Wilcannia Weir Replacement

Environmental Impact Statement

Summary

Water Infrastructure NSW
July 2022

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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Wilcannia Weir Replacement

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Contents

1.Overview

Water Infrastructure NSW proposes to build a new Wilcannia Weir on the Darling River (Baaka) to replace the existing weir, known as the Wilcannia Weir Replacement Project. The new weir would be built downstream of Union Bend, about two kilometres south of Wilcannia township and about five river kilometres downstream of the existing weir. The location of the new weir is shown in **Figure 1**. The existing weir would be partially removed and decommissioned as part of the project.

This document is a summary of the environmental impact statement prepared for the project. It describes the project and its benefits, identifies its key environmental impacts and provides information on how the local community and other stakeholders can provide feedback on the project and the environmental impact statement. More detail on all the information included in this summary can be found in the full version of the environmental impact statement.

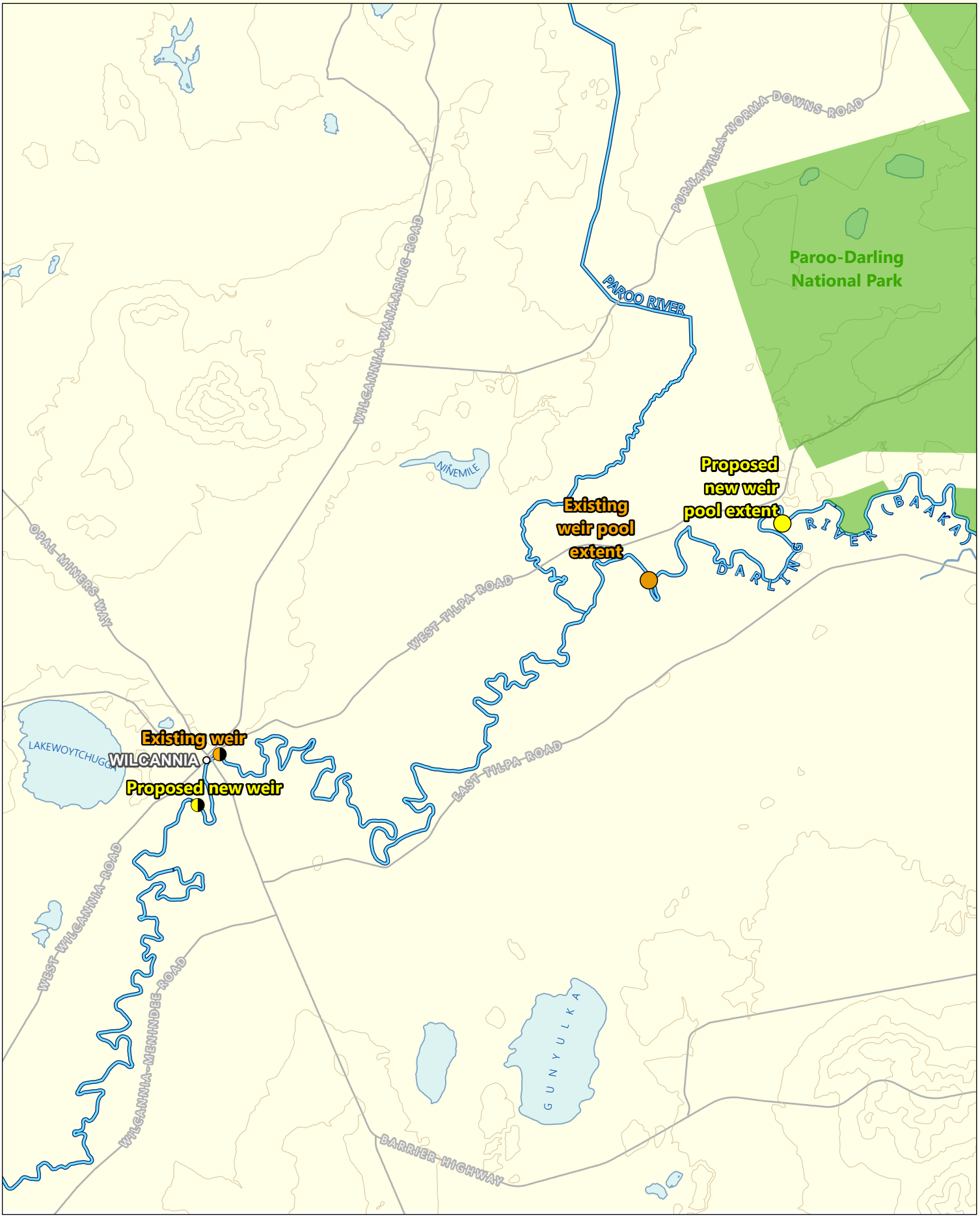

Figure 1: Location of the new weir

2. Why is a new weir needed?

Wilcannia Weir was constructed in 1942 and the weir pool is the main source of water for the town. A major refurbishment of the weir was carried out in 1987 to strengthen the weir wall and reduce erosion around the weir. Despite these works, the existing weir is in poor condition. There is a breach in the existing weir wall as shown in **Photo 1**. This breach means that the existing weir cannot store as much water as it is designed to, which means there is less water available to supply to the town during droughts when the river stops flowing.

Photo 1 The breach of the existing weir

Currently, when water levels in Wilcannia weir pool are low, water restrictions are introduced and emergency groundwater bores located at Union Bend are used to boost the town's water supply. As the existing weir continues to degrade, it is likely that water restrictions and the emergency groundwater bores would need to be used more often.

3. Description of the new weir

The new weir would have several features that the existing weir does not have including:

- Weir gates — The new weir would include two (or possibly three) weir gates that could be remotely moved up and down to control the volume of water that flows downstream and water quality in the weir pool. The existing weir has no weir gates and therefore there is no ability to decide when and how much water is released downstream. Water simply flows downstream of the existing weir when the weir pool is full and water overtops the weir
- A fishway — The fishway would enable native fish to swim upstream and downstream past the new weir. At the moment, fish can only swim upstream of the existing weir during some large floods when the existing weir is submerged
- Vehicle access — A new access track would be built from Union Bend Road to the new weir site (refer to **Figure 2**). The track would continue alongside the fishway. The access track would be designed so that future maintenance of the new weir can occur safely and efficiently.

The new weir would be supplied with power by installing power poles and lines between Union Bend Road and the new weir site. An existing access track on land owned by Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council on the southern side of the Darling River (Baaka) would be upgraded to enable its use during construction of the new weir (refer to **Figure 2**).

3.1 Operation of the new weir

The weir gates would enable the new weir to be operated to control the water level in the weir pool upstream of the new weir. It is proposed to operate the new weir differently during dry periods than at other times. Two operating modes are proposed:

- Normal operation mode — When the Darling River (Baaka) is flowing the new weir would operate at the same height as the existing weir. The water level in the weir pool during normal operation mode would be similar to that of the existing weir pool. The new weir is expected to be in normal operation mode about 70 per cent of the time. The main noticeable difference during normal operation mode would be the extension of the weir pool through Wilcannia township to create a 'new town pool' (refer to **Figure 3**)
- Drought security operation mode — When there are low flows in the Darling River (Baaka) the new weir would be operated one metre higher than the existing weir pool. This would mean that the weir pool would be up to one metre higher than the existing weir pool and would extend up to 18.81 kilometres further upstream than the existing weir pool, to create a weir pool that is about 85.52 river kilometres long. This includes the new section of weir pool through Wilcannia township between the new and existing weirs. The new weir is expected to

be in drought security operation mode about 30 per cent of the time. The new weir would return to normal operation mode once the Darling River (Baaka) resumes flowing.

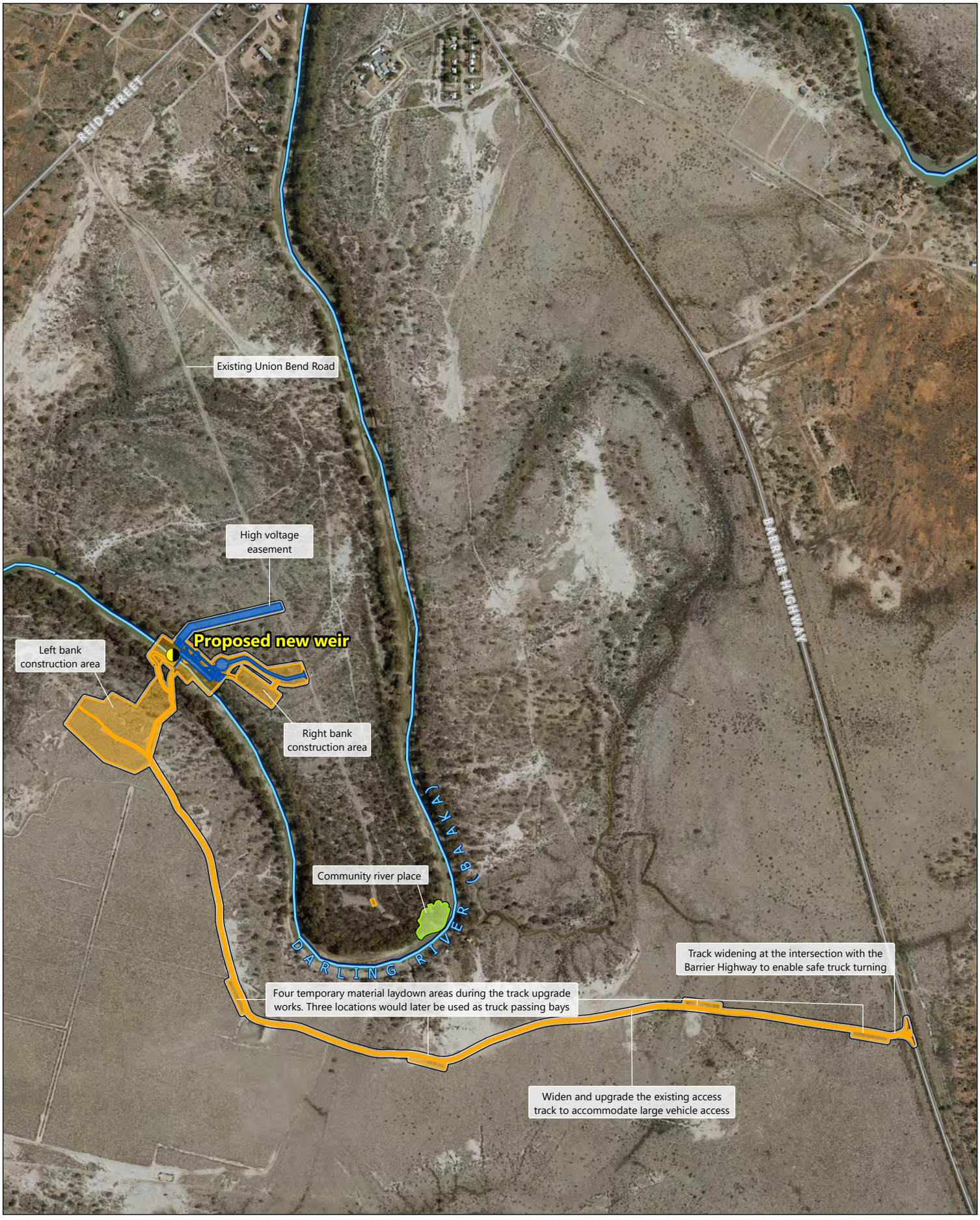

Figure 2: Key features of the project at the new weir site and Union Bend

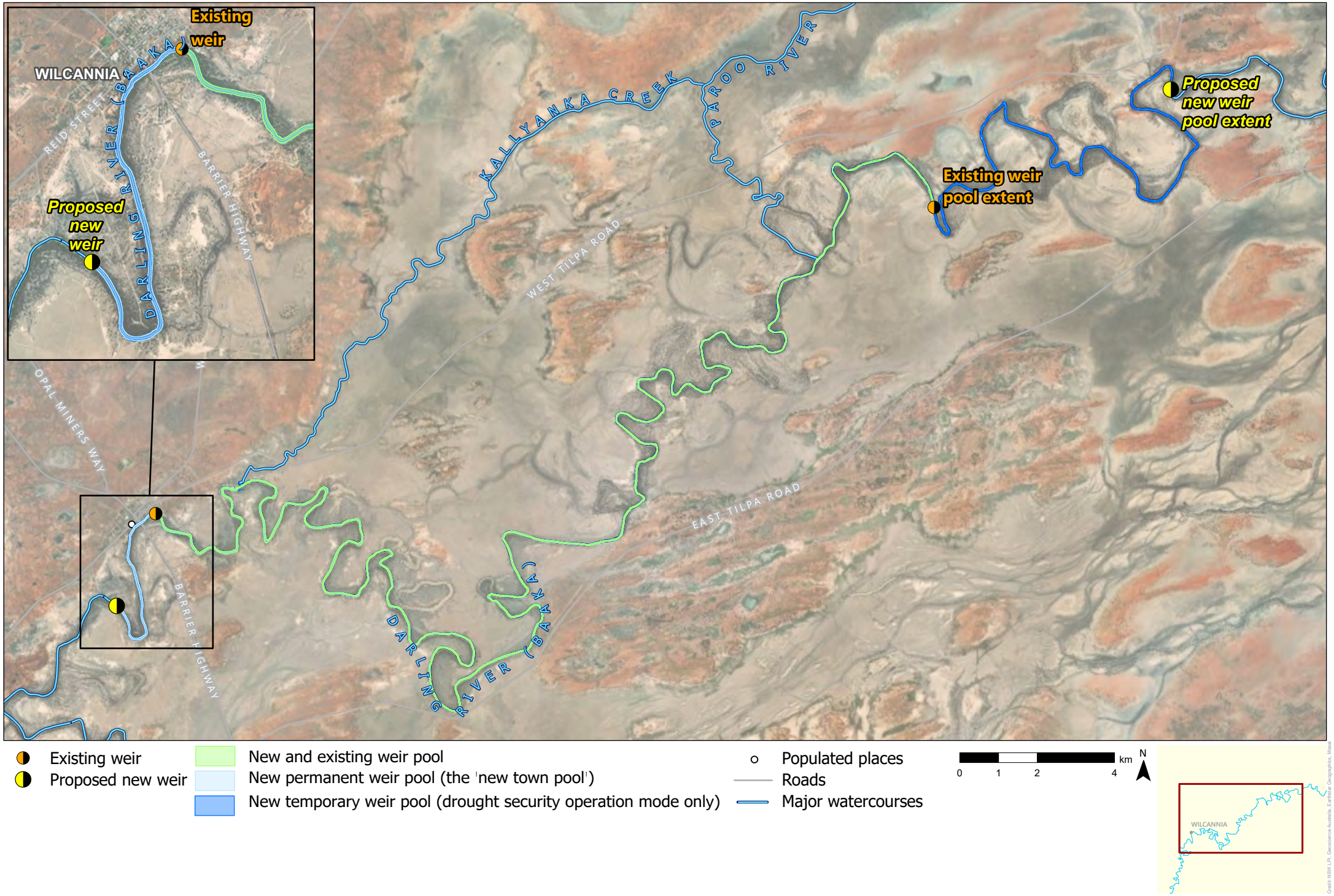

Figure 3 The new and existing weir pools

Artist's impressions of the new weir in normal operation mode and drought security operation mode are shown in **Figure 4** and **Figure 5** respectively.

The new weir is sized to store enough water when it is in drought security operation mode to provide water to Wilcannia for the duration of a drought that equals the longest drought that the town has ever experienced and a drought in which there are no inflows to the weir pool after it filled.

When the new weir is in drought security operation mode and after the weir pool has filled, any further inflows to the weir pool would be released to support the downstream environment.

It is proposed that WaterNSW would operate and maintain the new weir. WaterNSW is a NSW Government State-owned corporation that operates the State's rivers and water supply systems. It supplies two-thirds of water used in NSW and its customers include regional towns and local water utilities.

Figure 4 Artist's impression of the new weir in normal operation mode with downstream flow via the fishway and weir gates, looking in the upstream direction

Figure 5 Artist's impression of the new weir in drought security operation mode with the weir gates raised and no downstream flow, looking in the upstream direction

4. Alternatives considered

Investigations and studies have been carried out over the past 20 years to identify a preferred solution for water supply at Wilcannia. In 2000, an investigation of 10 sites between six and 10 kilometres downstream of the existing weir was undertaken. Four of the 10 sites were considered further, with a site about 4.2 kilometres downstream from the existing weir initially elected as the preferred location. After that, site suitability was ranked, and a site located a further one kilometre downstream was identified as the preferred site.

In 2015-2016, a study was carried out to compare the development of a new weir at the preferred downstream site with the alternatives of doing nothing and building a replacement weir at the existing weir site. Four downstream locations were considered (refer to **Figure 6**):

- Site B, located about 4.2 kilometres downstream from the existing weir
- Site 1, located about six kilometres downstream from the existing weir
- Site A2, located about 5.25 kilometres downstream from the existing weir
- Site D, located about 1.9 kilometres downstream of the existing weir.

All known Aboriginal heritage sites (at that time) were considered along with the potential for further unrecorded sites and places of heritage significance. Site A2 had several advantages compared to the other sites including having better access and a lower risk of disturbance to Aboriginal heritage sites.

After a workshop and consideration of the community feedback, site A2 was selected as the preferred downstream site. The new weir was moved about 300 metres upstream of site A2 when the preliminary concept design was being prepared to be on a straighter section of the river which has engineering and hydrology benefits. The final location of the new weir may be adjusted by a few metres during the design phase.

Figure 6 Locations considered for the new weir

5. What will happen to the existing weir?

Once the new weir starts operating, the existing weir would be partially removed and decommissioned. This is required to create a continuous weir pool between the new weir and the existing raw water intake pipe to the town's water treatment plant. The raw water intake is located about 80 metres upstream of the existing weir. The existing weir also needs to be partially removed so that it does not obstruct fish passage.

The proposed partial removal of the existing weir is a response to local community concerns about the removal of the entire weir due to its cultural significance as a location for fish trapping.

Partial removal of the existing weir would involve excavating a 16-metre wide section of the central portion of the weir to a depth of about two metres below the height of the existing weir wall. Decommissioning of the remaining sections of weir would involve removal of the sheet piles and the concrete capping over the sheet piles.

Water Infrastructure NSW will engage with the local community to identify opportunities to reuse some of the larger rocks removed from the existing weir.

6. Community river place

In response to community requests, the project also includes a proposal to develop a small recreation area, known as a community river place, at Union Bend (refer to **Figure 2**). A concept landscape plan for the community river place is shown in **Figure 7** and includes an informal car parking area for up to about 12 vehicles, walking trails, picnic tables and seating and landscaping.

Union Bend was selected in consultation with the local community as it is a place with cultural significance to the Barkandji and is already a popular fishing location. Visitors to the new weir would be able to park their vehicles at the community rive place and walk along the riverbank to the new weir on an existing walking track.

The community river place is subject to further consultation with the local Aboriginal community, Barkandji Native Title Group Aboriginal Corporation, Central Darling Shire Council and Heritage NSW.

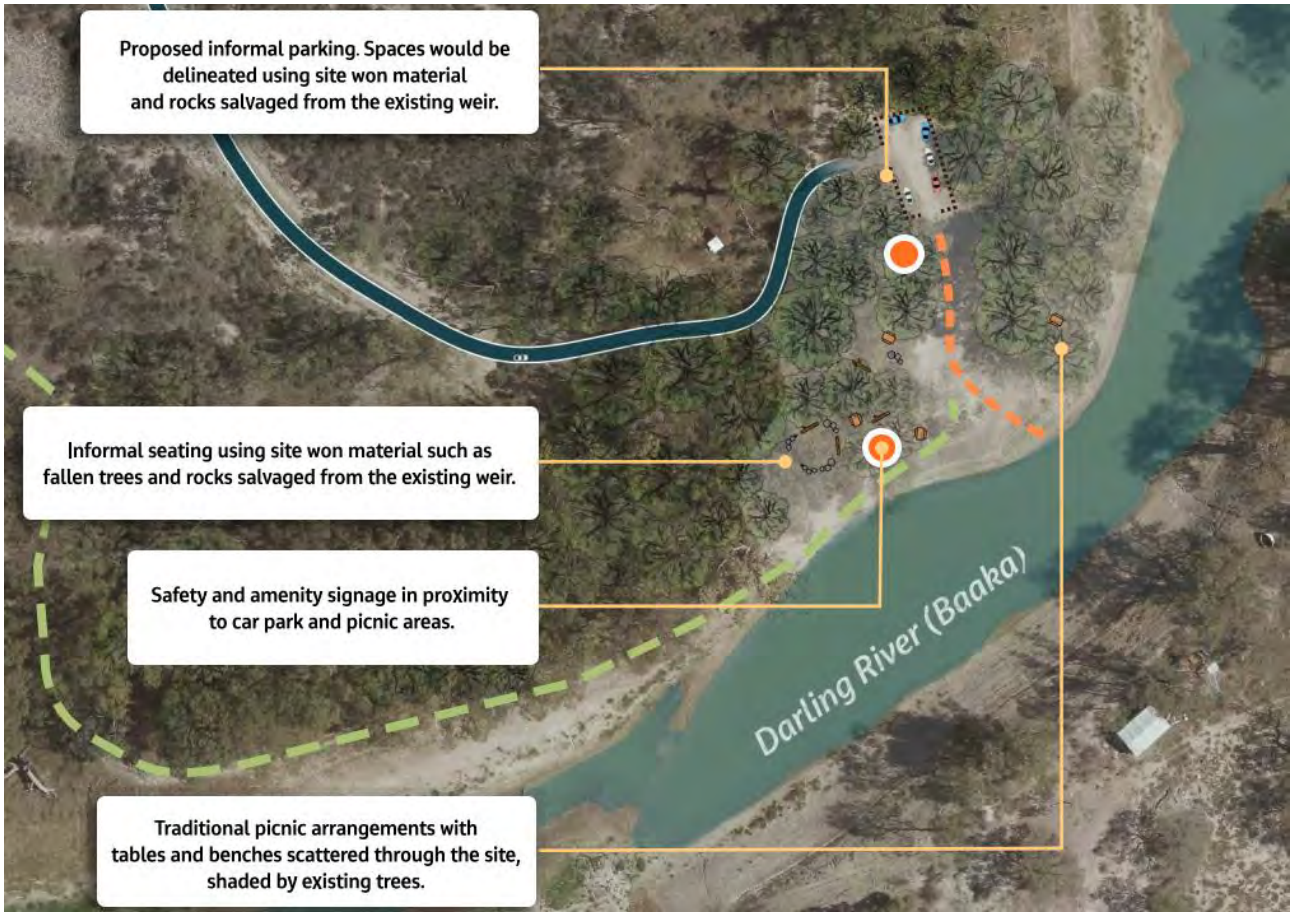

Figure 7 Concept landscape plan for the community river place

7. Construction

Construction of the new weir is expected to start in early 2023 once all planning approvals are in place. Construction and commissioning of the new weir is expected to take about 12 to 18 months, weather permitting. The construction workforce is expected to average about 10 full time equivalent construction personnel, with a peak workforce of about 20 full time equivalent personnel.

Partial removal and decommissioning of the existing weir would take about 10 weeks and would occur after construction of the new weir is completed. The project would lease Victory Park Caravan Park during this time to provide access to the existing weir and for use as a temporary construction compound and laydown area.

8. Funding

In November 2018, the Commonwealth and NSW Governments committed $30 million to the Wilcannia Weir Replacement project.

The Commonwealth funding of $15 million is drawn from the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program, a national program managed by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to invest in rural water use, management and efficiency.

The State funding of $15 million falls under the Safe and Secure Water Program, a regional infrastructure co-funding program established in 2017 to address regional water safety and security in NSW. The funding commitment came after many years of community lobbying.

9. Benefits of the project

The main benefit of the project is to improve the liveability of Wilcannia by securing the town's water supply and providing readily available and inexpensive water. The project, together with the separate project being undertaken by Central Darling Shire Council for a new Wilcannia water filtration plant, would make the supply of drinking water less of a concern for the local community.

The project would also have ecological benefits and create new recreational, tourism and employment opportunities:

- Fishway — The fishway would allow fish passage past the new weir when flows in the river are greater than 30 megalitres per day. Fish passage past the new weir is predicted to be possible for an average of 255 days per year, which is substantially more than the average of 54 days per year that fish passage is predicted to be possible past the existing weir. Importantly, the fishway would significantly increase the number of days that fish passage is available when female fish lay their eggs in the water (October to April). Increased fish passage would provide native fish species with an improved ability to complete upstream migration, lay their eggs in suitable locations, and for fish larvae to drift downstream. The fishway would also increase fish interaction along the river which would in turn boost biodiversity, long-term fish population resilience and create more diverse food chains
- Weir pool through the town centre — The project would extend the weir pool to include the section of the river between the new and existing weirs, which would result in there nearly always being water visible in the river where it runs through the township. The extension of the weir pool through the township would enhance town amenity and pride, and create a 'feel good factor' in the local community. Also, the new town pool would be visible from the Barrier Highway at Wilcannia Bridge and could encourage more tourists to stop in Wilcannia and visit Baker Park. Any increase in visitors stopping in Wilcannia would benefit local retail businesses
- Community river place — The community river place would provide a space where cultural teachings could be conducted, a place for relaxation and recreational activities and also offers opportunities to celebrate cultural connections to the Darling River (Baaka). The community river place, together with the new weir, has the potential to be a local tourist attraction, particularly if the local community pursues opportunities such as incorporating these sites into an Aboriginal cultural heritage walk, for example
- Training and employment — The project is likely to benefit local and regional businesses in industries that provide goods and services to support construction activities. Water Infrastructure NSW has established the Wilcannia Weir Local Business Register and would share the details of businesses on the register with contractors who tender for the construction of the new weir. Water Infrastructure NSW, in partnership with the Regional Enterprise Development Institute and Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly, has supported a TAFE program to upskill local residents to be job ready for employment opportunities during construction of the project.

10. Environmental impact statement

Water Infrastructure NSW has prepared an environmental impact statement based on the preliminary concept design of the project.

The environmental impact statement describes the project in detail, discusses the alternatives that were considered, explains why the project is the preferred option, and assesses how the project would impact the environment. The environmental impact statement also describes how Water Infrastructure NSW has engaged with project stakeholders including the local community during the development of the project.

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment has declared the project to be State significant infrastructure. As a result, the project needs to be approved by the NSW Minister for Planning. The project has also been declared to be a 'controlled action' under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and therefore, also requires approval by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment.

11. Assessment of environmental impacts

The environmental impact statement is a comprehensive document that considers a wide range of potential environmental impacts including changes to flows in the Darling River (Baaka), groundwater, water quality, ecology, heritage items and social and economic impacts and benefits. Construction impacts are also assessed including noise and traffic impacts. The key environmental impacts and benefits are summarised below.

11.1 Flows in the river

During construction of the project there would be only minor impacts to flows in the Darling River (Baaka) associated with the diversion of flows around construction work areas in the river at the new weir.

The operation of the new weir would result in the inundation of the about 4.92-kilomete-long section of the river between the new and existing weirs (see example location in **Photo 2**). This section of the river would be transformed from a normally flowing water environment to a weir pool (see example location in **Photo 3**).

The operation of the new weir would change flows in the Darling River (Baaka) in two main ways:

- Downstream flows — The new weir would store more water than the existing weir. The extra water stored in the weir pool would be consumed or otherwise evaporate or seep into the ground. As a result of the increased water storage there would be a small reduction in the amount of water flowing downstream of the new weir. This impact would mostly occur when the new weir is switched from the normal operation mode to the drought security operation mode. When this happens the weir gates are raised by one metre and this results in the weir pool being one metre deeper and extending an extra 18.81 kilometres further upstream. Filling the weir pool to this higher level would typically take less than five days, during which there would be no flow downstream of the new weir. Downstream flows would also be slightly lower when the new weir is in normal operation mode due to the extra water stored between the new and existing weirs
- Reduced upstream water velocities — The new weir would result in a reduction in upstream water velocities. This is because discharge from the new weir would be via the fishway and weir gates, which would be narrower than the width of the existing weir over which water currently flows downstream. When flowing water is forced to go through a narrowing it causes water to backup and slow down upstream of the narrowing. The greatest reduction in water velocities would occur just upstream of the new weir, with the reduction in water velocities decreasing with distance upstream away from the new weir. The greatest impact of the new weir on water velocities would occur at flows rates that are just below the level at which the

new weir overtops. Once water is flowing over the top of the new weir it would fill the width of the river channel and water velocities would be similar to those in the existing weir pool for those flow rates.

Photo 2 The Darling River (Baaka) looking downstream from Wilcannia Bridge, with Baker Park on the right riverbank in the foreground. This section of the river is between the new and existing weirs and would be inundated by the new weir pool

Photo 3 An example of a section of the Wilcannia weir pool, located just upstream of the existing weir

11.2 Groundwater and salinity

The groundwater and salinity assessment focussed on the about 4.92-kilomete-long section of the river between the new and existing weirs that would be transformed from a flowing water environment to a weir pool.

11.2.1 Groundwater level

The operation of the new weir would result in a localised increase in the groundwater level up to 100 metres from the new section of weir pool between the new and existing weirs. The groundwater level is expected to rise to a level similar to the water level in the weir pool when it is in normal operation mode, which is about 10 metres below the level of the floodplain. For comparison, existing groundwater levels at Union Bend fluctuate between about nine and 11 metres below ground level.

11.2.2 Salinisation

Shallow groundwater (less than three metres below ground level) has the potential to become saline over time due to the water evaporating or plants using the water. Long-term groundwater salinisation in low-lying areas next to the new section of weir pool between the new and existing

weirs would be similar to the minor changes that have already occurred upstream of the existing weir in certain low-lying areas next to the river.

11.2.3 Impacts on the emergency town water supply bores

The town's emergency town water supply groundwater bores are located at Union Bend between the new and existing weirs. The groundwater aquifer at Union Bend is characterised by a shallow groundwater aquifer that is connected to the Darling River (Baaka) and a deeper groundwater aquifer that is separated from the shallow groundwater aquifer by an about 20-metre-thick layer of clay.

The new section of weir pool is expected to contribute to recharging of the shallow groundwater aquifer but not the deeper alluvium aquifer. The emergency town water supply groundwater bores draw water from the deeper groundwater aquifer. Currently the salinity of groundwater pumped from the town water supply boreholes, while acceptable, is higher than that of good quality river water.

As the emergency town water supply bores are not directly connected to the Darling River (Baaka), the risk to the salinity of the town water supply bores due to the new weir is considered low.

11.3 Water quality

Construction of the new weir and partial removal and decommissioning of the existing weir would involve works within the Darling River (Baaka), which presents several risks to surface water quality (mainly sediments). A comprehensive range of management and mitigation measures are proposed including rehabilitation of disturbed areas of the riverbed and riverbanks.

The operation of the project would also present risks to water quality (increased salinity, nutrients and algae) as a result of hydrological changes, normal weir pool operations, and erosion downstream of the new weir. These operational risks are similar to those experienced at the existing weir and weirs across the State and it is proposed that WaterNSW mange this in accordance with its existing operating procedures. Water Infrastructure NSW also proposes to carry out stormwater mitigation works in Wilcannia prior to the project starting construction to minimise the risk of sewage overflows entering the weir pool. These stormwater mitigation works would be a separate project and are not assessed in the environmental impact statement.

The existing weir pool is currently used for swimming and other recreational activities. As the new weir would result in a weir pool that extends through the township, stormwater runoff from the town would enter the weir pool. Stormwater runoff can include overflows from the town's sewerage system due to failure of existing pump stations located within the town. Water Infrastructure NSW is undertaking works to upgrade the pumps at these locations to mitigate this leakage risk. Water Infrastructure NSW seeks to install diesel-powered back-up pump at two underground sewage pumping stations in the township that would be used if the existing pumps fail. These works would be carried out before construction of the Wilcannia Weir Replacement project starts and will be subject to a review of environmental factors.

11.4 Vegetation removal

Construction of the project would require the removal of native vegetation to gain access to the river and to construct the new weir. About 10.14 hectares of native vegetation would be directly impacted by the project including about 1.49 hectares of native vegetation present in the river channel between the new and existing weirs that would be inundated by the new section of weir pool.

Water Infrastructure NSW understands the importance the local community places on the large trees that line the tops of the riverbanks of the Darling River (Baaka) and has tried to reduce the number of these trees that need to be removed to build the project. Up to 22 large trees along the riverbanks are proposed to be removed, mostly at the new weir site (see **Photo 4**) but also at the existing weir site. Twelve new River Red Gum (Eucalpytus camaldulensis) trees, and four other new trees (mix of Eucalyptus coolabah and Eucalyptus camaldulensis) are proposed to replace those removed during construction.

Photo 4 The Darling River (Baaka) at the new weir site looking upstream. The group of trees in the foreground on the southern riverbank (right side of the photo) are some of those that would need to be removed to construct the new weir

Some of the native vegetation and associated animal species that would be impacted by the project are covered by the NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme. In accordance with the requirements of that scheme, Water Infrastructure NSW would need to purchase credits to offset its impacts.

11.5 Fish and other aquatic species

The Darling River (Baaka) at Wilcannia provides habitat for several native fish and other aquatic species. There is good quality habitat for fish and other aquatic species upstream of the existing weir pool (refer to **Photo 5**). The aquatic habitat in the weir pool and just downstream of the existing weir is of lower quality (refer to **Photo 6**).

Fish and turtle species including some threatened species would benefit from the fishway at the new weir site. The fishway together with the partial removal of the existing weir would make it

easier for native fish and turtle species to access about 137 kilometres of the Darling River (Baaka) between the existing Wilcannia Weir and Tilpa Weir. Migration past the existing weir is currently only possible when there are very high flows in the Darling River (Baaka) and the existing weir is submerged.

Downstream of the new weir, the predicted increase in periods when there is no flow in the river has the potential to result in local scale impacts immediately downstream of the new weir. The downstream extent of any impact to aquatic ecology is likely to be limited. Downstream of the new weir, some flow is expected to continue after the weir stops discharging as pools in the river are drawn down. The short duration of the increase in the number of periods when there is no discharge from the new weir compared to the existing weir means that downstream pools are unlikely to draw down to levels that would result in flows from these pools ceasing before discharge from the weir restarts and refilling of these pools occurs.

Upstream of the existing weir, the predicted reduction in water velocities (see **Section 11.1**) would not fall below critical thresholds for native fish spawning. Modelling of water velocities showed that at least 90 per cent of the river cross sections analysed would experience water velocities greater than 0.2 metres per second for about 50 per cent of the time during the spawning season when the new weir is operating. These conditions would be supportive of native fish spawning.

The project would result in a substantial reduction in water velocities in the section of the river between the new and existing weirs as it would fundamentally change from flowing water to a weir pool. The permanent change in the about 4.92-kilometre section of the Darling River (Baaka) between the new and existing weirs from flowing water to a weir pool has the potential to impact the abundance and diversity of aquatic species that are reliant on flowing water conditions for spawning as well as negatively impact flowing water habitat conditions.

Aquatic biodiversity offsets are required for State significant infrastructure projects that result in a loss (or reduction in quality) of existing aquatic habitat. Water Infrastructure NSW is working with the Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries) to determine a suitable aquatic biodiversity offset for the project.

Photo 5 The Darling River (Baaka) upstream of the existing weir pool, which provides good quality habitat for aquatic species

Photo 6 The Darling River downstream of the existing weir, which is lower quality habitat for aquatic species

11.6 Aboriginal heritage

Water Infrastructure NSW has carried out field surveys with representatives of the local Aboriginal community to identify culturally significant sites and items that could be impacted by the project. Several Aboriginal cultural heritage items have been identified that would be directly impacted by the project:

- A dead fallen culturally modified tree located on the bank of the Darling River (Baaka) (refer to **Photo 7**) would need to be moved as it is located where the new weir is proposed. This tree is in poor condition, which makes moving it difficult so a 3D scan of the tree has been completed to create a permanent record of it. The local Aboriginal community will decide where the tree is moved to
- A standing alive culturally modified tree near the new weir would need to be trimmed to construct the new weir. Trimming of this tree will not impact the scar
- There are fish traps at the existing weir which could be impacted when part of the weir is removed. The operation of the new weir will inundate the fish traps
- Four other heritage sites within the river between the new and existing weir sites would be inundated when the new weir starts operating. These sites are all resource and gathering

areas where water, ochre, water weeds and fish were sourced. One of the sites was also used for playing and swimming and as a river crossing point

- Three artefact scatters are within the footprint of the construction works and would be disturbed by ground disturbance works, with two of these scatters including hearths
- One culturally modified tree is very close to the footprint of the construction works but would not be impacted by the project
- Excavation may also impact currently unidentified subsurface Aboriginal objects, which could include artefacts, hearths, midden and potentially human burials. These impacts would only be known once construction starts.

An Aboriginal cultural heritage management plan would be prepared prior to construction to include measures to minimise the potential for impacts during the construction works, and would include procedures for any unexpected finds. The plan would be prepared in consultation with the representatives of the local Aboriginal community.

Photo 7 The dead fallen culturally modified tree located on the bank of the Darling River (Baaka) at the new weir site that would need to be moved

11.7 Social and economic

Construction of the project would benefit local and regional businesses, particularly in industries that provide goods and services to support construction activities. Businesses in hospitality, accommodation and trades are the most likely to benefit. Local businesses could also see a short term beneficial impact with increased revenue from construction workforce spending.

It is likely that most of the workforce would need to be sourced from outside Wilcannia, due to the technical requirements of the construction and the specific skills and experience required, and the availability of local workers with the necessary skills. This non-resident workforce would contribute to increased spending locally while they are in Wilcannia.

Construction of the project is not expected to negatively impact on social infrastructure in Wilcannia. It is expected that most local facilities such as the golf club or swimming pool, would have the capacity to meet increased demand, and the additional revenue for income generating facilities would be a short-term beneficial impact. It is not expected that the temporary local workforce would worsen existing health services challenges or significantly increase demand on such services due to the low numbers of workers required to build the new weir.

If construction occurs during the peak tourism season, it may become difficult to find temporary accommodation. The construction contractor would need to prepare a temporary workforce accommodation plan to manage this risk.

The key social and economic benefit of the operation of the project is that it would improve liveability by securing the town's water supply and providing readily available and inexpensive water. The project also has the potential to provide opportunities for new recreational and tourism offerings to be developed in the community. By creating an extended weir pool through the town centre where it is most visible, the project would enhance cultural connections to the Darling River (Baaka) for residents and visitors alike.

11.8 Other impacts

The environmental impact assessment identifies a range of other impacts of the project including:

- Wilcannia Bridge (refer to Photo 8), which is a local heritage item and part of the Wilcannia Conservation Area, may be at risk of greater corrosion and degradation of its piers as the river beneath it would change from flowing water to a weir pool. Central Darling Shire Council has sought funding from the Department of Planning and Environment to undertake cathodic protection and repair of the Wilcannia Bridge substructure, which would address this risk
- The existing Wilcannia Weir has heritage value to the local community. Water Infrastructure NSW proposes to carry out archival recording of the existing weir prior to its partial removal and decommissioning
- During construction, some residents may be able to hear the construction works, particularly if they occur outside the standard construction hours (7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturday). Standard construction noise mitigation measures would be implemented to manage this risk

- Water Infrastructure NSW would lease Victory Park Caravan Park during the works to partially remove and decommission the existing weir. The caravan park would therefore be unavailable for tourists for about 10 weeks during these works. There would also be no access to the existing weir during these works
- Water Infrastructure NSW would lease land from Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council on the southern side of the new weir site for a construction compound and to access the work site from the Barrier Highway. The new weir site would be inaccessible to the community while the new weir is being constructed.
- Once operational, WaterNSW would create an exclusion zone immediately upstream and downstream of the new weir. Certain activities would be prohibited in the exclusion zone to protect public safety.

Photo 8 Wilcannia Bridge. The new weir would result in the weir pool extending through Wilcannia township including under Wilcannia Bridge

12. Environmental management

Several plans would be prepared to manage the potential environmental impacts of the project including:

- A communication and stakeholder management plan to guide community and stakeholder engagement during the construction works. It will include procedures for dealing with complaints and enquiries
- A construction environmental management plan to oversee the management of environmental risks during the construction works. It would include several sub-plans for issues such as erosion and sedimentation, noise, heritage, ecology, traffic and landscaping
- A social impact management plan to support the proposed engagement activities during construction
- Performance and compliance reports to evaluate how the construction of the project is meeting the requirements of the conditions of approval and the above plans.

13.Next steps

The Department of Planning and Environment will exhibit the environmental impact statement for a minimum of 28 days during which it will invite the community and stakeholders to make submissions. The environmental impact statement will be available for viewing at the Department of Planning and Environment major project planning portal: www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/on-exhibition. Physical copies of the environmental impact statement will be available for viewing during the exhibition period at:

Wilcannia Local Aboriginal Land Council
72 Woore Street
Wilcannia

Regional Enterprise Development Institute
35 Reid Street
Wilcannia

Central Darling Shire Council
21 Reid Street
Wilcannia

Written submissions can be made to the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment. All submissions received will be placed on the Department of Planning and Environment website. Submissions can be made by creating an account at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/on-exhibition. This allows you to save a submission in progress and stay up to date with the progress of an application.

The Department of Planning and Environment will provide the submissions it receives to Water Infrastructure NSW for consideration. Water Infrastructure NSW may then be required to prepare and submit a submissions report, responding to the issues raised in the submissions. A preferred infrastructure report may also be required if changes to the project are proposed to minimise its environmental impacts or to address any other issues raised.

The Minister for Planning would then make a decision on the project and, if approved, set conditions of approval.

Water Infrastructure NSW will continue consulting with the community and stakeholders throughout the detailed design and construction phases of the project as required.

Department of Planning and Environment
Water Infrastructure NSW
4 Parramatta Square, 12 Darcy Street,
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NSW GOVERNMENT