This document looks at the 'Technical report 6 Social impact assessment' and the 'Technical report 4 Traffic and transport impact assessment' and raises concerns regarding what appear to be discrepancies between the two assessments. Highlighted in blue are extracts from the assessments related to Pokolbin Mountains Rd. Highlighted in red are questions/comments regarding the assessments.

Technical report 6 Social impact assessment

Executive Summary

ES1.2 Purpose

The purpose of undertaking the SIA is to identify how the project's construction (including detailed design and enabling works), operation and decommissioning of the HTP is likely to affect local and regional communities, key stakeholders, and the surrounding social environment. It also identifies how the Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) will work with stakeholders to mitigate negative social impacts and enhance project benefits.

Who are the stakeholders?
Do the stakeholders include individuals impacted by Transport and Traffic assessment?

4.2.2 SIA engagement outcomes

Table 4.5 Near neighbours and traffic affected stakeholders - SIA engagement outcomes

Issues specific to stakeholders on Pokolbin Mountains Road include:

- **Road safety/unsuitability of road - insufficient drainage, an unsealed surface, steep vertical drop offs (western side), landslides and flooding, narrow width and poor visibility**
- **Concerns for delays and congestion**
- **Concerns for residents if emergency response or evacuations are required, particularly for vulnerable people living on the mountain**
- **Requests to disclose more information, work with local residents and consider alternative routes**
- **Lack of proactive engagement and unmet expectations e.g. promises of meetings**
- **Strain of process causing health and wellbeing decline and community conflict (i.e. within the Pokolbin Mountains Road)**

Table 4.8 Local and State government - SIA engagement outcomes

Road safety and quality

• Concerns regarding the impact of increased and heavy construction traffic on local roads. Road safety and congestion highlighted

• Roads require investment and improvement in general and for the project. Calls for project to invest in this

• Pokolbin Mountain Road safety issues highlighted

• Proactive agreement making between proponent and local governments on road management and maintenance desired

Table 4.9 Businesses & industry - SIA engagement outcomes

Roads – safety and suitability

• Concerns around safety of the road for the workforce

• Concerned about visitor experience and safety regarding roads, including Pokolbin Mountains Road.

4.4 Summary of SIA engagement findings

4.4.7 Traffic and access

• Widely held concerns for the suitability of the road network in the region to handle construction traffic. Numerous participants raised concerns about existing safety issues along Pokolbin Mountains Road.

5.1 Land use and settlement

5.1.3 Transport and connectivity

Members of the Pokolbin Mountains Road Lobby Group elected representatives and local government representatives all expressed serious concerns over the safety and suitability of Pokolbin Mountains Road and Broken Back Road to be used for construction traffic. Currently these roads are often steep, narrow, with sheer drop offs, unsealed, easily congested and have a history of accidents. Speeding is also known to be an issue on Watagan Forest Road. Participants also advised that Broke Road and other roads in the Pokolbin region are frequented by tourists, and during peak grape harvesting season (January to March) many of the road verges are used by seasonal pickers to park their vehicles.

6.4 Accessibility

6.4.1 Changed access arrangements for emergency services

There is a risk that without mitigation, emergency services – inclusive of ambulance, police, and fire and rescue services – could experience delays responding to critical incidents. The potential for this impact is considered in the context of feedback received during SIA consultation from emergency service stakeholders who identified existing access and response time issues for regional and remote call-outs. Other consultation findings relevant to this SIA:

• Cessnock Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) requested a dedicated emergency services workshop to develop a coordinated response plan and address emergency access risks during construction

• Cessnock LEMC, particularly rural fire services, also identified the potential benefits associated with the project, to increase access through new access roads and improved road networks, for emergency response provision

• Rural Fire Service (RFS) stakeholders and local police raised concerns that degraded road surfaces and increased heavy vehicle use could hinder emergency access and response times, particularly in remote forested and mountainous areas recognising they operate in an already constrained challenging environment

• residents along Pokolbin Mountains Road raised concerns about delayed emergency evacuation options during construction, particularly because some people who live on the mountain have health vulnerabilities.

Issues raised regarding the Pokolbin Mountains Rd appear to be well documented in the 'Technical report 6 Social impact assessment' (see blue highlighted sections shown above) however there is nothing in the 'Technical report 4 Traffic and transport impact assessment' that indicates how these issues are to be addressed.

Technical report 4 Traffic and transport impact assessment

5.3.11 Impacts on property access

The project is expected to have some impact on property accesses during construction, particularly on roads only wide enough for one heavy vehicle to pass. These are typically unsealed roads in Pokolbin, Mount View, and Millfield, and the State forest roads in Corrabare and Olney State forests. These roads often provide access to rural residential properties in the first few kilometres from its access point from a major road.

There are some risks involving two vehicles travelling in opposing directions colliding in a section of road where passing is not possible. While this is an existing risk on these roads, the increase in traffic movements and the use of heavy vehicles during construction has the potential to exacerbate this. Heavy vehicles are longer, larger and less mobile to allow sufficient passing room.

Traffic management, including passing bays, is proposed to manage this risk. This would require traffic controllers to be present at passing bays during working shifts to ensure the roads are only operating under one-way conditions to prevent mid-block passing**. Residents with driveway access between the two passing bays would be provided with a contact number to inform traffic controllers when exiting their properties to minimise the risk of mid-block passing. Locations of roads where this type of traffic management is proposed includes:**

Pokolbin Mountain Road – services approximately 10 rural residential properties, most of which are located between the two proposed passing bays (shown in blue line) closest to Oakey Creek

Road (see Figure 5.10). Several passing bays are proposed at a range of 2–2.5 km further into the Pokolbin Mountains Road.

This is very inconvenient if every time one of the residents wants to use the road they have to call traffic control?

Do we have to wait until the vehicle gets to the second passing bay before we can leave our property?

Why are there not more passing bays on Pokolbin Mountain Road? (See map below for the long distance between the first 2 proposed passing bays.)

The main safety risk is from light vehicle drivers who do not travel safely. From experience travelling the road what most drivers consider as safe does not fit the condition of the road. What will be done to minimise this safety issue?

Will the most dangerous corners on Pokolbin Mountains Rd be widened?

Will vegetation be controlled to maintain line of sight?

Will road drainage be improved to avoid the constant issues of water damage to the road?

Will there be a complaints contact during construction?

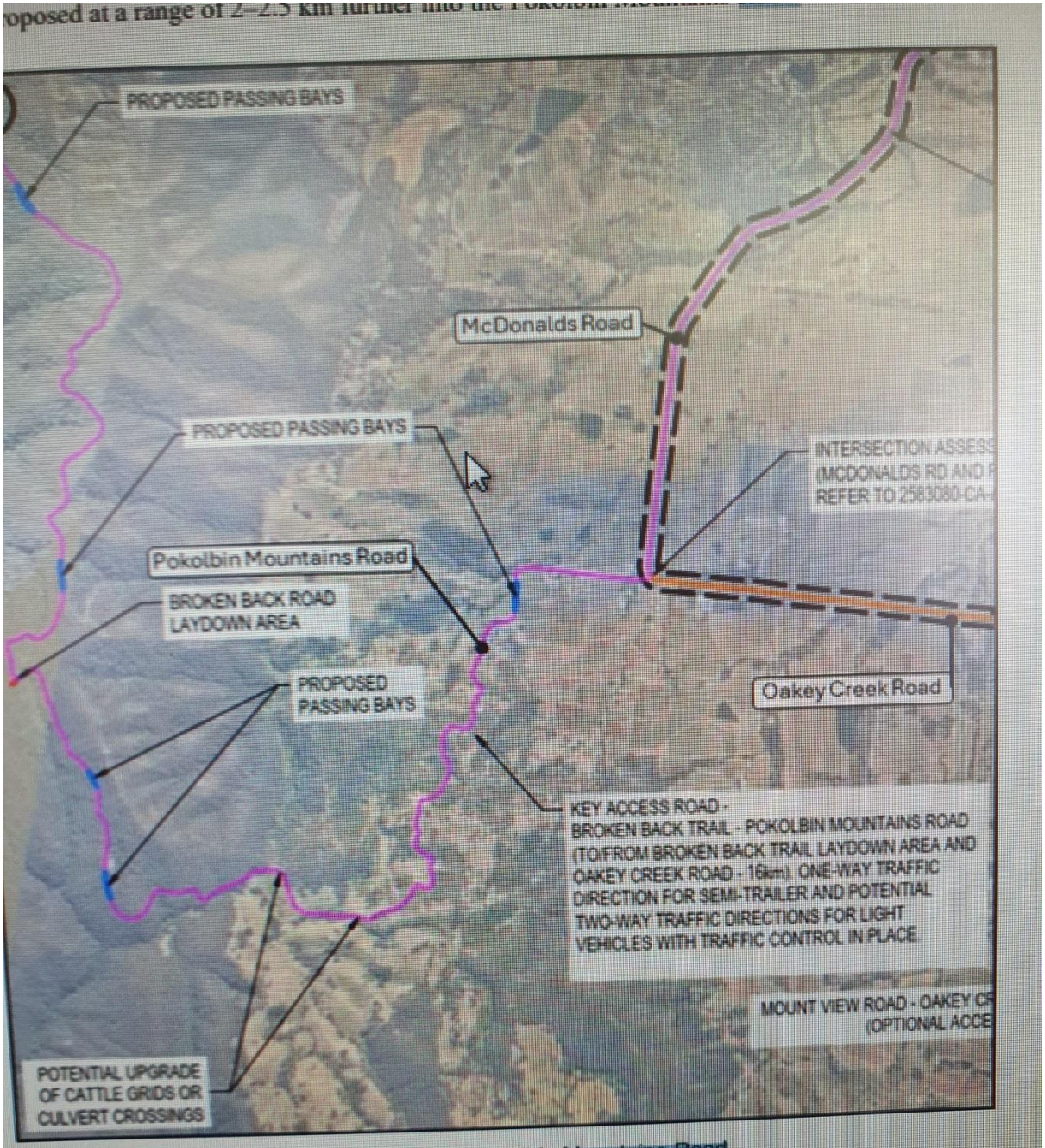

Figure 5.10 Proposed passing bays on Pokolbin Mountains Road

Project No PS138812
Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment
Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)

5.2 Construction overview

5.2.1 Construction program, workforce, and hours

Construction works are expected to be undertaken during the following hours: — Monday to Friday: 7.00 am–6.00 pm — Saturday: 8.00 am–1.00 pm

4.2.3 Local road network

Table 4.3 Local road network within the traffic and transport study area

Pokolbin Mountains Road Connects McDonalds Road to the local roads within Pokolbin State Forest that provide access to the HTP corridor. Cessnock Unsealed Bidirectional two-lane road (one lane in each direction). Likely 60 km/h speed limit

60km/h is not a safe speed for Pokolbin Mountains Rd.

This speed limit needs to be addressed and a safe speed (maybe 40km/h) be permanently set for Pokolbin Mountains Road.

Can this be investigated and suggested to the appropriate department?

Could signs be installed?

In summary there is nothing in the 'Technical report 4 Traffic and transport impact assessment' that shows any upgrades to the Pokolbin Mountains Rd that would improve the safety or inconvenience that the project will inflict on the local residents. This is despite numerous suggestions from the Local community.