Social

Section 10

10 Social

This section provides a summary of the assessment undertaken to identify the social benefits and impacts of the project during both construction and operation. It also identifies appropriate mitigation, management and enhancement measures to be implemented.

This section includes information from the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) undertaken by Umwelt, provided in full in Technical Report 4.

10.1 Assessment approach

The SIA has been undertaken in alignment with the Social Impact Assessment Guideline (DPHI, 2026, 'the SIA Guideline') and associated Technical Supplement (DPHI, 2026d), and the Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects (DPHI, 2026b), with the key activities of this process aligning to the broader EIA process.

The assessment was also prepared with reference to the SEARs as outlined in Appendix A.

Key phases and activities undertaken for the SIA included:

- developing a social baseline of the locality in which the project is proposed, to understand the current social environment and the communities, groups and individuals potentially affected by the project. This baseline is established through the analysis of both primary and secondary data and forms the basis for identifying and predicting social impacts
- undertaking a scoping exercise of social impact identification to inform the approach to subsequent phases of the assessment
- targeted SIA engagement to understand and validate key social impacts from the perspectives of those likely to be most affected by the project
- undertaking an assessment of the social impacts of the project, providing an evidence base for the evaluated impact significance through review of relevant project information, secondary research and literature and by drawing on the findings of other technical assessments
- identifying mitigation and/or enhancement measures, informed by community feedback, to avoid, reduce or manage adverse impacts, and to enhance the potential community benefits
- determining residual social impact significance rankings
- development of a Social Impact Management Framework.

The identification of social impacts considered the impact categories as identified in the SIA Guideline and shown on Figure 10.1.

Figure 10.1. Social impact categories

Source: (DPHI, 2026a)

The social impact evaluation methodology involves consideration of likelihood and magnitude to determine impact significance that ranges from negligible to very high (refer to Table 10.1). The residual impact is also assessed, following consideration of the mitigation or enhancement measures to be put in place to avoid or the identified social impact.

Table 10.1. Social impact significance matrix

	1	2	3	4	5
LIKELIHOOD LEVEL	MINIMAL	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	TRANSFORMATIONAL
A Almost certain	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Very high
B Likely	Low	Medium	High	High	Very high
C Possible	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
D Unlikely	Negligible	Low	Low	Medium	High
E Very unlikely	Negligible	Negligible	Low	Medium	Medium

Source: (DPHI, 2026a)

10.1.1 Social locality

The project's social locality represents the study area for the SIA and has been defined in accordance with the requirements of the SIA Guideline.

Given the linear nature of the project, the social locality of the project is spatially dispersed, with proposed activities in varied geographic areas likely to result in differing experiences of social impacts for local communities. The SIA has given consideration to project affected landholders and proximal landholders, regional service centres, rural townships and to the LGAs of which the project is proposed to traverse more broadly.

The social locality is visually represented on Figure 10.2.

FIGURE 10.2 Social locality

Image Source: ESRI Basemap (2026) | **Data Source:** NSW DFSI (2026), NSWSS (2026)

Scale 1:1,000,000 at A4
GDA2020 MGA Zone 56

10.1.1.1 SIA engagement

Community engagement as part of the SIA commenced in 2023 in the project's scoping phase and reflected in the project's 2024 Scoping Report. In this phase, SIA engagement involved participation in the EnergyCo-led community information sessions and community meetings.

During the preparation of the EIS and SIA, targeted SIA interviews and meetings were undertaken in 2rounds, with engagement activities occurring between February and March 2025 and between February and April 2026.

Engagement mechanisms adopted for SIA engagement included semi-structured interviews, personal and group meetings, online survey, and a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI) survey. Online surveys were administered from April to July 2025 and April to May 2026, and the CATI survey was administered in March and April 2026. SIA representatives also participated in EnergyCo-led engagement activities to reach other groups or affected parties, including via the project's community information sessions and at a Community Reference Group meeting. Quantitative and qualitative information collected through all engagement mechanisms has been analysed to understand and validate the potential impacts, to inform the evaluation of social impacts, and to inform the development of social impact mitigation, enhancement and management measures.

Table 10.2 provides a summary of the number of participants who were involved in the SIA engagement, and the relevant stakeholder groups who took part in each engagement mechanism. Further discussion on the stakeholder engagement undertaken by EnergyCo is provided in Section 5.

Table 10.2. SIA consultation statistics

Mechanism	Targeted stakeholder group	Number of participants / groups engaged
Interview or meeting	• community, special interest and environmental groups • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and representatives • agricultural bodies • local government • education and training providers • health and emergency service providers • industry/business groups	46
Online survey	• project affected landholders • proximal landholders • local and broader community	622
CATI survey	• local and broader community • proximal landholders.	600

10.2 Existing environment

The social baseline provides a foundation from which social impacts relating to the project can be predicted and then monitored over time. To inform the development of the social baseline, a range of data sources have been used to reflect the spatially dispersed and linear nature of the project. The approach and sources used are detailed in the SIA (refer to Technical Report 4).

The SIA considers the 41 suburbs and localities across the 2 regions the project is proposed to traverse, as outlined on Figure 10.3, noting that Singleton LGA has not been included due to the very small area of the LGA impacted by the project and the absence of nearby communities. The social baseline has considered these suburbs and localities, alongside LGA and urban centre data for key regional service centres and towns the project is most likely to draw on.

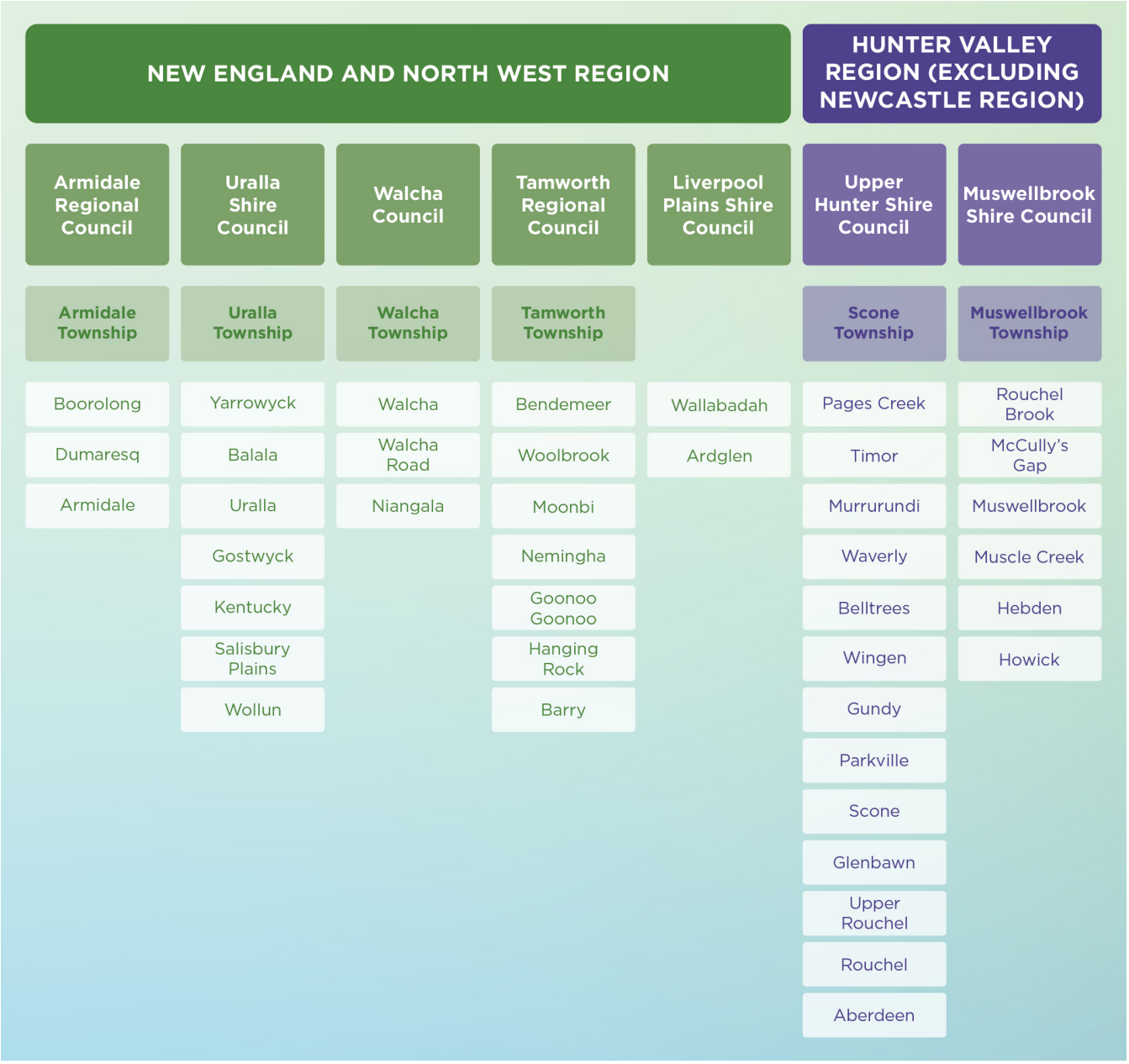

Figure 10.3. Social locality LGAs and key localities

10.2.1 Regional context

The project spans 2 regions, the Hunter Region and the New England and Northwest Region. The Hunter and the New England and Northwest regions encompass a broad and diverse social and environmental context across northern NSW, extending from coastal and peri-urban areas to tablelands, inland catchments and semi-arid rural landscapes. The regions include a mix of major regional centres, smaller towns and dispersed rural communities, shaped by long-standing agricultural, industrial and resource-based activities, strong place attachment and varied access to services and infrastructure. Both regions are part of Country for multiple Aboriginal Nations, with enduring cultural connections to land, water and community that continue to influence contemporary social structures, land use and regional identity.

While the Hunter Region includes more intensive industrial land uses and established transport corridors, the New England and Northwest region is characterised by greater remoteness and reliance on natural resource-based livelihoods.

In more recent years, communities across the Hunter and New England and Northwest regions have been navigating change associated with economic restructuring, demographic shifts, climate variability and increasing development pressure. Central to this context is the accelerating energy transition within the regions, including the transformation of traditional energy systems, establishment of the REZs, the expansion of renewable energy and transmission infrastructure, and changes to regional employment, land use and investment patterns.

10.2.2 Key social characteristics

Table 10.3 provides a summary of key social characteristics of the social locality.

Table 10.3. Key social characteristics

Social characteristic	Summary
Population and demographics	The social locality includes a mix of larger regional service centres, including Armidale, Tamworth and Muswellbrook, and smaller rural centres such as Uralla, Walcha and Scone. These centres provide employment, education, health and community services to surrounding rural localities. Communities are typically characterised by ageing populations, smaller settlement patterns and an ongoing reliance on regional centres for access to higher-order services and facilities.
Economic profile and livelihoods	Agriculture is a defining feature across the social locality and contributes significantly to local identity, employment and economic activity. The Hunter region also maintains strong associations with mining, energy and industrial activities. While economic opportunities associated with major infrastructure investment are recognised, communities differ in their capacity to benefit from such opportunities. Variations in education attainment, occupational profiles and access to employment contribute to differing levels of social resilience across the social locality.

Social characteristic	Summary
Housing and economic resources	Access to economic resources varies considerably across the social locality. Some communities demonstrate relatively high levels of financial advantage, whereas others exhibit greater levels of financial disadvantage and sensitivity to changes in employment, household costs and housing affordability. These differences may influence how project-related economic benefits and pressures are experienced by different communities. Many localities are characterised by constrained housing supply and low vacancy rates, with broader pressures on housing impacting availability across the social locality, including key services centres.
Access to services and infrastructure	Access to services differs significantly across the social locality, particularly between regional centres and smaller rural localities. Larger centres (such as Armidale, Tamworth and Muswellbrook) provide access to health, education, emergency and community services, while more remote communities often rely on travel to access essential facilities.
Community identity and sense of place	Communities across the social locality exhibit strong place attachment, long-standing connections to rural landscapes and significant pride in local identity. Social networks, volunteer organisations and community groups play an important role in maintaining social cohesion and supporting community wellbeing.
Community vulnerability	A community vulnerability assessment was undertaken to understand the relative capacity of communities to respond to project-related change. The assessment considered socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, education and occupation outcomes, economic resources, service accessibility and remoteness indicators. Overall, the vulnerability assessment indicates that the project area contains a heterogeneous mix of communities with differing levels of resilience. As such, social impacts and opportunities associated with the project are unlikely to be experienced uniformly across the social locality.

Table 10.4 presents a thematic summary of community engagement outcomes gathered through the SIA engagement process, with outcomes organised by social impact category as per the SIA Guideline. These summarised outcomes indicate the perceived social impacts of the project from the perspective of affected and local communities. Further detail on the community engagement outcomes, and how community feedback has informed the social impact evaluation, is contained in Technical Report 4.

Table 10.4. Engagement outcomes summary

Impact category	Engagement outcomes summary
Planning and construction	
Decision making systems and procedural fairness	• concerns regarding the adequacy and responsiveness of community consultation processes, including uncertainty regarding how community feedback was or is being incorporated into project decision-making • perceived limited ability to influence project siting and design • perceived imbalance in which stakeholders feel they are bearing a disproportionate share of project costs (for example land use impacts, landscape change, disruption and uncertainty), while expected benefits — such as employment, investment or community funding — are seen as benefiting others.
Livelihood changes	• concerns regarding impacts to agricultural productivity, disruption to farming operations, biosecurity and ongoing viability of farming enterprises • concerns regarding potential changes to rural property values, saleability, and insurance premiums.
Mental health and wellbeing	• elevated levels of stress, anxiety and uncertainty associated with project announcement and planning, land access and acquisition processes and uncertain approval timeframes • concerns regarding cumulative pressure on local communities from multiple proposed renewable energy projects across the region.
Sense of community	• concerns that construction workforce influx may alter the character of small rural communities and disrupt existing social networks • concern relating to increased community division and conflict between neighbours, families and community groups due to the numerous major projects proposed within rural communities • concerns regarding antisocial behaviour, community safety and reduced social cohesion associated with a transient workforce.
Sense of place	• concerns regarding vegetation clearing, impacts on flora and fauna, and changes to or loss of places/communities of environmental and recreational value • changing character and identity of the region due to presence of new industries.
Social amenity	• concerns regarding construction-related noise, dust, lighting, traffic and disruption to daily activities • concerns regarding increased heavy vehicle movements and impacts on local roads.
Aboriginal cultural values	• concerns regarding potential impact to culturally significant places, cultural landscapes and connections to Country • strong interest in ensuring Aboriginal knowledge and cultural values is recognised within project decision-making processes.

Impact category	Engagement outcomes summary
Accessibility to services, utilities and infrastructure	• concerns regarding potential pressure on housing, accommodation due to the incoming construction workforce • concern relating to the additional pressures to be experienced by health services and emergency services in the regions, associated with the construction workforce • preference for workforce accommodation solutions that minimise impact on local services and communities and deliver longer-term community benefits • concerns about strain on water resources, especially during dry periods.
Economic resilience	• strong interest in local employment, training and procurement opportunities • interest in ensuring project investment contributes to lasting regional economic outcomes and skills development.
Operations	
Livelihood changes	• concerns regarding long-term impacts on agricultural productivity, property management and future land use opportunities • interest in ensuring enduring economic benefits remain within the region.
Sense of place and amenity	• concerns regarding the permanent visual presence of transmission infrastructure and changes to landscape character.
Health and wellbeing	• concerns regarding human health effects associated with transmission infrastructure, including EMF and electrical hazards.
Intergenerational equity	• broad benefits associated with the energy transition for future generations to have increased access to renewable energy sources • inequitable impacts to be experienced by local communities for the benefit of broader society.
Decision making and procedural fairness	• concerns relating to transparency of project decisions, information sharing and project readiness to make commitments to manage the range of localised impacts.

10.3 Potential impacts

The SIA provides a detailed evaluation of the potential social impacts that may be experienced by different parties or groups due to project activities. The evaluation of social impacts has been informed through consideration of the social baseline conditions, through outcomes of SIA engagement, via relevant secondary social research, as well as through the findings of the relevant technical assessments that have been prepared as part of the EIS.

Impact significance has been evaluated by considering both likelihood and magnitude, as per the SIA Guideline, that ranges from a negligible impact to a very high impact (refer to Table 10.1). The residual impact significance is also assessed, following consideration of the mitigation or enhancement measures to be put in place to avoid or the identified social impact.

Community perception of impact has also been considered against the evidence base for each impact. Where concerns raised by affected communities do not have corresponding technical evidence, these are reported as a perceived issue or impact. Assessing the range of impacts in this way supports the development of mitigation and enhancement measures that address both technical and perceived matters, ensuring that the assessment responds to impacts requiring technical management, and to those considered important by affected communities.

Impact significance is represented using a colour-coded rating system. The colour blue has been used to denote negative impacts, and green to denote positive impacts/benefits. Colours are used to indicate the relative level of impact (for example negligible, low, medium, high and very high), with darker colours reflecting higher levels of impact significance.

Codes have also been used to denote likelihood levels (very unlikely (E), unlikely (D), possible (C), likely (B), almost certain (A)) and magnitude levels (minimal (1), minor (2), moderate (3), major (4), transformational (5)).

Where relevant and practicable, the outcomes of this impact evaluation have informed the project's proposed management strategies to address residual social impacts. Relevant impact management and enhancement plans and strategies are further discussed further in Section 10.4.

10.3.1 Planning and construction impacts

Table 10.5 and Table 10.6 provide a summary of the potential positive and negative social impacts that may arise during the planning and construction[11] of the project. The tables outline the relevant social impact category, provides a brief description of the social impact, the affected parties, presents the pre-mitigation impact significance ranking and, the applicable mitigation and enhancement measures, which is then used to determine the residual social impact significance ranking.

[11] Where these impacts will also be experienced to the same extent during the operational period this is also indicated, where these impacts will be experienced differently during the operational phase, these are further evaluated in Section 10.3.2.

Table 10.5. Social impact evaluation – positive impacts (planning and construction)

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Livelihoods	Construction	**Opportunities for local business development and increase in commercial activity** Generation of increased local spend and opportunities for local business development and increased commercial activity, through demand for goods and services such as civil works, transport, accommodation, catering and professional services, providing short term benefits for local businesses.	**Wider community (LGA)**	C/2 = Low	Local Industry Participation Plan (SO3)	C/3 = Medium
Livelihoods	Construction	**Increase in employment opportunities** Increase in employment opportunities at a local and regional level, associated with workforce demand across construction, operations and supporting industries, providing short-term employment outcomes for some local residents.	**Wider community (LGA)**	C/1 = Low	Local Industry Participation Plan (SO3)	C/2 = Low
Livelihoods	Construction	**Opportunities for skills development** Opportunities for skills development, including training, upskilling and exposure to new industries associated with renewable energy and major infrastructure delivery supporting workforce capability development and offering pathways for some groups to enter or transition within the labour market.	**Wider community (LGA)** **Employment and training providers**	C/1 = Low	Local Industry Participation Plan (SO3)	C/2 = Low

Table 10.6. Social impact evaluation – negative impacts (planning and construction)

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Health & Wellbeing	Planning and construction	**Increase in stress and anxiety** The project has the potential to contribute to increased stress, anxiety and uncertainty for project-affected landholders and proximal landholders including due to uncertainty relating to how people may experience impacts, land access arrangements, and changing project timeframes.	**Project affected landholders**	A/4 = Very High	Continuation of existing access support to mental health service providers through the Property Acquisition Support Line and Enhanced Mental Health Support Program Update and implementation of CSEP for both construction and operations, including targeted landholder and community awareness and information provision campaigns for localised construction activities Implementation of Community Wellbeing Strategy as a component of the Social Impact Management Plan (SIM Plan) (SO1)	C/3 = Medium
Health & Wellbeing	Planning and construction	As above	**Proximal landholders**	A/3 = High	As above	C/3 = Medium

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Health & Wellbeing	Planning and construction	**Increase in stress and anxiety** The project has the potential to contribute to increased stress, anxiety and uncertainty for the broader community, including due to uncertainty relating to how people may experience impacts, cumulative pressures and changing project timeframes.	**Local community (Suburb and Locality, or SAL)**	B/2 = Medium	As above	C/2 = Low
Livelihoods, decision making systems	Planning, construction and operation	**Inequitable distribution of project impacts** The project has the potential to result in an inequitable distribution of impacts across the community, with project affected and proximal landholders and residents experiencing a greater concentration of project effects.	**Proximal landholders**	A/4 = Very High	Implementation of management measures as determined in relevant technical assessments Update and implementation of CSEP for both construction and operations, including targeted landholder and community awareness and information provision campaigns for localised construction activities and clear communication channels with the project via dedicated place manager	B/2 = Medium
Livelihoods, decision making systems	Planning, construction and operation	As above	**Project affected landholders**	A/3 = High	Application of Strategic Benefits Payment Scheme Update and implementation of CSEP for both construction and operations, including targeted landholder and community awareness and information provision campaigns for localised construction activities and clear communication channels with the project via dedicated place manager Property Management Plan / Property Specific Management Plan Place management support through allocated place manager	C/3 = Medium
Livelihoods, decision making systems	Planning, construction and operation	As above	**Local community (SAL)**	A/2 = Medium	Funding delivered for local infrastructure, services and employment initiatives through EnergyCo's CEBP, delivered separately by EnergyCo in its role as Infrastructure Planner under the EII Act (not as part of this project)	B/2 = Medium

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Livelihoods	Construction	**Disruption to agricultural operations** Including reduced access to productive farming areas of properties, interference with grazing activities and livestock movement, and movement of machinery, as well as on ability to maintain aerial spraying activities for operational farms. These impacts may be experienced differently depending on duration of construction activity within the property, property layout, type of agricultural enterprise, and the location of the infrastructure within the property. It is anticipated that the majority of project-affected landholders would be able to continue to operate personal and commercial agricultural enterprises under and around the project infrastructure once it is established.	**Project affected landholders**	B/3 = High	Update and implementation of CSEP for both construction and operations, including targeted landholder and community awareness and information provision campaigns for localised construction activities and including clear communication channels for landholders with the project during construction via dedicated place manager Property Management Plan / Property Specific Management Plan Biosecurity Management Plan	C/3 = Medium
Livelihoods	Construction and operation	**Perceived change in rural property values** Presence of transmission infrastructure and its associated potential influence on rural property values, saleability and insurance costs for project-affected and proximal landholders, particularly where properties function as both productive assets and long-term financial security (including retirement and succession planning). The uncertainty associated with these perceived changes can contribute to stress and reduced confidence in future financial planning at the household or small business level.	**Project affected landholders** **Proximal landholders**	C/4 = High	Acquisition process undertaken in line with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* Application of Strategic Benefits Payment Scheme Place management support through allocated place manager for landholders whose properties are proposed for full or partial acquisition Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations	C/3 = Medium
Decision-Making Systems	Planning	**Relocation of landholders due to property acquisition** Property acquisition associated with the energy hubs and ancillary infrastructure sites for accommodation camps has the potential to result in the relocation of a small number of landholders, with potential associated impacts on personal livelihoods, place attachment and social networks.	**Five project affected landholders**	A/3 = High	Acquisition process undertaken in line with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* Property Management Plan / Property Specific Management Plan Personalised support through allocated Acquisition Manager and Place Manager Continued consideration of design refinements Update and implementation of CSEP for both construction and operations, including targeted landholder and community awareness and information provision campaigns for localised construction activities and clear communication channels with the project via dedicated place manager	A/2 = Medium

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Accessibility	Construction	**Reduced access to water** Uncertainty regarding project water sourcing and available supply, may cause potential reduced access for existing users, heightened by existing sensitivities in regional water security, particularly in anticipated drought or water restriction conditions, as well as the cumulative demand on regional water supply of multiple projects across the region.	**Wider community (LGA)**	B/4 = High	Extract water with consideration of the rules within the relevant Water Sharing Plans (for example cease to pump rules) Water management and prioritisation of water access in accordance with the *Water Management Act 2000* including management of water allocation in drought periods in accordance with DCCEEW's Extreme Events Policy, placing priority on critical human water needs over project construction water needs during such conditions Implementation of a Soil and Water Management Plan	C/3 = Medium
Community	Planning	**Increased community division and interpersonal conflict** Potential for project activities to increase community division and interpersonal conflict driven by differing views and perceptions of the project, differing experiences of impacts, and the inequitable distribution of impacts and benefits.	**Local community (SAL)**	B/4 = High	SIM Plan and associated a Community Wellbeing Strategy Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations	C/3 = Medium
Community, way of life, health and wellbeing	Construction	**Increase in antisocial behaviour** The project has the potential to contribute to increased antisocial behaviour, associated with the influx of a non-resident workforce and changes in community composition. This may contribute to a reduction in sense of public safety and social cohesion particularly in areas nearby the workforce accommodation camps.	**Emergency and health service providers**	B/3 = High	Workforce Management Plan (SO4) including Workforce Code of Conduct, including zero tolerance for anti-social, discriminatory or unsafe behaviour toward other workers or members of the community, and workforce accommodation camp operational management arrangements	C/2 = Low
Community, way of life, health and wellbeing	Construction	As above	**Local community (SAL)**	C/4 = High	As above	C/3 = Medium
Community, way of life, health and wellbeing	Construction	As above	**Project affected landholders** **Proximal landholders** **Wider community (LGA)**	C/3 = Medium	As above	C/2 = Low

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Surroundings	Construction	**Reduced social amenity due to noise, vibration and dust** The project has the potential to reduce social amenity, including disturbance to daily activities, outdoor use and general enjoyment of property or local surrounds, due to increased noise, vibration and dust generated by construction activities, plant and equipment operation, and construction-related traffic.	**Project affected landholders**	A/2 = Medium	Implementation of Noise, Vibration and Blast Management Plan Dust suppression methods including covering and spraying Update and implementation of CSEP for construction, including targeted landholder and community awareness and information provision campaigns for localised construction activities and including clear communication channels for landholders with the project during construction via dedicated place manager Property Management Plan / Property Specific Management Plan	A/2= Medium
Surroundings	Construction	As above	**Proximal landholders**	A/2 = Medium	As above	A/1 = Low
Surroundings	Construction	As above	**Local community (SAL)**	C/2 = Low	As above	D/1 = Negligible
Surroundings	Construction	**Loss of environmental values of community importance** Potential loss of environmental values, associated with vegetation clearing, earthworks and broader disturbance to the natural environment, native bushland, and local flora and fauna habitat.	**Project affected landholders**	B/3 = High	Avoidance of high-value environmental areas and reduction in disturbance footprint during corridor refinement process Biodiversity Management Plan Strategic Offset Delivery Agreement	B/2 = Medium
Surroundings	Construction	As above	**Proximal landholders**	B/3 = High	As above	B/2 = Medium
Surroundings	Construction	As above	**Local community (SAL)**	C/2 = Low	As above	C/1 = Low
Decision-making Systems	Planning and construction	**Reduced trust in project planning and decision-making processes** Perceived lack of transparency of project planning and associated community engagement processes, the quality of information provided and the extent to which community input has been considered, reducing trust in project planning and decision-making processes.	**Project affected landholders**	A/4 = Very High	Update and implementation of CSEP for construction, including targeted landholder and community awareness and information provision campaigns for localised construction activities and including clear communication channels for landholders with the project during construction via dedicated place manager	C/3 = Medium
Decision-making Systems	Planning and construction	As above	**Proximal landholders**	B/4 = High	As above	C/3 = Medium
Decision-making Systems	Planning and construction	As above	**Community/special interest groups**	B/3 = High	As above	C/3 = Medium
Decision-making Systems	Planning and construction	As above	**Local community (SAL)**	B/2 = Medium	As above	C/2 = Low

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Decision-making Systems	Planning and construction	As above	**Wider community (LGA)**	C/3 = Medium	As above	C/2 = Low
Decision-making Systems	Planning and construction	**Procedural fairness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives have concern regarding the perceived adequacy of consultation, the need for project-led engagement to be undertaken in culturally appropriate ways, and the importance of ensuring that Traditional Owners, Elders and knowledge holders are appropriately involved in decision-making processes. Perceptions of lack of transparency and insufficient opportunity to influence process and outcomes may contribute to reduced trust and heightened sensitivity to project impacts.	**Traditional Owners** **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and representative organisations**	C/3 = Medium	SIM Plan (SO1) including dedicated Community Wellbeing Strategy Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2) inclusive of culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and consultation processes Funding delivered for local infrastructure, services and employment initiatives through EnergyCo's CEBP, delivered separately by EnergyCo in its role as Infrastructure Planner under the EII Act Local Industry Participation Plan, inclusive of targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation commitments and associated initiatives (SO3)	C/2 = Low
Decision-making systems / Cumulative Impact	Planning and construction	**Consultation fatigue** Continuation of consultation fatigue amongst local communities, associated with perceived prolonged voluntary engagement processes and cumulative exposure to engagement processes across multiple concurrent major projects, with a perceived limited role for community input or contribution, which over time has reduced people's capacity and willingness to participate in project-led engagement processes.	**Project affected landholders**	A/4 = Very High	SIM Plan (SO1) including dedicated Community Wellbeing Strategy Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2) Property Management Plans	C/3 = Medium
Decision-making systems / Cumulative Impact	Planning and construction	As above	**Proximal landholders**	B/4 = High	SIM Plan (SO1) including dedicated Community Wellbeing Strategy Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2)	C/3 = Medium
Decision-making systems / Cumulative Impact	Planning and construction	As above	**Community/special interest groups**	A/3 = High	As above	C/2 = Low
Decision-making systems / Cumulative Impact	Planning and construction	As above	**Local community (SAL)**	A/2 = Medium	Funding delivered for local infrastructure, services and employment initiatives through EnergyCo's CEBP, delivered separately by EnergyCo in its role as Infrastructure Planner under the EII Act	C/2 = Low

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Decision-making systems / Cumulative Impact	Planning and construction	As above	**Wider community (LGA)**	B/2 = Medium	As above	C/2 = Low
Accessibility	Construction	**Reduced access to affordable rental housing and short-term accommodation** Increased demand from project personnel has the potential to reduce access to short-term accommodation and place additional pressure on the rental housing market, further exacerbated by major regional events and cumulative demand from multiple concurrent projects. The workforce accommodation camps are expected to largely reduce the pressure on local housing markets however impacts may be experienced during the establishment of each accommodation camp and will vary spatially depending on proximity to service centres and available accommodation stock.	**Wider community (LGA)** **Users of affordable, community or crisis housing**	C/3 = Medium	Workforce Management Plan (SO4) Local Industry Participation Plan (SO3)	D/2 = Low
Accessibility	Construction	**Reduced access to health services** Increased demand associated with the incoming workforce has the potential to reduce access to local health services, including general practitioners, community health centres, and specialist care, particularly given the already constrained service capacity especially in smaller communities and in locations proximal to workforce accommodation camps where baseline service provision is limited or absent.	**Wider community (LGA)**	B/3 = High	Workforce Management Plan (SO4) Inclusion of medical supplies and first aid facilities in workforce accommodation camps, including Telehealth services and first aid and paramedic personnel	C/2 = Low
Accessibility	Construction	**Strain on service capacity for emergency service responders** Increased population and activity associated with the project has the potential to place additional strain on emergency service responders, including ambulance, police and Rural Fire Service (RFS), reducing response capacity and affecting accessibility for local communities, particularly those in areas with elevated hazard exposure such as bushfire-prone area.	**Emergency/health service providers**	C/3 = Medium	Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2) Workforce Management Plan (SO4) Development of relevant Emergency Plan in consultation with emergency service providers	C/2 = Low
Accessibility	Construction	**Skills drain from other business sectors** Higher wages and more secure employment associated with the project may attract workers away from existing industries, including agriculture, small business, manufacturing and local service resulting in challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers already present across multiple sectors.	**Employment and training providers**	C/3 = Medium	Local Industry Participation Plan (SO3)	D/2 = Low

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Accessibility	Construction	**Increased travel times** Temporary road closures, congestion, detouring or other traffic flow changes due to the increase in construction vehicle movements, may cause changes to access, trip times, and connectivity across local and regional road networks, particularly for residents in areas reliant on single access roads. This is anticipated to be heightened in localities of concentrated construction activity and associated traffic movements, particularly near the locations where energy hubs and workforce accommodation camps are proposed.	**Wider community (LGA)**	C/2 = Low	Development and implementation of a Traffic and Transport Management Plan, interconnected with the updated CSEP (SO2), where it relates specifically to protocols and mechanisms for information provision and communication around traffic impacts and local road changes throughout the construction period, with tailored mechanisms for residents and project affected landholders most affected	C/1 = Low
Accessibility	Construction	As above	**Project affected landholders** **Proximal landholders** **Local community (SAL)**	B/2 = Medium	As above, and including tailored and place-based information provision and communication mechanisms for project affected and proximal landholders, and local communities, and/or in areas identified as expected to experience concentrated construction activity and associated traffic movements	B/1 = Low
Community	Construction	**Altered sense of community and disruption to local networks** The project has the potential to alter sense of community and disrupt local networks, driven by population change, workforce influx and changes in land use and ownership.	**Local community (SAL)**	C/3 = Medium	SIM Plan and associated a Community Wellbeing Strategy component (SO1) Workforce Management Plan (SO4)	C/2 = Low
Surroundings	Construction	**Reduced social amenity due to increased traffic on local roads** Increased traffic associated with the project has the potential to reduce social amenity for local residents, particularly in areas anticipated to experience higher construction traffic volumes and where road infrastructure has reduced capacity.	**Local community (SAL)** (located in proximity to energy hubs and workforce accommodation camps)	B/2 = Medium	Implementation of a Traffic and Transport Management Plan, interconnected with the updated CSEP (SO2), where it relates specifically to protocols and mechanisms for information provision and communication around traffic impacts and local road changes throughout the construction period	B/1 = Low
Surroundings	Construction	As above	**Project affected landholders** **Proximal landholders**	B/2 = Medium	As above	B/1 = Low
Surroundings	Construction	As above	**Wider community (LGA)**	B/1 = Low	As above	B/1 = Low

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre-mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Surroundings	Construction	**Reduced public safety due to increased traffic on local roads** Reduced safety on local roads, particularly where heavy vehicles and construction traffic interact with existing rural road users, as well as due to driver behaviour and fatigue.	**Project affected landholders** **Proximal landholders** **Local community (SAL)** (located in proximity to energy hubs and workforce accommodation camps) **Emergency/health service providers** **Other road users**	C/3 = Medium	Implementation of a Traffic and Transport Management Plan Driver Code of Conduct addressing road use, fatigue and safety	C/2 =Low
Surroundings	Construction	As above	**Wider community (LGA)**	C/2 = Low	As above	C/2 = Low
Culture	Construction and operation	**Reduced connection to Country and potential impacts on cultural values** While feedback from Aboriginal community members who participated in the RAP process reported increased connection to Country through their participation, for Aboriginal community members who were not engaged as RAPs the project has the potential to reduce connection to Country.	**Traditional Owners** **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and representative organisations**	C/2 = Low	Implementation of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan	C/1 = Low

10.3.2 Operational impacts

Table 10.7 and Table 10.8 provide a summary of the potential positive and negative social impacts respectively that may arise during the operation of the project. The tables outline the relevant social impact category as defined by the SIA Guideline, provides a brief description of the social impact, affected stakeholders, presents the pre mitigation social impact significance ranking and, a summary of relevant mitigation and enhancement measures, used to determine the residual social impact ranking.

Table 10.7. Social impact evaluation – positive impacts (operation)

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Livelihoods	Operation	**Diversification of income streams** During operation, easement affected landholders within the project transmission line corridor would receive supplementary income through easement payments and compensation mechanisms.	**Easement affected landholders**	C/3 = Medium	Application of Strategic Benefits Payment Scheme Property Management Plans	C/3 = Medium

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Access	Operation	**Improved access within or nearby properties** During operation, the establishment of project access tracks has the potential to improve physical access across and within affected properties, particularly for project affected landholders.	**Project affected landholders** **Proximal landholders**	C/2 = Low	Property Management Plans	C/3 = Medium
Surroundings	Operation	**Increasing energy supply and security, and reducing impacts of climate change** The project is expected to contribute to increasing energy supply and security, as well as supporting the transition to renewable energy and reducing the impacts of climate change. These benefits are experienced at a regional and state level, rather than being concentrated within local communities, and may be perceived differently across stakeholder groups.	**Wider community (LGA)**	A/3 = High	Continuation of regular project communications and public awareness as a part of the CSEP (SO2)	A/3 = High

Table 10.8. Social impact evaluation – negative impacts (operation)

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Surroundings	Operation	**Altered sense of place and change in landscape character** The project has the potential to alter sense of place and change landscape character as a result of the ongoing presence of transmission infrastructure within the landscape and the increasing industrialisation of previously rural areas.	**Project affected landholders** **Proximal landholders**	A/5 = Very High	Design of alignment considering feedback from project affected landholders to reduce impacts on residences where possible Implementation of measures identified in the LVIA	B/4 = High
Surroundings	Operation	As above	**Local community (SAL)** **Wider community (LGA)**	C/3 = Medium	As above	C/2 = Low
Livelihoods	Operation	**Perceived change in rural property values** Presence of transmission infrastructure and its associated potential influence on rural property values, saleability and insurance costs for project affected and proximal landholders, particularly where properties function as both productive assets and long-term financial security (including retirement and succession planning). The uncertainty associated with these perceived changes can contribute to stress and reduced confidence in future financial planning at the household or small business level.	**Project affected landholders** **Proximal landholders**	C/4 = High	Application of Strategic Benefits Payment Scheme Individual place managers for landholders whose properties are proposed for full or partial acquisition, and for landholders who may relocate off their properties Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2)	C/3 = Medium

SIA category	Duration	Social impact	Affected stakeholder	Pre mitigation impact ranking	Overview of management measures and relevant plans	Residual impact ranking
Livelihoods	Operation	**Disruption to agricultural operations** Potential disruption to agricultural activities, including interference with grazing and movement of machinery, as well as aerial spraying. Based on the current project area, it is anticipated that the majority of project affected landholders would be able to continue to operate personal and commercial agricultural enterprises under and around the easement.	**Project affected landholder**	D/3 = Low	Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2) Property Management Plans / Property Specific Management Plan Biosecurity Management Plan	D/2 = Low
Health & Wellbeing	Operation	**Perceived physical health impacts associated with EMF** Perceived safety risks and associated impacts on physical health, including electrical hazards through living and working near high-voltage powerlines, or long-term exposure to EMF. Perceived health impacts associated with EMF, despite being within established Australian guidelines and assessed as negligible at nearby dwellings and infrastructure (refer to Section 17.4), may contribute to anxiety and stress for some residents.	**Project affected landholder** **Proximal landholder**	D/2 = Low	Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2)	D/2 = Low
Accessibility	Operation	**Strain on service capacity for emergency service responders** Increased population and activity associated with the project has the potential to place additional strain on emergency service responders, including ambulance, police and Rural Fire Service (RFS), reducing response capacity and affecting accessibility for local communities, particularly those in areas with elevated hazard exposure such as bushfire-prone area.	**Emergency/health service providers**	C/2 = Low	Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2) Workforce Management Plan (SO4) Development of relevant Emergency Plan in consultation with emergency service providers	D/2 = Low
Surroundings, Livelihoods	Operation and decommissioning	**Uncertainty regarding decommissioning** Concerns regarding certainty and accountability for decommissioning include whether transmission infrastructure will be fully removed at the end of its operational life, whether land will be reinstated to a condition that supports future productive use, and the risk of residual environmental and land management impacts.	**Wider community (LGA)**	A/3 = High	Update and implementation of CSEP during construction and operations (SO2) Infrastructure to be progressively maintained, upgraded, replaced or repowered over time to support the ongoing operation of the electricity network	E/1 = Negligible
Surroundings, Livelihoods	Operation and decommissioning	As above	**Project affected landholder**	B/4 = High	As above	E/1 = Negligible

10.3.3 Cumulative impacts

As outlined in Section 5, community engagement undertaken as part of the SIA (Technical Report 4) identified housing availability and affordability, workforce attraction and retention, access to local services, and local infrastructure capacity as key cumulative impact concerns. Local councils in particular have raised concerns regarding the ability of existing infrastructure and services to accommodate growth associated with multiple concurrent developments across the 2 regions.

Potential cumulative impacts are expected to be most pronounced during the construction phase, particularly where development activity and workforce demand overlap, resulting in increased demand for housing and short-term accommodation (noting that this project is proposing workforce accommodation camps to address worker housing), pressure on community services and infrastructure, increased traffic movements, and changes to social amenity and community cohesion. The cumulative assessment also identified opportunities for increased employment, workforce development, business growth and regional investment. The nature and extent of cumulative social impacts would depend on the timing, scale and duration of concurrent developments, highlighting the importance of coordinated workforce accommodation planning, infrastructure planning and ongoing stakeholder engagement.

Further detail regarding cumulative impacts is provided in the SIA (Technical Report 4) and Section 24.

10.4 Mitigation and management

As identified in Table 10.5 to Table 10.8 there are a number of proposed management plans or strategies to be implemented in response to the predicted negative and positive social impacts that have been evaluated as significant or having a residual social impact post-mitigation. Table 10.9 provides an overview of each of the relevant plans and strategies proposed to manage the impacts and maximise the benefits associated with the project.

Table 10.9. Social impact management framework

Reference	Impacts addressed	Description	Timing	Relevant location
SO1	• Opportunity for employment opportunities and skills development • Impacts on mental health, increase in stress and anxiety • Changes in sense of community and cohesion • Population change and workforce influx causing potential strain on regional services	The **SIM Plan** will outline measures to address or manage social impacts and opportunities assessed as having high or medium significance and will describe monitoring arrangements inclusive of performance targets for each measure. Adaptive management protocols or processes will also be outlined in the event that the intended outcomes of the measures are not realised. The SIM Plan will detail measures relating to: • coordination with relevant government agencies and authorities with differing statutory roles and responsibilities, ensuring a consistent and integrated approach to managing project-related, and cumulative impacts • coordination with relevant government agencies and regional service providers to strengthen local health service provision and accessibility for residents • a dedicated Community Wellbeing Strategy to be prepared and implemented to identify, monitor and manage potential impacts on community health, wellbeing and social cohesion associated with construction and operation of the project. The Strategy will include consideration of: – measures to address stress, anxiety and uncertainty such as mental health training for the site-based workforce and personnel, particularly those in public-facing roles or who may interact with landholders – clear and timely communication, accessible complaints and enquiries mechanisms – new and ongoing initiatives to support mental health and wellbeing, including access to appropriate support services and referral pathways – partnership formation with existing local mental health services and community wellbeing programs – monitoring and adaptive management arrangements to identify changing or emerging wellbeing issues	Pre-construction Construction	Project area Local Regional

Reference	Impacts addressed	Description	Timing	Relevant location
		– measures to advocate for, and support increased health service capacity in impacted areas – opportunities for collaboration with councils, service providers and community stakeholders as required to identify emerging issues and responses and strengthen local health service availability and accessibility. The effectiveness of the SIM Plan will be monitored through a structured program of performance indicators, data collection, stakeholder engagement and periodic review, enabling comparison of actual outcomes against predicted impacts and community expectations. Ongoing monitoring will also ensure any anticipated social impacts that may arise are identified and managed.		
SO2	Decision making and procedural fairness to seek to enhance levels of trust in the planning and assessment process, and reduce consultation fatigue	The existing project **Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (CSEP)** will be revised and updated to guide ongoing, proactive and responsive engagement with landholders, communities, councils, service providers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders groups throughout the pre-construction and construction period. The Plan will: • prioritise engagement to support pre-construction activities and detailed construction phase planning • focus on timely notification of construction activities, changes to schedules, access arrangements, traffic movements and potential impacts • identify engagement mechanisms for use that are clear, accessible and plain-language • include mechanisms to ensure culturally appropriate engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders representatives and communities • identify targeted engagement approaches for stakeholder groups including for directly affected landholders, proximal landholders, community groups and vulnerable community members	Pre-construction Construction	Project area Local Regional

Reference	Impacts addressed	Description	Timing	Relevant location
		• include ongoing coordination with councils, emergency services and service providers to manage construction-related and cumulative impacts and identify emerging issues • integrate enquiries and complaints management mechanisms • provide clear points of contact • identify measures and approaches to reduce consultation fatigue and clearly communicate decision drivers • include monitoring and adaptive engagement measures to respond to emerging issues and impacts The revised CSEP will also include a dedicated Landholder Engagement Strategy which will be implemented to guide ongoing and consistent engagement with landholders affected by property access, land acquisition and construction activities. This Strategy will seek to manage land access and property interactions in a transparent, consistent and landholder-centred manner for easement-affected and proximal landholders. The Strategy will: • set out clear principles for respectful, transparent and responsive engagement • include roles and responsibilities, including the appointment of dedicated land access personnel and consistent points of contact for landholder interactions throughout the acquisition and land access processes • include actions to provide for early notification of access requirements and construction activities • develop property-specific engagement arrangements reflecting individual landholder preferences, needs, values and land use • include clear communication of decision drivers and constraints • ensure coordination with other proponents to minimise cumulative and repeated impacts on landholders.		

Reference	Impacts addressed	Description	Timing	Relevant location
SO3	• Increased employment and opportunities for skills development • Local business development and increased commercial activity	The **Local Industry Participation Plan** will be prepared and implemented to facilitate local worker and business participation in the project. The Plan will seek to: • identify targets for local employment and procurement • identify skills gaps to align training provision with project needs • ensure early communication of required skills and occupations through dedicated engagement activities • formalise partnerships with relevant education and training providers (including TAFE NSW, universities and schools) to establish regional training and skills initiatives • outline collaboration pathways with local employment providers to leverage existing networks • initiatives to realise and maximise local and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders participation in direct employment and contracting pathways • ensure a focus on apprenticeships, traineeships, pre-employment and upskilling programs with transferable outcomes, supporting workforce continuity and contributing to longer-term regional capability and legacy employment benefits • coordination with relevant government agencies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders organisations in the region to deliver targeted skills, employment or training programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders young people • development of a centralised workforce coordination hub or provider, offering a single point of contact for contractors to encourage local employment and procurement.	Detailed design Pre-construction Construction	Project area Local Regional
SO4	• Changes in community composition and cohesion and changes in public safety and security	The **Workforce Management Plan** will be prepared and implemented to manage workforce behaviour, wellbeing and integration with local communities, and to minimise potential social impacts associated with workforce presence during construction and operation.	Detailed design Construction	Project area Local Regional

	• Impacts on health and wellbeing and access to services • Decline in social amenity and increased disruption • Reduced access to local accommodation and health services • Change in sense of community includes reduced public safety	The Plan will also include management measures relating to the establishment and operation of workforce accommodation camps in order to ensure minimisation of impacts on local communities, services and regional housing markets. The Plan will: • outline strategies to balance the use of workforce accommodation with appropriate use of local accommodation, avoiding over-concentration in individual towns, and reducing pressure on, short-term accommodation and vulnerable population groups, particularly focussing on the workforce requirements in the project's enabling works period with consideration into major events and seasonal tourism periods that may affect availability • outline workforce accommodation arrangements for workers who will require housing in short-stay accommodation in the region • outline strategies to ensure workforce accommodation camps provide sufficient health services to meet the needs of workers while on shift, including at a minimum camp-based first aid and medic personnel, and facilitated access to General Practitioners via Telehealth services, to ensure that the project workforce has no reliance on local health services • include monitoring and adaptive management arrangements to respond to cumulative housing impacts over the construction period • outline mandatory cultural awareness training requirements for all workers • ongoing exploration of opportunities for legacy outcomes following construction, such as repurposing workforce accommodation camp facilities for community use • include measures to support workforce wellbeing, manage fatigue and travel demands such as the provision of appropriate on-site amenities, recreation facilities and access to communication services at workforce accommodation camps • address access and transport arrangements to/from the workforce accommodation camps to reduce pressure on local roads and services • include measures to promote positive interaction with local communities, including opportunities for participation in local events and activities where appropriate		

Reference	Impacts addressed	Description	Timing	Relevant location

		• include a Workforce Code of Conduct to clearly define expected standards of behaviour for all project personnel, including contractors and subcontractors, including:
		  ○ zero tolerance for anti-social, discriminatory or unsafe behaviour toward other workers or members of the community
		  ○ clear expectations regarding respectful interactions with landholders, community members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
		  ○ requirements for compliance with alcohol and drug management policies
		  ○ clear expectations for adherence to site safety, biosecurity and access protocols
		  ○ procedures for managing breaches, including corrective actions and removal from site where required
		  ○ clear induction processes
		  ○ ongoing monitoring to ensure consistent application and accountability across the workforce
		• outline monitoring arrangements to enable responsive management of unanticipated impacts which will be regularly reviewed to ensure effectiveness over the life of the project
		• include protocols for complaints handling, monitoring of community impacts, and adaptive management where issues emerge.		