist with, and gain consistency in, SIA practice have been developed.

### 2.1 SIA specific guidelines

#### 2.1.1 Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (2023) *Social Impact Assessment Guideline*



The New South Wales *Social Impact Assessment Guideline* has been developed to provide guidance specifically for the social impact assessment of State Significant Development projects. The *SIA Guideline* is the central reference and guidance document for preparation of this SIA Scoping Report.

#### Social impact categories

SIA assesses projects from the perspective of people to determine potential effects on individuals, households, groups, communities and organisations. The categories show the different elements of people's lives that can be impacted and that, therefore, should be considered in social impact. The following table provides basic definitions of each of the social impact categories.



Table 1 *Social Impact Categories*

Social Impact Category	Definition
<b>Way of Life</b>	Including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play and how they interact each day
<b>Community</b>	Including composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions and people's sense of place
<b>Accessibility</b>	Including how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private or not-for-profit organisation
<b>Culture</b>	Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Including physical and mental health especially for people vulnerable to social exclusion or substantial change, psychological stress resulting from financial or other pressures, and changes to public health overall
<b>Surroundings</b>	Including ecosystem services, such as shade, pollution control, and erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity
<b>Livelihoods</b>	Including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business, whether they experience personal breach or disadvantage, and the distributive equity of impacts and benefits
<b>Decision Making Systems</b>	Particularly whether people experience procedural fairness, can make informed decision, can meaningfully influence decisions, and can access complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms

## 2.1.2 SIA Technical Supplement

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) (now DPHI) published a *Technical Supplement: Social Impact Guideline for State Significant Projects* in February 2023. The purpose of the *Technical Supplement* is to provide “additional guidance for proponents and practitioners using the *Social Impact Assessment Guideline*”.

The *Technical Supplement* provides a range of tools to assist with the assessment process. One of these tools is the evaluation matrix. The matrix, and its accompanying explanatory tables, is a guide to help determine the likelihood of a particular impact occurring and also definitions of what can be considered minimal, minor, moderate, major and transformational impacts. These are then combined into an assessment matrix (shown below).

**Table 2 NSW Social Impact Guideline Assessment Matrix<sup>3</sup>**

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

## 2.1.3 Social Impact Practice Note: Project refinements to address social impact (2023)

This *Social Impact Practice Note* is focussed on how to achieve better social outcomes through project refinement with an emphasis on early issue identification and subsequently early refinement. The *Practice Note* suggests that when starting early, both issues of concern and potential project benefits can be identified and meaningful project changes or consideration of alternatives can be undertaken before the project has progressed too far down the design pathway.

The *Practice Note* suggests the following hierarchy of actions should be considered to manage predicted negative social impacts:

- Avoid
- Minimise
- Mitigate.

The *Practice Note* includes a case study on a renewable energy project and provides a number of possible project refinements examples in response to potential impacts.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/policy-and-legislation/under-review-and-new-policy-and-legislation/social-impact-assessment>

## 2.1.4 Social Impact Management Toolbox for State Significant Projects (2023)

This document outlines principles to guide the effective management of social impacts. The key focus of the *Toolbox* is that it:

Encourages proponents to publicly affirm how they will manage unforeseen or ongoing matters with the community. It also highlights the importance of managing impacts proactively rather than reactively (p.4).

The *Toolbox* identifies two key principles:

<p><b>Invest in relationships of trust with communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Process of understanding affected communities begins early</li> <li>▪ A nuanced, appropriate and sensitive approach requires a long term investment in building relationships</li> <li>▪ Genuine engagement requires listening and communicating in the language of the community</li> <li>▪ The key aim is to gain a social licence to operate</li> <li>▪ Relationships need to be actively managed for social licence to be maintained</li> </ul>	<p>Benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insights and information from genuine engagement helps in understanding the whole story</li> <li>▪ Enables focus on affected individuals and groups in responses to impacts, issues and concerns</li> <li>▪ Communities feel listened to and respected</li> <li>▪ Proactive engagement and meeting people in places where they feel comfortable builds trust and increases understanding</li> <li>▪ Communities that believe and trust the people they are dealing with are more willing to participate even if difficult conversations are necessary</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respond to changing contexts throughout the life of the project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are various impacts at different stages of a project</li> <li>▪ As projects change so does the social, cultural and physical context which can cause dynamic social impacts</li> </ul>	<p>Benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Responses to impacts, issues and concerns can be more targeted</li> <li>▪ Failing to address cumulative impacts can lead to fatigue and less acceptance and support for the project</li> <li>▪ A proactive and adaptive approach to managing social impacts can reduce conflict and complaints that could otherwise increase project costs and delays</li> </ul>

The *Toolbox* describes a 'scaled approach' to social impact assessment and management .

## 2.1.5 Engaging with Aboriginal Communities Social Impact Assessment Practice Notes

This *Practice Note* includes the following principles for engagement:

- Relationship and trust
- Ongoing conversations
- Flexible approach
- Finding common ground
- Accessibility
- Transparency.

The *Practice Notes* state that Aboriginal communities may experience the social impacts and benefits of a project differently to non-Aboriginal communities. All social impacts of a project should consider the livelihood and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities, beyond potential impacts to culture. Different steps in a social impact assessment may require different information and inputs from Aboriginal communities, and different considerations by the project team.

The Practice Notes also include notes on cultural and spiritual loss which can include loss or decrease in traditional attachment to land or connection to Country.

Equis has engaged cultural heritage specialists to provide advice on Aboriginal cultural and potential social impact issues. Basic information from this engagement will be incorporated within this preliminary SIA and further expanded upon in the EIS

Although not specifically related to SIA, the following guidelines on benefit sharing and cumulative impact are included here as they are pertinent to social impact and may be important in understanding, mitigating and enhancing social impact and benefits of the Wanganella project.

### 2.1.6 Draft Benefit Sharing Guideline: Guidance for state significant renewable energy development (2023)

The then NSW Department of Planning and Environment also produced the draft *Benefit Sharing Guideline* in November 2023. The *Guideline* recognises that:

Host communities may not necessarily experience a proportionate level of benefits from the uptake of renewable energy, unless there are specific efforts made to share the proceeds of renewable energy projects within the local area.

The intention of the draft *Benefit Sharing Guideline* is to enhance positive social and economic benefits of renewable energy projects to that host communities, and the places and people that experience the most impact, can more directly benefit from renewable projects. To achieve this goal, the *Guideline* outlines:

- A benefit sharing policy approach, objectives and implementation strategy
- Benefit sharing mechanisms that operate at neighbourhood, local and regional levels
- A proposed model, including guidance on the expected total value of benefit sharing from individual projects.

The draft *Benefit Sharing Guideline* includes the following policy principles:

- **Standard practice** – benefit sharing is incorporated as standard practice and applicants offer and fair and accepted rate of benefit to host communities
- **Collaborative** – Initiatives are designed in partnership with councils. Opportunities to centralise administration and leverage funding with other projects should be prioritised
- **Transparency** – information is made publicly available, including details on administration and distribution of proceeds
- **Community focussed** – informed by community consultation, tailored to the local context and community needs an designed to produce outcomes that are aligned with community values and priorities
- **Proportionate** – value and extent of the benefits provided reflect the scale of the project and the level of change experienced by the community
- **Net positive outcome** – initiatives provide a positive, long lasting and meaningful impact on the local community and contribute to tangible, long term social and economic outcomes.

**Table 3 Levels of benefit sharing<sup>4</sup>**

	<b>Neighbourhood</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Regional</b>
<b>Area defined</b>	Local community members and small neighbourhoods in the direct vicinity of proposed development	More broadly and typically within the Local Government Area hosting the project Recommended to be centrally administered	Regional scale across several local government areas within a REZ Consideration and accounting are managed separately to the assessment process for individual projects
<b>Level of change or impact</b>	High, acute	Moderate to high Scale of benefits are generally greater in financial value and number of benefactors	Cumulative
<b>Examples of benefits</b>	Minor capital works and improvements (e.g. rooftop solar, streetscape vegetation, landscaping, playgrounds) Funding or works for community facilities Sponsorship of local community events, clubs, groups Establishment of community programs Neighbour subsidies (energy discounts, free connections) Investment, co-ownership opportunities	Recurrent costs for infrastructure, services and facilities Additional or improved public facilities such as local parks, libraries, community centres, showgrounds, transport infrastructure Funding or works for neighbourhood level community facilities Scholarship programs Sponsorship of community events such as local markets, community clean ups, celebrations Sponsorship of local groups including sporting groups, environmental groups, social support, etc.	Include both community benefit and employment / training schemes

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/policy-and-legislation/under-review-and-new-policy-and-legislation/social-impact-assessment>

## 2.1.7 Cumulative Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (2022)

The NSW Government's *Cumulative Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (2022)* [CIA Guideline] defines cumulative impacts as:

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

The Wanganella Wind Farm would be considered to require a project-specific cumulative impact assessment (CIA) as part of the EIS. The *CIA Guideline* describes project level CIA as including the consideration of "impacts from a proposed project in combination with other future projects that are anticipated or reasonably foreseeable".

The *CIA Guideline* suggests that CIA should consider:

- Data availability including relevant data from other relevant projects, the quality of the available data, whether further research is required, and key constraints in obtaining data such as commercial restrictions
- The ability to avoid or mitigate potential cumulative impacts through alternative project design, introduction of mitigation measures, considering adaptive management approaches
- The ability to predict cumulative impacts having regard to approved measures such as those that exist for biodiversity, air quality and noise
- Criteria that will be used to evaluate the acceptability, or otherwise, of cumulative impacts.

The *Cumulative Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (2022)* identifies the following objectives of a project-level cumulative impact assessment:

- Integrates decision making with decision making at a broader strategic level
- Focusses on 'things that matter' including key social welfare issues, health and wellbeing, etc.
- Is proportionate to the impacts of the project and any material cumulative impact
- Is technically robust and deals effectively with the inevitable uncertainties associated with assessing the cumulative impacts of multiple projects over a long period of time
- Leads to practical action to minimise adverse impacts
- Informs further action at the strategic level to reduce adverse cumulative impacts of other developments over time.

## 2.2 International Best Practice

### 2.2.1 Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of project (2015)



The International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) 2015 Guidance<sup>5</sup> is a seminal and highly influential resource document for SIA practitioners across the world. This document provides much of both the theoretical and practical background to many of the SIA Guidelines that have been developed by various governments and organisations since 2015.

Prepared by Australian academic and SIA practitioner Frank Vanclay, the international IAIA Guidance possess a high degree of relevance to the Australian context.

The Guidance is the original source of defining social impact matters as changes to one or more of the following:

- People's way of life – how they live, work, play and interact with one another on a day to day basis
- Culture – their shared beliefs, customs, values, language
- Community – its cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities
- Health and wellbeing – complete physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing
- Environment – quality of the air and water people use, the level of hazard or risk, dust and noise exposure, availability and quality of food, physical safety
- Personal and property rights – people when people may be economically affected, or experience personal disadvantage
- Political systems – the extent to which people are able to participate in decisions which may affect their lives
- Fears and aspirations – perceptions about their safety, fears about the future of their community and their children.

The IAIA Guidance also documents the main phases of SIA as:

- Understand the issues
- Predict, analyse and assess the likely impact pathways
- Develop and implement strategies
- Design and implement monitoring programs.

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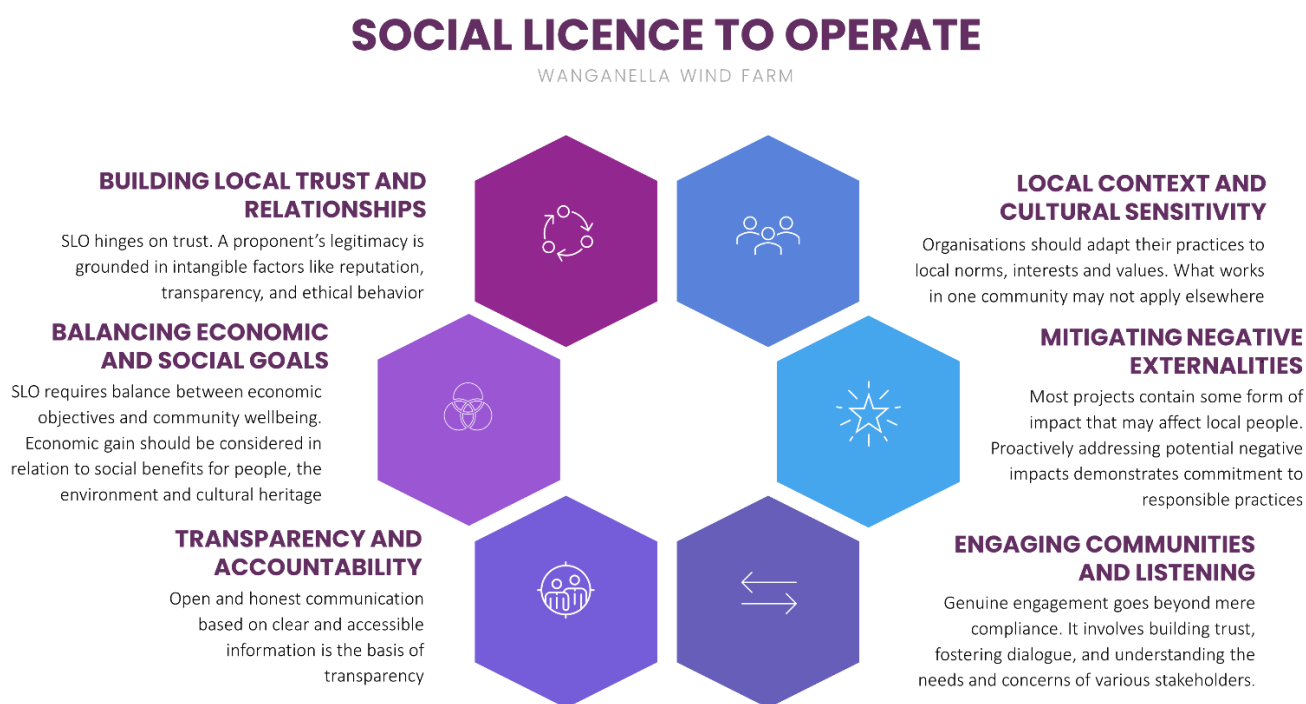
<sup>5</sup> Vanclay, (2015) *Social Impact Assessment: Guidelines for Assessing and Managing the Social Impacts of Projects*, International Association for Impact Assessment

## 2.2.2 Social Licence

Social Licence to Operate<sup>6</sup> refers to the level of acceptance or approval of the activities of an organisation by its stakeholders, especially local impacted communities. Leading corporations now realise that they need to meet more than just the regulatory requirements, they also need to consider, if not meet, the expectations of a wide range of stakeholders, including non-government organisations and local communities. If they don't, they risk not only reputational harm and the reduced opportunities that might bring. In some countries, 'social licence' has become an established element of the language of business, actively influencing, if not driving, the business strategy of many companies, and is part of the governance landscape.

The figure below shows some of the components of social licence to operate that will be considered during the Phase 2 SIA and the community and stakeholder engagement process that will support and inform that phase of the SIA.

Figure 2 Social Licence to Operate



<sup>6</sup> Boutilier, R.G. 2014 Frequently asked questions about the social licence to operate. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* 32(4), 263-272. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2014.941141> )

## 3.0 Project context

The Scoping Report for the project will provide an extensive description of the strategic context for the Wanganella Wind Farm project. This preliminary SIA does not repeat that detailed policy analysis; a more concise summary is provided here. The strategic context overview in this SIA does describe some of the relevant local context, the role of cumulative impacts and cumulative impact assessment and also identifies social impact issues documented in assessments of other nearby renewable energy projects.

The Wanganella Wind Farm project is located in the South West Renewable Energy Zone (SWREZ). The SWREZ was identified due to the availability of solar resources, land use compatibility and the potential for a strong pipeline of renewable energy projects. The NSW Government has set a target of 2.5 GW of renewable energy to be generated by the SWREZ.

### 3.1 Murray Region

Wanganella and the Edward River Local Government Area are located in the Central Sub-Region of the broader Murray region. The map below shows the broader regional context based on the Murray Regional Development Australia area.

Figure 3 Murray Region



Source: Murray RDA, *Murray Strategic Regional Plan*

The *Murray Strategic Regional Plan 2022-2025* includes the following four priority focus areas:

1. Investing in people including First Nations, policy and gender equality
  - Listening to local voices and partnering with communities
  - Targeted investment in skills, education, training and local leadership capacity.
2. Investing in places
  - Supporting adaptive, accessible, sustainable and liveable regions
  - Delivering infrastructure where and when it is needed.
3. Investing in services
  - Enhancing connectivity, accessibility and equity of services
  - Investment including across communications, health, water and transport.
4. Investing in industries and local economies
  - Investment to help activate economic and industry growth
  - Supporting the conditions needed for regional industries to diversify and grow.

Based on the consultations undertaken for the plan, Murray Redevelopment Australia states that the “conversations and lived experiences of people investing in regional development in the Murray point to”:

- The infrastructure pipeline is at an all-time high with a peak expected in 2023-2049. These projects are relying on resources such as workforce requirements (an estimated 3,500-5,500 people), housing and temporary accommodation, machinery, materials and the supply of services such as education, health, digital connectivity and banking.
- Capitalising on the impact of the large infrastructure projects bringing newcomers to the region with new skills and energising the school training-jobs pathway.
- Training and skills development, while a priority on paper, requires much more place-based investment to meet projected needs.
- Business development is relatively well supported for the longer-term job markets in the region.
- Environmental sustainability and disaster preparedness concerns leading to informed community engagement in communications, business adaptation to drought and disaster, diversity of enterprises suited to a changing climate, and making the most of capacity to sequester and build carbon stores.
- Leadership and collaboration, rather than competition, being considered critical to progress regional development.

## 3.2 South West Renewable Energy Zone (SWREZ)

The NSW *Electricity Strategy and Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap* set out a plan to deliver the State's Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) in New South Wales. The South West Renewable Energy Zone (SWREZ) was chosen as one of those zones because of its strong renewable energy resource potential, proximity to the existing electricity network, and consideration of potential interactions with existing land uses, including agricultural lands and biodiversity conservation.

The SWREZ 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. The REZ declaration sets out the intended network capacity (size), geographical area (location) and infrastructure that will make up the REZ. This enables and sets the scope of key legislative functions under the Act, including access schemes and REZ network solutions.

### 3.2.1 Other renewable energy projects

The closest existing or operational renewables project to the Wanganella Wind Farm is the Hay Solar Farm which is approximately 76 kilometres from the site. The closest known proposed or planned wind farm project is the Pottinger Wind Farm which is approximately 14 kilometres from the Wanganella site.

A full summary of known projects is shown in the following table.

**Table 4** *Nearby Renewables Projects – operational, planned and proposed*

Project	Developer / Operator	Energy	Indicative Size	Proximity to Project (estimated)	Status
VNI West	TransGrid & Transmission Company Victoria	Transmission	500kV	0 Km	Planning
Boooroban (Saltbush) Wind Farm	Octopus Investments	Wind	400 MW	31 Km	Planning
Pottinger Wind Farm	Someva	Wind	900 MW	14 Km	Planning
Romani Solar Farm	Samsung C&T Renewable Energy	Solar	250 MW	39 Km	Planning
EnergyConnect	Transgrid	Transmission	330 kV	40 Km	Construction
The Plains Solar Farm	ENGIE	Solar	400 MW	25km	Planning
The Plains Wind Farm	ENGIE	Wind	1800MW	25km	Planning
Currawarra Solar Farm	RES	Solar	195 MW	49 Km	Planning
Bullawah Wind Farm	BayWa r.e.	Wind	1,000 MW	53 Km	Planning
Tarleigh Park Solar Farm	RES	Solar	90 MW	61 Km	Planning
Techelery Wind Farm	Neoen	Wind	800 MW	61 Km	Planning
Lang's Crossing Solar Farm	TEC-C	Solar	10 MW	73 Km	Construction

Project	Developer / Operator	Energy	Indicative Size	Proximity to Project (estimated)	Status
Baldon Wind Farm	Goldwind	Wind	1,000 MW	73 Km	Planning
Yanco Delta Wind Farm	ViRYA Energy	Wind	1,500 MW	74 km	Planning
Argoon Wind Farm	RES	Wind	901 MW	75 Km	Planning
Hay Solar Farm	Island Green Power	Solar	152 MW	76 Km	Operational
Finley Solar Farm	John Laing	Solar	175 MW	81 Km	Operational
Keri Keri Wind Farm	Acciona	Wind	884 MW	85 Km	Planning
Keri Keri Solar Farm	Acciona	Solar	400 MW	91 Km	Proposed
Dinawan Wind Farm	Spark Renewables	Wind	1,200 MW	60 Km	Planning
Dinawan Solar Farm	Spark Renewables	Solar	800 MW	60 Km	Planning
Wilan Wind Farm	Kilara	Wind	800 MW	98 Km	Planning

\* Estimated distance

The example projects shown in the following section include a number that are in, or partly within, the Edward River LGA. However, with its location towards the southern part of the SWREZ, and its distance from the main Energy Connect transmission line, Edward River has not had the same exposure to, and experience with, large scale renewable energy projects as has its northern council neighbours like Hay Shire.

### 3.2.2 Cumulative impact

The declaration of a REZ inevitably creates a concentration of renewable energy projects within a defined area. Although these areas are large, the REZ policy does create the conditions for some level of cumulative impact to occur.

The consideration of cumulative impacts requires taking into account not only the potential impacts of a proposed project but also examination of how impacts caused by other projects can be reasonably foreseen. In the case of this SIA, cumulative impact assessment is the assessment of social impacts which may result from the Wanganella Wind Farm project when considered with, or added to, other past, present and foreseeable future projects.

### 3.2.3 SWREZ SIAs

There have been a number of SIAs completed for renewable energy projects in the SWREZ. Although each project is unique, an analysis of existing SIAs does provide some insights into typical renewable energy project potential and perceived impacts. Based on a review of SIA scoping reports or SIA sections of larger scoping reports, the following social impacts can be considered possible for the Wanganella Wind Farm project. Some caution is required here as each project has its own unique location, composition, landscape and topographical conditions, proximity to communities, etc.

#### **Potential Positive Impacts**

Energy Transition – contribution of wind farm projects to a renewable energy transition and the opportunity for local communities to become part of a new industry

Employment and training – increased and more diverse local employment opportunities

Local and regional economic benefits – diversification of the local and regional economic base, greater demand for local goods, services and labour and the provision of alternative income streams for landowners

Community benefits – community investment initiatives and benefit funds allocated to improve social outcomes for local communities

Connection to Country – there is the potential for Aboriginal communities to be reconnected to land which may have been previously inaccessible

#### **Potential Negative Impacts**

Local amenity impacts – changes to the local environment and visual amenity, particularly related to turbine visibility, may lead to impacts on the perceived quality and aesthetics of the landscape

Labour competition – potential for increased pressure on local workforce with possible impacts on local businesses due to labour competition and wage increases

Construction impacts – local traffic and transport route disruption, particularly related to construction period and requirements of large and oversized loads

Access to services and accommodation – impacts associated with the temporary influx of workers and the possible cumulative impacts of numerous projects on housing availability, affordability and services access

Community – possible changes related to community cohesion in terms of perceived unequal sharing of benefits

### 3.3 Local Government

The Wanganella Wind Farm project is located within the Edward River Local Government Area. The LGA covers 8,881 square kilometres in the southern Riverina area of NSW. The LGA includes the town of Deniliquin, which is built on the banks of the Edward River and the six rural villages of Blighty, Booroorban, Conargo, Mayrung, Pretty Pine and Wanganella.

Edward River Council shares its boundaries with Murray Shire LGA to the south, Hay LGA to the North and Murrumbidgee and Berrigan LGAs to the east. The LGA is strategically located in the Murray Riverina region linked by highways to Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne.

As will be expanded on in the Social Baseline, Edward River is based around the town of Deniliquin which accounts for around 75% of the council area's population.

The *Edward River Community Strategic Plan 2022-2050* describes some of the goals for the Local Government Area as:

- A healthy, socially connected, and resilient community
- A diverse economy that delivers ongoing benefits
- An active community that takes initiative and is 'heard' by political, business and community authorities
- A community that is connected to the world through technology and transport
- Vibrant and creative towns and villages supported by sustainable, quality infrastructure
- A place to visit for nature, food and fun.

The *Community Strategic Plan* refers specifically to economic development and identifies the following priorities:

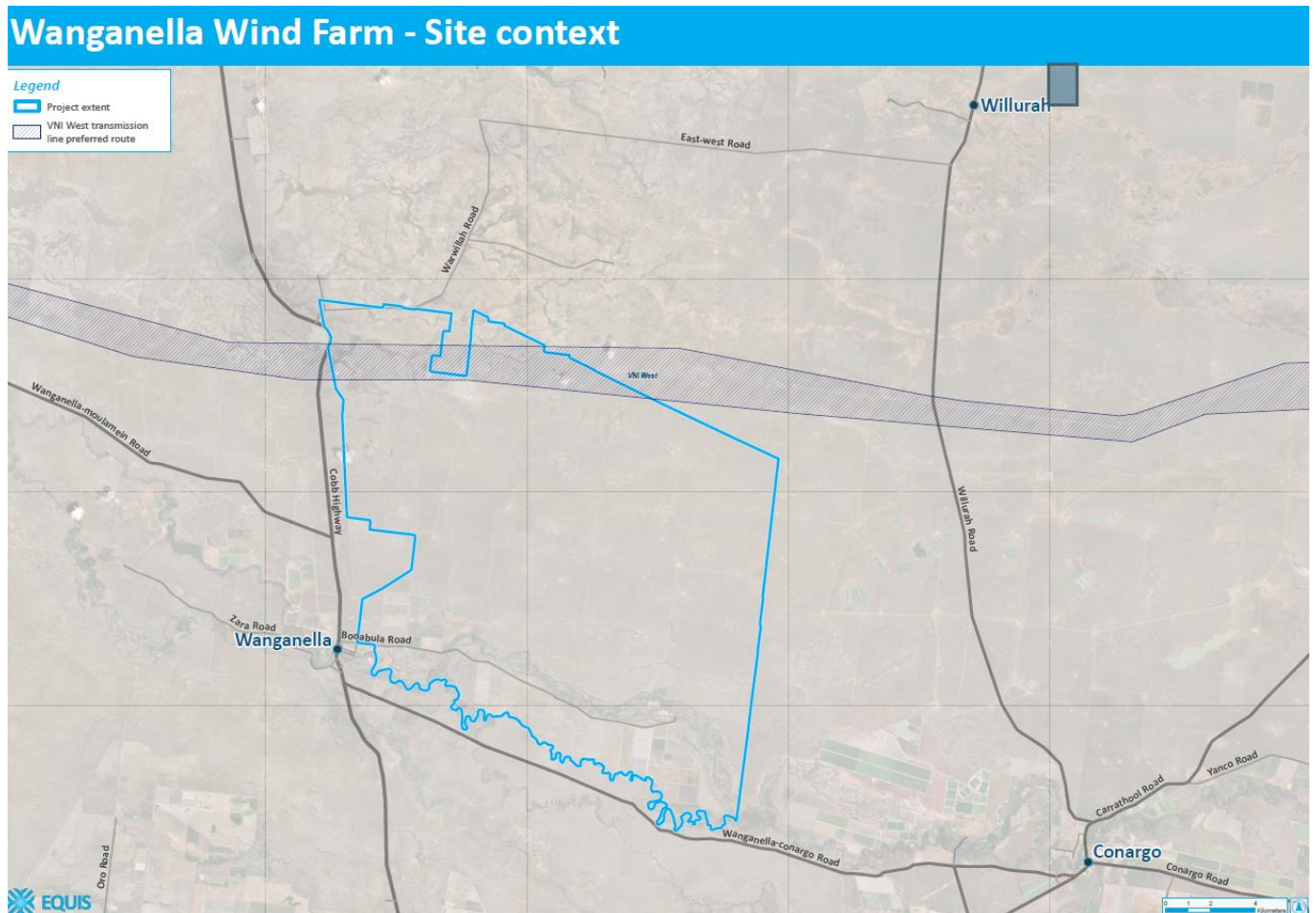
- Develop and implement a (technology aware) economic development and growth strategy for the Edward River region
- Collaborate with stakeholders and entrepreneurs to drive diverse, innovative and competitiveness in new markets
- Partner with neighbouring councils and service providers to implement the Agri business Masterplan.

# 4.0 Site Context

## 4.1 Subject site

The project is located along Cobb Highway, Wanganella, approximately 40km north-west of Deniliquin in the Edward River Local Government Area.

Figure 4 Site context map



Source: Equis Wind

The nearest town to the project site is Wanganella with a population of 61 as of 2021 (ABS 2021). Forming part of the Riverina district of New South Wales, the geography of the area includes wide, flat plains, and a semi-arid climate dominated by grasslands and few trees. Wanganella is at the heart of the 'Hay Plains'. The wider area has a very low population density and few dwellings not associated with agriculture.

North of the site is the village of Booororban, population 36 (ABS 2021). Just outside the site, on the Cobb Highway, is the South-West Woodland Nature Reserve – Booororban.

The site comprises, and is surrounded by, agricultural land largely used for sheep and cattle grazing, and rice, wheat and canola growing. A number of creeks flow through the southern part of the site including the Billabong Creek, and Sheepwash Creek, within the Murray-Darling basin.

## 4.2 Social baseline

The social baseline describes the social context without the project. It documents the existing social environment, conditions and trends relevant to the impacts identified. The *SIA Guideline* outlines the key components of a social baseline study:

- An understanding of the project's scale and nature
- Who may be affected by the project, including any vulnerable or marginalised groups
- Any built or natural features on or near the project that could be affected, or which hold tangible and intangible community values and associations
- An initial analysis of the defining characteristics of the communities within the projects area of social influence, including social, cultural and demographic trends and other change processes
- History of development within the social area of influence, and how people have responded to these changes previously.

Profiling provides a summary of the key characteristics of the people of a community or project area and is concerned with developing a detailed understanding of the social and economic context in which a project is based to inform impact prediction. The study is a benchmark against which direct, indirect and cumulative impacts can be predicted and analysed. Tailor the scope and content of the social baseline study to the project context and the level of assessment of social impacts using meaningful indicators and information.

## 4.2.1 Defining the social locality

The *SIA Guideline* identifies a number of issues that should be considered in defining the social locality for a project. The following table shows the issues and their geographical implications for the Wanganella Wind Farm project.

**Table 5 Social Locality for Wanganella Wind Farm**

Consideration	Issues	Social locality area for project	How localities may be impacted
Scale and nature	Associated activities including ancillary works and infrastructure; likely direct and indirect impacts (e.g. transport and logistic corridors or property acquisitions)	Local communities – Wanganella, Booroorban Deniliquin Edward River Local Government Area	Local communities potentially impacted by ancillary works and infrastructure.  Broader localities like Deniliquin, Edward River LGA and the SWREZ may be impacted by transport corridors and broader works and infrastructure including roads and transmission lines
Who may be affected	Social, cultural and demographic characteristics (including Aboriginal populations); their relevant interests and values; the things that differentiate groups (such as cultural diversity) as well as things that they have in common; and the broader community and public interest	Local communities – Wanganella, Booroorban Deniliquin Edward River Local Government Area	Residents in Wanganella are likely to be most directly impacted.  The interests and values of communities of Wanganella, Boorboorban and Deniliquin/Edward River will be explored both in the scoping phase and then in more detail during the Phase 2 SIA.
Whether any vulnerable or marginalised groups will be affected	Including people on low incomes; people living with disabilities, chronic medical conditions or in poor health requiring access to services; culturally and linguistically diverse communities; people who are homeless or in insecure housing; people who are unable to represent themselves; or other vulnerable people such as elderly people, children or single parent families	Local communities – Wanganella, Booroorban Deniliquin	Residents in Wanganella are likely to be most directly impacted. The social baseline will identify the existence of any vulnerable groups within this community.  A similar analysis will be undertaken of Deniliquin as the closest major town.
Built or natural features	Features near the project that could be affected and the tangible and intangible values that people may associate with these features such as sense of place or belonging, rural character, connection to Country and value of stories within the cultural landscapes, community cohesion and use of natural areas and resources	Local communities – Wanganella, Booroorban Deniliquin Edward River Local Government Area SWREZ/ Murray region	Sense of place, rural character, cultural landscape and community cohesion will be considered for local communities as well as the broader LGA and region.  The broader regional implications may include cumulative consideration of change in rural character and a perceived transition away from agricultural production.

Consideration	Issues	Social locality area for project	How localities may be impacted
Relevant social, cultural and demographic trends and other change processes	Including how people have felt or experienced these changes; community resilience; how Aboriginal people engage in the area (past and present); different trends and patterns around issues like rental affordability, employment, shifting land uses, or population and demographic; or experiences of extreme weather and natural hazards	Local communities – Wanganella, Booroorban Deniliquin Edward River Local Government Area SWREZ/ Murray region	All geographic areas are likely to be experiencing various effects of the transition from primarily rural character and a perceived transition away from agricultural production. The extent to which renewable energy represents a transition from rural character or a co-existence with will be understood differently by different groups and individuals.  It is noted that the change process associated with climate change and the transition to renewable energy is a global process but may be experienced more directly within REZs.
History	Any similar experiences people in the locality have had, including change prior to, or created by, the project's planning assessment; how people reacted to early discussions; how these discussions and other experiences affected the broader community; and the traditional Aboriginal use of the place, recent history of the place and people and any ongoing traumas	Edward River LGA SWREZ/ Murray region	This is the first renewable energy project in close proximity to the Wanganella community. Edward River LGA has limited direct history and experience in comparison to other LGAs in the district like Hay Shire.  The broader communities within the wider REZ have experience with a number of renewable energy projects to

The *SIA Guideline* (p.16) stresses that:

There is no prescribed meaning or fixed, pre-defined geographic boundary (e.g the local suburb or within 500 metres) to a social locality; rather, the social locality should be construed for each project, depending on its nature and its impacts.

As the preceding table shows, for the Wanganella Wind Farm project different impacts will be experienced at different scales for different geographical areas. This includes:

- Potential visual and noise impacts will be largely restricted to the village of Wanganella which is the only inhabited area within 10 kilometres of the site
- Impacts related to demands for local goods and services may be experienced to some degree in Wanganella but are likely in the nearest significant town which is Deniliquin
- The Edward River Local Government Area is the area where impacts related to transport routes and any requirements to upgrade local roads and other infrastructure. These impacts may also be experienced at the very local level in Wanganella
- Community benefits and the expenditure of funding for community benefits will impact local communities like Wanganella but there is also the possibility of more regional level projects that may impact the whole of the South West Renewable Energy Zone.

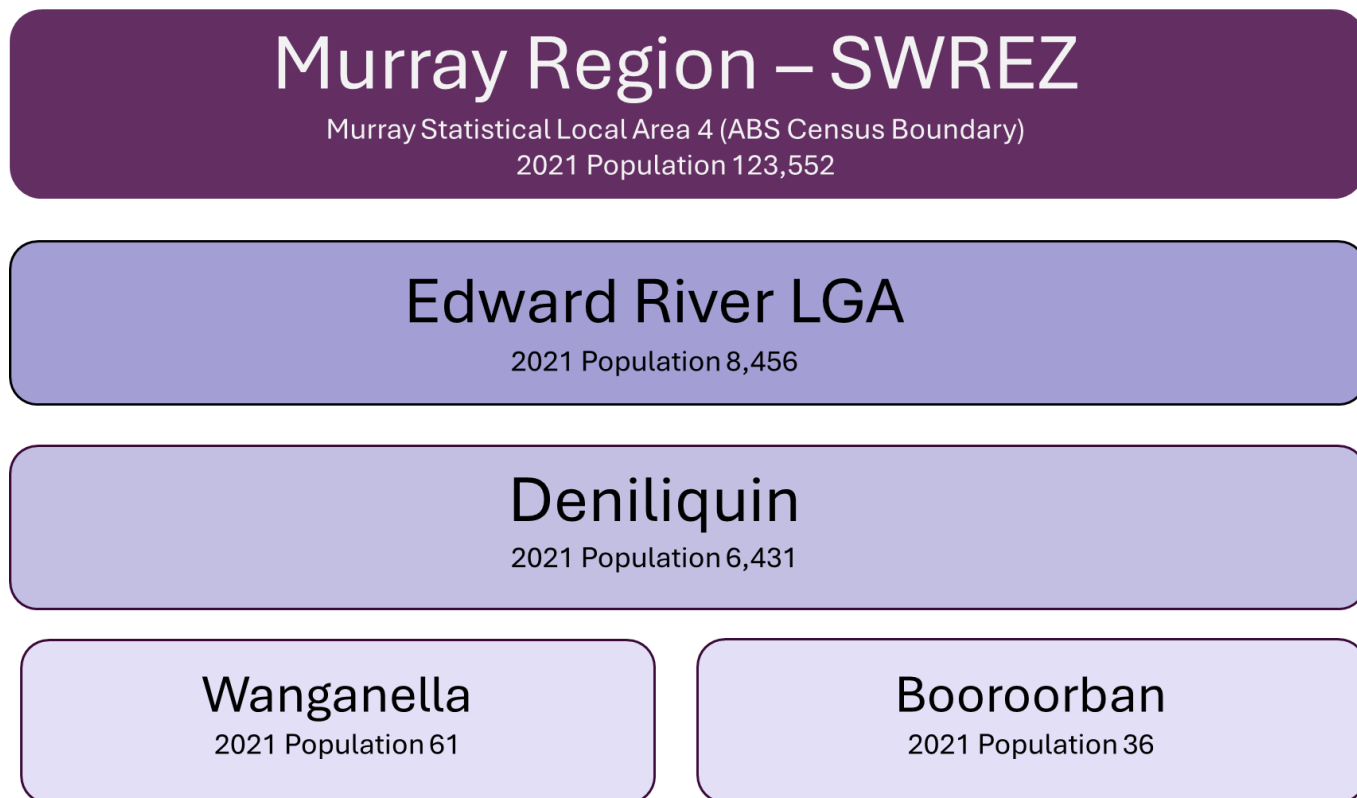
It is recognised that the social locality may have to be reconsidered after more detailed study is undertaken at the next stage of the project. Future studies may highlight how particular issues such as visual impact, heavy

vehicle transport routes, community benefit distribution and others may have a wider or smaller potential impact area than has been considered at this Phase 1 scoping stage.

This approach is consistent with best practice in SIA which promotes responsiveness to new information as it becomes available and the capacity to modify and revise the consideration of social impacts as the assessment process progresses and evolves.

The following image shows the different levels or areas where social impacts are likely to be experienced for the Wanganella Wind Farm project.

**Figure 5 Study area components**



The previous figure shows the key geographical areas that are considered in the social impact assessment and the development of the social baseline. The figure shows:

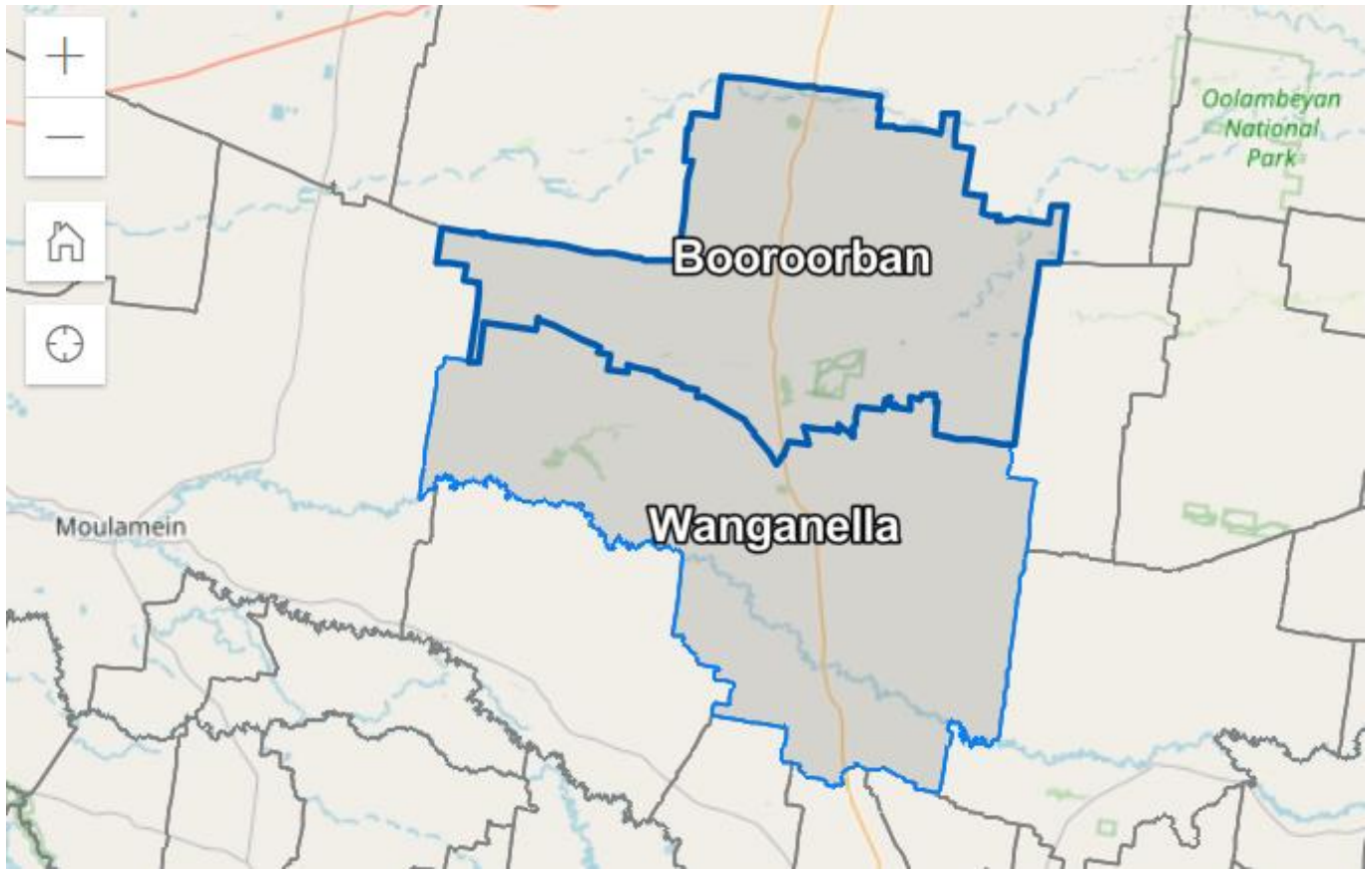
- The local study area including the small townships of Wanganella and Booorooban. The analysis will have a slightly greater emphasis on Wanganella given its proximity to the site and the likelihood of greater and more immediate impacts being experienced in that area
- Deniliquin is the nearest largest town and is important as a potential source of labour, supplies and accommodation
- Edward River is the Local Government Area (LGA) and will be considered in terms of infrastructure and services, indirect social impacts, economic and community benefit and potential cumulative impacts. It is important to note that Deniliquin comprises over 75% of the total Edward River LGA population so the social impact issues between the two areas are likely to be similar
- The Murray Region (based on the ABS Census geographic area of Murray Statistical Local Area 4) is included as another level of regional community. This Census boundary is used as it is the closest approximation of the boundaries of the SWREZ. It is an important area for consideration of regional social and economic impacts and cumulative impacts.

#### 4.2.2 Local Study Area

The local study area consists of communities that may experience direct social impacts from the project, such as impacts related to amenity, traffic and the influx of the workforce.

Wanganella

Figure 6 Wanganella and Booroorban



Source: ABS Census

The following figures shows the key community profile or demographic features of Wanganella and Booroorban.

Figure 7 Wanganella demographic snapshot 2021

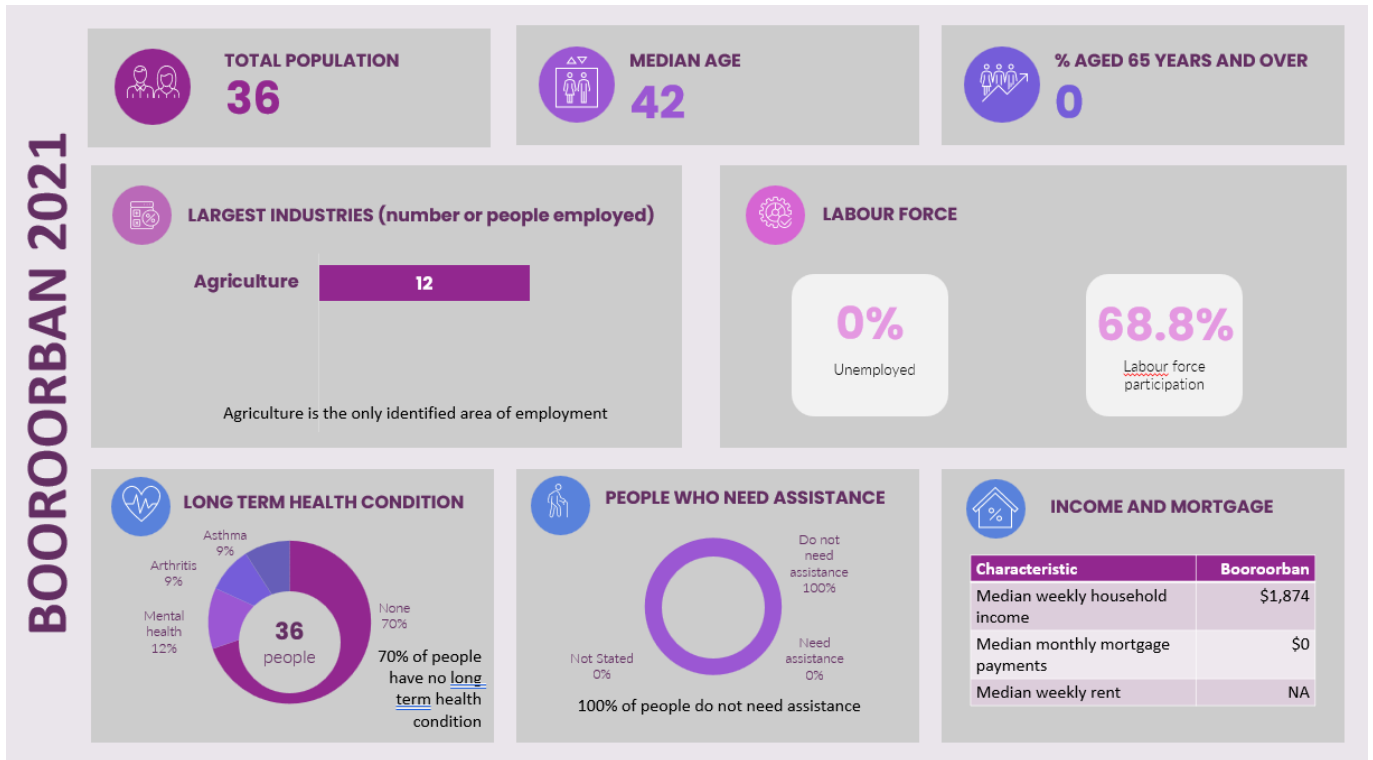


Source: ABS Census 2021

Wanganella is the closest community to the proposed wind farm. It is a small township with 61 residents. Due to the small numbers some caution needs to be exercised when interpreting Census results. With these cautionary comments in mind, key features of the community profile of Wanganella include:

- A strong reliance on agriculture as its main industry
- Workforce engagement is high
- The majority (two thirds) of its residents report they have no long-term health conditions and few if any people who require any form of assistance.

Figure 8 Booroorban demographic snapshot 2021



Source: ABS Census 2021

Booroorban is located approximately 20 kilometres to the north of the Wanganella Wind Farm site. It is a small community with 36 residents. Due to the small numbers some caution needs to be exercised when interpreting Census results. With these cautionary comments in mind, key features of the community profile of Booroorban include:

- A strong reliance on agriculture as its main industry
- Workforce engagement is high
- Seven out of ten people have no long-term health conditions.

### 4.2.3 Local towns - Deniliquin

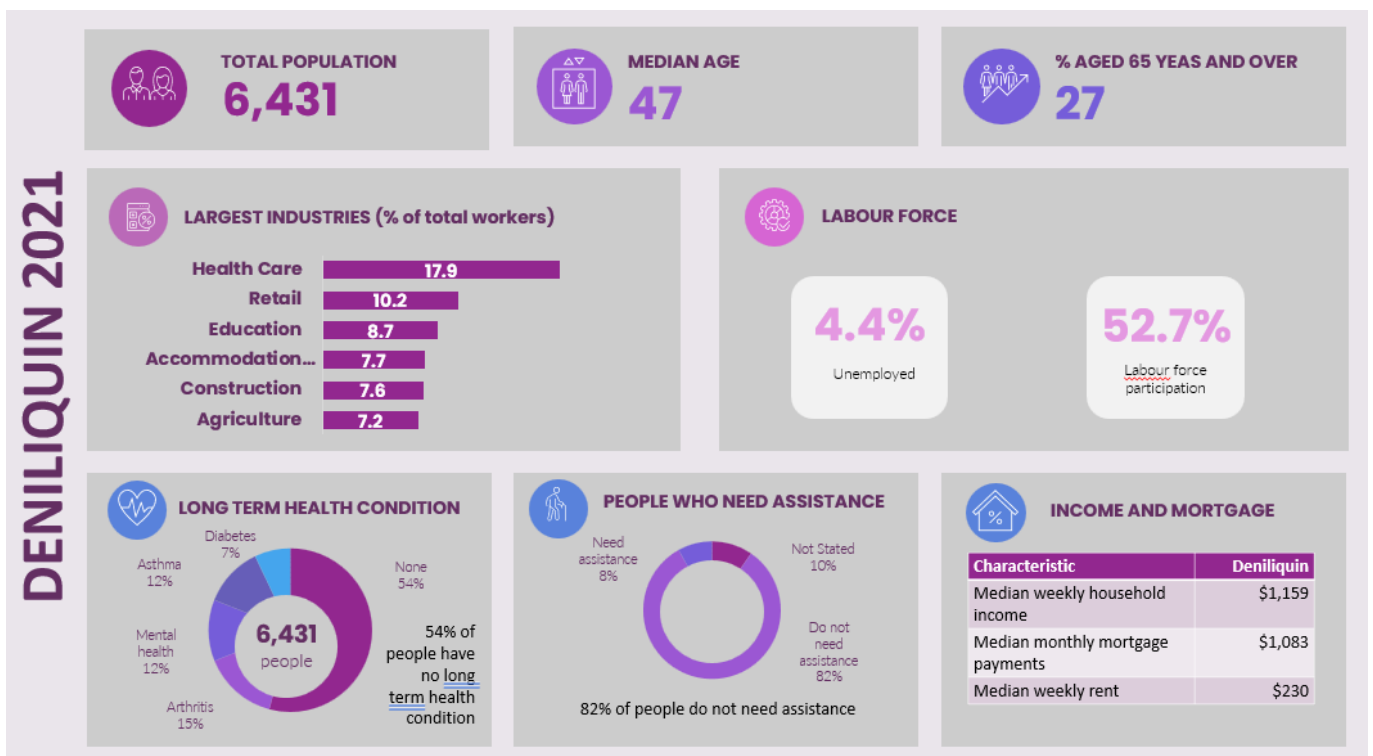
Nearby regional communities include the surrounding local towns that may experience social impacts related to social infrastructure and services, employment, business and industry, and housing and accommodation. These townships may also experience a range of positive and negative cumulative impacts. Deniliquin is the nearest major township. It is located in the Edward River LGA and is approximately 48 kilometres south of the Wanganella Wind Farm site.

Figure 9 Deniliquin



Source: ABS Census

Figure 10 Deniliquin demographic snapshot 2021



Deniliquin is located approximately 48 kilometres to the south of the Wanganella Wind Farm site. It is an important regional town with a population of 6,431 people. Key features of the Deniliquin community include:

- An older median age than the smaller surrounding communities
- A quarter of the population aged 65 years and over
- A more diverse range of industries of employment
- A lower workforce participation
- A higher proportion of people with health conditions and who require some form of assistance with daily life.

#### 4.2.4 Regional community

The regional study area is comprised of the geographic areas likely to primarily experience indirect social impacts of the project. Indirect impacts are associated with use of infrastructure, supply chains, roads, transportation of goods, materials and equipment, the movement of workers, and cumulative impacts arising from other projects in the area. The regional study area comprises Edward River LGA and the broader SWREZ.

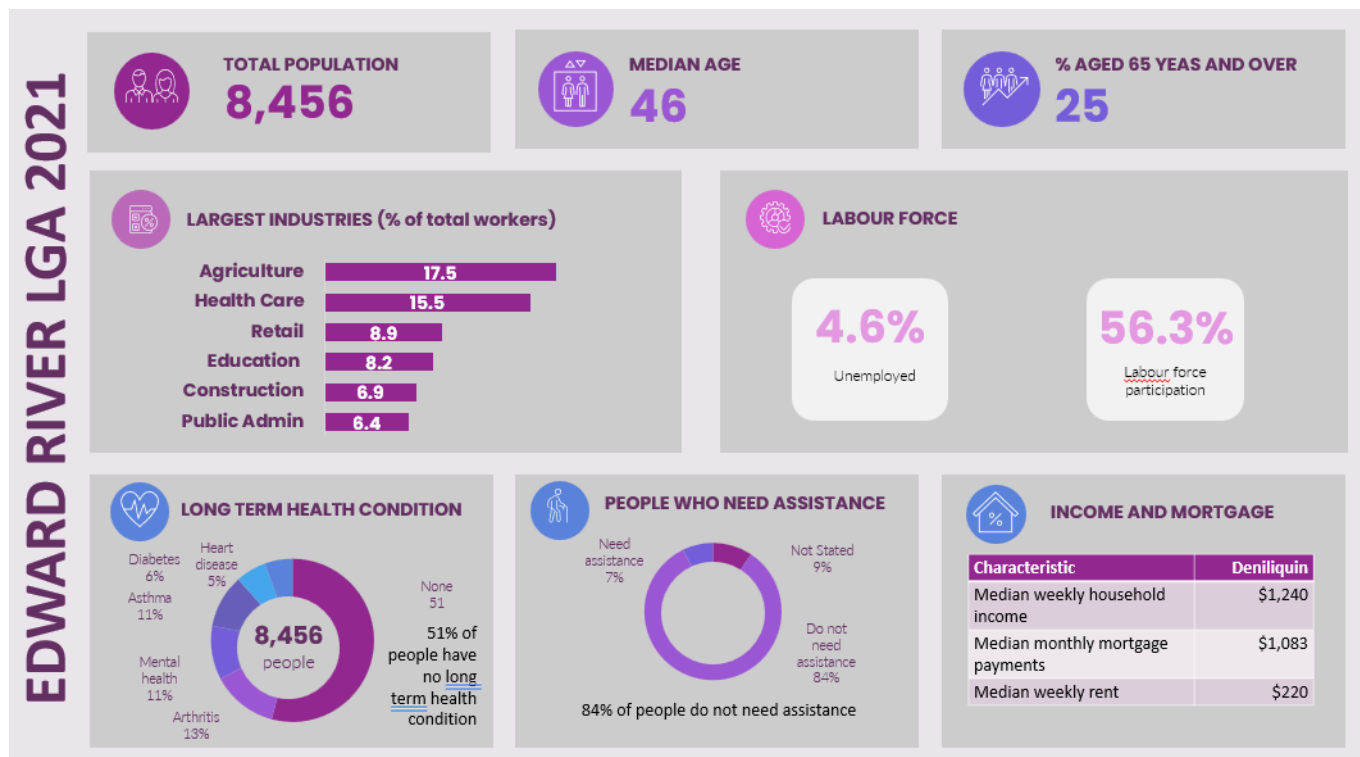
Edward River LGA

Figure 11 Edward River LGA



Source: ABS Census

Figure 12 Edward River LGA demographic snapshot 2021



Source: ABS Census 2021

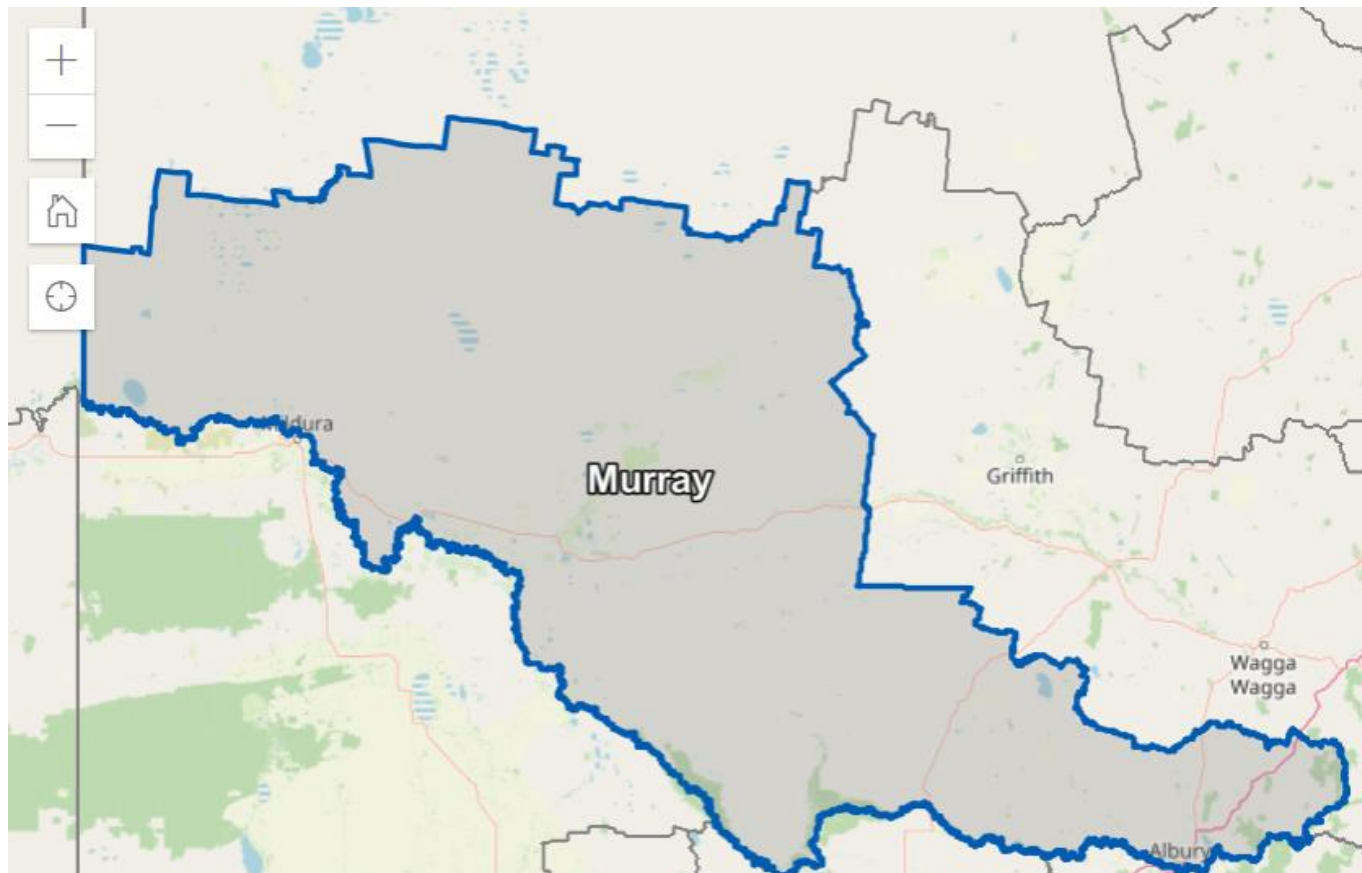
The Edward River Local Government Area has a population of 8,456 people. Key features of the Local Government Area include:

- An older median age than the smaller communities
- A quarter of the population aged 65 years and over
- A more diverse range of industries of employment but a strong representation of agriculture with that being the highest employing industry
- A higher proportion of people with health conditions and who require some form of assistance with daily life.

## Murray Statistical Local Area 4

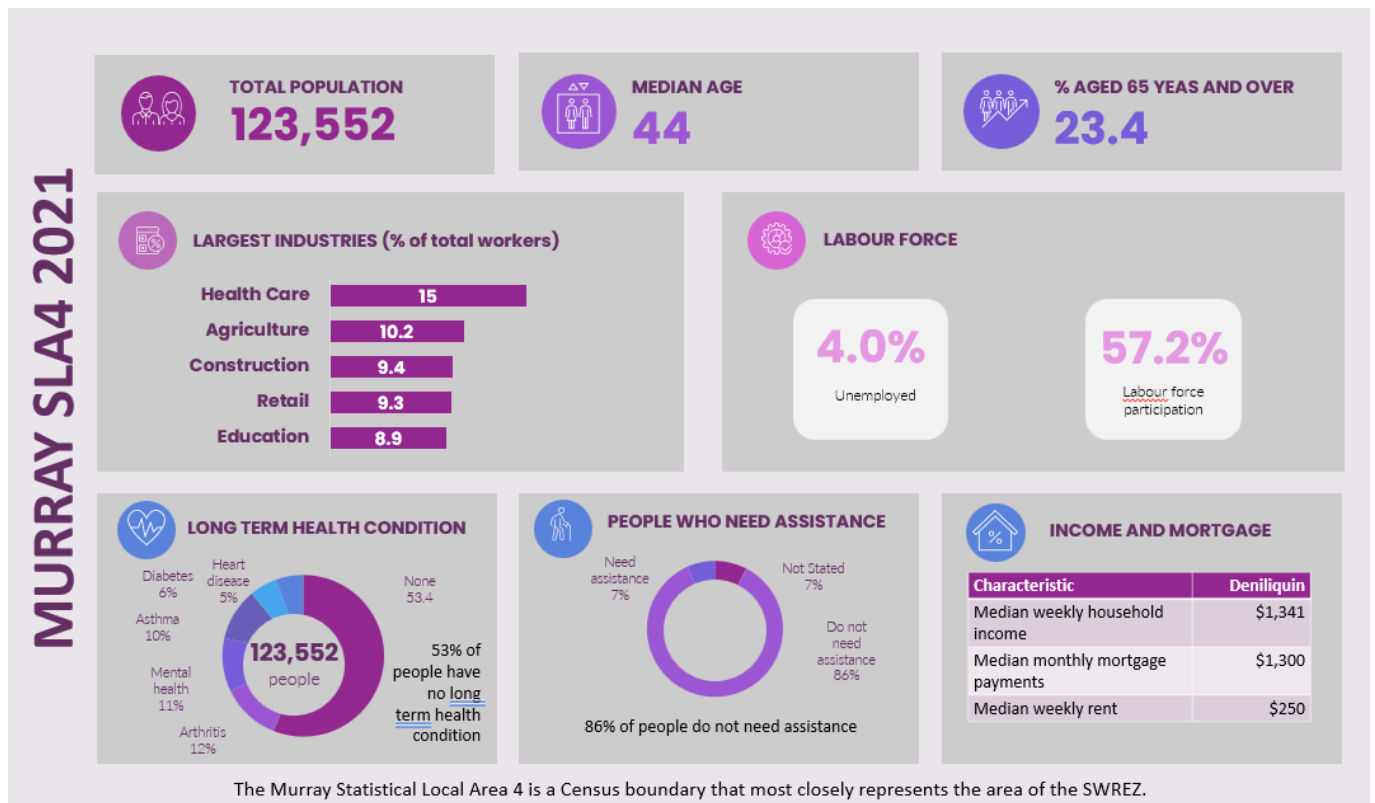
The broader Murray Statistical Local Area is a Census boundary that most closely resembles the SWREZ area.

**Figure 13 Murray SLA4**



Source: ABS Census

Figure 14 Murray SLA4 demographic snapshot 2021



Source: ABS Census 2021

The Murray Statistical Local Area has a population of 123,552 people. Key features of this broader regional area include:

- 23.4% of the population aged 65 years and over
- A more diverse range of industries of employment but a strong representation of agriculture with that being the second highest employing industry after health care
- A higher proportion of people with health conditions and who require some form of assistance with daily life.

## 4.2.5 Community values

The *SIA Guideline* recommends that community values are best understood through community engagement. During September 2024 a doorknock of Wanganella was undertaken to gather local people's views about the project and to ask about the things they value about living in the village. This was supplemented with an interview with a key local business person. Questions asked in the door knock and interview included:

1. What do people value about living in this area?
2. How do the values contribute to your: way of life overall health and wellbeing sense of community
3. Are there any concerns that the project may impact any of these values or aspect of their lives? If so, which aspects?
4. What are people's thoughts on cumulative impacts?
5. From a community perspective what are the most important things for Equis to focus on?

The key feedback provided by Wanganella residents provided during these engagement activities are summarised in the following table.

**Table 6** Summary of community issues from Wanganella engagement

Theme	Comments/ details
Community values - physical	<p>The flatness of the landscape ("you can see the curvature of the Earth")</p> <p>"We don't do landscape features, we do flat"</p> <p>The feeling of space, open country and serenity</p> <p>Most significant landscape features – creek, hay plains, saltbush, not outback but feels outback</p> <p>Trees, birds, animals</p> <p>Most significant feature is Billabong Creek ("One of the longest creeks in the world")</p> <p>Most significant landscape features – creek, hay plains, saltbush, not outback but feel outback</p>
Community values - lifestyle	<p>Wanganella is a "little oasis"</p> <p>Able to fish and shoot</p> <p>A place you can eat what you catch</p> <p>Clean drinking water (which people said they currently do not have)</p> <p>Rural living</p> <p>Value being in the middle of the bush, without much infrastructure around, peace and quiet, no noise, camping on the creek, looking at the stars, sitting around the fire</p> <p>Values peace and quiet, being out of town and the hustle and bustle, friendships and community, no troublemakers</p>
Possible impacts	<p>Concern about noise and its impact on the quiet, serene character of the place</p> <p>Concerned about the noise, they look "awful" and "disgusting" but they will become a part of the landscape in time.</p> <p>View that turbines are ugly</p> <p>Some concern about cumulative visual impact of turbine with the comment they "pop up like rabbits"</p> <p>Most people in Wanganella travel south to Deniliquin and don't go north, so thought to be less impact given location of the Wanganella Wind Farm</p>
Community benefits	<p>Wind farms do the job and provide energy</p> <p>Support for renewable energy</p> <p>The view that community benefits should be directed to Wanganella and not distributed broadly such as to Deniliquin</p>

Council's strategic documents can also provide an insight into community values and priorities. The *Edward River Community Strategic Plan 2022-2050* describes some of the community priorities for the Local Government Area as:

- Health and wellbeing
- Social connection and resilience
- Places and towns that are vibrant and provide good food and an enjoyable atmosphere
- Access to nature
- A diverse economy that delivers long term and shared benefits
- An interest in economic development, innovation and sustainable growth
- Community participation and an active community that is involved in decision making
- Strong connections through both transport routes and technology.

## 5.0 The Proposal

The Wanganella Wind Farm project includes a major wind farm featuring up to 105 turbines and associated infrastructure and works. In addition to the wind farm, the Project includes a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The Project is located on the proposed VNI West Transmission line which runs through the site. (See Figure 1 over the page for location map)

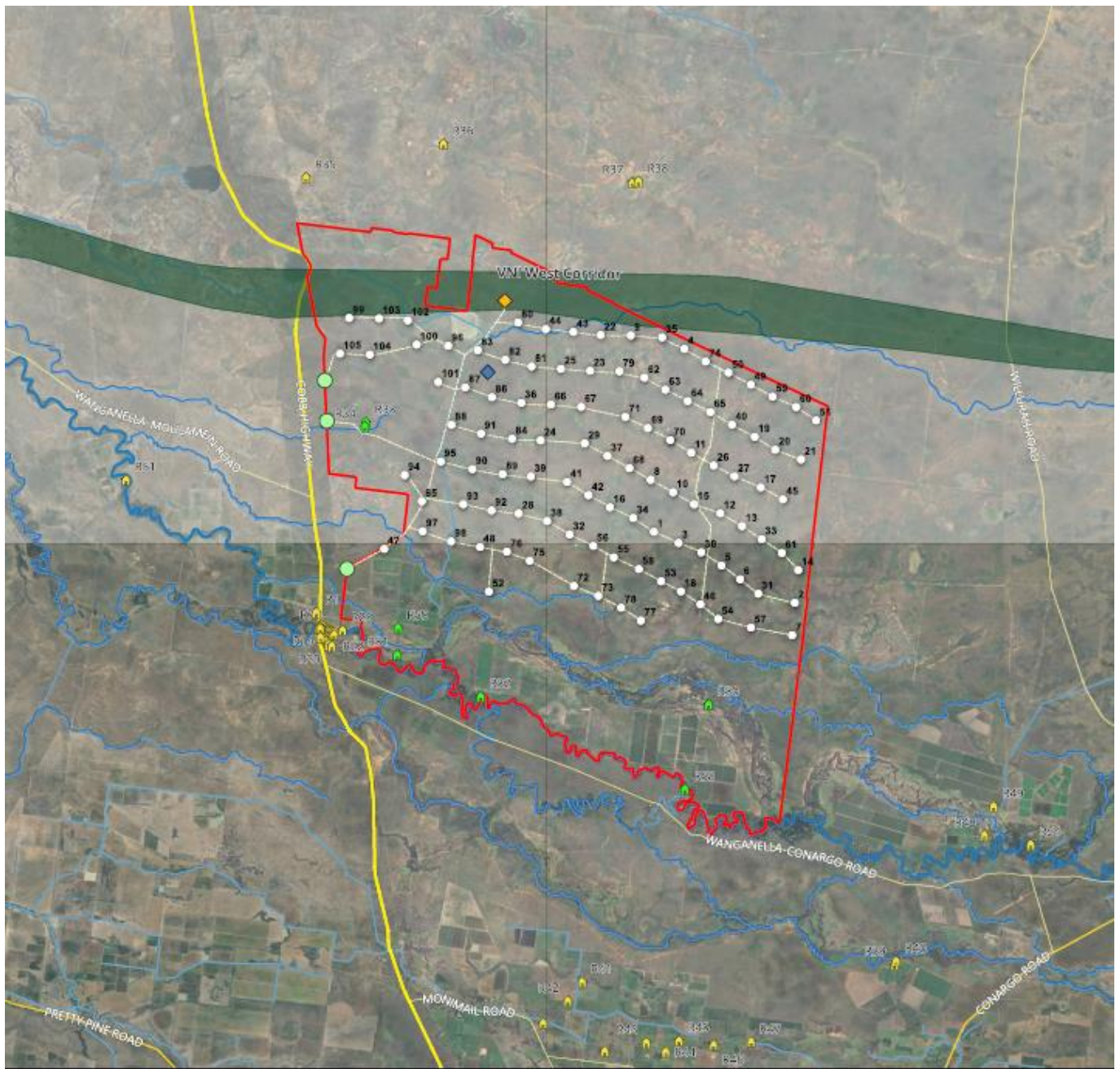
Based on early designs, the wind farm is planned to comprise the use and development of land for:

- Wind turbine generators including hardstands
- Internal access tracks, and car parking
- Substation and switchyard
- Internal electrical reticulation network and cabling
- On site buildings including office, amenities, and storage workshop
- Temporary on-site accommodation (still under investigation)
- Fencing and signage
- Grid connection infrastructure
- Temporary construction yards, storage compound and concrete batching plant
- Local road upgrades, if required
- Other associated uses, facilities and works as required.

The project is located within the South West Renewable Energy Zone (SWREZ). The SWREZ occupies a large area in south western New South Wales. It is centred around the towns of Hay and Balranald. The area was chosen as a REZ due to its strong renewable energy resource potential, proximity to the existing electricity network, and consideration of potential interactions with existing land uses, including agricultural lands and biodiversity conservation.

## 5.1.1 Preliminary Layout Plan

Figure 15 Preliminary Layout Plan



### Legend



- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Site Boundary                  | <b>Existing Infrastructure</b> |
| Waterways                      | Roads                          |
| <b>Proposed Infrastructure</b> | <b>Dwellings</b>               |
| Wind Turbines                  | Associated                     |
| Access Point Options           | Not Associated                 |
| BESS                           | <b>VNI West</b>                |
| Switchyard and Substation      | Preferred Route (May 2024)     |
| Access track                   |                                |

0 3 6 9 km



**cogency**

### Indicative Project Layout

2411 - Equis Wanganella WF

Date: 15/10/2024

The Preliminary Layout Plan on the previous page shows the preliminary turbine layout for the project and the relationship between the project site and the township of Wanganella. Wanganella is shown located on the yellow line of the Cobb Highway to the immediate south-west of the site. The concentration of yellow figures on the layout plan at Wanganella indicates the number of 'not associated' dwellings in the township (dwellings that are not located within the project boundaries or on land where turbines are located).

### 5.1.2 Worker accommodation

An approach to worker accommodation has not yet been determined. This will be an important consideration in the SIA as the options available to accommodate workers have the potential to create a range of both positive and negative impacts. The current preference which is being explored is for temporary on-site accommodation. The EIS will provide more detail.

### 5.1.3 Traffic impact

Detailed transport planning has yet to be undertaken. Truck routes and the frequency and routes of heavy and / or oversized vehicles is yet to be determined. Truck routes, road closures and damage to roads by heavy vehicles are often key issues in SIA for wind farm projects. These issues will need to be explored in detail in the Phase 2 SIA and the EIS.

## 5.2 Key project stages

The following is an indicative summary of key project stages and their anticipated timing.

**Table 7** Key project stages

Stage	Approximate timing
Planning and Design	2024-2026
Approvals	2024-2027
Construction	2029-2032 (total construction workforce of approximately 420)
Commissioning	2031
Operation	2032 (operational for approximately 30 years; full time workforce of approximately 19 people)
Decommissioning	2057-2062 (could involve 'repowering' of wind farm with next generation equipment)

Project timing is important to understand what impacts may occur when. It is also significant in SIA to understand cumulative impact with respect to how the timing of this project may relate to other major projects in the area (renewable energy projects and others) that may have similar demands for workforce, accommodation, etc.

## 6.0 Scoping of social impacts

The purpose of this scoping phase is to identify and describe the project activities that have the potential to cause social impact (both negative and positive). These possible impacts are considered across the various stages of the project and are categorised according to the social impact matters identified in the *SIA Guideline*. These social impact matters are shown in the table below along with possible impact considerations for the Wanganella Wind Farm project.

**Table 8** Possible impact issues

Social Impact Category	Definition	Potential impact issues for project
<b>Way of Life</b>	Including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play and how they interact each day	Traffic and transport disruption Change to predominantly rural landscape and lifestyle
<b>Community</b>	Including composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions and people's sense of place	Visual impact on landscape and sense of place Both benefits and potential risks of distribution of community benefit funds. Temporary change of community character and cohesion due to workforce influx
<b>Accessibility</b>	Including how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private or not-for-profit organisation	Potential for impacts on accessibility due to road closures or traffic disruption Community benefit funds may be used to enhance local services and infrastructure Increased demand for local goods and services Local housing and accommodation demand Possible upgrades to local roads
<b>Culture</b>	Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings	Connection to Country opportunities Perceived change in agricultural character and cultural dimensions of that character Change to flat landscape character
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Including physical and mental health especially for people vulnerable to social exclusion or substantial change, psychological stress resulting from financial or other pressures, and changes to public health overall	Potential for mental and other health impacts of changes related to project such as visual impact, noise, change of character, sense of remoteness etc. Community benefit funds could be used to support programs for health and wellbeing
<b>Surroundings</b>	Including ecosystem services, such as shade, pollution control, and erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity	Visual impact and change to landscape character
<b>Livelihoods</b>	Including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business, whether they experience personal breach or disadvantage, and the distributive equity of impacts and benefits	Diversification of local economy through introduction of renewable energy Direct benefits for landowners Employment opportunities in construction and operation
<b>Decision Making Systems</b>	Particularly whether people experience procedural fairness, can make informed decision, can meaningfully influence decisions, and can access complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms	Community engagement opportunities in project design and development Community involvement in administration of community benefit scheme

## 6.1 SIA Scoping Tool

The Scoping Matrix table below is based on the Scoping Tool included in the *SIA Guideline*. It enables a standardised and comprehensive approach to scoping potential social impact issues.

**Table 9 Scoping Matrix**

Project Activity	Social impact category/ies	Potential impacts on people		Previous Investigation		Cumulative Impact		Elements of impacts (based on preliminary investigation)					Assessment level required
		What impacts are likely and what concerns/aspirations have been expressed?	Positive or negative	Previously investigated?	If yes – what form of investigation	Combine with others impacts from this or other projects?	If yes – which impacts and / or projects	Extent (i.e. number of people)	Duration	Intensity of expected impacts	Sensitivity	Level of concern/ interest	
Construction	Accessibility Way of life	Traffic including large trucks	Negative	Yes	Traffic Impact Study EIS Route mapping	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and traffic / truck generation	Near neighbours / Local	Construction / decommissioning	Moderate	High	Moderate to high	Detailed
		Possible road closures	Negative	Yes	Traffic Impact Study EIS Route mapping	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and traffic / truck generation	Near neighbours / Local	Construction / decommissioning	Moderate	High	Moderate to high	Detailed
		Impacts on condition of local roads	Negative	Unknown	EIS	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and traffic / truck generation	Local / regional	Construction / decommissioning	Moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate to high	Detailed
		Housing availability and affordability due to temporary influx of workers	Negative	Yes	SIA Housing/ Accommodation studies	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and	Local / regional	Construction / decommissioning	Moderate to high	Moderate to high	Moderate to high	Detailed

Project Activity	Social impact category/ies	Potential impacts on people		Previous Investigation		Cumulative Impact		Elements of impacts (based on preliminary investigation)					Assess - ment level required
								Extent (i.e. number of people)	Duration	Intensity of expected impacts	Sensitivity	Level of concern/ interest	
What project activities could produce social impacts?	What social impact categories are relevant?	What impacts are likely and what concerns/ aspirations have been expressed?	Positive or negative	Previously investigated?	If yes – what form of investigation	Combine with others impacts from this or other projects?	If yes – which impacts and / or projects	Extent (i.e. number of people)	Duration	Intensity of expected impacts	Sensitivity	Level of concern/ interest	Detailed, Standard, Minor
							workforce demands						
	Livelihoods	Local employment and training opportunities	Positive	Yes	Economic Impact Assessment (EIA)	Possible		Local / regional	Mostly construction / decommissioning	Moderate	High	Moderate to high	Standard
		Availability of workforce	Negative		SIA EIA	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and workforce demands	Regional	Construction	Moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate	Standard
		Demand for local goods and services	Positive	Yes	SIA EIA	Possible		Local / regional	Mostly construction / decommissioning	Moderate to high	High	Moderate	Standard
Site planning / operation	Accessibility Way of life Health and wellbeing Surroundings	Visual impact of turbines	Negative	Yes	Visual Impact Assessment	Possible	If other wind farm project within viewing distance	Near neighbours / Local	Ongoing	Moderate to high	High	High	Detailed
		Noise generation from turbines	Negative	Yes	Noise Impact Assessment	Possible / unlikely	If other wind farm project within distance where noise would be issue	Near neighbours	Ongoing	Low to moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate	Detailed
		Change of character – people valuing quiet and flat landscape	Negative	Yes	SIA Visual Impact Assessment	Possible	If other wind farm project within viewing distance	Near neighbours / Local	Ongoing	Moderate	High	Moderate to high	Detailed

Project Activity	Social impact category/ies	Potential impacts on people		Previous Investigation		Cumulative Impact		Elements of impacts (based on preliminary investigation)					Assess - ment level required
		What impacts are likely and what concerns/ aspirations have been expressed?	Positive or negative	Previously investigated ?	If yes – what form of investigation	Combine with others impacts from this or other projects?	If yes – which impacts and / or projects	Extent (i.e. number of people)	Duration	Intensity of expected impacts	Sensitivity	Level of concern/ interest	
What project activities could produce social impacts?	What social impact categories are relevant?	What impacts are likely and what concerns/ aspirations have been expressed?	Positive or negative	Previously investigated ?	If yes – what form of investigation	Combine with others impacts from this or other projects?	If yes – which impacts and / or projects	Extent (i.e. number of people)	Duration	Intensity of expected impacts	Sensitivity	Level of concern/ interest	Detailed, Standard, Minor
Operation	Culture	Aboriginal people's access to land – Connection to Country	Positive		SIA Cultural Heritage Assessment	Possible	If increased access made available and is also feature of other projects	Local / regional	Ongoing	Moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate	Standard
	Community Accessibility Way of life Health and wellbeing	Energy transition to renewables	Positive	Yes	NSW Electricity Strategy and Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap		Cumulative impact of projects in REZ	Regional	Ongoing	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Standard
		Distribution of community benefits	Positive	Yes	SIA Community Benefit Scheme Guidelines	Possible	If a regional or REZ wide approach to community benefits is considered	Local / regional	Ongoing	Moderate to high	High	High	Detailed
Operation	Livelihoods	Diversification of the local economy	Positive	Yes		Yes	Renewable Energy projects in REZ	Regional	Ongoing	Moderate to high	Moderate to high	Moderate to high	Standard
Decommissioning	Accessibility Way of life	Traffic including large trucks	Negative	Yes	Traffic Impact Study EIS Route mapping	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and traffic / truck generation	Near neighbours / Local	Construction / decommissioning	Moderate	High	Moderate to high	Detailed
		Possible road closures	Negative	Yes	Traffic Impact Study EIS Route mapping	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and traffic / truck generation	Near neighbours / Local	Construction / decommissioning	Moderate	High	Moderate to high	Detailed

Project Activity	Social impact category/ies	Potential impacts on people		Previous Investigation		Cumulative Impact		Elements of impacts (based on preliminary investigation)					Assess - ment level required
		What impacts are likely and what concerns/ aspirations have been expressed?	Positive or negative	Previously investigated ?	If yes – what form of investigation	Combine with others impacts from this or other projects?	If yes – which impacts and / or projects	Extent (i.e. number of people)	Duration	Intensity of expected impacts	Sensitivity	Level of concern/ interest	
What project activities could produce social impacts?	What social impact categories are relevant?	What impacts are likely and what concerns/ aspirations have been expressed?	Positive or negative	Previously investigated ?	If yes – what form of investigation	Combine with others impacts from this or other projects?	If yes – which impacts and / or projects	Extent (i.e. number of people)	Duration	Intensity of expected impacts	Sensitivity	Level of concern/ interest	Detailed, Standard, Minor
		Impacts on condition of local roads	Negative	Un-known	EIS	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and traffic / truck generation	Local / regional	Construction / decommissioning	Moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate to high	Detailed
		Housing availability and affordability due to temporary influx of workers	Negative	Yes	SIA Housing/ Accommodation studies	Possible	Any other major project that has similar construction timelines and workforce demands	Local / regional	Construction / decommissioning	Low to moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate	Detailed
	Livelihoods	Local employment and training opportunities	Positive	Yes	Economic Impact Assessment (EIA)	Possible		Local / regional	Mostly construction / decommissioning	Moderate to high	High	Moderate to high	Standard
Decommissioning	Livelihoods	Demand for local goods and services	Positive	Yes	SIA EIA	Possible		Local / regional	Mostly construction / decommissioning	Low to moderate	Moderate to high	Moderate	Standard

**Table 10** *Elements of impact – explanation of terms (SIA Guideline)*

DIMENSIONS		DETAILS NEEDED TO ENABLE ASSESSMENT
<b>CONSEQUENCE</b>	<i>extent</i>	Which location(s) is/are affected? (e.g. near neighbours, local, regional)
	<i>duration</i>	Will the impact be time-limited (e.g. over particular project phases) or permanent?
	<i>severity or scale</i>	What is the likely scale or level of change? (e.g. mild, moderate, severe)
	<i>sensitivity or importance</i>	How sensitive/vulnerable (or how adaptable/resilient) are people to the impact, or (for positive impacts) how important is it to them? This might depend on: the value they attach to the matter; whether it is rare/unique or replaceable; the extent to which it is tied to their identity; and their capacity to cope with or adapt to change.
	<i>level of concern/interest</i>	How concerned/interested are people, according to the findings from research and engagement? Sometimes, concerns may be disproportionate to findings from technical assessments of likelihood, duration, and/or severity. Concern itself can lead to negative impacts, while interest can lead to expectations of positive impacts.

## 6.2 Summary of most significant scoped impacts

Based on the preliminary scoping assessment documented in Table 14, the potential impacts that have:

- A moderate to high intensity or severity meaning that there will be a significant level of possible change experienced by people
- A moderate to high level of sensitivity meaning that change is likely to occur to something or some dimension of people's life that is important to them and that is highly valued
- A moderate to high level of interest or concern reflecting that the issue is something that people have expressed concern about or are likely to be concerned about potential change.

The following tables identify the potential social impacts that fit into the three categories above and presents them in separate tables for negative and positive impacts.

The issues identified in the following two tables are not intended to be exhaustive or the final priority social impacts that will be considered. The Phase 2 SIA process will include further study and will also test potential impacts (and their perceived severity, intensity, etc.) with community members through the engagement process. The tables below present what the scoping phase has identified as those potential social impacts that may have higher possible impacts based on the preliminary analysis conducted in the scoping phase of this SIA.

**Table 11** *Potential negative impacts*

Stage	Potential Impacts	Description	Opportunities/ Refinements
<b>Construction</b>	Traffic – large trucks	Traffic impacts and potential disruption to local movement and access particularly related to the requirement for large trucks including those that will bring rotor blades to the site	A Traffic Management Plan will be required. It will be important that that plan be developed in consultation with local Council and TfNSW to understand local usage of roads and also the potential for access impacts to be exacerbated during particularly times of the year (ie. harvest, community or cultural events, etc.)  The Traffic Management Plan should also include a notification process of when disruptions may be likely to enable local community members to plan their travel around any possible disruptions.
	Possible road closures	Impacts of any required road closures during construction and transportation of materials to site. Most likely also related to large truck movements transporting large turbine components.	As above re Traffic Management Plan
	Impacts on local road conditions	Damage caused to local roads due to construction traffic including large trucks.	Establishment of a road repair process or agreement with Edward River Council.
	Workforce influx and accommodation	Impacts related to any change of local character or disruption to existing community resulting from presence of construction workforce. Also includes demands on local accommodation and its capacity to meet workforce demands. Accommodation issues also consider impact on rental prices of increased workforce demand.	Development of a Workforce Accommodation Strategy

*Continued over page*

Stage	Potential Impacts	Description	Opportunities/ Refinements
<b>Site planning / operation</b>	Visual impact of turbines	Potential for a change of character in the landscape and visual impact on local residents from visibility of turbines	Comprehensive visual impact assessment based on the <i>2023 Draft Technical Supplement for Landscape and Visual Assessment</i> to be undertaken.  Site plan modifications and screening as required to mitigate visual impact on nearby residents
	Change of character	Concerns about change in rural character and primacy of agricultural lifestyle and culture	Engagement process in Phase 2 to work with local community members to understand concerns related to this issue. May include provision of information/discussion of ability for renewable energy projects to co-exist with, rather than replace, agriculture. Potential decommissioning also considered.

**Table 12** *Potential positive impacts*

Stage	Potential Impacts	Description	Opportunities/ Refinements
<b>Construction</b>	Local employment and training opportunities	Opportunity for both construction and operation employment and training opportunities for local community members.	Development of a Local Participation Plan that considers employment of local community members and includes investment in training opportunities to address potential skills gaps that may inhibit employment of local workers.
	Demand for local goods and services	Purchase of local goods and services (materials, labour, support services, transport, administration support, etc.) to support both construction and operational phases of project.  Concerns related to this issue are associated with the capacity of local businesses to support the project (particularly during construction) with these concerns exacerbated if other projects are occurring at the same time in the area.	Development of a Local Procurement Plan that explores opportunities to maximise use of local goods and services to support project requirements.  Identification of other major projects that may be on similar timelines and coordination of timelines to minimise capacity impacts on local service providers.
<b>Operation</b>	Distribution of community benefits	Fair, equitable and transparent process of identifying community benefit initiatives/programs and allocation of funds to those projects	Development of a Community Benefits Scheme in consultation with community members, incorporating best practice. Working closely with Edward River Council as potential administrator of scheme to understand capacity and support requirements for effective administration of the scheme. May also be potential to collaborate with other renewables developers regarding pooling and scaling of community benefit funds.
	Diversification of the local economy	Provision of alternative source of revenue to both individual landowners and broader community to supplement agricultural based income	Work with community, Council and other stakeholders to understand how to maximise economic resilience created by project and how that resilience can be shared throughout the community

## 7.0 Phase 2 SIA considerations

This preliminary SIA has identified a number of potential social impacts of the Wanganella Wind Farm project. These have been identified based on the level of analysis relevant to the scoping phase of the project. This analysis has included demographic profiling in the social baseline, a thorough review of similar projects including many in the SWREZ and a consideration of the key policy directions and understanding of best practice. This analysis has been complemented with engagement with local community members and the Edward River Council.

This section of the Scoping Report identifies some of the key SIA activities that should be undertaken in the next phase of the project to both test and validate initial scoping findings and to enable a more comprehensive analysis to be undertaken.

### 7.1 Future community and stakeholder engagement

Community engagement is mentioned first as a key component of the Phase 2 SIA. Engagement should be used to validate and test initial findings and to explore other potential impacts. The robustness of both the identification of social impacts and their mitigation or enhancement is highly related to the extent to which they are based on the integration of community knowledge and an understanding of how the local communities operate.

### 7.2 Refinement considerations

Based on the key potential social impacts issues identified in the previous chapter, considerations for refinements to mitigate potential negative impacts and enhance potential positive impacts, should be considered in Phase 2 for:

- Traffic related issues including heavy vehicle traffic and any potential for road closures
- Workforce influx impacts including workforce accommodation
- Visual impacts of turbines
- Local employment and training opportunities
- Demand for local goods and services
- Economic diversification
- Community benefits.

#### 7.2.1 Traffic impacts

Truck routes, including heavy vehicles, is currently under investigation for the Wanganella Wind Farm project. Route design and timing should include the necessary technical analysis supplemented with engagement with communities, businesses and Council. While some disruption may be inevitable it is likely that an inclusive engagement process with local stakeholders will help to identify local conditions and circumstances that can be incorporated into decision making for route selection and timing.

A Traffic Management Plan will be prepared that include the proposed routes, timing, frequency of trips, etc as well as flagging the need for any temporary road closures and how these will be managed. The Traffic Management Plan will also include a process for how local community members will be notified in advance of major traffic movements to enable them to plan their lives and businesses around any possible disruptions.

#### 7.2.2 Workforce accommodation

A confirmed strategy for accommodation of the construction workforce has yet to be developed. Options include:

- Accommodation within nearby towns as Wanganella likely to have few options

- The construction of temporary accommodation on site
- The use of existing, nearby temporary accommodation units constructed for other projects (The VNI West camp in the NW corner of the project is currently being examined for temporary accommodation potential).

Options will be canvassed and assessed through a Workforce Accommodation Strategy which will be developed with the Phase 2 SIA. The strategy will consider the local housing market capacity, workforce timing and the identification of peak workforce demand periods, exploration of on-site or near site temporary options and the pros and cons of these.

As part of the Phase 2 SIA, and specifically the Social Impact Management Plan component, the management of the preferred model of accommodation will be explored to ensure any possible negative impacts can be minimised.

### 7.2.3 Visual impact

Visual impact is one of the most commonly identified and recognised potential impacts of wind farm projects. While visual impact is dealt with comprehensively through visual impact specialists, it is still important for the SIA to understand the magnitude of visual impact and assess how any visual impact may affect people including those considered to be sensitive receptors and/or vulnerable members of the community.

The community engagement process will include findings from a visual impact assessment to ensure that those likely to be affected are engaged in the process and have a good understanding of how they may be affected. The SIA will consider any potential health (including mental health) effects of visual impact. It is noted that there are no dwellings within two kilometres from a proposed turbine in the current site concept plan.

### 7.2.4 Local employment and economic opportunities

Local job creation and service delivery is important to most host communities. It is critical for developers to work closely with local communities and ensure plans are transparent, and communities have significant lead time to understand and make the most of benefit sharing opportunities presented to them. Considerations to maximise local opportunities include:

- Communicating early about opportunities that will be available at each stage of the project cycle and promoting these through multiple communication channels
- Making sure communication channels are fit for purpose for the community
- Ensuring transparency in the process, particularly when communicating budgets and realistic timelines
- Providing briefings or training to support local suppliers' ability to be part of the project
- Holding contractors to the same local procurement standards as the lead developer is committed to
- Discussing with local providers how to develop education opportunities to encourage skill development
- Training local people for ongoing employment in maintenance and operation of projects.

### 7.2.5 Community benefits

The NSW *Draft Benefit Sharing Guideline* (produced by the then NSW Department of Planning and Environment in 2023) notes that while communities benefit from employment and investment, they also experience the most pressure and changes from the renewable energy transition. This can include impacts from individual projects, as well as broader changes to the local landscape and community that may be difficult for some people to accept and accommodate.

Community benefit is a significant area of potential positive social impact. Community benefit schemes are generally designed to bolster the positive social and economic outcomes from projects, so that host communities who experience the most change can more directly benefit from these projects. These schemes share or distribute the rewards of changes created by a project to the people who experience that change. The purpose of community benefits schemes is to ensure that the benefits of a project are extended to the wider community and are not confined to the hosts (who receive direct payments from the proponent/operator).

For the benefits to be realised strong governance and the capacity to manage the scheme is required. This is relevant to this project as small councils like Edwards River may find it difficult to locate the necessary resources

to effectively manage the scheme. It is important that the community has confidence that community benefits are going to be fairly and transparently distributed and that maximum funds are allocated to community projects rather than absorbed in larger budgets or lost in administrative costs.

As part of the Phase 2 SIA for this project, it is recommended that engagement be undertaken with both Edwards River Council and Hay Shire. Edwards River is likely to be the body responsible for administering a community benefits scheme for the Wanganella Wind Farm project and Hay Shire has been recognised as having one of the most well-developed community benefit scheme management approaches in Australia and is likely to be a source of information and guidance on establishing and administering a successful scheme.

The NSW *Draft Benefit Sharing Guideline (2023)* refers to three levels of benefit sharing that could be considered:

- Neighbourhood – local community members and small neighbourhoods in the direct vicinity of the proposed development
- Local – a broader area and typically within the Local Government Area hosting the project
- Regional – regional scale across several local government areas within a REZ.

Host communities usually express a preference that benefit sharing is focussed on local community benefit. This sentiment has been expressed in initial community engagement with Wanganella residents. While local community benefit should be a priority, some caution is required to ensure that the benefits provided are substantial and meaningful. Local community benefit can sometimes be realised in the form of projects such as repair of park benches, local murals, new nets for the local tennis courts, etc. While the community benefit of these projects is not disputed, it is beneficial to explore schemes and the projects that have produced the most significant benefits.

A more coordinated and strategic approach to community benefit sharing, where funds from individual projects are pooled together to fund more significant, regional projects within a REZ is a possible alternative approach. This approach would require REZ level coordination and a transparent and inclusive process of regional priority setting. This process is outside the remit of individual proponents and would require Government coordination to be successful.

### **Diminishing small community projects to fund**

Small community grant programs run by individual project developers can quickly run out of projects to fund for small grants. Although these programs do make important contributions to communities, there are only so many new barbecues for the local park and new insulation for the local hall that one town needs.

A coordinated regional model allows opportunities to pursue bigger projects that are more structural and strategic in nature, and which are beyond what governments and councils can provide. Such initiatives might include boosting opportunities for tourism; attracting investment into innovative housing and cost of living solutions; energy equity (affordable, clean energy for all in the community); supporting and leveraging youth, education/training, health, family violence programs, etc.; or supporting local business development.

Hicks, J. and Mallee, K. (2023) *Regional Benefit Sharing - Creating strategic impacts for regions that host multiple renewable energy projects*, Community Power Agency, Sydney.

### **In kind contributions**

Contributions at local or neighbourhood levels can also be made as in-kind contributions. Examples of in-kind contributions include companies providing knowledge, labour and equipment free of charge to assist the local community with projects that might require their expertise. This type of support can involve, for example, a developer directly assisting the local community to build a small-scale community energy project. The developer can use their existing skills and networks to fast-track development and support of the project.

Another approach is contractor engagement in other local projects during the renewable energy development project's construction phase. This can take the form of the proponent supplying expertise, knowledge, labour and materials to support the actual construction of an important local community project. It can also be via formal mentorship programs, education or upskill sessions or sharing industry or leadership insights via public speaking sessions at local schools or TAFEs.

## 8.0 Summary

This preliminary SIA has identified a number of potential social impacts (both positive and negative) of the Wanganella Wind Farm project. These have been preliminarily identified based on the level of analysis relevant to the scoping phase of the project. This analysis has included demographic profiling in the social baseline, a thorough review of similar projects including many in the SWREZ and a consideration of the key policy directions and understanding of best practice. This analysis has also been complemented with, and informed by, direct engagement with local community members and the Edward River Council.

The key potential social impacts identified in this Scoping Report are:

- Traffic related issues including heavy vehicle traffic and any potential for road closures
- Workforce influx impacts including workforce accommodation
- Visual impacts of turbines
- Local employment and training opportunities
- Demand for local goods and services
- Economic diversification
- Community benefits.

The main considerations for the Phase 2 SIA are:

Undertake a comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement process - Engagement should be used to validate and test initial findings and to explore other potential impacts. The robustness of both the identification of social impacts and their mitigation or enhancement is highly related to the extent to which they are based on the integration of community knowledge and an understanding of how the local communities operate

- Undertake further analysis, to be supplemented with additional community and stakeholder engagement, to identify and / or confirm the already identified or any new potential social impacts. Equis has an existing Community Engagement Strategy that is being implemented and has helped to inform this Phase 1 SIA. It is intended that community engagement will continue throughout the next phases of the project and will be a component of the Phase 2 SIA.
- Consider refinement options and further development of approaches for any possible social impacts including:
  - The development of a Traffic Management Plan that includes the proposed routes, timing, frequency of trips, etc as well as flagging the need for any temporary road closures and how these will be managed and notified
  - The development of a Workforce Accommodation Strategy that includes management of any proposed accommodation
  - Any site planning or introduction of screening that may reduce adverse visual impact and the development of a Visual Impact Assessment that involves direct engagement with the most affected landowners
  - The development of Local Employment and Training Plan and a Local Procurement Plan created in consultation with local community stakeholders, businesses and Council
  - The development of a comprehensive and locally focussed Community Benefits Scheme that is transparent and equitable and addresses approaches to both resourcing and administration.