

Moreton Hill Wind Farm

Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA)

Prepared for MHWF Nominees Pty Ltd

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'Gura Bulga'

Liz Belanjee Cameron

'Gura Bulga' – translates to Warm Green Country. Representing New South Wales.



'Dagura Buumarri'

Liz Belanjee Cameron

'Dagura Buumarri' – translates to Cold Brown Country. Representing Victoria.



'Gadalung Djarri'

Liz Belanjee Cameron

'Gadalung Djarri' – translates to Hot Red Country. Representing Queensland.

Colliers Urban Planning acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. In supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

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Abbreviation	Description
A	Reference List and Data Sources
B	Demographic Profile
C	Stakeholder Analysis
D	Register of Social Impacts rated Medium / Low

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
DPHI	Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
EIA	Economic Impact Assessment
ESA	Economic Study Area
GW	Gigawatts
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
KV	Kilovolt
LGA	Local Government Area
MW	Megawatts
PiLoR	Payment in Lieu of Rates
PSL	Primary Social Locality
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
SA	Statistical Area
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SEIA	Socio Economic Impact Assessment
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SSL	Secondary Social Locality
WTG	Wind Turbine Generator

Executive Summary

MHWF Nominees Pty Ltd (the Proponent) are proposing to develop the Moreton Hill Wind Farm and associated infrastructure (the Project). The Project, which is located on Wadawurrung Country between Skipton and Linton, will have an installed capacity of approximately 421 megawatts (MW). The Project is also located in the Victorian Government's draft Central Highlands Renewable Energy Zone (CH REZ). The Project is also listed on the National Renewable Energy Priority list.

Social and Economic Impact Assessment

This Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) has been prepared to inform and support the development of the Project. Specifically, the SEIA will assist the Proponent's planning application through the Victorian Government's Development Facilitation Program (DFP) and the Federal Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPCB Act).

Geographical areas used in the SEIA are:

- **Primary Social Locality (PSL)** – Area within 6km of the Project Area boundaries.
- **Secondary Social Locality (SSL)** – As per Economic Study Area (see below).
- **Economic Study Area (ESA)** – Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ararat, Ballarat, Corangamite (Project host), Golden Plains (Project host), Greater Geelong, and Pyrenees.

Key findings from the SEIA are outlined below.

Benefits

Key construction benefits include:

- Capital investment of \$1.5 billion, with \$150 million expected to be retained in the ESA over the 24-month construction phase.
- Construction employment of 360 FTE jobs, with 145 FTE jobs supported in the ESA (includes direct and indirect jobs).
- Opportunities for local industry, business and contractors/workers to participate in the Project through the procurement process and training initiatives. This has the potential to improve the livelihoods of households in a region characterised by higher levels of socioeconomic disparity.

Key operational benefits include:

- Contribution to emissions reduction in line with Federal and State policy and targets.
- Creation of 40 FTE operational-related jobs, with 16 FTE jobs supported in the ESA (direct and indirect).
- Employment and training opportunities for local workers with positive flow-on effects to local businesses.
- Financial returns to Council estimated at \$34 million, (through the PiLoR scheme) and to the community \$21 million (through the Proponent's proposed Community Benefits Scheme).
- Overall economic stimulus associated with the operation of the Project of \$200 million (over 30 years, CPI adjusted), which includes host landowner returns, neighbourhood agreements, operational wage stimulus, PiLoR and Community Benefit Scheme payments.
- Improved livelihood outcomes for participating landholders, neighbouring residents, and the surrounding community through the above targeted payments/programs.

Impacts

Key construction impacts include:

- Potential modest impacts on the availability of housing and accommodation, depending on the scale of cumulative impacts.

- Potential modest impacts on labour and skills availability, depending on the scale of cumulative impacts.
- Construction activities have the potential to increase pressure on the road network and cause disruption to farming operations across the Project Area.

Key operational impacts include:

- The landscape character of the Project Area will be impacted, which may be experienced negatively by residents opposing wind energy.
- The Project has the potential to impact community cohesion due to conflicting perspectives on wind farm development and perceived inequality in the distribution of commercial arrangements and community benefits.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the SEIA, it is recommended that the Proponent:

- Co-design Community Benefits Scheme in consultation with host LGAs (Corangamite Shire and Golden Plains Shire).
- As a part of the Traffic Management Plan, notify residents within the Project Area when major work impacting road traffic will take place. This may include the provision of contact details of relevant project construction managers where appropriate.
- Implement a worker code of conduct detailing expected behaviour when off-shift and/or engaging in activities in surrounding townships (e.g., Skipton, Linton).
- Collaborate with TAFE training organisations across the region to conduct an analysis of local opportunities for apprentice upskilling through working on the Project. Specifically, opportunities to upskill local workers to perform maintenance work throughout the operational phase of the Project.
- Develop a comprehensive Traffic Management Plan detailing heavy vehicle routes and transport windows to reduce the risk of traffic access impacts on residents and other road users.
- Prioritise procurement for local businesses, industry and workers, potentially through the development of a Procurement Strategy.
- Consider preparing a high-level Construction Workforce Accommodation Strategy in the lead up to construction commencing, identifying cumulative impacts at that time which have potential to negatively affect regional labour and accommodation markets.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

MHWF Nominees Pty Ltd. (the Proponent) are proposing to develop the Moreton Hill Wind Farm (the Project) including associated infrastructure for network connection. The Project's wind farm will have an installed capacity of approximately 421 megawatts (MW).

The purpose of the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is to analyse potential social impacts and benefits that may arise from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project. An SIA has regard to specific aspects of each development phase, along with social characteristics of the locality and broader district and its communities, and social trends and issues affecting these communities which may be of relevance to the proposed Project. The SIA subsequently recommends appropriate social mitigation and benefits optimisation measures.

The purpose of the Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) is to identify and quantify (where possible) the impacts of the Project on local and regional economies over the construction and operational phases. This includes assessing any potential negative factors, highlighting potential benefits to workers, businesses and communities and recommending mitigation measures to reduce negative impacts and maximise benefits.

This SEIA report will assist the Proponent's planning application through the Victorian Government's Development Facilitation Program (DFP) and the Federal Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPCB Act).

1.2 SEIA Requirements

This SEIA report has regard to relevant federal, state and local policy frameworks and strategic drivers.

The SIA draws on the analysis of the current and forecast social conditions of the defined study area/s, along with details of the proposed development, to assess its likely social impacts. It also draws on the outcomes of community consultation that has been specially undertaken to inform the SIA.

This EIA addresses the economic impacts and benefits for the region and State as a whole, including construction workforce accommodation considerations.

Further detail on methodology for the SEIA is outlined in **Chapter 2.0**.

1.3 SEIA Scope

This Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) is based on the development concept for the Project. The SEIA involves an assessment of common and well-understood impacts and benefits associated with wind farm development and operation, within the particular social and economic context of the region. The SEIA has been informed by technical assessments of potential amenity impacts such as visual, noise and traffic as these impacts in which are standalone specialist reports commissioned by the Proponent.

2.0 Assessment Methodology

2.1 Social Impact Assessment

The purpose of a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is to identify and evaluate likely social impacts (positive and negative) arising from a project over the development, construction, operation and decommissioning phases and propose responses (enhancement and mitigation) to the predicted impacts.

There is no Victorian Government framework or prescribed methodology for social impact assessments. Therefore, the NSW Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) SIA Guideline (February 2023) has been used to guide the methodology of this SIA.

The NSW DPHI SIA Guideline represents best practice in Australia and is aligned with the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) standards. The SIA Guideline provides a framework for assessing major infrastructure and building projects across a comprehensive range of categories in order to meet the requirements of relevant consent authorities.

As outlined in the SIA Guideline, a SIA occurs in three key phases and its scale should be proportionate to the likely project impacts and project context. This SIA addresses phase two and reports on the Project’s potential social impacts.

Table 2-1 SIA Phases

Phase One: Scoping Early identification of impacts and project responses.
Phase Two: Social Impact Report Detailed assessment of social impacts drawing on a range of primary and secondary data. Identification of mitigation and enhancement options for any identified significant social impacts.
Phase Three: Social Impact Management (If required) Ongoing management of social impacts, if required.

2.1.1 Social Factors

As outlined in the SIA Guideline, social impacts vary in their nature and can be positive or negative, tangible or intangible, physically observable, or psychological (fears and aspirations). They can also be experienced or perceived differently by different people and groups within a community, or over time.

This SIA classifies social impacts using a suite of social factors, which forms the core basis of this assessment:

Way of life: how people live, get around, work, play and interact with one another each day	Community: its composition, cohesion, character, how it functions, resilience, and people's sense of place	Accessibility: how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities (private, public, or not-for-profit)	Culture: both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal - people's shared beliefs, customs, practices, obligations, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings
Health and wellbeing: people's physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing – especially for people vulnerable to social exclusion or substantial change, psychological stress (from financial or other pressures), access to open space and effects on public health	Surroundings: access to and use of natural and built environment, including ecosystem services (shade, pollution control, erosion control), public safety and security, as well as aesthetic value and amenity	Livelihoods: including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business	Decision-making systems: the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and have access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms.

2.1.2 Social Significance Rating

The significance rating of each identified impact is determined by assessing the **likelihood** and **magnitude** of each impact. The magnitude considers dimensions such as the extent of impacts, duration of impacts, intensity/scale of impacts, sensitivity of the people affected, and their level of concern or interest.

The social impact significance matrix specified in the SIA Guideline has been adapted for the purposes of undertaking this social and impact assessment.

Table 2-2 Defining Magnitude Levels for Social Impacts

Magnitude level	Meaning
Transformational	Substantial change experienced in community wellbeing, livelihood, infrastructure, services, health, and/or heritage values. Permanent displacement or addition of at least 20% of a community.
Major	Substantial deterioration/improvement to something that people value highly, either lasting for an indefinite time or affecting many people in a widespread area.
Moderate	Noticeable deterioration/ improvement to something that people value highly, either lasting for an extensive time or affecting a group of people.
Minor	Mild deterioration/ improvement, for a reasonably short time, for a small number of people who are generally adaptable and not vulnerable.
Minimal	Little noticeable change experienced by people in the locality.

Source: NSW DPHI, 2023 Technical Supplement - Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects

Table 2-3 Defining Likelihood Levels of Social Impacts

Likelihood level	Meaning
Almost certain	Definite or almost definitely expected (e.g. has happened on similar projects)
Likely	High probability
Possible	Medium probability
Unlikely	Low probability
Very unlikely	Improbable or remote probability

Source: NSW DPHI, 2023, Technical Supplement - Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects.

Table 2-4 Social Impact Significance Matrix

Likelihood	Magnitude				
	Minimal	Minor	Moderate	Major	Transformational
Very unlikely	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Possible	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
Likely	Low	Medium	High	High	Very high
Almost certain	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Very high

Source: DPHI 2023

2.1.3 Assumptions and limitations

Assumptions applied to complete this SIA include:

- Socio-economic data for each study area accurately reflects the community demographic profile.
- All potential social impacts to the local community that can reasonably be identified at this point in the development process have been included in this report. This includes impacts identified through a small number of stakeholder interviews undertaken by the consultant and a review of the Proponents Consultation and Engagement report. It is possible that broader engagement at a later date in the process will identify further possible social impacts that will need to be reflected in an updated SIA.

2.2 Economic Impact Assessment

2.2.1 Economic Baseline

The following methodology has been applied to **Chapter 5.0** of this report, noting there are no specific National or State guidelines informing EIAs for renewable energy projects:

- Identification of relevant Economic Study Area (ESA) for the assessment which reflects likely labour force, accommodation, and supply chain linkages available to support the Project. The ESA is defined in terms of host and surrounding LGA boundaries.
- Baseline analysis of population, labour markets, occupational structure and business structure for the ESA and Victoria, with reference to latest available data (refer to each table/figure for source date) relating to ABS Estimated Resident Population, Department of Environment and Planning State and Local Government Population Projections, ABS Census, ABS Business Counts and Department of Jobs and Skills - Small Area Labour Markets.
- Assessment of the capacity and opportunities of townships in the ESA to participate and service the Project. This information has been compiled through a site visit, a desktop review of townships and accommodation data (accommodation provider websites, TripAdvisor, SQM, Airbnb and Vrbo databases, website searches) and discussions with local real estate agents and the Proponent.

2.2.2 Economic Impact Assessment

The following methodology has been applied to **Chapter 8.0** of this report:

- Estimated Project investment, with investment figures provided by the Proponent based on internal project investment estimates, and the estimated share of investment retained in the ESA informed by benchmarking analysis of similar sized completed renewable energy and energy storage facilities located in regional areas.
- Ratios of direct Local Region (local) and non-Local Region (imported) employment are based on:
 - The Project's estimated workforce requirements, average and peak.
 - Assessment of potential cumulative effects of other major infrastructure projects in the local region.
 - A review of the ESA's existing workforce capacity.
- Assessment of Project employment (direct and indirect) for construction and operational phases. Direct employment reflects jobs created to support the on-site construction and operation of the Project. Indirect employment reflects jobs supported through the industrial and consumption/induced impacts of each Project stage. Relevant ABS multipliers are applied to construction and operational phases. Employment numbers have been provided by the Proponent based on estimated labour requirements. Ratios of direct ESA (local) and non-ESA (imported) employment are based on the Proponent anticipated labour force requirements and the ESA's existing workforce capacity.
- Identification of business and industry participation opportunities, with reference to baseline analysis outcomes regarding workforce size and skills composition and procurement activities proposed by the Proponent.
- Assessment of agricultural impacts which includes employment and production impacts through land consumption and disruption to activities, and benefits to /associated landowners from new incomes and improved on-site infrastructure.
- Assessment of accommodation and housing impacts with reference to the baseline analysis and the estimated number of construction workers that may require accommodation at the Project's peak.

- Assessment of cumulative impacts relating to potential concurrent construction of major infrastructure projects in the ESA. This analysis includes assessing potential impacts on accommodation and labour and providing measures to manage identified cumulative impacts.
- The cost of supporting and accommodating a non-local worker represents direct expenditure retained within the ESA. Spending on supporting non-local workers includes accommodation (e.g., private rent, hotels, or worker camps), daily meals, laundry and other personal services, medical expenses, and living away-from-home allowances. These are paid for by the individual worker or a cost incurred by contracted companies.
- The following approach and assumptions are used to estimate the economic stimulus arising from the relocation of construction worker to the ESA.:
 - Based on a weekly ESA spend of \$1,000 per worker or approximately \$50,000 annually.
 - Importantly, this calculation is part of the total retained Project investment figure. Therefore, this analysis does not quantify additional investment benefits but rather provides insight into a component of the total investment benefits in the local region.
- Estimates of economic stimulus impacts (construction and operation phases) including project wages and spending, host landowner rental incomes, neighbour benefit payments, and the Proponent's Community Benefit Sharing scheme (base numbers provided by the Proponent). Construction stimulus is expressed in 2025 dollars (and calculated over the Project's 24-month construction phase), while operational stimulus is calculated over 30 years using 2025 dollars adjusted by 3.0% pa to reflect the consumer price index (CPI).
- To estimate the operational phase wage stimulus in the ESA generated by the Project's operational workforce, the following approach has been applied:
 - Establishing the Average Wage - The analysis uses Average Weekly Earnings, Industry, Australia (Dollars) - Original - Persons, Full Time Adult Total Earnings data to determine the annual wage for direct workers in the 'Electricity, Gas, Water, and Waste Services' sector. For indirect workers 'All Industries' is used which reflects the broad nature of the indirect jobs.
 - Calculating Total Wages - The operational workforce consists of both direct and indirect jobs in the ESA. The pre-tax wage pool is calculated by multiplying the total number of jobs by the average annual wage.
 - Applying Tax and Local Spending Assumptions - A 25% tax rate is applied to determine the post-tax income of the workforce. It is assumed that 50% of post-tax earnings will be spent in the ESA, benefiting local businesses and service providers.
 - Indexing - The year-one expenditure is indexed at 3.0% annually over the Project's operational phase to reflect wage growth and inflation. This provides the total wage stimulus estimate over the operational life of the Project.
- The Victorian Government's Payment in Lieu of Rates (PiLoR) framework 2025/26 guidelines have been used to estimate financial returns to the host councils from the operation of the Project. The estimate is based on a fixed charge of \$67,270 and a variable charge of \$1,515 per MW (per nameplate or installed capacity), adjusted by 3.0% pa over 30 years to reflect CPI.
- Estimate of total economic benefits for the ESA from the construction and operation of the Project (based on the preceding methodology).
- High level commentary on potential economic impacts associated with the Project's decommissioning phase, provided by the Proponent.

3.0 Project Overview

3.1 Project Area and Regional Context

The Project is located in the Central Highlands region of western Victoria, straddling the Golden Plains and Corangamite shires, approximately 35km southwest of the major regional city of Ballarat. The Project Area is largely bound by the Glenelg Highway in the north, Linton-Mannibadar Road in the east, Lismore-Pittong Road in the south and Mount Bute Road in the west. Rokewood Skipton Road bisects the Project Area from east to west. The closest towns to the Project are Skipton and Linton, approximately 5km to the west and east of the Project, respectively. The Project is located on Wadawurrung Country.

3.2 Description of the Project

The Project involves a renewable energy facility comprising a wind farm, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and a transmission line to connect the Project to the electricity network, and includes (but is not limited to):

- Up to 62 wind turbines, each with a generation capacity of 6.8 MW and a maximum overall tip height of 252 metres.
- Hardstands at the base of each turbine.
- Underground and overhead electrical reticulation cabling between turbines.
- Onsite electrical substation.
- A 220 kV underground transmission line connecting the Project from the onsite substation into the electricity network at Berrybank Terminal Station.
- BESS with a storage capacity of approximately 100 MW /4hrs and associated water storage tanks.
- 45% pa 100 litre water tanks at main entrance locations or as recommended by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) or Bushfire Risk Assessment (Fire Risk Consultants, 2023).
- Internal site access tracks.
- Up to four permanent meteorological monitoring masts.
- Operations and maintenance facilities.
- Other permanent ancillary works, including road upgrades.

The Project also requires temporary infrastructure including two construction compounds, temporary laydown areas and two concrete batching plants.

The Project comprises up to 62 wind turbines, however 68 wind turbine locations have been identified and the impacts of those are considered in other technical assessments where physical footprint impacts are quantified and assessed (and subsequently mapped in figures **Figure 3.1**.) This assessment considers the impacts of the final 62 wind turbines.



Figure 3.1 *Moreton Hill Wind Farm Layout*
 Source: Squadron Energy, Colliers Urban Planning

3.3 Benefits Sharing and Community Commercial Arrangements

The Proponent has proposed a community commercial arrangement to deliver payments to neighbouring and participating landholders, as well as to implement a community benefit scheme for the Project's 30-year operational period. Commercial arrangements are detailed below:

- **Host landowner payments** – Confidential.
- **Neighbouring landowner payments** – The proposed annual payments (refer to Table 3.1 below), would start from the construction phase and continuing through the 30-year operational period (adjusted for CPI).

Table 3-1 *Commercial Arrangements for Neighbouring Landowners*

Zone (Distance from Turbines)	Payments per Turbine (per annum)	Minimum Payment (per annum)
Zone 1: 0-3 km	\$2,000	\$5,000
Zone 2: 3-4 km	\$1,000	\$5,000

Source Squadron Energy

Community Investment Program and PiLoR

- The proposed Community Benefit Scheme will allocate \$1,050 per MW per year (adjusted for CPI) over 30 years.
- Payment in Lieu of Rates (PiLoR) to the host Councils is based on 2025/26 values, a fixed charge of \$67,270 and a variable charge of \$1,515 per MW, to be adjusted for (CPI) over 30 years.

Estimated financial values for benefit sharing and community commercial arrangements are presented in **Chapter 8.0**.

4.0 Research and Policy Context

4.1 Policy Review

The following section identifies key social and economic policy drivers for this Project, based on a review of energy-related national, state and local policies and strategies. The following key documents have been reviewed:

- Australia's Long-term Emissions Reduction Plan (Australian Government Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, 2021)
- Climate Change Act 2017 (Victorian Government, 2017)
- Climate Change Act 2022 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2022)
- Planning guidelines for Development of Wind Energy Facilities (Department of Transport and Planning, 2023)
- Victoria's Renewable Energy Action Plan (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, 2018)
- Victoria's 2035 Emissions Reduction Target (Victorian Government, 2023)
- Draft 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan (VicGrid 2025)
- Environment & Sustainability Strategy 2024-2034 (Corangamite Shire, 2024)
- Grow and Prosper Framework 2023-33 (Corangamite Shire, 2023)
- Climate Emergency Plan 2022-2032 (Golden Plains Shire Council, 2022)
- Golden Plains Shire Environmental Strategy 2019-2027 (Golden Plains Shire council, 2019).

A summary of the key themes of these documents are included below in **Table 4-1**.

Table 4-1 Strategic policy review

Policy themes	Implications for Social Impact Assessment	Relevant documents
Local government renewable energy development goals	• Corangamite Shire Council's Environment and Sustainability Strategy outlines Council's goal to increase renewable energy production and consumption. • Corangamite Shire Council's Grow and Prosper Framework identifies investigating new energy opportunities as a priority area. • Golden Plains Shire Council seeks to encourage renewable energy generation. This includes connecting landholders with opportunities to host renewable energy development. • Golden Plains Shire Council's Environmental Strategy relies on renewable energy development across the LGA as an indicator of the Strategy's success.	• Environment & Sustainability Strategy 2024-2034 (Corangamite Shire, 2024) • Grow and Prosper Framework 2023-33 (Corangamite Shire, 2023) • Climate Emergency Plan 2022-2032 (Golden Plains Shire Council, 2022) • Golden Plain Shire Environmental Strategy 2019-2027 (Golden Plains Shire council, 2019)
National goals for renewable energy development and emissions reduction	• Federal Government wants to drive down the costs of low emissions technologies, enabling their deployment at scale across all sectors through investments, market incentives and infrastructure development to provide affordable and reliable energy (Australian Government Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, 2021). • Federal Government to adopt low-cost and low emissions technologies while maintaining competitiveness of industries and without incurring new costs for Australian households or businesses (Australian Government Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, 2021).	• Australia's Long-term Emissions Reduction Plan (Australian Government Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, 2021)
State goals for renewable energy	• The Victorian Government's legislated emissions reduction targets provide policy certainty for developers, investors, business, government and the community for the transition to net zero	• Climate Change Act 2017 (Victorian Government, 2017)

Policy themes	Implications for Social Impact Assessment	Relevant documents
develop and emissions reduction	emissions. Targets set in law encourage further investment in zero-emissions technologies, goods and industries. • The Victorian Government has established its own renewable energy targets and adopted a Renewable Energy Action Plan to support a shift to a net zero emissions energy sector by 2045. Renewable energy generation targets are set for 25% by 2020 (achieved), 60% by 2030, and 95% by 2035. • The Victorian Government aims to drive job creation through renewable energy programs. This is supported by the State's 1.6-billion-dollar investment into the sector. • The Victorian Government supports wind energy facilities that do not lead to unacceptable impacts on critical environmental, cultural or landscape values. • The Victorian Government is establishing renewable energy zones to deliver new benefits for local communities and provide a signal to industry on where to focus when developing new projects. By coordinating development in renewable energy zones, the Victorian Government is aiming to streamline grid connections and plan transmission upgrades to make the best use of Victoria's existing network.	• Planning guidelines for Development of Wind Energy Facilities (Department of Transport and Planning, 2023) • Victorian's Climate Change Strategy (Department of Environment and Climate Action, 2021) • Victoria's Renewable Energy Action Plan (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, 2018) • Draft 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan (VicGrid 2025)
Social and economic development opportunities in renewable energy transition	• The Victorian Government is committed to a development approach that incorporates community views from the start of the planning phase for transmission and renewable energy infrastructure. This will contribute towards better decision making, minimise impacts and maximise tailored benefits for communities.	• Draft Renewable Energy Zone Community Benefits Plan (VicGrid, 2024)

4.2 Social and Economic Issues and Trends

This section identifies social and economic issues and trends of relevance to the Project, including macro issues, as well as intangible community assets in the locality, such as human and social capital, community values and connection to place.

4.2.1 Victorian Transmission Plan

The Victorian Government has published the Victorian Transmission Plan which outlines the boundaries for Renewable Energy Zones (REZs). REZs allow new renewable energy projects to connect to the grid quickly, reducing risk for investors and improving energy affordability outcomes for households and businesses.¹ The goal of the REZs is to add 17.5 GW of new renewable energy capacity and 3.4 GW of storage capacity to the Victorian Energy system by 2040. Establishing REZs benefits communities by supporting network investment and renewable energy development in regional areas, guided by consultation with local residents. The Project is located in the Central Highlands REZ, as shown below in Figure 4.1.

¹ VicGrid, 2025, Draft 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan, <https://engage.vic.gov.au/download/document/40389>

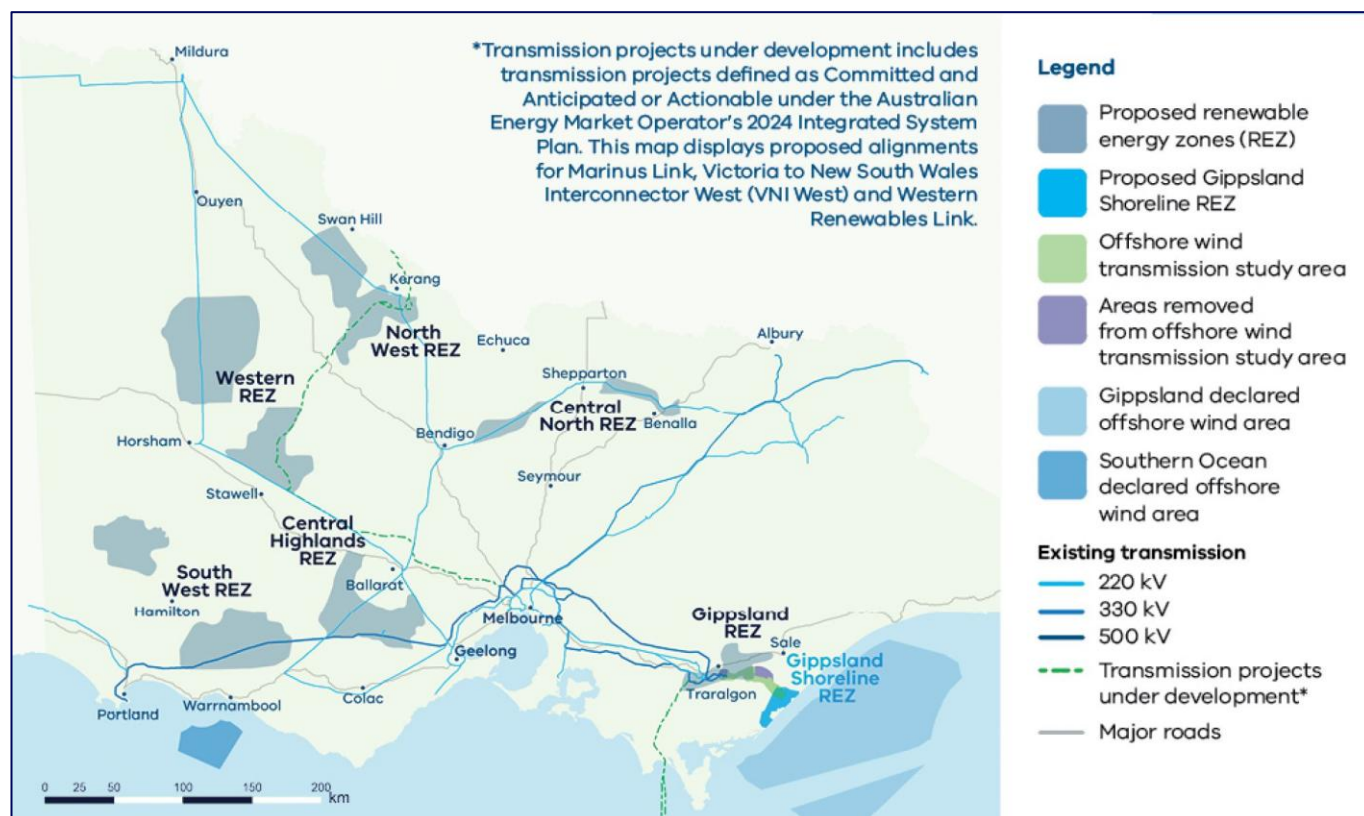


Figure 4.1 Victorian Renewable Energy Zones

Source: VicGrid, 2025

4.2.2 Visual Impacts

Visual impact is a commonly cited and often unavoidable consequence of wind farm development. Community opposition to visual impact is often based on the sense of landscape value, whereby the industrial character of wind turbines is difficult to reconcile with seeing rural areas as 'natural' places.² Understanding attitudes towards wind farms through lenses of rural identity and place attachment helps to contextualise the fears of landscape change that may be present. Research conducted by British Geographer Rebecca Wheeler identifies the place-based construction of rural identities through conceptualisations of natural landscape.³ The development of rural space through the installation of turbines can be perceived by some as industrial incursions that conflict with representation of the 'natural', threatening connections to place that were previously anchored by a sense of rural belonging.⁴

In a study examining community opposition to the development of a proposed 750MW offshore wind farm in North Wales, researchers assessed two towns across the affected locality. The first is called Llandudno, which was renowned for its natural beauty, and the second is called Colwyn Bay, which was considered 'rundown'.⁵ Surveying 488 local residents across the two towns, the results showed that framings of Llandudno as a site of natural beauty was woven into the local conceptualisation of place. For residents of Llandudno, this resulted in a negative perception of the wind farm development. By contrast, residents of Colwyn Bay held less consistent views, with some suggestions that the wind farm could enhance the town. Understanding how communities see landscapes as 'natural' or otherwise helps to inform the likely views towards how a wind farm may change the character of an area.

Research undertaken on wind farm development in South Australia supports the concept of landscape value dependent perceptions. In a study involving 311 participants, the scenic quality of 68 locations both with and without wind farms

² Rebecca Wheeler, "Reconciling Windfarms with Rural Place Identity: Exploring Residents' Attitudes to Existing Sites," *Sociologia Ruralis* 57, no. 1 (January 2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12121>.

³ Wheeler, "Reconciling Windfarms with Rural Place Identity."

⁴ Patrick Devine-Wright and Yuko Howes, "Disruption to Place Attachment and the Protection of Restorative Environments: A Wind Energy Case Study," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, no. 3 (September 2010): 271–80, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2010.01.008>; Wheeler, "Reconciling Windfarms with Rural Place Identity."

⁵ Devine-Wright and Howes, "Disruption to Place Attachment and the Protection of Restorative Environments."

added into the landscape using digital imaging was undertaken. A key finding of the study was that wind farms were generally perceived to have a negative impact on landscape with high levels of scenic value. Conversely wind farms were perceived to have a positive impact on landscape with low levels of scenic value.⁶

4.2.3 Community Cohesion in the Context of Wind Farm Development

Wind farm development has the potential to undermine community cohesion if not appropriately managed. Renewable energy proposals can result a range of often conflicting views, from those who support the proposal to those that vehemently oppose it. Support may stem from supporting green energy development and addressing climate change, to the potential for financial benefit by hosting turbines. Opposition may be based on the visual impact, fear of impacts to health or property values or the impact on farming. A variety of views across the community can lead to the fragmentation along a dividing line – of those who approve of the development proposal and those who oppose. Attempts to develop without consideration of social cohesion can lead to a lasting negative impact on communities and their resilience. Researchers in Montreal examined the impacts of a wind farm development on a rural town in Quebec. They highlighted the deterioration of relationships between community members based on positions in favour or against the wind farm.⁷ Modifications to the community's social structure were observed, including weakened social ties and a reduction in mutual aid.⁸

Likewise, locally, Australian researchers identified poor consultation and community tensions as the cause of a failure to develop a wind farm on King Island, Tasmania.⁹ Despite the proposal not going ahead, the sense belonging to a close-knit community with a strong place identity was undermined by the development process, affecting local institutions – such as the Kind Island newspaper and Council – due to perceptions of allegiance to or against the proposal.¹⁰ Efforts to understand the nuance of renewable energy acceptance within a community is an essential process to help mitigate against breakdowns in community cohesion and chart pathways towards common ground.¹¹ Long-term and genuine community engagement is also a critical tool in managing the potential for community conflict.

4.2.4 Impact of Wind Farms on Property Values

The impacts of wind farms on property values are a concern that frequently emerges amongst communities adjacent to proposed wind energy projects. Despite fears of property value decline, studies examining Australian and international property values of townships and farm homes have shown no clear evidence of adverse effects.

A report undertaken by Urbis examining wind projects across Victoria and NSW could not identify a substantive trend indicating that wind farms negatively impacted property values.¹² This finding is reflected in the UK, whereby property values were not measurably impacted by proximity to wind projects, irrespective of higher rural population density and development of wind energy projects close to populations centres compared to Australian norms.¹³

4.2.5 The Economic Benefits of Renewable Energy Investment in Regional Areas

Research conducted by the Clean Energy Council found that farmers and landholders in regional areas across Australia were likely to receive between \$0.9 and \$1.1 billion from clean energy projects between 2024-2030. A further \$213 million will likely be contributed to regional and rural communities including through community benefits funds, sharing

⁶ Andrew Lothian, "Scenic Perceptions of the Visual Effects of Wind Farms on South Australian Landscapes," *Geographical Research* 46, no. 2 (2008): 196-207, [10.1111/j.1745-5871.2008.00510.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-5871.2008.00510.x)

⁷ Marie-Eve Maillé and Johanne Saint-Charles, "Social Cohesion in a Community Divided by a Wind Farm Project," *Human Ecology Review* 19, no. 2 (2012).

⁸ Maillé and Saint-Charles.

⁹ R.M. Colvin et al., "The Community Cost of Consultation: Characterising the Qualitative Social Impacts of a Wind Energy Development That Failed to Proceed in Tasmania, Australia," *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* 77 (July 2019): 40–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2019.03.007>.

¹⁰ Colvin et al.

¹¹ Itay Fischhendler et al., "The Impact of Community Split on the Acceptance of Wind Turbines," *Solar Energy* 220 (May 2021): 51–62, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.solener.2021.01.055>.

¹² Urbis, "Review of the Impact of Wind Farms on Property Values," 2016, 20.

¹³ Sally Sims, Peter Dent, and G. Reza Oskrochi, "Modelling the Impact of Wind Farms on House Prices in the UK," *International Journal of Strategic Property Management* 12, no. 4 (December 31, 2008): 251–69, <https://doi.org/10.3846/1648-715X.2008.12.251-269>.

schemes and local household electricity bill contributions. Looking further ahead, economic benefits are anticipated to grow substantially between 2024-2050.¹⁴

- farmers and landholders are expected to receive between \$7.7 billion and \$9.7 billion in direct payments between 2024 and 2050 Australia-wide.
- farmers and landholders in Victoria are expected to receive between \$1.4 and \$1.7 billion between 2024-2050.
- community contributions in rural and regional areas are likely to be nearly \$2.0 billion by 2050 Australia-wide.

Research conducted on renewable energy investment in rural communities in Scotland has shown that wind farm development in rural communities has provided opportunities for farmers to ‘future proof’ their farming businesses, by providing stabilising farming incomes.¹⁵

¹⁴ Clean Energy Council, Farmers for Climate Action “Billions in the Bush: Renewable Energy for Regional Prosperity” (2024), <https://stg-live.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/getmedia/2d58a5c7-0e1e-4b03-b68e-25a0092203dd/digital-billions-in-the-bush-november-2024.pdf>

¹⁵ Lee-Ann Sutherland and Kirsty L. Holstead, “Future-Proofing the Farm: On-Farm Wind Turbine Development in Farm Business Decision-Making,” *Land Use Policy* 36 (January 2014): 102–12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2013.07.004>.

5.0 Social and Economic Context

This Chapter defines the context that will form the basis of the SEIA. It provides an overview of the Project Area and its current social and economic context, in relation to defined social localities or 'area/s of social influence' (for the Social Impact Assessment) and economic study area (for the Economic Impact Assessment).

The baseline analysis assesses the existing social and economic characteristics of the community within the identified area/s to better understand the potential community and economic characteristics that may experience impacts as a result of construction and operation of the Project. Definition of Study Areas are presented below.

5.1 Social Localities for the Social Impact Assessment

For the purposes of the SIA, social localities have been defined taking into consideration the need to factor in both local social impacts and those likely to occur on a broader scale. The areas of social influence have been determined for the Project based on the consideration of:

- The construction activities and operational uses of the Project.
- The likely scale and extent of potential direct and indirect impacts and benefits of the Project. This includes indirect impacts that are generally less tangible and more commonly relate to matters such as community values, identity and sense of connection to place.
- Cumulative impacts that may affect communities as a result of planned major renewable energy projects, those under construction, and those which are currently operational within the region.
- The potentially affected built or natural features that have social value or importance located on or near the sites, and the social characteristics of the areas likely to be affected by the Project, as informed by the social baseline study and other technical assessments.
- The community and stakeholder groups that would be most likely affected by the direct and indirect impacts, based on stakeholder and community engagement activities, and other available information sources.
- Based on the above, this assessment has considered the following 'areas of social influence' as shown in **Table 5-1**.

Table 5-1 Social Locality Definition

Study Area	Relevance to SIA	Definition in this SIA
Primary Social Locality (PSL)	- Likely to be localised social impacts relating to the immediate surroundings of the Project Area, for example, impacts associated with the construction of new buildings (i.e., amenity values, access, noise, air quality). - Longer-term impacts such as potential operational noise, light, traffic and/or increased activity in the area may occur within the close proximity to the proposed development.	- The PSL is defined using a 6km buffer from the Project Area. This represents the visual impact catchment as identified in the Preliminary Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Moir 2023). This boundary has been chosen to define the PSL because of the visual prominence of WTG and preliminary scoping of visual landscape change as a key social impact. - To understand the demographic profile of the PSL, SA1s which align with the 6km Project Area buffer have been identified. These include: - SA1 Code 20103101504 - SA1 Code 20103101506 - SA1 Code 20103101510 - SA1 Code 20103101511 - SA1 Code 20103101517
Secondary Social Locality (SSL)	Understand the broader impacts and benefits that the proposed development will likely have on the surrounding region.	- The Economic Study Area (ESA) has been used to define the SSL. Alignment between the SSL and ESA recognises the joint social and economic impacts that will occur at a regional scale. - The ESA is defined below in Section 5.1.1

These social localities are shown over the page in **Figure 5.1** and **Figure 5.2**

5.1.1 Economic Study Area Definition

The Economic Study Area (ESA) for the Project has been defined in terms of the following Local Government Areas (LGAs):

- Ararat
- Ballarat
- Corangamite
- Golden Plain
- Greater Geelong
- Pyrenees.

The main regional cities/townships/settlements in the ESA are all located within a 60-minute drive (approximately) of the Project Area.

The ESA's local and regional communities, to differing extents, have the potential to contribute to the Project and derive economic benefits from both the construction and operational phases of the Project. On a wider regional perspective, the LGAs of the City of Greater Geelong and Glenelg Shire are also anticipated to play an important role in the delivery of components and procurement of goods and services. The ESA is shown in **Figure 5.2**.

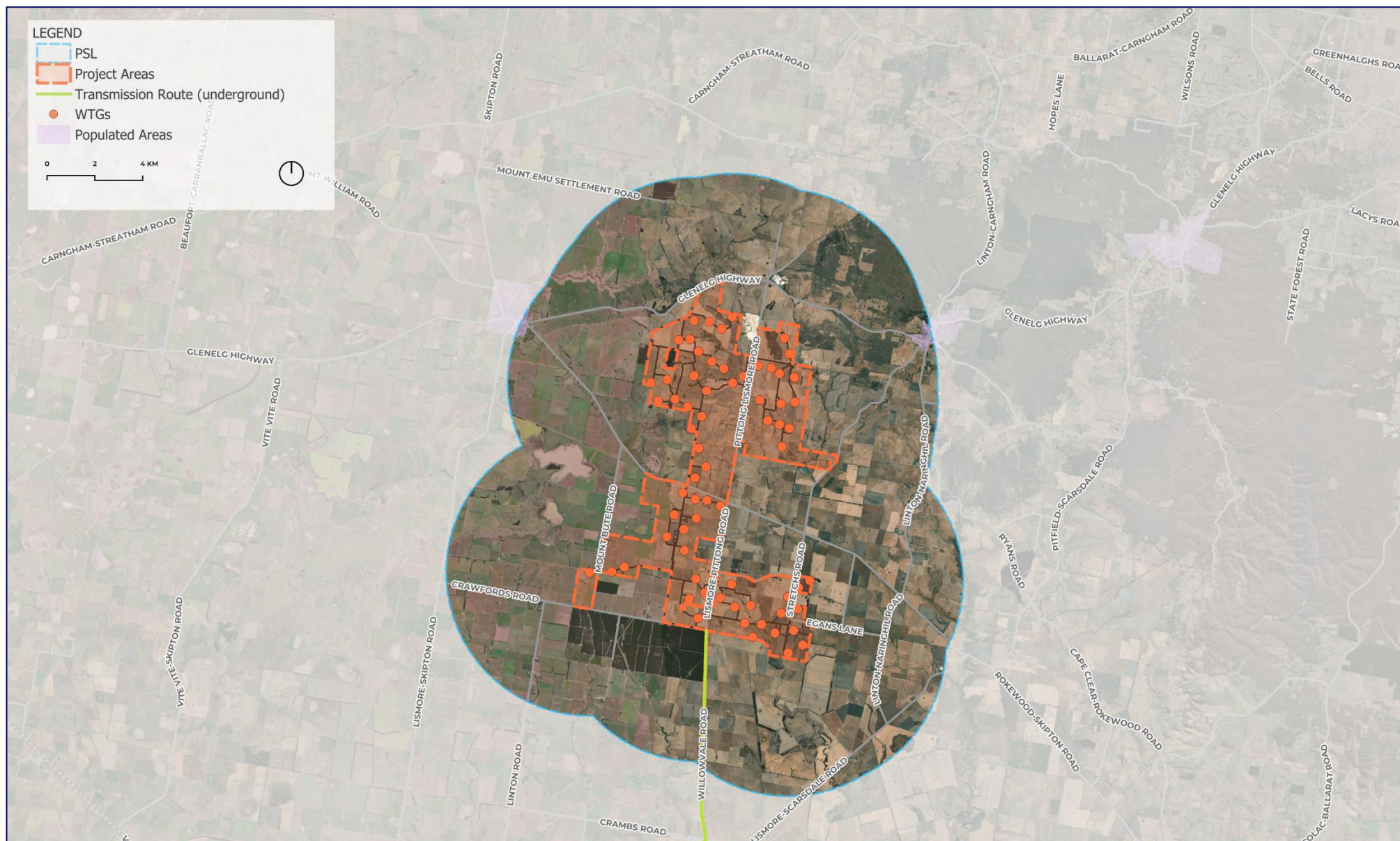


Figure 5.1 Primary Social Locality

Source: Colliers Urban Planning

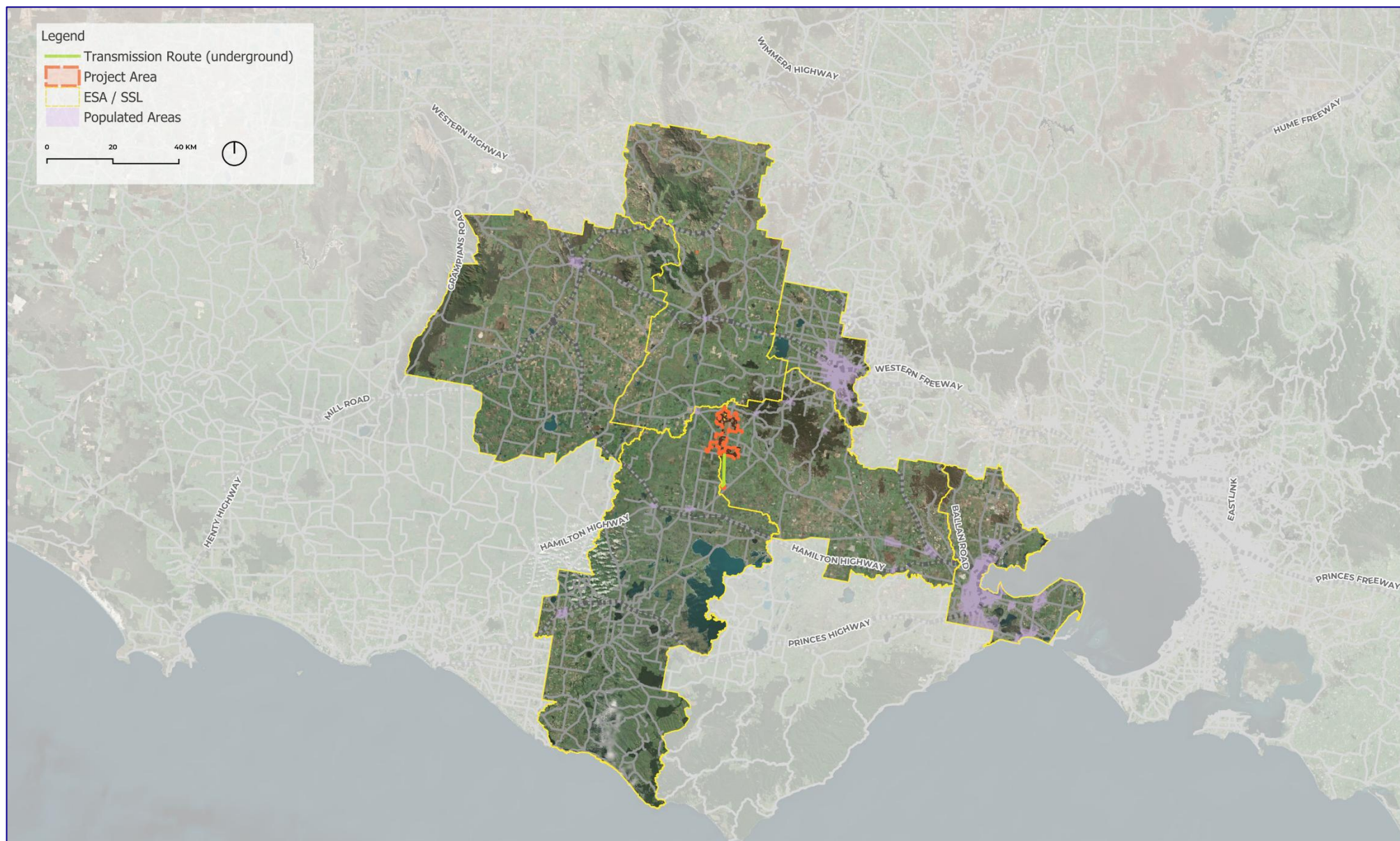


Figure 5.2 *Economic Study Area (ESA) / Secondary Study Locality (SSL)*

Source: Colliers Urban Planning

5.2 Regional Context

The Project is located on the border of the Corangamite and Golden Plains Local Government Areas (LGAs), regional municipalities in western Victoria. The general location of the project, Pittong, is in a predominantly rural setting with a small surrounding population. Ballarat serves as the primary service centre for the surrounding rural areas, being the closest major regional centre.

On a broader view, the host LGAs and their neighbouring LGAs have key towns within a one-hour drive of the Project Area.

Ballarat, Ararat, Smythesdale, Bannockburn, Camperdown and Beaufort are key settlements within a 60-minute drive, each supporting a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial sectors. Ballarat is the most significant city in the immediate region and is located approximately 35 km to the north east of the Project.

Beyond this local region, the major city of Geelong is located approximately 65 minutes' drive from the Project Area. Geelong, while more distant, is part of the broader regional setting and has an established role in industry, transport and logistics (including the Port of Geelong and Avalon Airport) and services, and has the potential to support many aspects of the Project, although accommodating relocating construction workers is unlikely (the closer City of Ballarat is likely to mainly fulfill this role).

5.2.1 Local Government Areas

Corangamite Shire

Corangamite Shire is approximately 4,600 km² and is distributed across 12 townships, which include Skipton in the north. Corangamite Shire is recognised for its natural beauty and history, particularly in coastal areas of the LGA.

The Corangamite Shire economy generates an estimated \$3.5 billion in output annually. The largest contributor to annual economic output in the Shire is Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, which represents 36% of total output. The geographical area in Corangamite generating the most output is Corangamite - South, and the largest industry here is Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector.¹⁶ The largest sub-sector within the Agricultural sector is the Sheep, Grains, Beef and Dairy Cattle industry. Tourism is also a major economic driver for Corangamite, particularly along the southern coast and hinterland region, driven by iconic attractions along the Shipwreck Coast, including the 12 Apostles.¹⁷

Golden Plains Shire

Golden Plains Shire is situated between Geelong and Ballarat. The Shire covers 2,703 square kilometres and contains 16 townships and 56 rural communities. The Shire is home to more than 1,700 businesses in farming, retail and home-based businesses.

As detailed by the REMPLAN, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector stands as the cornerstone of Golden Plains Shire's economy, contributing \$422 million to the region's \$2.1 billion total annual economic output, and accounts for 20% of all output. This sector is also the Shire's largest employer, providing 908 jobs, which represents 19% of the Shire's total employment.¹⁸

5.2.2 Local Townships

Skipton

Skipton is located in the Western District of Victoria and is situated on the Glenelg Highway, 116 km west of the Greater Melbourne. The township is an agricultural area, primarily known for sheep and wool. Key services available in Skipton include small-scale retail and professional services, a monthly food market, food shops, a primary school with 63 students

¹⁶ REMPLAN, "Corangamite Economy – Industry Output," accessed April 16, 2025, <https://app.remplan.com.au/corangamite/economy/industries/output>.

¹⁷ Corangamite Shire Council, Economic Development Strategy, accessed April 16, 2025, <https://www.corangamite.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/documents/publications/strategies/strategy-economic-development-strategy.pdf>.

¹⁸ REMPLAN, "Golden Plains Economy Summary," accessed April 16, 2025, <https://app.remplan.com.au/goldenplains/economy/summary>.

enrolled in 2024, fuel supplies and a place of worship.¹⁹ Recreation opportunities include a local AFL club, golf course, bowling green, and tennis courts. A recent focus on tourism has Skipton defined as 'the home of the platypus' in a much larger tourism campaign which also highlights the 53 km walking trail to Ballarat.

Linton

Linton is located approximately 19 km east of Skipton and approximately 5 km east of the project boundary. Linton is also 35 km west of Ballarat and is situated along the Ballarat Skipton rail trail. Linton has various small-scale services, such as a grocery shop and takeaway, a vet, agricultural supplies, a hotel and a large community hall. The primary school caters for Prep to Grade 6 and has 22 students enrolled in 2024.²⁰ The town hosts home maintenance and trade services such as electrical, carpentry, and plumbing services. A number of recreational activities are available for community members, such as walking paths and bush tracks, biking, horseback riding, netball, bowling and cricket clubs.

5.2.3 Social Infrastructure

It is important to consider the provision of key social infrastructure to support the Project, such as hospitals, emergency services, schools, and other social and health services. The Project workforce and future residents may place additional demand on existing infrastructure and services. Any impacts associated with local social infrastructure networks must be identified.

Local social infrastructure is concentrated within 7-15 km of the Project Area and is mapped out in **Figure 5.3**.

¹⁹ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), "St Thomas' School," *My School*, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/44107>.

²⁰ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), "St Patrick's School," *My School*, accessed April 16, 2025, <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/44161>.

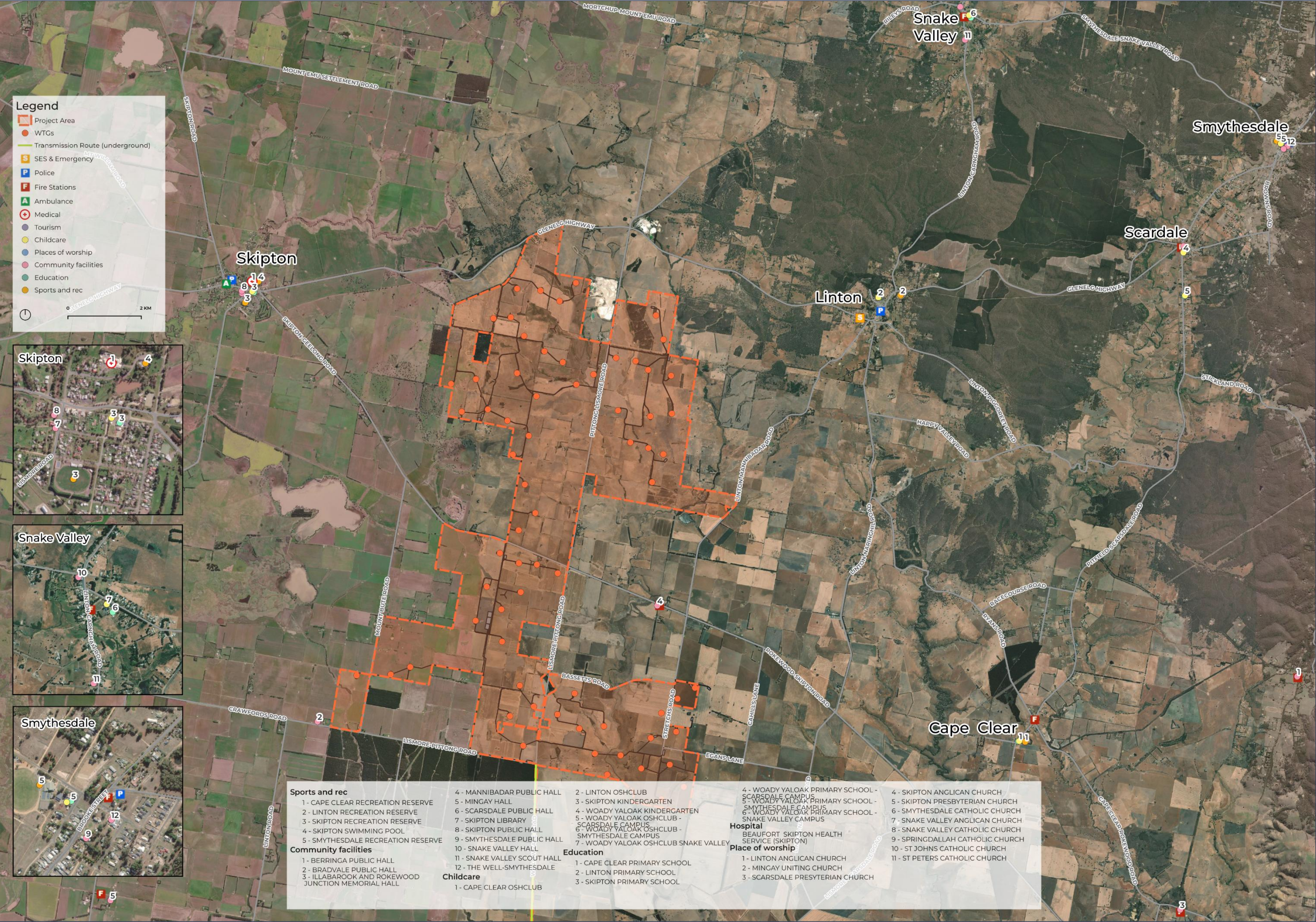


Figure 5.3 Social Infrastructure context
Source: Vicmap Features of Interest, 2024

5.3 Stakeholder Context

This section identifies relevant stakeholders for consideration in the Social Impact Assessment. These stakeholders have been identified as the likely receivers of social impacts and benefits caused by the construction and operation of the Project.

Table 5-2 Stakeholder Matrix

PSL	SSL/ESA
• Participating land holders • Non-participating land shoulders within 6km of the Project Area • Farmers in the PSL • Residents of Skipton • Residents of Linton • Community facilities in the PSL	• Community groups across the SSL • People accessing community infrastructure • Sports and community clubs • Visitor economy businesses • Construction workers • Trades workers • Retail trade and hospitality businesses • Construction supply businesses • Traditional owner (Djab Wurrung People) • Visitors/tourists to the region • People who live in rented housing

Source: Colliers Urban Planning

Residents within the PSL have been identified as key stakeholders. **Figure 5.4** below shows the dwellings of participating landholders (who will host WTGs on their land) and non-participating landholders within the PSL area. The dwelling breakdown within the PSL is as follows:

- There are **24** participating land holders.

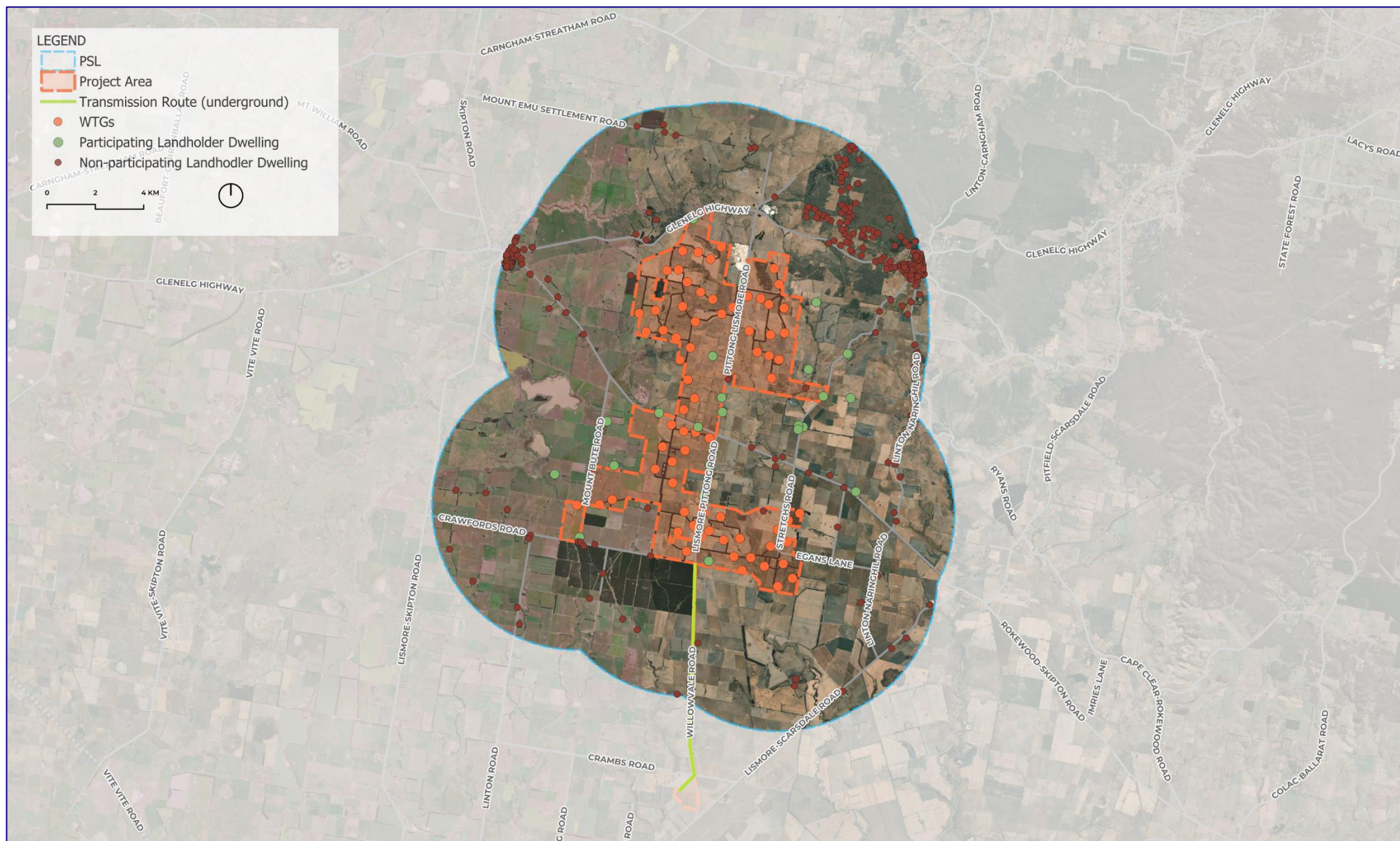


Figure 5.4 *Dwelling Distribution – Project Area and Immediate Surrounds*

Source: Squadron Energy, Vicmap 2025

5.4 Demographic Profile

This section provides an overview of the social localities' demographic profiles compared to the Regional Victorian baseline. The findings provided below are based on 2021 ABS Census of Population and Housing data. A detailed demographic profile is provided in **Appendix B**.

In summary, the PSL population is older than the Regional Victorian median and typically has lower household income. However, a substantially higher proportion of PSL residents own their homes outright, corresponding with low levels of renting and mortgaged tenures. Generally, the PSL population is less educated compared to the SSL/ESA and Regional Victorian baseline, with a majority of residents having completed years 9-11 and fewer holding Bachelor's Degrees. However, a greater proportion of PSL residents have a Certificate or Advanced Diploma compared to the SSL and Regional Victorian average.

Table 5-3 Overview of General Population Characteristics

Characteristic	Summary
Age structure	The median age in the PSL is 46.2 years , older than the Regional Victoria baseline median of 42.8 years. The median age in the SSL, is younger than the PSL and baseline at 39.8 years. Older age cohorts 50-84 years) make up a higher proportion of the PSL population (45.7%), as opposed to the SSL (35.5%). There is a lower proportion of young adults aged between 18-24 in the PSL (6.5%) in comparison to the SSL and the baseline (8.4% and 7.2% respectively). However, a very low percentage of the PSL population is aged 85 years and over (0.5%), a smaller proportion compared to the SSL (2.4%) and baseline (2.6%).
Education	The majority of people in the PSL completed year 9-11 or equivalent (51%) . Comparatively, the majority of people in the SSL completed Year 12 equivalent (56.4%). There is a significant difference in highest level of education attainment between the PSL and the SSL for Year 12 or equivalent (45.5% versus 56.4%). A higher proportion of the PSL population has a Certificate (52.7%) compared to the SSL (39.5%) and baseline (44.9%). However, a lower proportion has completed a bachelor's degree (21.9%) as opposed to the SSL (27.8%) and baseline (24.5%). However, more of the PSL residents have an advanced diploma (21.5%) compared to the SSL (18.4%) and baseline (18.5%).
Median Income	The PSL has a lower median household income of \$63,770 , less than both the SSL (\$79,530) and the Regional Victoria baseline (\$72,730). Most individuals in the PSL are identified as medium income earners (48.3%), which is marginally higher than that of the SSL and baseline (45.1% and 44.8% respectively). The PSL also has a larger proportion of people with no income earners (10.4%) in comparison to the SSL (7.7%) and baseline (7.6%).
Cultural diversity	In the PSL approximately 90.8% of residents were born in Australia , with the top three countries outside of Australia being New Zealand (3.7%), England (2.8%) and Scotland (1%). In the SSL, the top three countries of birth outside of Australia (85.9%) are England (3.1%), India (1.7%), and New Zealand (1.1%). This aligns closely with the baseline wherein England (2.9%), New Zealand (1.1%) and India (1%) are the most common countries outside of Australia (88.2%). The proportion of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander across the PSL (0.5%) is lower than the SSL (1.5%) and the baseline (2.1%).
Household composition	Family households comprise the majority of households in the PSL (68.5%) , SSL (68.2%) and Regional Victoria baseline (56.2%). There are more lone-person households in the PSL (31.5%) in comparison to the SSL (28.2%) and the baseline (29.4%). There are no group households in the PSL, however, there is a low proportion within the SSL (3.6%) and baseline (2.9%).
Tenure Type	Private dwellings that are owned outright are the most common tenure type within the PSL (56.3%) , SSL (35.7%) and the Regional Victoria baseline (40.3%). Dwellings that are owned with a mortgage comprise a smaller proportion of tenures (22.7%) compared to the SSL (35.5%) and baseline (34.1%). This trend is reflected in the proportion of rented dwellings when comparing the PSL (14.1%), SSL (33.9%) and baseline (36.3%).

Characteristic	Summary
Long-term Health Conditions	The PSL has high rates of long-term health conditions (85%). This trend is reflected across the SSL (84.2%). The top four conditions in the SSL are asthma (20.7%), cancer (19.2%), stroke (18.6%), and kidney disease (9.3%). By contrast, 52% of the regional Victorian population have a long-term health condition.

Source: ABS 2021

5.5 Labour Force

The ESA had a labour force of 252,170 persons and an unemployment rate of 4.3% in December 2024, which is in line with the rate for Victoria (4.3%). The ESA currently has approximately 10,950 unemployed residents. This information is sourced from the Australian Government – *Small Area Labour Markets* data (refer **Table 5-4**).

The Project is likely to require 320 workers (at the Project's peak), with potentially 50% of these workers (160 workers) sourced from within the ESA, providing new opportunities for unemployed job seekers (subject to appropriate skills match) or 'back filling' employment opportunities associated with jobs vacated by workers taking up Project employment.

Labour supply factors are further explored in **Chapter 8.0**.

Table 5-4 Resident Labour Force Statistics – Economic Study Area, December 2024

LGA/Area	Labour Force	Unemployed	Employed	Unemployment Rate
Ararat	5,590	280	5,310	5.0%
Ballarat	63,650	2,710	60,940	4.3%
Corangamite	8,600	140	8,460	1.6%
Golden Plains	14,560	430	14,130	3.0%
Greater Geelong	156,130	7,220	148,910	4.6%
Pyrenees	3,640	170	3,470	4.7%
Total ESA	252,170	10,950	241,220	4.3%
Victoria	3,917,900	168,600	3,749,300	4.3%

Source: Australian Government National Skills Commission, *Small Area Labour Markets*, December Quarter 2024

Note: Figures Rounded

5.6 Occupational Structure

The skills base of the ESA is reflected in its occupational structure. ABS Census data for 2021 highlights the occupations of approximately 30.6% or 64,470 employed residents in the ESA were broadly aligned with the types of skills required for the construction of major utility-scale renewable energy projects (e.g., technicians and trades workers, machinery operators and drivers, and labourers). Refer **Table 5-5**.

The representation of these occupations in the ESA is above the State average (27.3%), indicating a generally suitable occupational base for the Project is present in the region (but subject to labour supply constraints, as noted above).

Table 5-5 Occupational Structure – Economic Study Area, 2021

Occupation	Economic Study Area		Victoria (%)
	(no.)	(%)	
Managers	26,280	14.0%	14.6%
Professionals	45,420	25.0%	25.8%
Technicians and Trades Workers	30,270	12.6%	11.9%
Community and Personal Service Workers	28,270	11.0%	10.6%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	24,040	12.4%	13.0%
Sales Workers	18,570	8.3%	8.0%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	12,760	5.9%	6.0%
Labourers	21,440	8.8%	8.2%
Inadequately described/ Not Stated	3,570	2.0%	1.9%
Total	210,620	100.0%	100.0%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021, TableBuilder – Usual Place of Residence

Note: Figures Rounded

5.7 Business Structure

A tangible benefit of a major investment project is the extent to which local businesses can participate through project contracts and other service provision.

The ESA includes some 7,929 construction businesses, representing 20.0% of all businesses located in the ESA based on ABS Business Count data for June 2024 (latest available) (refer **Table 5-6**). This data indicates a reasonable presence in the ESA of the types of firms that have the potential to service aspects of the project. This opportunity is discussed in more detail in **Chapter 8.0**.

Although construction-related businesses will likely be the main beneficiaries of the Project, businesses in other sectors supporting the Project (directly and indirectly) are also likely to benefit, including:

- Retail trade
- Accommodation and food services
- Financial and insurance services
- Rental, hiring and real estate services
- Health care and social assistance.

These sectors make up approximately 32.7% of all businesses located in the ESA and their services will likely play a role in supporting the needs of construction workers, especially those relocating to the ESA to work on the Project.

Table 5-6 Business Structure – Economic Study Area, June 2024

Industry	Economic Study Area		Victoria
	Total (no.)	Industry Share (%)	Industry Share (%)
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3,587	5.2%	5.9%
Mining	69	0.1%	0.2%
Manufacturing	1,373	3.2%	3.2%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	117	0.3%	0.3%
Construction	7,929	16.9%	17.1%
Wholesale Trade	819	3.1%	3.3%
Retail Trade	2,319	6.5%	5.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,830	4.4%	4.2%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	3,562	10.7%	8.0%
Information Media and Telecommunications	237	0.9%	1.1%
Financial and Insurance Services	1,316	4.8%	5.6%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	4,009	10.8%	11.3%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3,979	12.5%	14.0%
Administrative and Support Services	1,685	4.9%	4.6%
Public Administration and Safety	90	0.3%	0.3%
Education and Training	534	1.6%	1.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,460	7.3%	7.4%
Arts and Recreation Services	658	1.5%	1.5%
Other Services	2,008	4.7%	4.6%
Currently Unknown	25	0.1%	0.1%
Total	39,606	100.0%	100.0%

Source: ABS, Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, June 2020 to June 2024

Notes: Figures Rounded

5.8 Accommodation Capacity

The Proponent anticipates that approximately 30% of the construction workforce are likely to be non-local (i.e. sourced from beyond the ESA). This means that on average, around 40 FTE workers will require accommodation per month across the construction phase (i.e. a period of 24 months), increasing to approximately 95 FTE workers over the peak construction period.

5.8.1 Commercial Accommodation

A review has been undertaken of commercial and private accommodation located within the ESA's major townships. These townships generally represent a maximum drive time of approximately 60 minutes (but including Geelong which is a slightly further distance) from the Project Area. The ESA's commercial accommodation capacity is currently approximately 2,811 rooms/cabins, as shown by Table 5.7.

Most accommodation options in the ESA are located at Geelong and Ballarat, reflecting their roles as regional service centres and notable tourism areas. A more limited provision of visitor accommodation is located in the smaller towns of Ararat, Camperdown, and Avoca.

The range of short-term commercial accommodation options available in the ESA is diverse and includes motels, hotels and caravan/holiday parks.

Table 5-7 Commercial Accommodation – Economic Study Area, April 2025

Township	Establishments	Rooms	Cabins	Total Supply (Rooms)
Camperdown	8	93	0	101
Ararat	14	166	41	221
Linton	1	6	0	7
Beaufort	2	18	20	40
Lake Bolac	2	54	28	84
Cobden	4	42	0	46
Avoca	5	32	0	37
Ballarat	44	860	22	926
Geelong	34	1130	151	1,315
Terang	4	30	0	34
Total ESA	118	2431	262	2,811

Source: Colliers Urban Planning; Trip Advisor; GapMaps

Note: n/a: not available

5.8.2 Private Accommodation

Unoccupied Private Dwellings

Private accommodation is often used to support construction worker needs for major renewable energy projects. This could be through leasing of holiday homes and investment properties, either privately (including Airbnb), or through real estate agents.

The ESA has a slightly lower share of unoccupied dwellings (10.0%) when compared to the Victorian average (11.1%). Corangamite Shire and Pyrenees Shire has a significant share of unoccupied dwellings (14.6% and 18.8% respectively). Some of these unoccupied dwellings (subject to condition, ownership etc) may have the potential enter the market to support the Project and other major infrastructure projects in the region.

Table 5-8 Unoccupied Dwellings – Economic Study Area, 2021

LGA	Occupied Dwellings		Unoccupied Dwellings	
	no.	%	no.	%
Ararat	4,540	88.3%	600	11.7%
Ballarat	44,650	92.6%	3,580	7.4%
Corangamite	6,340	85.4%	1,080	14.6%
Golden Plains	8,290	91.9%	730	8.1%
Greater Geelong	103,510	89.4%	12,330	10.6%
Pyrenees	2,980	81.2%	690	18.8%
Total ESA	170,310	90.0%	19,010	10.0%
Victoria	2,390,230	88.9%	298,030	11.1%

Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Note: Figures rounded

Long-term Rentals

Long-term accommodation relates to a region's housing rental market, where a property can be leased for an extended period (i.e. 6 to 12 months+). This may include fully furnished properties.

The vacancy rate for long-term rental properties within 60-minutes of the Project Area in the ESA was 1.4% in March 2025, with around 202 rental properties available. (Data sourced from SQM Research for April 2025). The majority of this supply is located in Ballarat with around 120 properties available. This indicates a constrained rental market in the ESA and as such the local rental market is likely to play a role in accommodating non-local workers in the Project's construction phase.

Short-term Rentals

Short-term accommodation provides another option for construction workers. Some 2,825 active short-term rentals are currently advertised in the ESA. In the LGAs of Greater Geelong and Ballarat, there are a total of 2,428 active listings.

The ESA's 2,810 listings are estimated to account for approximately 7,460 rooms, based on an average of 2.6 rooms per rental. It is likely that many of these rooms already play a role in servicing a range of visitor sectors including business travellers, tourists, seasonal agriculture workers, and the visiting friends and family cohort in the region.

Short-term rentals in the ESA generally operate at an average occupancy of 40-50%, noting in March 2025 occupancy was at 51%, while in February 2025 occupancy was 43%. These occupancy rates are slightly lower than standard operating occupancy (~60%).

5.9 Socio-Economic Disparity

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) provides a measure of the relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage of geographical areas using ABS Census data. Relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, as defined by ABS, refers to "people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society." (ABS, 2021) SEIFA uses socio-economic indicators such as but not limited to income, education, employment, occupation and housing variables. In the context of this SIA, SEIFA provides an indication of the collective socio-economic characteristics of the communities in the study areas and can highlight potential vulnerable communities that may be disproportionately affected by the development. Based on Census 2021 data.

Figure 5.5 shows the mapping of SEIFA percentiles on a SA1 level for the Project and surrounding area. Generally, the locality to the north and east of the project area is characterised by higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Notably, all population centres, including Skipton to the west of the Project experience higher levels of disadvantage. The SA1s to the south of and east of the Project are characterised by relatively high levels of socio-economic advantage. However, it is noted that areas with higher levels of advantage are predominantly sparsely populated areas which are mostly occupied by farming households and land uses. Areas with higher population densities across the locality experience higher levels of disadvantage.

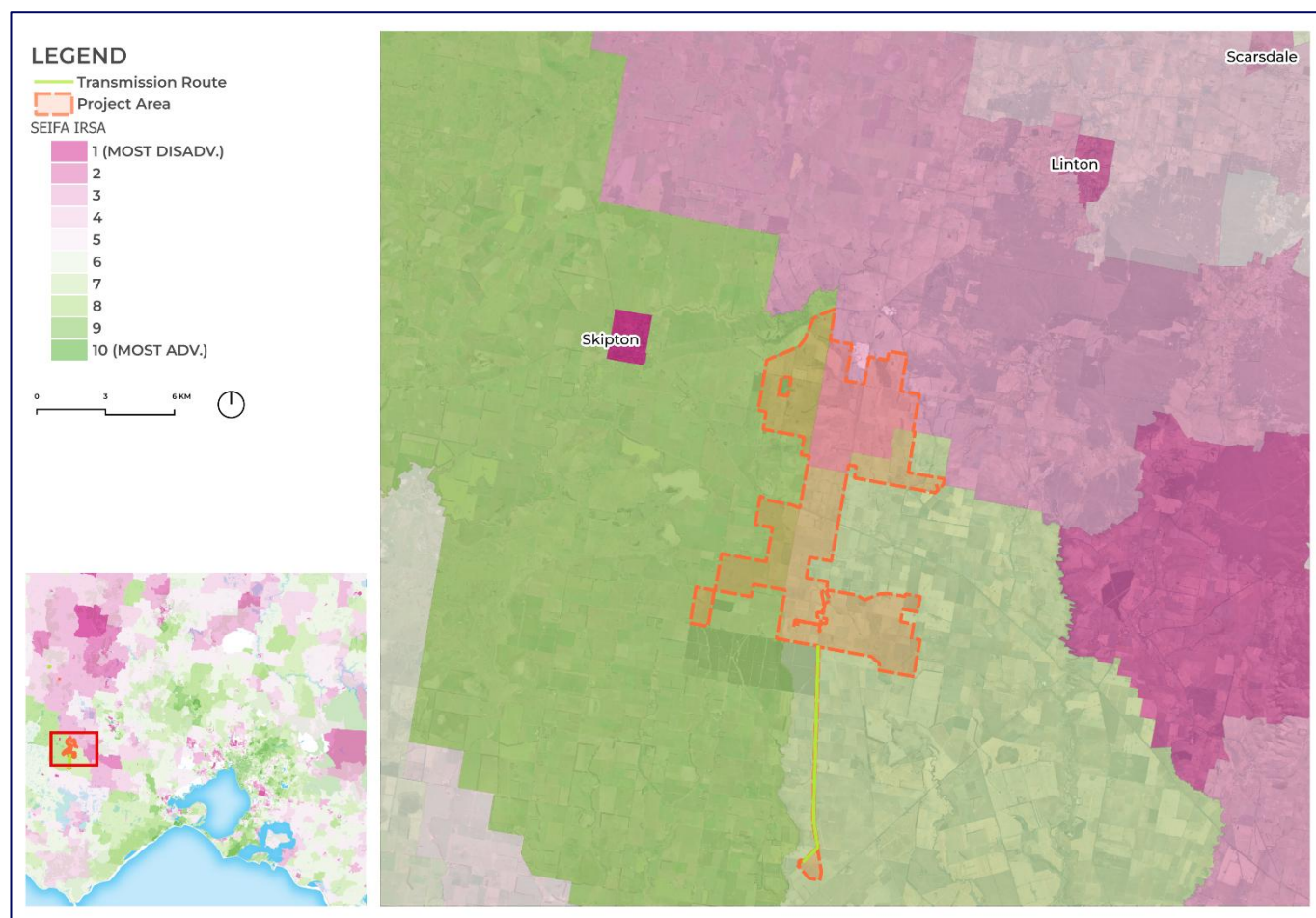


Figure 5.5 *SEIFA – Relative Advantage and Disadvantage for Communities surrounding the Project*

Source: ABS (2021), Colliers Urban Planning

5.10 Population Trends and Projections

For the purposes of this analysis, population projections have been sourced using Victoria in Future 2023 (VIF2023) which represents the Victorian Government's official population projections. For the purposes of this assessment, VIF2023 has been rebased to the latest ABS ERP (2024) to provide an overview of anticipated population growth in given Study Areas.

The population of the ESA totalled 444,800 persons at June 2021 (ABS Estimated Resident Population, 2021). Over the period 2021-2036, population growth in the ESA is expected to be +1.7% per annum (p.a.) (or +8,430 persons p.a. over 15 years) compared to the Victorian (VIC) growth rate of +1.7% p.a.

The population growth in the ESA is primarily driven by significant growth in the City of Greater Geelong with growth of +88,720 persons projected for the next 15-years. Further, minimal growth is projected in Ararat and Pyrenees Shires, while Corangamite Shire's population is projected to decline. Major infrastructure projects, such as the state significant resource projects and other renewable energy projects in western Victoria's development pipeline will provide new employment opportunities that will likely assist in attracting new residents to the region.

Table 5-9 Population Trends and Projections 2021 to 2036, Economic Study Area

Locality	2021	2026	2036	2021 to 2036	
				Average Annual Growth (no.)	Average Annual Growth Rate (%)
Population (no.)					
Ararat	11,830	11,720	11,940	+10	+0.1%
Ballarat	113,500	122,320	142,580	+1,940	+1.5%
Corangamite	16,030	15,850	15,460	-40	-0.2%
Golden Plains	24,890	26,750	33,370	+570	+2.0%
Greater Geelong	270,930	294,780	359,650	+5,910	+1.9%
Pyrenees	7,620	7,850	8,310	+50	+0.6%
Total ESA	444,800	479,270	571,310	+8,430	+1.7%
Victoria	6,547,820	7,234,000	8,488,540	+129,380	+1.7%

Source: ABS Regional Population Growth, ERP June 2024 (April 2025 Release); Victoria in Future, 2023

Note: Figures rounded

6.0 Stakeholder Perspectives

A small number of stakeholder perspectives have been used as evidence to inform this assessment. A range of sources have been used to understand community sentiment and key issues relating to the proposal. Primary research was undertaken by the SEIA team to validate specific social and economic impacts.

This involved 30-45-minute interviews (in person and via phone) with five key stakeholders:

- Corangamite Shire CEO (in person).
- Golden Plain Shire Coordinator of Economic Development (online meeting).
- Skipton community representative (phone call).
- Two participating landholders (one via phone, one in person).

Secondary data has been used to support the primary data collected through the interview process, as well as a media scan to understand broader discourses and recent events in relation to wind farm development in the Western Victoria region.

It is recommended that further social impact-focused community engagement is undertaken as part of the development process and be used to inform an update to the SIA. Broader community engagement data should be used to inform updates to the understanding of the local context, social risk and most appropriate mitigations.

6.1 Local Government

Corangamite and Golden Plains Shires maintain a formal neutral position on wind farm developments. Both Councils recognise community concerns and emphasise effective consultation as key to creating project understanding and building social license. Both communities which will surround the Project we acknowledge to be experienced with windfarm development. Financially, wind farms significantly support Council services through PiLoR contributions and community benefit programs. Golden Plains and Corangamite Shires' perspectives in relation to the social and economic impacts of the Project are detailed below in **Table 6-1** and **Table 6-2**.

Table 6-1 Golden Plains Shire Council - Consultation Outcomes

Theme	Consultation outcomes
Role of council and position	• Council works to educate the local community on the planning process of wind farms, directing information requests or submissions to relevant state authorities. • Council's position is to remain neutral on wind farm development, acting as a facilitator of state government-led initiatives. • Community members often approach Council when concerned about wind farm development. Council provides up-to-date and accurate information to address potential concerns when based on misinformation. Residents are encouraged to consider the long-term benefits of wind turbines and how they help contribute to Council's provision of services. • Council has been effective at articulating how wind farm benefits have been spread across the community by highlighting social infrastructure funded by wind farm community funds and PiLoR (e.g., Berry Bank WF, Golden Plain Wind Farm).
Community issues	• Community concern in relation to wind farm development is common. However, consultation with Council often works to improve community understanding of wind farm projects. • A loss of community cohesion has not been a strong feature of wind farm development in the LGA. This is due to a relatively strong community understanding of wind energy development and experience of hosting wind turbines for over 15 years. • Community members sometimes feel left out if benefits are not visible in their immediate area. • Occasional road closures caused by wind farm construction and maintenance across the LGA. Golden Plain wind farm semi-regularly requires the closing of roads for maintenance work, causing delays or diversions.

Theme	Consultation outcomes
Safety	Recent attention has been brought to the importance of WTG exclusion zones and safety protocols after recent incidents (Feb 2025) wherein a WTG collapsed in Berrybank Wind Farm.
Financial and community benefits	- Wind farms significantly contribute to Council through PiLoR contributions. This has been critical in GP in the context of Council Rates caps, which would have made upkeeping current levels of service or providing community improvement impressive without additional rates from wind farms. - Wind farm projects often provide initial upgrades to community facilities to be seen as contributors to the community. This direct investment has benefited Council and the local community. - The Berrybank community benefits program directly involves Council. This is highly beneficial as Council has an intimate knowledge of community needs and can most effectively allocate funds. - Council recognises the benefit to farmers by providing long-term stable income, assisting during variable years and contributing to financial security during retirement. - Wind farms have often supported local events like Twilight Markets and small-town festivals. This has helped support regional tourism.
Workforce and accommodation	- Council's experience with Golden Plain and Berrybank wind farms has been that most wind farm workers commute to the Project Area for Geelong or Ballarat. Very few workers stay in smaller towns such as Linton, Smythesdale, Skipton as there is very little on offer to workers in terms of services and entertainment, and there is very little visitor accommodation. - Benefits to smaller towns associated with hosting non-local workers a low, with the exception of lunchtime spending in general stores.
Education and training	Council support education links and advocates for building local skills through apprenticeships and school engagement.

Table 6-2 Corangamite Shire Council - Consultation Outcomes

Figure Theme	Consultation outcomes
Role of Council and position	- Council has no adopted position on wind farms. - Council generally support wind farms when sited in appropriate locations. - North of Hamilton Highways, away from high-value landscapes and agricultural to the south of the LGA - Wind farms will not be supported if they significantly impact agricultural land - Council will be more likely to support wind farms if the transmission infrastructure is underground. - If there is community opposition to a wind farm project, Council will generally reflect the view of those who oppose wind farm construction.
Community issues	- No negative community sentiment has been brought to Council in relation to Moreton Hill Wind Farm. - Council does not see a significant risk to community cohesion associated with the Project. - Historically community opposition to wind farms has occurred due to inappropriate siting in the south of the LGA (towards the Great Ocean Road area). - Investment in the community by the Proponent is key to building social licence.
Financial and community benefits	- Council sees the main benefits as Payment in Lieu of Rate (PiLoR). - Council acknowledges the benefits to landholders and inquired about the benefits to neighbouring landholders.
Workforce and accommodation	- Council anticipates that a majority of the workforce will commute from Geelong or Ballarat and therefore not place pressure on accommodation. - Council does not expect a construction workforce and accommodation strategy, as they view the project as low risk in terms of impacts on visitor accommodation.

6.1.1 Community Investment Fund Model Feedback

The community investment model was a key point of discussion with both Golden Plain Shire and Corangamite Shire representatives. In particular, the Berrybank Wind Farm community investment fund model was discussed with different perspectives.

Berrybank Wind Farm Community Investment Model

Golden Plains Shire Council co-coordinate the community benefits program alongside the wind farm operator and community representatives. This is overseen by a committee comprising:

- A representative from the wind farm operator.
- A Council Grants Administration Officer.
- Council Coordinator for Economic Development.
- Two community representatives.

Grants are themed as “contributing to Economic Development and Tourism”. The minimum grant amount is \$10,000. Applications can be multi-year (maximum three years) as long as they demonstrate they are sustainable in year four. This format provides insight to what initiatives will deliver value for money across the Shire.

Council commentary on the Berrybank Model

In general, Corangamite Shire and Golden Plains strongly support the co-coordination of the investment funds with Council.

Corangamite Shire feedback highlighted a preference for options to receive large single payments instead of annual funding. This would have the potential to contribute to building new community facilities early in a wind farm project’s life cycle, contributing to building social license amongst the community and significantly boosting Council’s ability to deliver new infrastructure.

Golden Plains Shire strongly support the Berrybank model and sees the regular income directed into the community as providing valuable community uplift for local groups and small community infrastructure projects. Councils’ co-coordination was highlighted as key to the model’s success because they have an in-depth understanding of community needs and can best direct fund allocations.

6.2 Participating Landholder

Two participating landholders were interviewed to discuss the Project’s potential social impacts and benefits, as well as potential mitigation measures and community sentiment. Participating landholders were generally supportive because of the significant financial incentives offered to host wind turbines. However, they also highlighted the wider community benefits, climate benefits and impacts on community cohesion. Key outcomes are summarised below in **Table 6-3**.

Table 6-3 *Participating Landholders Consultation Outcomes*

Theme	Consultation outcomes
Community profile and local challenges	• The area is described as a close-knit rural community, with a strong sense of local identity (specifically around Mannibadar and Skipton). • Ongoing concerns around generational shifts, with fewer farming families due to property amalgamations. • The Skipton area is described as deteriorating, with limited opportunities for young people. • Local infrastructure, like hospitals, is seen as key community asset.
Key local resources	• Skipton is a regional hub, with essential services like a medical centre. • For major health issues, residents travel to Ballarat.
Positive benefits	• Primary support for the wind farm is because of financial benefits. The landholder appreciates the stability of regular income, especially in retirement and supporting succession planning.

Theme	Consultation outcomes
	• There is hope that the wind farm might stimulate local work, particularly in construction and support services. • Recognition that local businesses like quarries and trades might benefit, though employment is expected to be limited and specialised. • Landholders believe the community benefit fund will support local assets like clubs and infrastructure. • The landholder supports the idea of compensating neighbouring properties that are visually or operationally affected but do not host turbines. • Perception of wind farms as important initiatives that could revitalise the local regional area.
Negative impacts	• The landholder is aware of and concerned about the social divisions wind farms can cause in tight-knit communities, citing examples from other regions. • Potential for generational divides: older family members are sceptical, while younger ones are more climate-aware and accepting. • Visually, the landholder does not mind turbines at a distance but would be uncomfortable if they were too close to the home. • Fire management concerns were raised, particularly about potential limitations for aerial firefighting around turbines. • Worries about gates being left open, affecting livestock. • Concerns about access roads and how construction will interfere with daily farm operations.
Proposed enhancement or mitigation	• More transparent and timely communication about neighbour compensation. • Potential to provide free power for nearby towns. • Support for the local tennis club. • Bureaucracy and delays are frustrating, and hope the project moves forward quickly.

6.3 Community Group

The community group representative provided key insights into local social resources, community perceptions of wind farms, and potential community benefits associated with the Project in Skipton and the surrounding area. Key outcomes are summarised below in **Table 6-4**.

Table 6-4 Community Group Consultation Outcomes

Theme	Consultation outcomes
Community profile and local challenges	• A key concern is the outward-bound migration of younger people, largely due to limited job opportunities in the area. • Most local employment is tied to agriculture and related services, which do not appeal to many younger, technology-oriented job seekers. • An unreliable power supply is a significant issue for residents of Skipton and the surrounding area, often cutting out during storms or heavy rain.
Key local resources	• Despite being small, Skipton is relatively well-resourced with a hospital, primary school, kindergarten, pool, and emergency services. • The hospital is historically significant and has been strongly supported by the State Government.
Perception of wind farms	• The community has previous experience with wind farms (e.g., Berrybank and Stockyard Hill) and is largely accepting of them. • There is a vocal minority opposing wind farms; however, these concerns are not widely supported in the broader community.

Theme	Consultation outcomes
	• Opposition groups are sometimes linked to wider anti-wind movements (e.g. Landscape Guardians) but are not influential. • Initial resistance to wind farms has mostly faded as predicted negative impacts did not materialise. • The stakeholder highlights the inevitability of change and the community's ability to adapt positively. • A sense of pragmatism and forward-thinking is evident, recognising that while the town will not remain the same, it can evolve beneficially.
Community benefits	• Tangible benefits have already been seen, such as buses for the local football club and hospital, funded by wind farm contributions.
Proposed enhancement or mitigation	• There is a desire for future benefits to be more inclusive and impactful, rather than scattered projects. • Improving power reliability through a community BESS would be a transformative community benefit.
Workforce and accommodation	• During previous wind farm project construction periods, temporary workers during construction had little negative impact, largely commuting from Ballarat or staying quietly in town. • Some works were even integrated into community life (e.g., attending local sports clubs), which was seen positively.

6.4 Media Scan

A media scan of articles published since 2023 shows that wind farm developments in regional Victoria have drawn varied reactions from local communities, including support for renewable energy development, the emergence of opposition groups, and calls for enhanced engagement and transparency. Media sources are referenced in **Appendix A**

Table 6-5 *Media Scan Summary*

Community concerns	Summary
Community cohesion	• The rollout of renewable energy projects in regional Victoria has led to significant divisions among farming communities, with neighbours in conflict over proposed developments. • Farming families who have coexisted in community, often for generations, are now experiencing strained relationships due to differing views on hosting wind turbines and other renewable infrastructure.
Safety, transmission line and battery energy Storage debates	• Plans for new transmission lines, such as the 500-kilovolt VNI West powerline in Western Victoria have sparked further debates and community concerns. • Battery Energy Storage Systems have been the subject of community opposition to the renewable energy rollout across regional Victoria. Community concerns around fire risk are prominent in bushfire-prone areas. • Community concerns have been raised following the collapse of a wind turbine at Berrybank wind farm in 2025 during a storm event.
Economic opportunities for rural and farming communities	• Some farmers view renewable energy projects as opportunities to support farming practices by providing stable income, assisting with the long-term viability of farms during drought years. • Renewable energy development has been strongly associated with the revitalisation of small rural towns by providing employment, training programs and ongoing community contributions.
Construction disruption	• An incident involving the transport of a 70m wind turbine blade through Ararat in February 2025 resulted in blocked traffic and damaged council assets within 1km of Ararat town centre. This was caused by inappropriate route selection for turbine blade transportation through a highly populated town centre.

6.5 Project Engagement Outcomes

6.5.1 Engagement delivery

Since 2020, potential host landowners have been engaged with as part of the development process. The Project was launched publicly in October 2023, and this initiated the wider formal engagement activities.

There has been a comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement program (summarised in **Table 6-6 below**), including with host landowners, First Nations identified community members and Registered Aboriginal Party, and relevant elected representatives, State and Federal Government members and agencies.

The project stakeholder engagement plan can be found [here](#).

Refer to **Appendix C** for a detailed stakeholder analysis for the Project.

Table 6-6 Summary of project engagement delivery by Squadron Energy

Method	Total / quantity / recurrence	Stakeholder groups	Timing
Phone calls and text messages* (including voicemail and text)	~ 80	Host landowners, neighbours, broader community Primarily arranging landowner meetings and access to host landowner's property for environmental assessments	Ongoing, since October 2023
Face-to-face meetings	~ 180	Host landowners, neighbours. 25 neighbours met with in July and August 2025 alone.	Ongoing, since October 2023
Meetings with Traditional Owners	~ 15	Traditional Owners (WTOAC). Plus regular communication between meetings.	Ongoing, since 14 March 2023
Emails	~ 580	All stakeholder groups	Ongoing, since October 2023
Letters (letterbox drop and direct mail)	~ 900	At the launch of the project a letter drop was conducted to every neighbour withing 4 km of the project (86), providing information on the project and a request to meet to discuss the project.	Ongoing, since October 2023
Community newsletters	6	All stakeholder groups 3 x Community newsletters have been dropped in Linton and Skipton Post office Boxes to date (300 each time). There are 160+ email addresses on the email database for community newsletters.	October 2023, April 2024, February 2025 and August 2025, December 2025, March 2026
Project stakeholder engagement plan	1 (external updated annually and as project details change)	All stakeholder groups	Ongoing
Community sponsorship application	24 applications 16 Supported (\$70,000)	Host landowners, neighbours and broader community	Ongoing
Project website https://www.squadronenergy.com/our-projects/moreton-hill-wind-farm	1	All	Ongoing since October 2023
Drop-in community information sessions	2 – held in Skipton and Linton	All – neutral to positive sentiment with approximately 50 community members attending	April 2024

Method	Total / quantity / recurrence	Stakeholder groups	Timing
Group meetings	2 – with one planned for April 2026	Host landowners	Since September 2023
Briefings	8	Federal MP, State MP, Councils	Since October 2023
Advertising in local media	Weekly since September 2024	Skipton and Linton News	Ongoing
Video display in local cafés	Displayed in cafes in Linton and Skipton	Broader community	Since December 2024
Community sentiment survey	1	Broader community	2024
Community Benefit Workshop/s	2	Broader community	Scheduled

Source: Squadron Energy

Proposed ongoing consultation for the project

Leading up to and following lodgement of the environment report, the project team will continue to carry out the following stakeholder engagement activities:

- Ongoing weekly host landowner consultation, including a group meeting with hosts (or more as appropriate).
- Continue meeting with all neighbours to discuss potential impacts, the community benefit scheme, and offer voluntary neighbour agreements.
- Liaison with Corangamite and Golden Plains Shire Council on project timelines and benefit sharing initiatives. Meetings with Councillors to be offered as required, with a target of quarterly.
- Ongoing engagement with Federal MP Dan Tehan (Shadow Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction) and Federal MP the Hon Catherine King.
- Regular meetings with State MP Martha Haylett.
- Set up briefings with State MPs (Richard Riordan and Michaela Settle)
- Continue to meet with representatives from WTOAC to discuss CHMP progress and potential benefit sharing opportunities.
- Project newsletters, at least quarterly or after major project milestones.
- Broader community engagement through project team presence attendance at community events.
- Maintaining and updating the project-specific contact details and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.
- Community Benefit Workshops, to be coordinated with Council and local stakeholders.
- Notice of the environment report and planning permit applications when on public notice through newspaper advertisements and notification to the community and key stakeholders by the Proponent.

6.5.2 Engagement outcomes

The sentiment of the community has been neutral to positive, with a few neighbours concerned around the change in landscape. To date, there has been no formal community opposition campaign or action group. With Stockyard Hill and Berry Bank Wind Farms also operating near the area, wind farms and the development process associated with them are generally familiar to community members.

Table 6-7 summarises the feedback provided by stakeholders.

Table 6-7 Summary of Project engagement outcomes

Stakeholder group	Interests, concerns and feedback received
Host landowners	- Decommissioning - Neighbour benefits - Community benefits - Project design - Project schedule - Original location of BESS, Sub Station and working compound
Neighbours within 4km of a turbine	- Visual. - Noise. - Traffic and access points to Project Site. - Neighbour benefits. - Project schedule.
Corangamite Shire Council	- Management of community investment program. - Project design. - Approvals process. - Community sentiment. - Project schedule.
Golden Plains Shire Council	- Management of community investment program. - Project design. - Approvals process. - Community sentiment. - Project schedule.
Hon Dan Tehan MP, Member for Wannon	- Engaging in the 'right way'. - Learning lessons from BLWF. - Likes community investment program.
The Hon Catherine King MP, Member for Ballarat	Not taken up on offer of briefing yet.
Ms Martha Haylett – Member for Ripon	- Likes local shop front idea. - Likes community investment program. - Has not received any enquiries to her office.
Mr Richard Riordan – Member for Polwarth	Briefing scheduled.
Ms Michaela Settle – Member for Eureka	Briefing has been offered and project information provided.
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Group	- Concerns around other proponent engagement. - Interested in innovative investment options. - Requested Cultural Values Assessment.
Members of the broader community	Biodiversity, specifically Brolga protection and avoidance.

Source: Squadron Energy

Project changes based on stakeholder feedback

The Proponent has integrated feedback received into updated project design and the preparation of the environmental report:

- From inception to EES referral, the response to stakeholder feedback resulted in the following changes:
 - host landowner feedback and design iteration, 2020 – late 2022.
 - project size determined by available grid connection solutions, 2020 – late 2022.
 - undergrounding of transmission in response to neighbour and local government feedback to avoid visual impacts, 2023.
 - moving the BESS sub-station and compound north of Henderson Road as a result of community feedback, 2023.
- The following changes have been made to the project since the EES referral:
 - minor adjustments to layout from ongoing host landowner feedback.
 - inclusion of new host landowner after expression of interest during neighbor consultation.
 - engagement with neighbours led to further detailed investigation of Brolga usage of Lake Widderin. Subsequent detailed flocking assessment led to the implementation of significant buffering and layout alteration.

6.5.3 Community investment

The project has also launched its community investment program.

- **Voluntary neighbour agreements:** neighbours within 4km have been offered an annual payment, depending on the location of turbines in relation to a dwelling.
- **Payment in Lieu of Rates Scheme:** the Project will contribute to supporting social infrastructure and community programs by contributing \$705,000 per year (based on payment 2025/26 rates) to Golden Plain Shire and Corangamite Shire.
- **Community investment fund (in addition to PiLOR):** Implementation of a community investment program that will see \$1,050 per MW per annum delivered to at the start of construction and for the operational life of the Project (30 years). Over the life of the project, this will amount to approximately \$21million (CPI adjusted)
- **Community sponsorship program:** \$40,000 in annual small grant funding available to local community groups and initiatives, program running since 2023. \$95,000 has been distributed to date.

Table 6-8 *Community investment to date*

Month/Year	Club/Group	Description
April 2023	Skipton Football Netball Club	Support of a night game and naming rights on scoreboard
October 2023	Linton Bowls Club	Supply new shirts for all players with Squadron Energy logo
December 2023	Mannibadar Hall	Purchase defibrillator
February 2024	Skipton PS	Contribution to new netball courts
May 2024	Lismore Landcare	Contribution to new works
September 2024	Skipton Football Netball Club	Support the installation of heaters at the netball courts
September 2024	Skipton Progress Association	Support the Skipton Spring Festival
October 2024	Skipton Golf Club	Support an event
October 2024	Skipton Football Netball Club	Support an independent Paint & Sip Night
November 2024	Skipton Bowls Club	Triple bowls event
April 2025	Skipton Golf Club	Sponsoring the installation of disabled toilets
March 2025	Skipton Football Netball Club	New scoreboard
July 2025	Skipton Primary School	Sponsor accessible equipment
July 2025	Friends of the RSL	Upgrades to Veterans graves and Remembrance Walk
August 2025	Linton Cricket Club	Sponsor the senior and junior boys and girls cricket sides in the GCA for the 2025/2026 season
August 2025	Skipton Progress Association	Support for the Skipton Spring Festival
January 2026	Skipton Progress Association	Support for BlazeAid for immediate 2026 bushfire recovery efforts
February 2026	Skipton Progress Association	Funding to purchase a hydraulic post driver to support post 2026 bushfire recovery fence installation with BlazeAid

Source: Squadron Energy

7.0 Social Impact Assessment

The following section sets out the assessment of perceived social impacts arising from the proposed development. It provides measures to enhance social benefits and mitigate potentially negative impacts across the suite of factors set out in the SIA methodology (see **Section 2.1**). The assessment has been based on the information available to date, and is a desktop study, informed by a review and analysis of available documents relevant to the proposal and an interview with one stakeholder.

The following sections set out the assessment of “High” rated social impacts arising from the proposed development. It considers project responses, which mitigate potentially negative impacts and enhance potential positive benefits. Less significant social impacts (“Medium” and “Low” in rating) are assessed in **Appendix D**. The following social impacts are assessed in **Section 7.1** and **Section 7.2**:

Positive

- Increased employment opportunities and flow-on effects to local businesses.
- Improved livelihoods for participating landholders.
- Increased investment in social infrastructure and community groups across Golden Plains and Corangamite LGAs.
- Contribution to emission reduction in the State of Victoria.

Negative

- Change in the locality's landscape character and people's connection to place caused by the visual impact of wind turbines.
- Temporary way of life impacts from construction related noise, dust, vibration, traffic, and disruption.
- Risk of reduced social cohesion and community resilience due to conflicting perspectives on wind farm development.

7.1 Positive Impacts

7.1.1 Increased employment opportunities and flow on effects to local businesses

Social factor(s): Livelihoods

Extent of impact: SSL

Period: Construction and ongoing

The development of the Project will increase employment opportunities for construction workers across the region (SSL). This will have a positive impact by improving livelihood outcomes for workers employed throughout the construction and operations phase of the Project.

It is anticipated that 140 FTE jobs will be supported on average per month by the Project during the construction phase, with 320 FTE jobs supported during the peak construction period. Positive flow-on effects include increased livelihood benefits for local business owners across Skipton, Linton and the wider region. This will likely be driven by Project construction workforce spending estimated at \$7.0 million over 24 months (see **Section 8.5**). Improved livelihoods caused by an increase in income and economic activity have the potential to improve individual and community wellbeing by reducing stress and anxiety associated with financial insecurity, as housing stress and food stress. This is particularly important within the broader economic context of widespread cost-of-living pressures and the local socio-economic context (see **Figure 5.5**).

The PSL population have lower household incomes compared to the Regional Victorian median (see **Table 5-3**), meaning that livelihood benefits, particularly related to increased local spending by construction workers, will likely be comparatively important compared to areas with higher incomes. Likewise, increasing access to regionally significant construction work has been potential to lift incomes amongst participating workers. This has the potential to provide greater financial stability amongst households.

Enhancement measure(s)

- The Proponent will implement an Employment Strategy to direct employment benefits to the local community and support a diverse workforce during the construction and operation of the Project. This will include:
 - An Aboriginal Participation Plan aiming to encourage Aboriginal workforce participation.
 - Align with *Victoria's Social Procurement Framework* when selecting local and social procurement objectives and designing procurement processes to meet these objectives.
 - Align with *Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy* by encouraging greater participation of women in the Project's construction workforce.

Enhanced impact(s)

Employment benefits and technical training opportunities driven by the construction and operation of the Project will be directed to the local community and increase economic opportunities for women in construction and First Nations people. As such, the Project is considered to have the potential to deliver a very high positive impact in relation to improved livelihoods for involved workers, with positive flow on effects contributing to the local business across the PSL and surrounding region.

Impact rating (unenanced)	Impact rating (enhanced)
Likely / Moderate = High (positive)	Almost Certain / Major = Very High (positive)

7.1.2 Improved livelihoods for participating landholders

Social factor(s): *Livelihoods, way of life*

Extent of impact: *PSL*

Period: *Ongoing*

The 24 participating landholders will receive livelihood benefits through commercial arrangements made with the Proponent. The commercial arrangements will benefit participating landholders – who are farmers – by providing an additional source of income for 30 years. These payments are confidential between the Proponent and host landholders.

The provision of additional income supported through the operation of Moreton Hill Wind Farm will benefit farmers by providing greater financial stability. Consistent income supported by hosting wind turbines will contribute to greater financial stability for farming households, who typically manage variable incomes based on farm productivity. This is significant within the context of drought vulnerability (see **Section 6.4**) and an ageing demographic structure of the local farming community, which is seeing more farmers move towards retirement age (see **Section 5.4**).

Stable income supported by the development of the Project was identified as a significant benefit by participating landholders and the Golden Plain Shire representative (**Section 6.0**). This will have a positive impact on the overall livelihoods of farming households and communities, as their way of life will be supported through diverse and more consistent income. This benefit has also been supported by international research highlighting how wind farm development in rural communities has provided opportunities for farmers to 'future proof' their farming businesses by providing stabilising farming incomes (see **Section 4.2.5**).

Enhancement measure(s)

- Additional commercial offers have been made to neighbouring landholders. Commercial offers are consistent, using the following rate structure:
 - Neighbouring landholders Zone 1 \$2,000 per WTG per annum within 0-3km from wind turbine.
 - Neighbouring landholders Zone 2 \$1,000 per WTG per annum within 3-4km from wind turbine.
 - Minimum payment of \$5,000 pa for neighbouring landowners.

Enhanced impact(s)

The provision of commercial arrangements to neighbouring landholders enhances livelihood impacts by supporting residents surrounding the Project Area. This will improve the overall well-being of farming communities beyond only host landholders, reducing the likelihood of financial stress and loss of way of life during low-income drought years.

Impact rating (unenanced)	Impact rating (enhanced)
Likely / Major = High (positive)	Almost Certain / Transformational = Very High (positive)

7.1.3 Increased investment in social infrastructure and community groups across Golden Plains and Corangamite LGAs

Social factor(s): *Way of life, community*

Extent of impact: *Golden Plains and Corangamite LGAs*

Period: *Ongoing*

The Project will contribute to supporting social infrastructure and community groups by establishing a stand-alone community investment program providing \$442,050 per annum and direct payment in lieu of rates (PiLoR), contributing \$690,000 per year to Golden Plain Shire and Corangamite Shire. The community investment program and PiLoR contributions will provide additional funding for community programs and infrastructure, such as sports clubs, community services and health organisations, and tourist attractions.

Community investment has the potential to improve the way of life and health and wellbeing of rural communities, particularly in regional areas wherein Council rate collections may be constrained by low or negative population growth (such as Corangamite Shire see **Table 5-9**).

The development of the Project was framed as critical to supporting community infrastructure and services by all key stakeholders who were interviewed as part of the SIA preparation (**Section 6.0**) Stakeholder Perspectives. Existing wind farms across the surrounding locality were identified as a key contributor to the community infrastructure (see **Section 6.1.1**). This perspective is supported by research undertaken by the Clean Energy Council, which has attributed improvements to regional community infrastructure to wind farm development across Victoria, and projects that \$1.9 billion of landholder payments and community contributions between 2024-2050 (**Section 4.2.5**).

Enhancement measure(s)

- Implementation of a community investment program that will see \$1,050 per MW per annum delivered to the community once construction is commenced and for the operational life of the Project (30 years).

Enhanced impacts(s)

Community infrastructure and programs will benefit from long-term term sustained investment over the course of a 30-year period as a result of the Project's development. Council's direct involvement in community fund allocation will allow benefits to be distributed effectively into projects or organisations, wherein community benefit can be maximised and will ensure a high degree of transparency. Residents throughout Golden Plains and Corangamite will experience improvements to their overall way of life.

Impact rating (unenanced)	Impact rating (enhanced)
Likely / Moderate = High (positive)	Almost Certain / Major = Very High (positive)

7.1.4 Contribution to emission reduction in the State of Victoria

Social factor(s): *Surroundings, Way of life, livelihood*

Extent of impact: *SSL and Victoria*

Period: *Ongoing*

The Project will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by producing clean, renewable energy to supply homes, businesses, and industry across Victoria. The Project will produce enough electricity to provide approximately 260,000 homes with clean energy, reducing the State's contribution to global emissions. Contributing to the decarbonisation of Victoria's energy system aligns with the State Government's goal of achieving a 95% clean energy grid by 2035 (**Section 4.1**).

The development of a wind farm on a state significant scale has the potential to drive community pride in the positive contribution to climate action. However, Stakeholders identified energy unreliability as an issue affecting the Skipton area

and highlighted opportunities to provide greater grid reliability using renewable energy generated by the project using a community BESS (**Sections 6.3**).

Enhancement measure(s)

NA

Residual impacts

The Project will contribute to emission reduction in Victoria.

Impact rating (unenhanced)	Impact rating (enhanced)
Almost Certain / Moderate = High (positive)	Almost Certain / Moderate = High (positive)

7.2 Negative Impacts

7.2.1 Change in the locality’s landscape character caused by the visual impact of wind turbines

Social factor(s): *Way of life, surroundings* **Extent of impact:** *PSL/SSL* **Period:** *Ongoing*

The development of a wind farm across the Pittong, Mannibadar and Skipton area has the potential to negatively impact the locality’s visual landscape amenity. The construction of WTGs will change the area’s current landscape character, which may affect some residents’ and visitors’ enjoyment of their surroundings. This may lead to a loss of connection to place associated with industrial development in a rural area.

Changing landscape character is an unavoidable outcome associated with the development of terrestrial wind farms. The Preliminary Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) identifies 20 non-associated dwellings (non-participating landholders) within 2,000m of a proposed WTG. These dwellings will likely experience direct visual impacts. However, it is noted that 16 of the 20 of these dwellings are surrounded by vegetation screening (Moir 2024, p. 52). A further 42 non-associated dwellings are between 2000-4000m of a WTG and will be visually impacted. There are 11 non-associated dwellings located between 4000-6000m of a WTG – these dwellings likely have some views of the wind farm, based on the area’s topography (Moir 2024, p. 52).

Stakeholder consultation showed that visual impact was a known and accepted aspect of the Project’s development. WTGs and associated infrastructure were highlighted as being less desirable than a landscape without WTGs, though participants broadly accepted wind farms as a fixture of the current and future landscape character of the locality (see **Section 6.0**).

Mitigation measure(s)

- Neighbourhood landholdings within 4,000m of the Project Area will be compensated through the commercial neighbour arrangements. It is noted that this financial contribution will not mitigate the experience of the visual impact but acts as an acknowledgement that it is being experienced potentially negatively by the receiver.
- The site layout has allowed for a 1000m exclusion buffer between dwellings and WTGs.
- Use of underground transmission line for reducing the visual impact grid connection infrastructure along Willowvale Road.

Residual impacts

Visual impact and changing landscape character are inherent aspects of wind farm development. However, receivers of the most substantial changes to visual landscape character will be compensated for their proximity to the Project, though it is noted this will not mitigate the experience of the impact. However, the visual impact of transmission line infrastructure will be mitigated by using an underground transmission line connection. Considering the unavoidable nature of landscape change associated with WTGs, the overall impact will remain notable, but somewhat lessened by the careful consideration that has gone into the location of the WTGs and the implementation of landscape screening as recommended in the LVIA.

Impact rating (unmitigated)	Impact rating (mitigated)
Almost Certain / Moderate = High (negative)	Almost Certain / Minor = Medium (negative)

7.2.2 Way of life and accessibility impacts from temporary construction related noise, dust, vibration, traffic, and disruption

Social factor(s): *Way of life, accessibility*

Extent of impact: *PSL, SSL*

Period: *Construction*

Construction related noise, dust, vibration, traffic, and disruption may cause irritation, annoyance or disturbance to the way of life and accessibility for people living in PSL. This may impact the health and well-being of some receivers, especially those with pre-existing conditions, which may make them sensitive to construction activities, such as people with respiratory and auditory conditions, people with long-term health conditions, young children or older people. Construction related heavy vehicle traffic has the potential to disrupt the daily routines of residents across the PSL and road users along trucking routes selected to transport the WTG components from the Port of Portland to the Project Area. Participating landholders will likely be the most heavily impacted groups within the PSL. Construction activities will occur closest to participating landholders' dwellings, with construction taking place across their properties. It is noted by the Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) that road capacity is sufficient to support the development of the Project (Impact, 2025). The site is estimated to generate in the order of 289 daily vehicle movements during peak construction (comprising 65 heavy vehicles, 222 light vehicles and 2 OD vehicles) on average. Incidental or temporary distribution associated with heavy vehicles or temporary road closure has the potential to impact residents across the PSL.

Stakeholder consultation showed high levels of concern relating to incorrect management of livestock gates and barriers, specifically relating to the loss of livestock in the event a gate is left open while unattended by construction workers. This would impact the livelihoods of participating landholders who may lose a productive animal and/or cause them to incur labour costs to collect escaped livestock (see **Section 6.2**).

Long-term health conditions are more prevalent across the PSL, with 85% of the population having a condition compared to the Regional Victorian average of 51.1%. This represents an underlying vulnerability which may make some members of the population more vulnerable to construction related impacts. Asthma is the leading long-term health condition in the PSL (see **Section 5.4**) which has the potential to be exacerbated by excess construction dust.

Consultation with Corangamite Shire Council highlighted concerns regarding the maintenance of roads following the Project's construction. Corangamite expressed a need for the Proponent to repair any damaged roads which may have become degraded by heavy vehicles during construction (**Section 6.1**).

Mitigation measure(s)

- A detailed Traffic Impact Assessment has been undertaken, highlighting potential risk in relation to construction traffic and has proposed vehicle routes for key construction materials, WTG components and workers. Upgrading local gravel roads to all weather standard accommodate the increased vehicle movements and entering into a maintenance agreement with Council to ensure roads are adequately maintained during the construction period is also recommended. (Impact 2025).
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will include detailed mitigation measures for dust suppression to ensure minimal dust impact affects residents across the Project area, as per standard conditions of permit.
- A Construction Management Plan will be issued outlining construction activities, heavy vehicle route selection and relevant mitigation measures.
- Implementation of Traffic Management Plan (TMP) that will ensure a proactive program of construction communications and a complaint management to quickly respond to issues, as per standard conditions of permit.

Residual impacts

Construction impacts will occur due to the scale of the Project. However, the impact on the local community will be minimised through a Comprehensive Management Plan to account for traffic disruption, dust, noise and vibration impacts.

Impact rating (unenhanced)	Impact rating (enhanced)
Almost Certain / Moderate = High (negative)	Almost Certain / Minor = Medium (negative)

7.2.3 Risk of reduced social cohesion and community resilience due to conflicting perspectives on wind farm development

Social factor(s): *Community*

Extent of impact: *PSL/SSL*

Period: *Planning/Ongoing*

A risk of social conflict caused by varying support for the Project has the potential to undermine community cohesion. Participating landholders may welcome wind farm development because of its financial benefits, whereas neighbouring residents or community members may reject wind development in the region. This has the potential to cause breakdowns in neighbour and community relationships throughout the Project's development phase and operations.

Conflict may also result from the perceived unequal distribution of benefits and impacts. This dynamic has been observed when households that are not receiving direct financial benefits but still perceive themselves as negatively impacted take issue with wind energy development. For example, neighbouring landholders who fall beyond the 4km catchment for participating landholder commercial offers yet take issue with potential visual impacts on the locality. This scenario reflects academic research findings into community division on wind turbine development, as referenced in **Section 4.2.3**.

Stakeholder perspectives on the Project's impacts on community cohesion varied. Of those interviewed, participating landholders were generally more concerned about impacts to community cohesion, highlighting a reserved attitude to speaking about wind farm development to reduce the risk of disagreements or potential conflict within a tight-knit regional community context (See **Section 6.2**). However, Golden Plains Shire, Corangamite Shire and the community groups stakeholder were less concerned about impacts to community cohesion, highlighting a high degree of community understanding in relation to wind farm developments based on the experience of other wind farms across the region and a robust communication engagement process undertaken by the Proponent early in the planning and development phase of the Project (**Section 6.0**).

The influx of 40 FTE relocating workers for the 24-month construction period (and 95 FTE relocating workers across the construction peak period) has the potential to affect community cohesion. There is a social risk that the local community members and non-local workers may experience social tensions. This may be associated with a perception that work may impact the availability and affordability of rental housing, perceptions of poor worker behaviour, and substantial differences in income levels, as well as underlying parochialism favouring locals over temporary residents. Withstanding, stakeholder engagement showed general support from non-local workers taking up accommodation within small towns surrounding the Project area (such as Skipton, Linton, or Smythesdale), highlighting previous experiences wherein workers contributed to the local community by participating in local sporting clubs and events (see **Section 6.0**).

Mitigation measure(s)

- Implementation of equitable commercial offers with host and neighbouring landholders. The use of a standard rate structure dependent on proximity to the project and number of turbines hosted reduces the likelihood of community disagreement based on perception of impact.
- Implementation of a community investment program that will see \$1,050 per MW per annum delivered to the community once construction is commenced and for the operational life of the Project (30 years).
- Implementation of a robust Engagement and Communications Strategy with regular Project updates and information sessions to inform the community about project details and potential impact and benefits.

Residual impacts

The risk of reduced community cohesion will remain due to potentially conflicting views on wind farm development across the Skipton, Linton and Mannibadar region. However, a strong community understanding of Project details informed through community consultation lowers this risk by reducing the likelihood of people experiencing fear based on inaccurate Project information. The implantation of a community investment program further mitigates risk to community cohesion by delivering shared benefit, contribution to positive framing of windfarm development community-wide. Community conflict relating to differences in commercial arrangements between neighbouring and participating landholders will be mitigated by implementing a standard commercial offer rate structure.

Impact rating (unenhanced)	Impact rating (enhanced)
Possible / Major = High (negative)	Possible / Moderate = Medium (negative)

8.0 Economic Impact Assessment

8.1 Project Investment

The estimated investment for the Project is approximately \$1.5 billion (excluding GST), according to information provided by the Proponent. Major investment costs are associated with the purchase of turbine components, including the blades, rotors, towers and nacelles, associated equipment, battery storage components etc. Additionally, significant investment is required for civil, electrical and grid connection works.

A review of confidential information sourced from constructed renewable energy projects in Australia (based on unpublished Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) data) shows approximately 5% -15% of construction investment is generally retained within the host Study Area for these types of projects. Applying a 10% allocation to the ESA, recognising the diverse economic base of the region and capacity of major regional cities such as Ballarat and Geelong (including port services), the construction phase is likely to generate \$150 million in wages, contracts and other service provisions for the ESA's economy over the 24-month construction period.

8.2 Project Employment

8.2.1 Construction Phase

Project employment is assessed in terms of direct jobs (i.e., on-site-related) and indirect (or flow-on) jobs in the local and wider economies (i.e., jobs that are supported through the industrial and consumption impacts of the initial investment).

Direct Construction Employment

Data provided by the Proponent indicates an average of 140 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs will be supported each month over the construction phase, which is expected to be 24 months. Actual workforce numbers will vary from month to month depending on the intensity of construction at the time.

At the Project's peak, the Proponent estimates 320 FTE positions will be supported by on-site construction activities.

Based on Colliers Urban Planning's experience of wind farm construction projects in western Victoria, the anticipated demands of multiple concurrent projects likely to be constructed in the surrounding region, and the existing scale and composition of the ESA workforce, the following target for ESA (local) and non-local construction employment split is considered realistic.

- ESA (local) employment: 70% of total jobs or an average of 100 FTE jobs are expected to be sourced from within the ESA, increasing to 225 FTE local jobs at the Project's peak.
- Non-local employment: 30% of total jobs or an average of 40 FTE jobs are expected to be sourced from outside the ESA , increasing to 95 FTE non-local jobs at the Project's peak.

Construction-related jobs are expected to be associated with a wide range of on and off-site activities, including:

- Labour recruitment
- Training
- Installation and assembly of Turbine components
- Vehicle and equipment hire.
- Civil works including earthworks, foundations, external roads and internal access tracks.
- Engineering services
- Operation of specialised equipment including cranes
- Transport and logistics.
- Electrical works including cabling, connections, and Turbine setup.
- Installation of monitoring equipment
- Fencing
- Waste disposal
- Business and financial services
- Administrative services.

The business structure of the ESA indicates that that there is a good mix of these types of services are present in Ballarat, Geelong, with smaller townships such as Ararat, Beaufort having capacity to service some aspects of the Project. Outside the ESA, Metropolitan Melbourne is expected to provide significant higher order services.

Indirect Construction Employment

In addition to direct employment, significant employment will be supported indirectly through the employment multiplier effect. By applying an industry-standard multiplier for the construction industry of 1.6 (based on ABS Type B multipliers), the Project is estimated to support an additional 220 FTE jobs indirectly (on average) over the 24-month construction period, with 510 FTE jobs supported through the national economy during the peak construction period which could last for several months.

Indirect or flow-on jobs (which captures industry and consumption effects) include those supported locally and in the wider economy (including within other parts of Victoria and nationally), as the economic effects of the capital investment flow through the economy. Indirect employment creation in local and regional economies includes jobs supported through financial and property services, accommodation, food and beverage, trade supplies, fuel supplies, mechanical support, transportation, etc.

For the purposes of this assessment, it is assumed that 20% of indirect jobs or 45 FTE jobs (rounded) are supported in the ESA (on average) during the construction phase. This assumption is made recognising the ESA's economic base, with reference to findings from completed renewable energy projects in regional areas and with regard to the proportion of workers (30%) relocating to the ESA during the construction phase providing a spending stimulus to the regional economy.

Total Construction Employment

In summary, 360 FTE jobs (140 FTE direct jobs and 220 FTE indirect jobs) are expected to be supported (on average per month) by the Project during the 24-month construction phase.

The Project is estimated to support 145 FTE jobs in the ESA (100 FTE direct jobs and 45 FTE indirect jobs) during the construction phase.

Table 8-1 Construction Phase Employment Summary (Average Monthly FTE for 24 Months)

Direct Average Monthly Employment FTE	Direct Average Monthly ESA Employment FTE (70% Share)	Indirect Average Monthly Employment FTE	Indirect Average Monthly ESA Employment FTE (20% Share)	Total Average Monthly Employment (Direct + Indirect) FTE	Total Average Monthly ESA Employment (Direct + Indirect) FTE
140	100	220	45	360	145

Source: The Proponent; Colliers Urban Planning, ABS Input-Output Tables.

Note: Figures rounded

8.2.2 Operational Phase

Direct Operational Employment

Data provided by the Proponent estimates the Project will support 10 FTE direct jobs locally (on-site) on an ongoing basis through the operation and maintenance activities.

Indirect Operational Employment

A further 30 FTE ongoing jobs (rounded) will be supported in the wider State and national economies, through operational supply chains and consumption impacts through the employment multiplier effect (based on applying industry-standard ABS Type B multipliers for the electricity industry of 2.9).

For the purposes of this assessment, it is assumed that 20% of indirect operational jobs are supported in the ESA (refer to previous assumption). This equates to approximately 6 ongoing indirect FTE (rounded) jobs in the ESA.

Operational-related employment is for the lifetime of the Project (i.e., 30 years); therefore, while ongoing job creation is relatively small, it represents new long-term employment opportunities at a local, regional, State and national level.

Total Operational Employment

In summary, 40 FTE jobs (10 FTE direct and 30 FTE indirect) are expected to be supported by the Project, with 16 FTE positions located in the ESA.

Table 8-2 Operational Phase Employment Summary (Ongoing Annual Employment for 30 Years)

Direct On-site Employment FTE	Indirect Employment FTE	Indirect ESA Employment FTE (20% Share)	Total Employment (Direct + Indirect) FTE	Total ESA Employment (Direct + Indirect) FTE
10	30	6	40	16

Source: The Proponent; Colliers Urban Planning, ABS Input-Output Tables.

Note: Figures rounded

8.3 Labour Force and Business Participation Assessment

Construction is a key specialisation of the regional economy as indicated by the ESA's workforce structure (by occupation and industry).

The anticipated number of direct and indirect ESA jobs (115 FTE workers) represents only 0.2% of the ESA's labour force in construction-related activities (64,470 workers).

The ESA has approximately 10,950 unemployed labour force participants, some of whom could work on the Project and/or other major infrastructure projects (subject to suitable skills match). Alternatively, unemployed jobseekers may play a 'backfill' role in the labour market, engaging in jobs vacated by other workers transferring to employment on the Project or other major regional infrastructure projects.

In isolation, the labour force requirement of 115 FTE local workers should not present a constraint to labour supply for the Project. However, potential does exist for potential cumulative impacts associated with other large infrastructure projects planned or under development in the ESA, and this is further assessed in **Section 9.2**.

In view of the above, it is recommended the Proponent support the ESA economy by providing ESA employment and business opportunities wherever possible. In this regard, the Proponent may consider developing a 'Procurement Strategy' to guide the Project's construction phase.

8.4 Housing and Commercial Accommodation Sector Impacts

Data provided by the Proponent indicates 95 non-local FTE workers may need to be accommodated in the region over the Project's peak construction period. This calculation is based on 30% of the 320 peak on-site FTE workers coming from outside the ESA and requiring local accommodation.

This level of accommodation relates to the Project's construction peak only. The average number of non-local staff requiring accommodation across the 24 months is estimated at 40 FTE workers (noting this number will be less during periods of low site activity).

These temporarily relocating staff are likely to include general managers, project managers, supervising engineers and turbine construction specialists. Contract lengths will vary. This highlights the need for a range of accommodation types including higher-end options for staff on longer contracts, to convenient low-cost options for those on short-term contracts.

The ESA currently has a capacity of approximately 10,270 rooms and cabins in commercial / private accommodation in locations within a 60-minute drive of the Project Area. Assuming each non-local worker requires individual accommodation (95 rooms), 0.9% of this accommodation stock would be required at peak times to service the Project if all workers chose this type of accommodation.

When standard vacancy rates are factored in across commercial and private accommodation sectors (40%), 4,110 rooms might be available at any one time, with relocating Project workers consuming approximately 2.3% of these vacant rooms.

The long-term established rental market currently comprises 200 vacancies in key ESA townships, with 120 vacancies identified in Ballarat, therefore, this stock could potentially play a role in servicing the Project. However, the low vacancy rate of 1.4% highlights a shortage of rental stock to service existing local communities and population growth. It would therefore be prudent to avoid this type of stock to house relocating Project workers, given its relative scarcity and the potential to inflate local rental costs exacerbating affordability challenges.

This above data indicates sufficient capacity of commercial and private accommodation currently exists in the ESA to house the relatively small number of relocating construction workers expected at the peak of the Project.

With regard to increased demand from concurrent regional infrastructure projects (refer to Section 9.0) and seasonal accommodation demands relating to tourism, agriculture etc, accommodation, capacity is still likely to be adequate given the large amount of commercial/private accommodation stock likely to be available.

8.5 Economic Stimulus by Temporary Relocating Workers

The cost of supporting and accommodating relocating construction workers represents direct new expenditure within the ESA economy, which can be significant. This spending includes accommodation (e.g., private rent, motels, hotels), daily meals, laundry, retail, fuel, medical expenses, and other personal services.

An estimated \$5.0 million in economic stimulus (2025 dollars) is expected to be directed to local businesses and service providers due to the temporary relocation of non-local workers during the 24-month construction period.

This level of expenditure is projected to sustain the equivalent of approximately 12 FTE jobs in the services sector. The additional spending will support jobs in the ESA, particularly in sectors such as retail, accommodation, trade supplies, health services, fuel supplies, cafes, and restaurants.

These jobs are included under indirect construction employment (refer to Table 8.1).

8.6 Agricultural Impacts

Approximately 6,740 ha of existing agricultural land will be required to host the Project, with a relatively small Development Footprint of 99 ha (1.4% of the total area). Land within the Development Footprint is currently primarily used for livestock grazing, and some cropping activities.

No loss of employment associated with the Project Area is anticipated, either directly (on-site) or through agricultural supply chains. Some disruption is likely during construction; however, the scale of current activities can continue broadly similar after construction.

Agricultural activities are expected to be ongoing on the Project Area and will co-exist with the operation of the Project. It is also important to recognise benefits to host landowner properties from the Project, including improved access facilitated by 62 km of new internal tracks which will assist in improving farming efficiencies such as access to stock. The improved access would also reduce bushfire risks across the landholdings decreasing the likelihood of loss of buildings, machinery, livestock, fencing etc.

8.7 Local Road Impacts

The Moreton Hill Wind Farm – Traffic Impact Assessment (Impact, July 2025), indicates the Project will have little impact on the local road network during construction and operational phases; and some minor improvements to local roads are identified. Specifically (refer to p 7-8),

“Access to the construction compound by heavy vehicle deliveries will primarily be via Glenelg Highway to the north and Rokewood-Skipton Road towards the centre of the site to the various site access points - thereafter vehicles will travel along the local roads or access tracks to each turbine site as required.

Vehicle deliveries will be contained within roads that are either pre-approved or conditionally approved (dry weather) for B-double & HML travel. It is proposed to upgrade existing local roads to all weather roads.

The site is estimated to generate in the order of 289 daily vehicle movements during peak construction (comprising 65 heavy vehicles, 222 light vehicles and 2 OD vehicles). This level of additional traffic can comfortably be accommodated by the external road network. It is however recommended that local gravel roads be upgraded to an all-weather standard during the construction period.

We recommend the proponent enter into a maintenance agreement with Council to ensure roads are adequately maintained during the construction period.

Outside of construction (i.e. during operation) the site is not expected to have a significant impact on local roads, and maintenance can revert to Council”.

8.8 Ongoing Economic Stimulus

8.8.1 Landowner Benefits

The Proponent will be leasing land from 24 landowners to host the Project. While annual lease payments are confidential between the Proponent and these landowners, the payments may provide a local stimulus through investment in farming (or other) activities and through business and individual consumption impacts associated with the host landowners.

Additionally, the Proponent will be making annual CPI adjusted payments to non-host landowners located within 4km of the Project Area. The level of payments for these neighbouring landowners are confidential and will vary according to proximity to the Project Area.

An estimate of aggregated host lease and neighbourhood payments is included in the total operational stimulus figure in Section 8.8.4.

8.8.2 Council and Community Benefits

Council

Established under section 96(6A) of the Electricity Industry Act 2000, the Payment in Lieu of Rates (PiLoR) framework allows councils and electricity generators to negotiate annual payments.

The PiLoR framework was amended by the Victorian Government in October 2018 to account for solar generators coming online now and in the future. In general, financial returns to Council from renewable energy projects are considerably higher than revenue associated with rateable agricultural activities. For example, the 2025/26 PiLoR guidelines include a fixed charge of \$67,270 and a variable charge of \$1,515 per MW (per nameplate or installed capacity).

Using this revised PiLoR framework, it is estimated the host councils will in Year 1 receive annual revenue from wind farm operations of approximately \$0.7 million (2025 dollars) – excluding the existing rates revenue collected from the Project Area. Under the PiLoR guidelines, this value will then increase in line with CPI (modelled at 3.0 % pa) over the operational lifetime of the wind farm (i.e., 30 years). Over the operational life of the Project an estimated \$34 million will be directed to the host councils through to the PiLoR framework.

Unlike a new residential development (where Council incurs costs such as garbage collection; maintenance of parks, open space, roads, footpaths; provision of community services; etc) the cost to Council of providing resources to service the Project Area are likely to be relatively small and would be limited to road maintenance, garbage removal and the like. Therefore, the uplift in rates revenues generated from the operation of the wind farm on the Project Area will represent a net return to Council.

Importantly, this additional revenue can be re-invested by the host councils into local infrastructure and services, which will benefit the community more generally.

Community Benefit Scheme

The Proponent has indicated it would provide community payments for the operating life of the Project (30 years). These payments are based on a figure of \$1,050 per installed MW per year, adjusted for CPI over the 30-year operational phase.

The distribution mechanism for these payments has yet to be determined but may take the form of a Community Fund which could provide grants to local organisations/programs under a formal management arrangement.

Based on the above parameters, an estimated \$21.0 million would be paid to the community over the 30-year operational phase (adjusted for an uplift in CPI of 3.0% pa).

8.8.3 Ongoing Local Wage Stimulus

The Project will support 16 FTE jobs in the ESA (direct and indirect) on an ongoing basis while the Project remains operational. These jobs will provide an estimated stimulus within the ESA of approximately \$0.7 million (2025 dollars) in Year 1 of operations. This figure assumes there will be no loss in direct or indirect agricultural jobs associated with the Project Area. (i.e., existing agricultural activities will continue on the remainder of the land and around the Project's infrastructure).

Over the 30-year operational lifespan, the 16 FTE ESA jobs supported by the Project will generate an economic stimulus of \$35.3 million (CPI adjusted).

8.8.4 Total Operational Stimulus

The total economic stimulus associated with the operational phase of the Project is estimated at approximately \$200 million over 30 years (2025 dollars, CPI adjusted), relating, host and neighbouring landowner payments, PiLoR returns to the host councils, community benefit scheme payments and operational wage stimulus.

8.9 Project Decommissioning

The Project has an operating life of approximately 30 years, at which stage there are likely to be two main options for consideration:

- Repower based on existing assets, or refurbishment of existing assets to prolong the operating life, for a nominal period.
- Deconstruct and finally rehabilitate.

Squadron Energy proposes to enter into a Decommissioning Security Deed with host landowners. This provides detailed measures of when and how the security is to be established, involved parties beyond the landowner and Proponent, payment of secured amounts, calling on security measures and future lease terms.

The amount of security involves a structured payment system from Year 1, and an accumulation of the percentage of the funds at Year 23, 28 and 32 based on the decommissioning estimates in a dedicated Decommissioning Cost Report, and revisions thereof.

By these stages, a portion of the total decommissioning funds will accumulate, ensuring progressive financial readiness that aligns with operational and landholder risks, and increasing environmental obligations for restoration. This progressive financial security preparation ensures that 100% of the decommissioning costs are available for the decommissioning activities to begin as scheduled, demonstrating our commitment to fiscal responsibility and long-term environmental stewardship.

The financial security option selected will be specific and consider the range of available security options at the time of the project's construction period.

9.0 Cumulative Impact Assessment

This section considers how other projects in the region alongside this Project may influence the experience of cumulative impacts. A summary of relevant major renewable projects within the ESA / SSL is included in **Table 9-1**.

9.1 Contribution to change in landscape character across the Central Highlands Renewable Energy Zone

The Project will contribute to a changing rural landscape across the Central Highlands. This cumulative and gradual change has the potential to impact local residents and visitors' understanding of place and connection to the landscape. This may be experienced positively or negatively.

Positively, the ongoing development of wind farms across the region may symbolise a shift towards a net zero energy system, providing an improved sense of wellbeing in relation to addressing Victoria's contribution to climate change. Wind farm projects may also represent major capital investment in a regional area to some residents, creating greater optimism for future employment, business growth and incomes in the Central Highlands regional economy more broadly.

Negatively, people who oppose wind farm development may be adversely impacted by the cumulative change occurring across the landscape. The gradual yet steady development of wind energy. This may impact an overall sense of well-being based on a subjective view of wind turbine aesthetics and perception of health and well-being impacts.

Overall, the cumulative social risk rating is **Medium (negative)**. This is due to the significant landscape impression of the proposal in terms of wind turbine generator height (252m). Contribution to landscape character change balanced against the substantial amount of existing windfarms across the region, which has seen Wind Farms become a part of the regional landscape context over the course of nearly two decades.

9.2 Labour and Accommodation Competition

The Project may potentially compete for labour, accommodation, and other resources with other major infrastructure projects (mainly renewable energy projects) if constructed concurrently in the ESA.

The following is noted in relation to proposed infrastructure projects located in the ESA:

- The development status of projects varies, with some projects currently going through the planning process; therefore, construction timing is uncertain.
- New developments, currently not in the planning system, may emerge in the period prior to construction of the Project.

When assessing the potential cumulative impacts, the anticipated construction timing of projects is a key factor. For the Project, the indicative timing for the construction is spread across 24 months, with the construction phase expected to commence in mid-2027 and be completed by the end of 2030.

The Project will not overlap with the proposed Ballyrogan Wind Farm, although may overlap with the Western Renewable Energy Link project. Timing is uncertain, although some overlap approximately in the years 2029-30 is expected. If the construction phase were to overlap, cumulative impacts during construction may include economic impacts affecting the availability of labour, key services and accommodation in nearby towns.

Considering these impacts, the cumulative risks rating is considered to be **Medium (negative)** in a scenario where construction periods overlap and **Low (negative)** in a scenario where periods do not overlap. Should construction periods overlap with the Western Renewables Energy Link and Ballyrogan Wind Farm, targeted mitigation measures will be required to ensure sufficient labour and worker accommodation is available to service all three major projects in the region.

Table 9-1 Renewable energy development context (ESA/SSL)

Project	Location / proximity	Status	Project description	Likelihood of cumulative impact	Impact description
Ballyrogan Wind Farm – Squadron and RE Future	40 km to the north east - Ararat LGA	Awaiting planning pathway determination, may require preparing EES	650 MW / 115 turbines.	Unlikely	- Construction period overlap is unlikely due to a coordinated planning between the two projects. - Limited impact once operational as located some distance from the proposed Project.
Western Renewables Link – Ausnet	45 km to the north	Preparing EES	500 kV/190 km renewable energy transmission line from Victoria's west to Sydenham in Melbourne's north-west.	Possible	Potential construction period overlap which has the potential to cause workforce and accommodation shortfalls across the region
Brewster Wind Farm – RE Future	26km to the North - Pyrenees LGA	Under construction	40 MW/7 turbines. 520 ha.	Unlikely	Minimal cumulative impact due to distance and site location in different LGA
Mt Fyans Wind Farm – Woolnorth Renewables	43km to the south west - Moyne LGA	Under construction	400 MW/81 turbines. 10,700 ha. - Privately owned freehold grazing land Project is not highly visible from the surrounding towns of Woorndoo, Hexham, and Darlington.	Unlikely	- Moyne Shire Councillors voted unanimously to object to the permit application for the development and attended the planning panel in May 2023 (90 community submissions, 10 in support of the development). Outcomes from the planning panel may have some impact on community sentiments across the broader region. - Limited impact once operational as located some distance from the proposed Project.
Golden Plains Wind Farm – West Wind	10km to the south east - Golden Plains LGA	Under construction	1,330 MW/228 turbines. 16,000 ha. \$2 billion project. - Provide approximately \$3.5 million in annual income to landowners. - Community Benefit Fund and Investment program to be established.	Almost certain	- Construction likely to be completed prior to the proposed Project's construction phase commencing - Cumulative visual impact changing the visual character of the area - Potential cumulative benefit to the local economy from the community benefit sharing scheme, providing additional funds to community groups and/or infrastructure within Golden Plain LGA

Project	Location / proximity	Status	Project description	Likelihood of cumulative impact	Impact description
Berry Bank Wind Farm – GPG Naturgy	9.5 km to the south - Golden Plains and Corangamite LGAs	Operating	332 MW/79 turbines. 5,000 ha. - Connection to the Grid via the 220 kV Ballarat-Terang Transmission Line.	Almost certain	- Cumulative visual impact changing the visual character of the area - Potential cumulative benefit to the local economy from the community benefit sharing scheme providing additional funds to community groups and/or infrastructure within Golden Plains and Corangamite LGAs
Stockyard Hill Wind Farm – Origin Energy	5km to the north - Pyrenees LGA	Operating	539 MW/149 turbines. 15,600 hectares.	Almost certain	- Cumulative visual impact changing the visual character of the area - Potential cumulative benefit related to operational staff and site visitors accessing local services.
Dundonnell Wind Farm – Trustpower	40 km to the south west - Moyne LGA	Operating	336 MW/ 80 turbines. 4,500 ha. - The project also includes a 38 kilometre 220 kV, overhead transmission line and a new substation at the Mortlake Gas Fired Power Station.	Unlikely	Limited impact as already operational and located some distance from the proposed Project.
Mt Mercer Wind Farm – West Wind Energy	30 km to the west of the site - Golden Plains LGA	Operating	131 MW/64 turbines.	Unlikely	Limited impact as already operational and located some distance from the proposed Project.

10.0 SEIA Conclusions

This assessment has provided a detailed account of the social and economic impacts and benefits of the Project. Assessment outcomes have been informed by analysis of quantitative and qualitative data sources, including data provided by the Proponent, primary research activities including interviews with key stakeholders, ABS and other data, supporting technical reports and relevant policy.

Social Assessment Summary

Positive social benefits are strongly associated with improved livelihood and way of life outcomes. The assessment found:

- Employment and training opportunities for local workers with positive flow-on effects to local businesses. This has the potential to improve the livelihoods of households in a region characterised by higher levels of socioeconomic disparity.
- Improved livelihoods of participating landholders through direct financial contributions under commercial arrangements. This will provide long-term support for the way of life of farming households and communities in the context of variable agricultural conditions.
- Increased investment in social infrastructure and community groups across Golden Plains and Corangamite LGAs through PiLoR and Community Benefit Scheme. This will improve the way of life for communities across the region surrounding the Project Area and wider LGAs.
- Contribution to Victorian emissions reduction targets.

The Project may also cause perceived negative impacts associated with the Project's construction phase and changes to the locality's landscape character. The assessment found:

- The landscape character of the Project Area will be impacted, which may be experienced negatively particularly by residents opposing wind energy.
- Construction activities have the potential to increase pressure on the road network and cause disruption to farming operations across the Project Area.
- The Project has the potential to impact community cohesion due to conflicting perspectives on wind farm development and perceived inequality in the distribution of commercial arrangements and community benefits.

Economic Assessment Summary

- The Project will involve investment of \$1.5 billion during the construction phase, with \$150 million expected to be retained in the ESA.
- Significant employment will be supported by the Project, including:
 - 360 FTE construction-related jobs, with 145 FTE jobs supported in the ESA (includes direct and indirect jobs).
 - 40 FTE operational-related jobs, with 16 FTE jobs supported in the ESA (direct and indirect and indirect jobs).
- Over the operating phase, financial returns to Council are estimated at \$34 million (through the PiLoR scheme) and \$21 million to the community (through the proposed Community Benefit Scheme). Both values have been adjusted to factor in an uplift in CPI of 3.0% pa over the 30-year operational period).
- Overall economic stimulus associated with the operation of the Project is estimated at \$200 million (over 30 years, CPI adjusted) which includes host landowner returns, neighbourhood agreements, operational wage stimulus, PiLoR and Community Benefit Scheme payments.
- From an economic perspective, cumulative impacts are considered manageable given the strong construction base and significant accommodation options that exists in the ESA. However, labour and accommodation market conditions will need to be monitored and reassessed closer to the construction starting date.

10.2 Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the SEIA, it is recommended that the Proponent:

- Co-design Community Benefits Scheme in consultation with the host LGAs (Corangamite Shire and Golden Plains Shire).
- Notify residents within the Project Area when major work impacting road traffic will take place. This may include the provision of contact details of relevant project construction managers where appropriate.
- Implement a worker code of conduct detailing expected behaviour when off-shift and/or engaging in activities in surrounding townships (e.g., Skipton, Linton).
- Collaborate with TAFE training organisations across the region to conduct an analysis of local opportunities for apprentice upskilling through working on the Project. Specifically, opportunities to upskill local workers to perform maintenance work throughout the operational phase of the Project.
- Develop a comprehensive Traffic Management Plan detailing heavy vehicle routes and transport windows to reduce the risk of traffic access impacts on residents and other road users.
- Prioritise procurement for local businesses, industry and workers, potentially through the development of a Procurement Strategy.
- Consider preparing a high-level Construction Workforce Accommodation Strategy in the lead up to construction commencing, identifying cumulative impacts at that time which have potential to negatively affect regional labour and accommodation markets.

Appendices

Appendix A Reference List and Data Sources

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Data Sources

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- ABS, Input-Output Tables.
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- GapMaps
- REMPLAN
- SQM Research
- Trip Advisor
- Victoria in Future, 2023
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- Vrbo

Appendix B Demographic Profile

Table 0-1 General Community Profile

Category	PSL	SSL	Regional Vic.
Income			
Median individual income (annual)	\$39,970	\$39,190	\$37,160
<i>Variation from Regional Vic. median</i>	+7.6%	+5.5%	n.a.
Median household income (annual)	\$63,770	\$79,530	\$72,730
<i>Variation from Regional Vic. median</i>	-12.3%	+9.3%	n.a.
Individual income			
No income	10.4%	7.7%	7.6%
Low	33.3%	36.7%	38.7%
Medium	48.3%	45.1%	44.8%
High	8.1%	10.5%	8.8%
Household income			
No income	1.2%	1.5%	1.7%
Low	20.8%	16.8%	18.6%
Medium	49.6%	43.1%	45.4%
High	28.4%	38.6%	34.4%
Age Structure			
0 years	0.5%	1.1%	1.0%
1-2 years	0.5%	2.2%	2.1%
3-4 years	1.7%	2.3%	2.2%
5-6 years	3.0%	2.5%	2.4%
7-11 years	6.5%	6.1%	6.1%
12-17 years	10.0%	7.2%	7.3%
18-24 years	6.5%	8.4%	7.2%
25-34 years	10.5%	13.5%	11.7%
35-49 years	14.7%	18.8%	17.6%
50-59 years	18.4%	12.3%	13.2%
60-69 years	13.9%	12.0%	13.8%
70-84 years	13.4%	11.2%	12.9%
85 years and over	0.5%	2.4%	2.6%
Males	53.0%	48.9%	49.2%
Females	47.0%	51.1%	50.8%
Median Age (years)	46.2	39.8	42.8
Country of Birth			
Australia	90.8%	85.9%	88.2%
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</i>	0.5%	1.5%	2.1%
Other Major English Speaking Countries	8.2%	5.3%	4.9%
Other Overseas Born	1.0%	8.8%	6.9%
% speak English only at home	99.5%	90.9%	93.0%
Household Composition			
Couple family with no children	33.1%	27.9%	29.9%
<u>Couple family with children</u>	<u>22.7%</u>	<u>28.2%</u>	<u>26.3%</u>
Couple family - Total	55.8%	56.0%	56.2%
One parent family	10.4%	11.4%	10.8%
Other families	2.3%	0.8%	0.7%
Family Households - Total	68.5%	68.2%	67.7%
Lone person household	31.5%	28.2%	29.4%
Group Household	0.0%	3.6%	2.9%

Category	PSL	SSL	Regional Vic.
<u>Dwelling Structure (Occupied Private Dwellings)</u>			
Separate house	100.0%	87.6%	90.2%
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc.	0.0%	9.9%	7.2%
Flat, unit or apartment	0.0%	2.1%	1.9%
Other dwelling	0.0%	0.4%	0.7%
Occupancy rate	79.7%	90.0%	86.0%
Average household size	2.3	2.4	2.4
<u>Tenure Type (Occupied Private Dwellings)</u>			
Owned outright	56.3%	35.7%	40.3%
Owned with a mortgage	22.7%	35.5%	34.1%
<u>Rented</u>	<u>14.1%</u>	<u>27.1%</u>	<u>23.6%</u>
State or territory housing authority	0.0%	2.4%	2.5%
Housing co-operative/community/church group	0.0%	0.6%	0.5%
Other	14.1%	24.1%	20.6%
Other tenure type	7.0%	1.7%	2.0%
<u>Attending Education (% of those attending)</u>			
Pre-school	6.1%	9.3%	9.3%
<u>Infants/Primary Total</u>	<u>44.3%</u>	<u>33.9%</u>	<u>36.3%</u>
Government	94.8%	65.2%	66.3%
Catholic	5.2%	24.8%	25.4%
Other	0.0%	10.0%	8.2%
<u>Secondary Total</u>	<u>33.6%</u>	<u>26.8%</u>	<u>28.6%</u>
Government	36.4%	48.8%	56.0%
Catholic	38.6%	30.2%	28.1%
Other	25.0%	21.0%	15.9%
Technical or Further Educational Institution	2.3%	9.3%	10.0%
University or other Tertiary Institution	10.7%	17.6%	12.6%
Other type of educational institution	3.1%	3.2%	3.1%
% of total population attending education	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	21.3%
<u>Highest Level of Education Completed (% of population aged 15 years and over)</u>			
Year 12 or equivalent	45.5%	56.4%	50.2%
Year 9-11 or equivalent	51.0%	38.2%	43.6%
Year 8 or below	3.5%	4.8%	5.6%
Did not go to school	0.0%	0.6%	0.6%
<u>Non-school Qualifications (Employed persons aged 15 years and over)</u>			
Postgraduate degree	0.0%	8.8%	6.9%
Graduate diploma or certificate	3.8%	5.4%	5.2%
Bachelor degree	21.9%	27.8%	24.5%
Advanced diploma or diploma	21.5%	18.4%	18.5%
Certificate	52.7%	39.5%	44.9%
<u>Employment Status</u>			
Unemployed/ looking for work	4.2%	4.3%	4.1%
Labour force participation rate	60.6%	60.2%	57.4%
<u>Need for Assistance</u>			
With Need for Assistance	4.5%	7.1%	7.4%
No Need for Assistance	95.5%	92.9%	92.6%
<u>Top 10 Countries of Birth</u>			
	<u>PSL</u>	<u>SSL</u>	<u>Regional Vic.</u>
1	Australia (90.8%)	Australia (85.9%)	Australia (88.2%)
2	New Zealand (3.7%)	England (3.1%)	England (2.9%)

Category	PSL	SSL	Regional Vic.
3	England (2.8%)	India (1.7%)	New Zealand (1.1%)
4	Scotland (1.0%)	New Zealand (1.1%)	India (1.0%)
5	Germany (1.0%)	Philippines (0.6%)	Philippines (0.6%)
6	South Africa (0.7%)	China (0.5%)	Netherlands (0.4%)
7	Canada (0.0%)	Netherlands (0.4%)	Italy (0.4%)
8	Ireland (0.0%)	Scotland (0.4%)	Scotland (0.4%)
9	United States of America (0.0%)	Italy (0.4%)	Germany (0.4%)
10	Wales (0.0%)	Germany (0.4%)	China (0.3%)
<u>Top 10 Languages Spoken at home (other than English)</u>			
	<u>PSL</u>	<u>SSL</u>	<u>Regional Vic.</u>
1	Greek (0.5%)	Mandarin (0.7%)	Mandarin (0.6%)
2	Afrikaans (0.0%)	Punjabi (0.7%)	Italian (0.5%)
3	Arabic (0.0%)	Italian (0.5%)	Punjabi (0.5%)
4	Australian Indigenous (0.0%)	Croatian (0.5%)	Malayalam (0.2%)
5	Cantonese (0.0%)	Hindi (0.3%)	Arabic (0.2%)
6	Mandarin (0.0%)	Malayalam (0.3%)	Vietnamese (0.2%)
7	Chinese - other (0.0%)	Greek (0.3%)	Greek (0.2%)
8	Croatian (0.0%)	Macedonian (0.3%)	Tagalog (0.2%)
9	French (0.0%)	Vietnamese (0.2%)	Filipino (0.2%)
10	German (0.0%)	Arabic (0.2%)	Croatian (0.2%)
<u>Religion</u>			
Buddhism	0.0%	0.9%	0.9%
Christianity	53.5%	46.7%	47.2%
Hinduism	0.0%	1.2%	0.7%
Islam	0.0%	1.2%	1.0%
Judaism	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Religions	0.0%	0.9%	0.7%
No religious association	46.5%	49.1%	49.5%
<u>Long-term Health Conditions</u>			
Asthma	20.7%	17.4%	8.8%
Cancer	19.2%	18.2%	2.9%
Dementia	5.1%	5.3%	0.5%
Diabetes	0.0%	1.1%	4.4%
Heart disease	6.0%	8.3%	4.2%
Kidney disease	9.3%	7.6%	0.6%
Lung condition	0.9%	1.0%	1.8%
Mental health condition	4.5%	3.2%	9.6%
Stroke	18.6%	20.6%	0.7%
Other	0.9%	1.4%	7.6%
None	15.0%	15.8%	48.9%
<u>Provided Unpaid Childcare</u>			
Females	31%	32%	31%
Males	26%	26%	24%

Source: ABS 2021

Appendix C – Project Stakeholder Analysis

Table 0-2 Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Group	Description
Host landowners	Landowners hosting wind turbines or project infrastructure or transmission line via commercial agreements with SQE
Neighbouring Landholders	Up to 86 neighbours/Properties within 4km of proposed turbine locations
Broader Community	Residents of Skipton, Linton, and other neighbouring townships
Local Council	Corangamite Shire Golden Plains Pyrenees Shires
Elected Reps – Council	Corangamite Shire – Mayor Cr Kate Makin Golden Plains Shire – Cr Mayor Owen Sharkey Hayden Pyrenees Shire – Mayor Cr Tanya Kehoe
Elected Reps – State MPs	Member for Ripon – Ms Martha Haylett Member for Polwarth – Mr Richard Riordan Member for Eureka – Ms Michaela Settle
Elected Reps – Federal	Federal Member for Wannon, Shadow Energy Minister for Climate Change – Dan Tehan Federal Member for Environment and Water – The Hon Murray Watt Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy – The Hon Chris Bowen MP Member for Ballarat – The Hon Catherine King, MP
State Government	DTP
Federal Government	DELWP (DEECA)
First Nations Organisations	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and First Nations peoples in Wadawurrung Country
Community Interest Groups	Skipton and Linton Men's Sheds Skipton Probus Skipton Cricket Club Skipton Football and Netball Club Skipton Tennis Club Skipton Golf Club Skipton Lions Club Skipton District Historical Society Linton & District Bowling Club Linton Cricket Club Linton District Men's Shed Linton District Progress Association Carngham Linton Football Netball Club Skipton Progress Association Berrybank and District Community Group Mannibadar Hall
Schools	Skipton Primary School Linton Primary School

Stakeholder Group	Description
Industry and Local Business	Local employers, service providers, quarries, and health services including Beaufort and Skipton Health Service SUVO Mining Eldridge Quarry
Other Stakeholders	Local media including Skipton Community Newsletter Ballarat Courier Golden Plains Times Camperdown Chronicle Pyrenees Advocate Linton News

Source: Squadron Energy

Appendix C– Register of Social Impacts rated Medium / Low

Table 0-1 Register of Social Impacts Rated Medium / Low

Impact	Key supporting evidence	Impacted communities	Impact Dimensions			Potential Impact (without standard mitigation techniques)		Project Enhancements and Mitigations	Residual impact after project response
			Period	Duration	Extent	Rating	Experience		
Annoyance caused by wind turbines noise and shadow flickering. WTGs may generate some noise and shadow flicking that may cause annoyance for a small portion of residents. Residents who are most likely to experience noise impacts will be participating landholders that host WTGs Social factor(s): <i>Way of life, health and wellbeing</i>	Predicted noise levels are anticipated to be below the reference noise level limit of 45 dB by at least 5.6 dB at all receivers (non-stakeholders, stakeholders, outside the project boundary and stakeholders within the project boundary) by at least 1dB (Marshall Day Acoustics, 2023).	- Participating host and neighbouring landholders in the PSL, - Non-participating landholders within the PSL.	Operations	30 years	Project Area	Possible / Moderate <u>Medium</u>	Negative	The configuration of the site layout ensures a general 1km buffer between dwellings and WTGs. This ensures all dwellings are beyond the 40 dB noise level buffer (Marshall Day Acoustics, 2023).	Risk of noise and shadow annoyance remains; however, the likelihood has been reduced by WTG placement. Further, a level of social acceptance for noise impacts likely as the most heavily impacted land holders will be participating landholder who will be aware of potential noise impact risks. Residual impact rating: Low (Unlikely / Minimal)
Fear of bushfires caused by the onsite BESS and WTG failure. Risk of community fear relating to the BESS and WTG failure in proximity to bushland (Mount Bute Scenic Reserve, Mount Erip Nature Reserve, State Forest) and grasslands and a pine plantation. Fear will likely be rooted in reports of BESS causing fires, images of WTG failure and past incidents of bush in Western Victoria. Social factor(s): <i>health and wellbeing</i>	Section 6.0 identifies concerns for BESS and transmission lines in rural setting in relation to bushfire risk. - Golden Plains and Corangamite LGAs are identified as a fire prone area.	Residents in the PSL and surrounding townships.	Operations	30 years	PSL/SSL	Possible / Moderate <u>Medium</u>	Negative	- A comprehensive Bushfire Assessment and Management Plan will be prepared to mitigate potential risk associates with the development a BESS and transmission line within a rural context. - The Project will be designed and developed in accordance with the CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities. - Comprehensive community consultation will be undertaken, as detailed by the External Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Squadron 2025). This will provide an open forum for the community to voice concerns about bushfire risk and allow the project team to give detailed responses to address potential concerns.	Fear of bushfires caused by the onsite BESS and transmission line may remain amongst some residents due to scepticism about the technology in rural settings. However, the provision of a Bushfire Assessment and Management Plan as in combination with comprehensive community engagement outlining risk and mitigations, has the potential to reduce bushfire fears amongst the community. Residual impact rating: Low (Possible / Minimal)
Fears of decreasing property values Residents across the PSL and the surrounding region may fear that the construction of an additional wind farm in the Skipton, Linton, Mannibadar area may decrease their property values. This has the potential to cause increased stress and anxiety during the project planning, construction and early operations phase. Social factor(s): <i>Livelihood</i>	Fears of decreases in property value caused by proximity to wind farms is a prominent concern amongst rural communities. However, property value decreases as a result of wind farm development have not been observed (see Section 4.2.4).	Non-participating landholders in the PSL.	Planning / Construction / Operations	30 years	PSL	Possible / Moderate <u>Medium</u>	Negative	Comprehensive community consultation has been undertaken, as detailed by the Consultation and Engagement Report (Squadron 2023). This will provide and open forum for the community to voice concerns relating to property value decline and give the project team an opportunity to articulate current trends in property values with proximity to wind farms across other squadron projects.	Fear of declining property values my remain, causing some stress and anxiety. However, these anxieties will likely subside following project completion. Residual impact rating: Low (Unlikely / Minimal)

Impact	Key supporting evidence	Impacted communities	Impact Dimensions			Potential Impact (without standard mitigation techniques)		Project Enhancements and Mitigations	Residual impact after project response
			Period	Duration	Extent	Rating	Experience		
Diminished ability to connect to Country, due to construction activities and changed landscapes. Construction activities have the potential to disturb or damage Aboriginal cultural artefacts. This may adversely impact Aboriginal stakeholders in the area. Social factor(s): <i>Culture</i>		Wathaurong community	Construction	24 Months	Project Area	Possible / Moderate <u>Medium</u>	Negative	The Proponent is preparing a Cultural Heritage Management Plan in consultation with the RAP to assess the Project's potential cultural heritage impacts. The RAP will assess and determine whether to approve the CHMP.	The risk of damaging Aboriginal cultural artefacts will remain, potentially impacting traditional owners' ability to connect with Country. However, the Comprehensive assessment will reduce the likelihood of damaging cultural artefacts by surveying the Project Area for heritage artefacts and providing a framework for managing potential encounters with artefacts during construction. Residual impact rating: Low (Unlikely / Minimal)
Risk of increased pressure on rental housing, services and social infrastructure An influx of non-local workers to small regional towns (Skipton, Linton, Smythesdale, Snake Valley, Beaufort) has the potential to reduce the availability of rental housing for local residents. This has the potential to negatively impact local residents accessing the local rental market, due to a reduction in availability for rental housing throughout the project's peak construction period. Further, an increase in non-local workers has the potential to reduce the availability of visitor accommodation (such as hotels and motels) for tourists to the region. This has the potential to impact local businesses and the livelihoods of those who are reliant on the flow-on benefits of the visitor economy. Social factor(s): <i>Livelihood</i>	- Stakeholder consultation showed that Golden Plain Shire and Corangamite Shire are not concerned about workforce accommodation due to the project's proximity to Ballarat and Geelong. Section 5.8.2 shows a sufficient supply of accommodation to house non-local workers across the SSL.	Residents of Skipton, Linton, Smythesdale, Snake Valley, Beaufort.	Construction	24 Months	PSL / SSL	Unlikely / Minor <u>Low</u>	Negative	NA	Adverse impacts relating to workforce accommodation capacity constraints are <u>not</u> anticipated for this project. Residual impact rating: Low (Unlikely / Minimal)