

APPENDIX M

Social impact assessment



Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project

Social Impact Assessment

Prepared for Evolution Mining (Cowal) Pty Limited

May 2023

Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project

Social Impact Assessment

Evolution Mining (Cowal) Pty Limited

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Executive Summary

ES1 Overview

Evolution Mining (Cowal) Pty Limited (Evolution) is the owner and operator of Cowal Gold Operations (CGO), an existing open pit and underground gold mine approximately 38 kilometres (km) north-east of West Wyalong, in the central west region of New South Wales (NSW). Evolution is seeking approval for further open pit mining operations at CGO through the Open Pit Continuation Project (the Project). The Project primarily seeks to continue the open pit operations by approximately 10 years to 2036 and extend the total mine life by approximately two years to 2042. The Project would allow the existing 230 person open pit mining workforce to be retained as otherwise these jobs would cease in 2026.

The Project has been declared by the NSW Government to be State Significant Development (SSD) under the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). Projects are declared to be SSD if they are considered important to NSW for economic, environmental, or social reasons.

This report satisfies the requirement for completion of a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in accordance with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements for the Project as well as the Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (DPE 2021a) and Technical Supplement: Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (DPE 2021b).

ES2 SIA study areas and existing environment

As outlined in the Social Impact Assessment Guideline (DPE 2021a), the first step of the SIA process is scoping which informs development of the industry-specific SEARs and definition of the SIA study areas (referred to as 'social locality' in the Guideline). The Social Impact Assessment Scoping Report (EMM 2022) was submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) and SEARs were issued in June 2022.

The SIA study areas reflect the nature of social impacts and benefits which may be experienced by different stakeholder groups. Study areas adopted for the SIA include a local study area (Bland, Forbes and Lachlan LGAs), key townships (West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin) and a regional study area (Central West Area of NSW).

The location of the Project is on the western foreshore of Lake Cowal on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri People. Lake Cowal is an ephemeral waterbody and when full is the largest lake in NSW. The area surrounding the mine is sparsely populated as land use is characterised by large to medium scale agricultural properties based around broad hectare cropping of cereals and canola and sheep (wool and meat) and cattle production.

There is an extensive history of gold exploration in the area dating back to the late 1800's. The Cowal Gold Mine was first approved in 1999 and open pit mining operations commenced in 2005. The closest township to the Project site is West Wyalong (and adjacent Wyalong). This is a community of over 3,000 residents who enjoy a safe, friendly and relaxed environment, with access to a range of educational, medical and business facilities. Residents pride themselves on community spirit and a heritage founded on gold mining and agricultural production. While mining remains a key contributor to the local economy, West Wyalong is also an important service centre for agricultural activities throughout the surrounding district with the Bland Shire being one of the most productive agricultural areas in NSW.

ES3 Engagement informing SIA

Community and stakeholder engagement is a core element of SIA. This SIA draws on feedback generated through community stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of the EIS and engagement activities tailored specifically to inform the SIA including:

- In depth interviews with key stakeholders which directly informed identification and assessment of potential social impacts and benefits. Interviews were held with nearby neighbours and landholders, local businesses, local councils, Indigenous groups and cultural knowledge holders, service providers and key community groups.
- A community survey was delivered to further confirm community perceptions, concerns and expectations and potential social impacts and benefits associated with Project construction and operation.

Community and stakeholder feedback derived through engagement activities revealed that stakeholders were almost universally supportive of the Project. It was highlighted by multiple stakeholders that CGO has established a positive reputation in the community founded on the tangible economic and social benefits which have been delivered and the effort they have invested in managing impacts and establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships with community stakeholders. There is a high degree of trust that Evolution will continue to be a responsible operator which forms the basis of a social licence to operate (Santiago et al, 2021).

Through the analysis of Project details, social baseline characteristics and engagement feedback, the following key SIA themes were defined:

- **Decision making systems** – the ability to engage with the Project and contribute to decisions which affect community outcomes.
- **Housing and accommodation** – the nature of the local housing market and how the Project can contribute to optimal accommodation solutions.
- **Economy** – the positive contribution CGO makes to the local and regional economy and how this can be maximised.
- **Services** – the nature of service provision in the local and regional area and how this intersects with the Project.
- **Transport** – localised impacts associated with estimated traffic movements.
- **Surroundings** – potential effects on the amenity enjoyed by nearby residents along with impacts on Indigenous cultural heritage and the management of pests and bushfire risk
- **Water** – concerns generated by potential competition for groundwater resources and perceptions held by landholders around Lake Cowal as to the effect of the expanded bund wall on water displacement during flood events. These key impact themes framed the impacts and benefits analysed by the SIA along with an assessment of potential cumulative effects as stipulated by the SEARs issued for the Project.

ES4 Assessment of social impacts and benefits

A summary of the social impacts and benefits which were assessed as having a residual (post mitigated) significance of medium or higher are presented in Table ES1 (impacts) and Table ES2 (benefits). The full assessment of potential impacts and benefits is provided in Chapter 6.

Table ES1 **Key social impacts**

ID	Social theme	Impact	Significance (mitigated)
H01	Housing and accommodation	Continued pressure on the local rental housing market	Medium
H02		Reduced availability of short-term accommodation	Medium
W01	Water	Perceived competition for groundwater resources	Medium
W02		Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall	Medium
W03		Impacts to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community	Medium

As outlined above, there were no impacts which were assessed as having a high mitigated significance. A key finding of the SIA was that as this Project is a continuation of existing operations, Project impacts are principally derived from Project construction and small operational changes to existing features of the site. The mitigations section of this report generally proposes minor changes or the continuation of existing management approaches.

A summary of the social benefits which were assessed as having a residual (enhanced) significance of medium or higher are presented in Table ES2.

Table ES2 **Key social benefits**

ID	Social theme	Benefit	Significance (enhanced)
D01	Decision making systems	Ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement (Benefit)	High
D02		Opportunity to plan and deliver a positive mine legacy	High
D03		Improved mine rehabilitation outcomes	High
H03	Housing and accommodation	Heightened confidence in the housing market	Medium
EO1	Economy	Ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience	High
E02		Provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community	High
E03		Provision of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people	High
S01	Services	Community support and contributions from CGO operations	High
S02		Improved access to services due to the Projects contributions to economic capacity	High
Su05	Surroundings	Continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders	High
Su06		Improved environmental education outcomes	Medium

A defining feature of the Project is the positive relationship which CGO has with the community in which it is already operating. This has been achieved through high levels of ongoing engagement and ensuring that social and economic benefits generated by the mine are being realised. Such a context provides a positive platform for the Project to further community benefits and make a positive contribution to maintaining CGO's existing social licence to operate.

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1 Introduction

EMM Consulting has prepared this Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project (the Project) on behalf of Evolution Mining (Cowal) Pty Limited (Evolution), as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The context for this SIA is provided below.

1.1 Background

Evolution is the owner and operator of Cowal Gold Operations (CGO), an existing open pit and underground gold mine approximately 38 kilometres (km) north-east of West Wyalong, in the central west region of New South Wales (NSW).

CGO is located on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri People and is immediately adjacent to the western foreshore of Lake Cowal, which is an ephemeral waterbody. The Project area within the local setting is shown in Figure 1.2, alongside significant roads and existing water and energy supply lines.

1.1.1 Site history

The Cowal Gold Mine has a long history of development and has involved numerous mining companies prior to Evolution. A summary of the history of the Cowal Gold Mine is provided in Table 1.1 below.

For further information on modification consents granted to date, please refer to Chapter 3 of the EIS.

Table 1.1 Cowal Gold Mine – history of development

Year	Action
1893	Gold discovered in West Wyalong area.
1988	North Limited undertakes extensive exploration at Lake Cowal.
1999	The mine was first approved in 1999, the NSW Government issued development consents conditions for the Cowal Gold project (DA14/98).
2000	North Limited was acquired by Rio Tinto.
2001	Cowal Gold Project is sold to Homestake Mining.
2002	Homestake Mining merges with Barrick Gold Australia.
2003	Modification 1 the mine is approved to operates under Ministerial development consent (DA14/98). Original development consent allows construction and operation of open pit gold mine, gold processing plant, a water supply pipeline and bore field and associated facilities.
2004	Construction commences on Cowal Gold Operation (CGO) Project.
2005	Open pit mining operations commenced in 2005.
2006	First gold is poured in April 2006.
2010	Modification 6 sought approval and extension the life of the mine until 2023. Approved for the E42 cutback which allowed additional 53 Mt of ore, increased the processing rate from 6.9 Mtpa to 7.5 Mtpa.
2011	Modification 9 sought approval to amend the life of mine for CGO to the end of 2019 to align with the E42 modification, until 2023.
2014	Modification 11 sought approval for the continuation and extension of open pit mining for an additional operational life of approximately five years, to 2024.

Table 1.1 **Cowal Gold Mine – history of development**

Year	Action
2015	Evolution Mining acquired CGO from Barrick Gold Australia. Ore Reserves increased from 1.6Moz to 2.2Moz.
2017	Modification 13 approved an extension of the mine life to 2032 and continued operations at the CGO within Mining Lease (ML) 1535. Ore Reserves increased by a further 12% to 3.2Moz.
2018	Modification 14 approved the increased processing rate from 7.5Mtpa to 9.8 Mtpa.
2020	Underground feasibility underway and regulatory approvals submitted.
2021	Underground Development approved. Modification 16 approved which included ancillary surface changes required to support the Underground Development including an extension of the life of CGO by eight years to the end of 2040 to enable processing of ore from the underground. There has been a total of 16 modifications.
2023	This Project proposes to further extend the mine's presence in the local area further into the future until approximately the year 2042.

1.1.2 Mining process

The process of mining gold at CGO (Evolution Mining, 2018) involves:

- Waste rock from the open pit and underground is hauled by truck to waste rock emplacements to the north and south of the existing open-pit mining pit. Soil is placed into temporary stockpiles for later use during mine rehabilitation.
- Ore mined from the open pit and underground is hauled directly to either the primary crusher (adjacent to the process plant), run-of-mine pads or low-grade ore stockpiles. The low-grade ore stockpile is located north of the processing plant. Mineralised material is also separately stockpiled for future processing.
- To start the gold extraction process, firstly the ore is crushed. Then, cyanide is used to dissolve the gold in a slurry of water and ore, after which it adsorbs to the surface of the activated carbon as a gold-cyanide complex. The 'loaded' carbon is then screened out from the slurry and stripped from the carbon. This process is called 'carbon-in-leach cyanidation'. The process takes place in the processing plant, which is located on the southwest of the site between the pit and southern waste rock emplacement.
- The gold is recovered from the loaded carbon and poured as gold bars.
- The tailings (the materials left over after the extraction process) are pumped from the process plant via a pipeline to the integrated waste landform (IWL). The IWL is located further west of the processing plant. Water used in this process is subsequently reused for further processing.

A Lake Protection Bund (LPB) is located along the eastern boundary of the site which separates Lake Cowal and the mining operations.

1.2 Project overview

Evolution is seeking approval for further open pit mining operations at CGO through the Open Pit Continuation Project (the Project). The Project primarily seeks to continue open pit operations by 10 years to 2036 and extend the total mine life by approximately two years to 2042.

The Project will involve further development of the existing E42 Pit and the development of open pit mining in three adjacent orebodies, known as 'E46', 'GR' and 'E41'. It is noted that the three adjacent ore bodies are within the existing mining lease (ML 1535). No change to the approved ore processing rate of 9.8 Mt per annum is proposed. A detailed description of the Project is contained in Chapter 4 of the EIS.

In addition to the above, the Project comprises the following key components:

- expansion of the integrated waste landform (IWL) to accommodate Project tailings
- backfilling of one of the new satellite open pits (E46) with waste rock and establishment of a new waste rock emplacement on the backfilled pit to minimise the additional area required for waste rock disposal
- expansion of the footprint of the existing waste rock emplacement (WRE) areas to accommodate additional waste rock
- development of additional topsoil and subsoil stockpiles to accommodate materials from pre-stripping, with materials to be reused during progressive mine rehabilitation
- extension of the LPB system to provide continued separation and mutual protection between Lake Cowal and the mine
- upgrades to existing surface water drainage system, to assist with on-site water management and maximise on-site water conservation
- development of new water storages and relocation of some components of the surface water drainage system
- modification of internal site access and haul roads
- modification and relocation of some existing auxiliary mining infrastructure.

Other than the changes to existing approved activities as set out above, all activities that are currently approved under existing Ministerial development consents, including existing ore processing rates or methods, tailings disposal methods, main site access, water supply sources or hours of operation are intended to continue. Existing activities approved under the consents are described in Chapter 3 of the EIS. The Project will also retain the existing open pit mining workforce. Further detail on key Project elements relevant to the SIA and the proposed Project area is provided in Chapter 3 of this report.

1.2.1 Terminology

A summary of key terminology used to describe operations and disturbance areas is provided below. A full list of abbreviated terms is provided in the 'Acronyms' section of this report:

- **Cowal Gold Operations (CGO)** – comprises both the existing open pit mine, underground mine, processing facility, IWL, waste rock emplacement areas, ore stockpiles and ancillary infrastructure.
- **The Project area** – outlines the area that is the subject of the development application as shown in Figure 1.2.
- **Existing and approved disturbance area** – areas that are disturbed and/or approved to be disturbed under the current development consents that apply to CGO.
- **Additional disturbance area** – the areas that will be disturbed by the Project that are outside of the existing and approved disturbance area.

- **Project disturbance area** – this area is a combination of the additional disturbance area and the existing and approved disturbance area.

1.3 Assessment approach and requirements

This SIA informs the planning and approval process for the Project. It has been prepared in accordance with the Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the Project as well as relevant regulatory assessment requirements, guidelines and policies, including:

- the *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (SIA Guideline) (DPE, 2021a)
- the *Technical Supplement: Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (SIA Technical Supplement 2021) (DPE, 2021b)
- the *Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects* (DPE, 2021d).

The SEARs outline what is required to be addressed in the EIS and were issued on 10 June 2022. The SEARs for the Project, and where each element is addressed in this SIA technical report, are provided in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 SEARS requirements – Social

SEARS	Chapter and section in this report
Including an assessment of the social impacts of the development, prepared in accordance with the Department’s Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (2021a), including:	• Chapter 6 • Chapter 7
• the likely impacts of the development on the local community	• Chapter 6
• cumulative impacts (considering other mining developments in the locality)	• Chapter 6, Section 6.8
• consideration of workforce accommodation.	• Chapter 4, Section 4.7 • Chapter 6, Section 6.2 and 6.8; and • Chapter 7

The SIA Guideline (DPE, 2021a) provides a checklist of SIA review questions. The questions and corresponding responses are presented in **Table 1.2** (Table A.1). The responses in both Table 1.2 and Table A.1 identify where each element of the SEARs and SIA Guideline requirement is addressed in this report.

1.4 SIA study area

The SIA study area (referred to as ‘social locality’ in the SIA Guideline) is defined with reference to stakeholders who could potentially be directly or indirectly affected by the Project. This includes landholders, nearby neighbours, community members, businesses, service providers and indigenous groups who may have an interest in the Project or could be directly or indirectly impacted. The SIA study area identifies the social and geographical areas of focus of the SIA, and takes into account:

- the nature and scale of the proposed Project, including associated infrastructure
- the scope of the potential social impacts throughout the Project lifecycle
- the location and characteristics of potentially affected communities

- land use patterns, infrastructure and urban/rural centres.

The local study area and key townships consist of the communities that may experience both direct and indirect social impacts from the Project (i.e. impacts related to local social infrastructure and services, road infrastructure, amenity, workforce, local business and industry, local housing and accommodation, and community health and wellbeing).

The regional study area includes geographic areas likely to experience few direct and more indirect social impacts of the Project. Indirect impacts are associated with use of infrastructure, supply chains, roads, transportation of goods, materials and equipment, the movement of workers (some of which may operate on a drive-in-drive-out (DIDO) basis) and cumulative impacts arising from other projects in the area.

Potentially affected communities have been mapped to respective ABS statistical geographic areas (Table 1.3). The SIA local area, key townships and regional study area are illustrated in Figure 1.3.

Table 1.3 **SIA study area**

Study area	Geographic area	ABS data category	Referred to in report as:
Local study area	Bland Shire Council area	Bland LGA	Local area
	Forbes Shire Council area	Forbes LGA	
	Lachlan Shire Council area	Lachlan LGA	
Key townships	West Wyalong	West Wyalong UCL	Key townships
		Wyalong UCL	
	Forbes	Forbes UCL	
	Condobolin	Condobolin UCL	
Regional study area	Central West region	Central West Statistical Area 4 (SA4)	Regional area
State of New South Wales	State of New South Wales	New South Wales STE	NSW

1.5 Authorship and SIA declarations

The authorship and SIA Declarations for this report are provided in the following sections.

i Authorship

This report has been prepared and reviewed by a suitably qualified and experienced lead author, Chris Mahoney and co-authors Breannan Dent and Alicia Minogue, consistent with SIA Guideline requirements. All contributors hold appropriate qualifications and have the relevant experience to carry out the SIA for this Project. The curriculum vitae for each author is provided in Appendix B.

ii SIA declarations

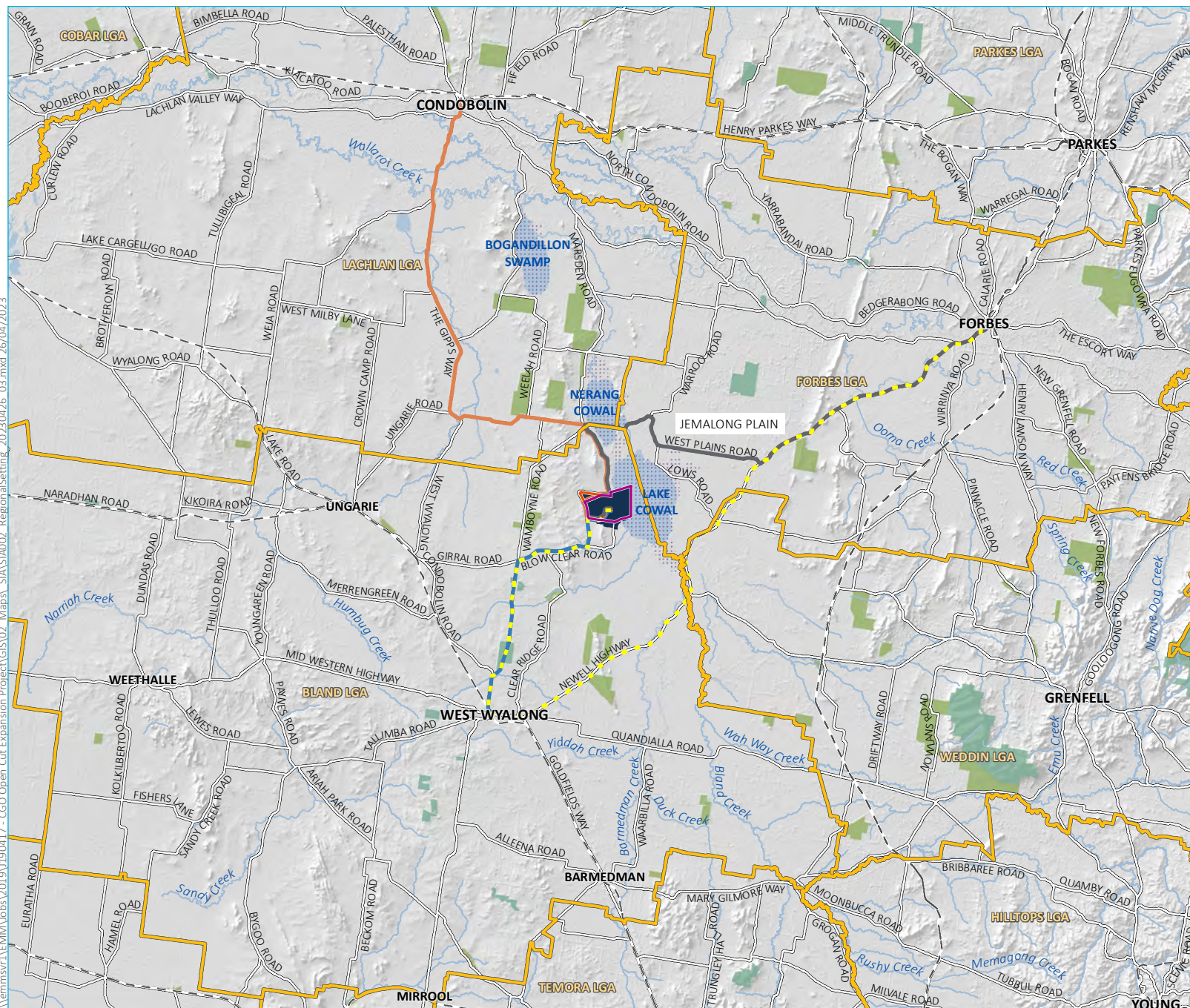
The authors declare that this SIA report:

- was completed in March 2023
- has been prepared in accordance with the EIS process under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act)

- has been prepared in accordance with the SIA Guideline 2021
- contains all reasonably available Project information relevant to the SIA
- as far as EMM Consulting Pty Limited (EMM) is aware, contains information that is neither false nor misleading.

Assumptions and limitations of this report are outlined in Section 2.2.

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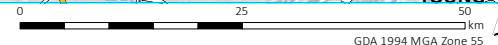
Source: EMM (2023); Evolution (2023); DFSI (2017); GA (2011); ASGC (2006)

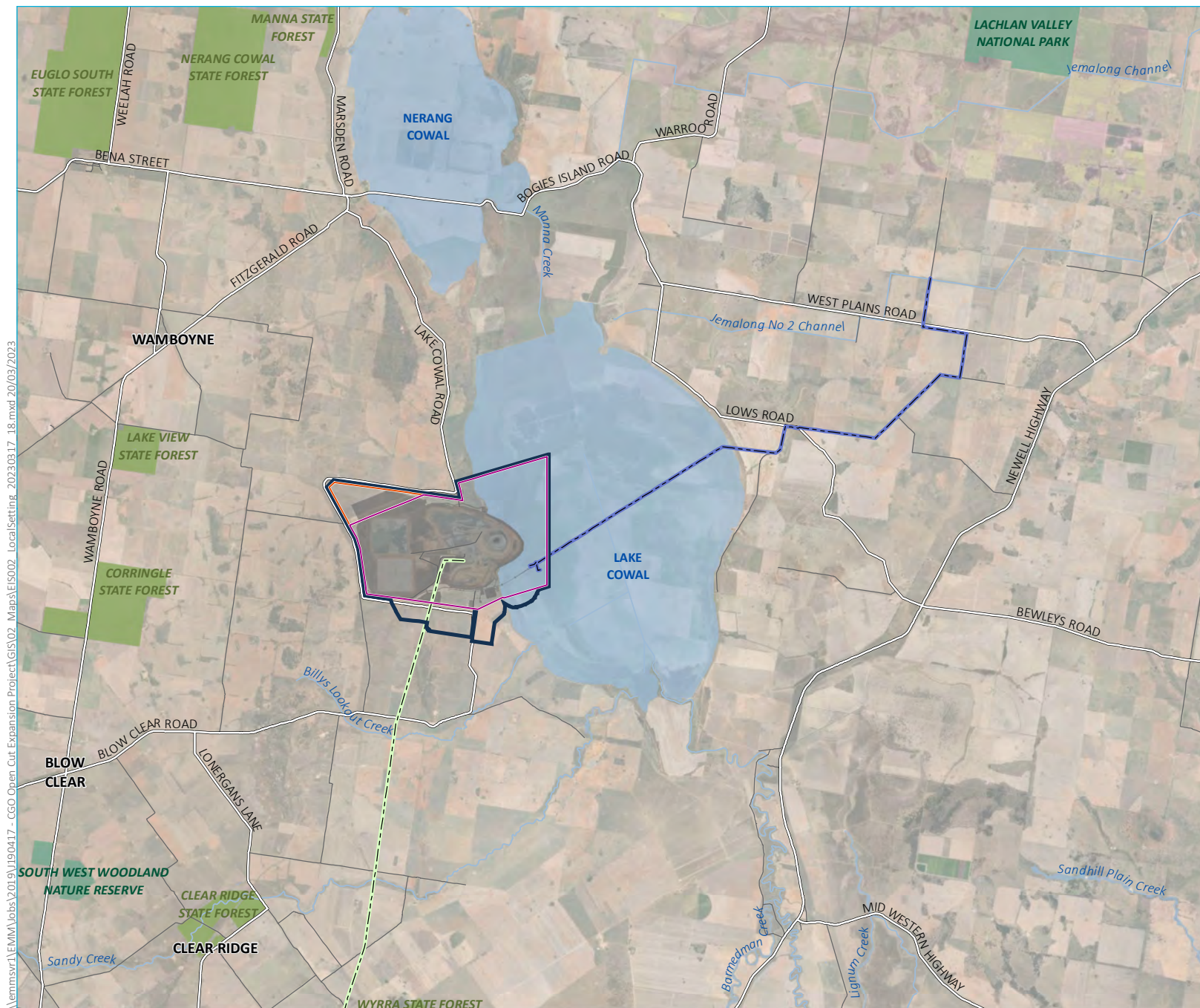


- KEY**
- Project area
 - Mining lease (ML1535)
 - Mining lease (ML1791)
 - Rail line
 - Major road
 - Named watercourse
 - Named waterbody
 - Lake Cowal/Wilbertoy Wetlands
 - NPWS reserve
 - State forest
 - Local government area
 - Mine access transport routes
 - West Wyalong
 - Condoblin
 - Forbes
 - Forbes (sealed network)

Regional setting

Evolution Mining
Cowl Gold Operations
Open Pit Continuation Project
Social Impact Assessment
Figure 1.1





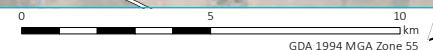
- KEY**
- Project area
 - DA14/98 approved surface disturbance
 - Mining lease (ML1535)
 - Mining lease (ML1791)
 - Water supply pipeline
 - Electricity transmission line
 - Major road
 - Minor road
 - Named watercourse
 - Named waterbody
 - NPWS reserve
 - State forest

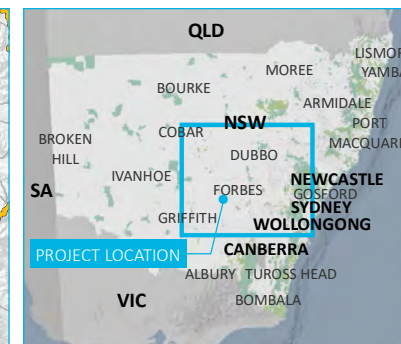
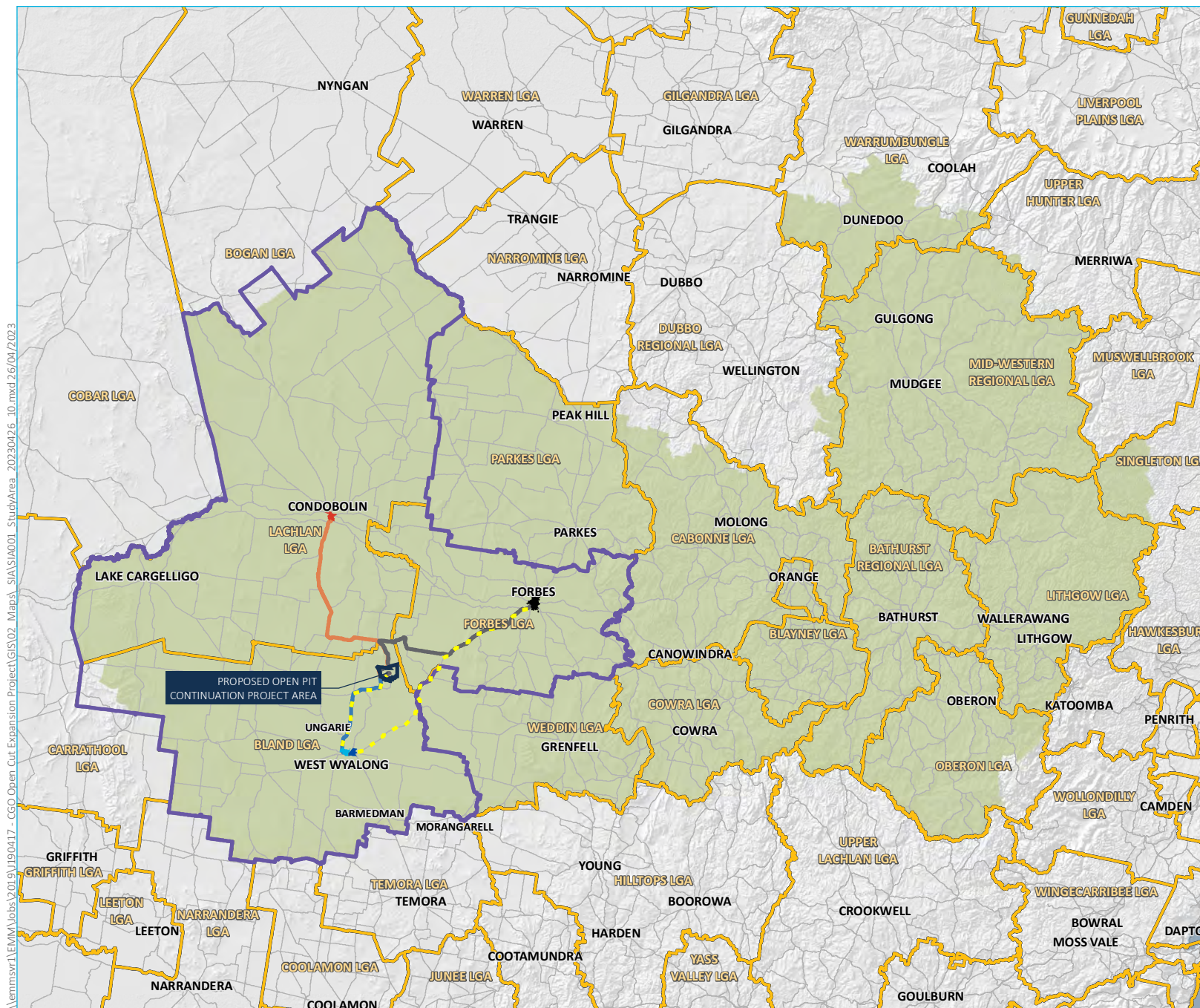
Local setting

Evolution Mining
Cowl Gold Operations
Open Pit Continuation Project
Social Impact Assessment
Figure 1.2



Source: EMM (2023); Evolution (2023); DFSI (2017); ESRI (2023)





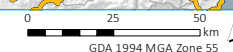
- KEY**
- Project area
 - Local government area
 - Major road
 - Key townships**
 - Condobolin
 - Forbes
 - West Wyalong
 - Wyalong
 - Mine access transport routes**
 - West Wyalong
 - Condobolin
 - Forbes
 - Forbes (sealed network)
 - SIA study area**
 - Local area
 - Regional area

SIA study area

Evolution Mining
Coral Gold Operations
Open Pit Continuation Project
Social Impact Assessment
Figure 1.3



Source: EMM (2023); Evolution (2023); ABS (2021); DFSI (2017)



2 Methodology

This section presents the methodology which guided completion of the SIA. The methodology was specifically tailored to meet the requirements of the SEARs and the SIA Guideline 2021 (DPE, 2021a). Completion of the SIA has also been informed by best practice guidance and standards set out by the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) and International Finance Corporation (IFC).

Figure 2.1 below illustrates the phases of the SIA methodology which reflects the SIA process outlined in the SIA Guideline 2021 (DPE, 2021a).

The SIA report, which is an output of Phase 2, will be placed on public exhibition with the EIS, with submissions received and responded to in Phase 3.

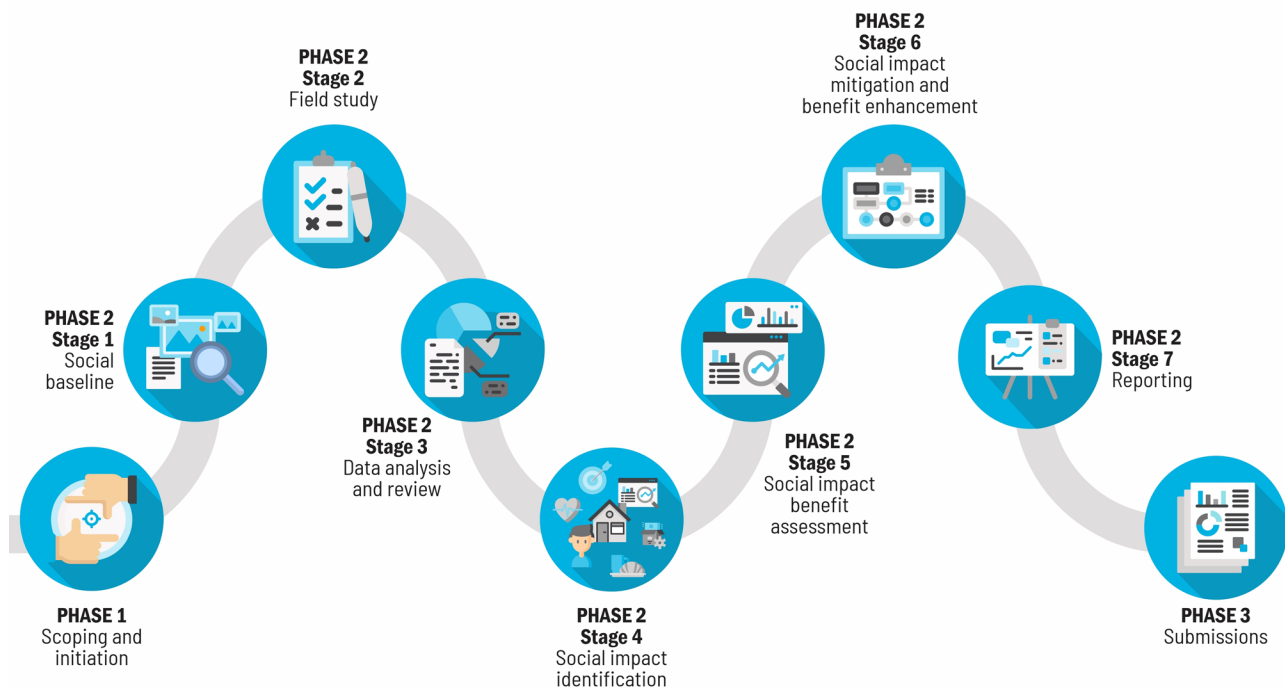


Figure 2.1 Phases of the SIA methodology

2.1 Methodological phases

The phases of the SIA methodology are described below.

i Phase 1

a Scoping and initiation

The Social Impact Assessment Scoping Report for the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project (EMM, 2022a) was submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) as part of the Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project Scoping Report (EMM, 2022b), using an approach consistent with the SIA Guideline (2021a). Scoping is the first phase of the SIA process and provides an understanding of what the Project entails and how it might interact with the social environment.

The SIA Scoping report defined the scope of the SIA including:

- potentially affected stakeholders
- an understanding of the SIA study area
- potential, negative and positive social impacts for further investigation
- the level of assessment required to address potential social impacts
- the methodology to be adopted in completion of the SIA.

The Scoping report informed definition of the SEARS as outlined in Section 1.3.

ii Phase 2

a Stage 1 – Social baseline study

Building upon the understanding of the existing social environment attained in the scoping phase, a social baseline study was compiled. Key sources of information included existing demographic, health, housing, and socio-economic data collected by the ABS, other government agencies and local government; published literature and social research; government policies and plans; and research completed on similar projects. A wide range of social indicators were reviewed and assessed for relevance.

The selection of social baseline indicators was informed by the social impact categories defined in the SIA Guideline 2021 and the outcomes of initial scoping and background literature review. The social baseline study provides a community profile, including a socio-economic profile and analysis of social infrastructure and capacity within the SIA study area.

The social baseline study provides the benchmark against which potential social impacts are identified and assessed. The social baseline study is presented in Chapter 4.

b Stage 2 – Engagement informing the SIA

A primary source of information drawn upon by the SIA is the feedback generated through engagement with potentially affected stakeholders and communities. SIA field studies were conducted in accordance with Appendix A of the SIA Guideline 2021 which prescribes key engagement objectives and methods. The specific activities and outcomes of community engagement and SIA field studies are presented in Chapter 5.

The field study component of the SIA employed contemporary social research methods including in-depth stakeholder interviews, workshops and community surveys to collect qualitative and quantitative data to:

- validate baseline data and assumptions
- identify/test impacts that may be experienced by nearby neighbours and the broader community
- confirm identified impacts and determine potential management strategies
- provide communities with an opportunity to express opinions and concerns.

c Stage 3 – Social impact identification

Social impacts and benefits were identified by suitably qualified social scientists (see Appendix B) through analysis of the nature of Project activities, baseline characteristics of potentially affected communities and feedback generated through engagement processes.

Identification and assessment of impacts was undertaken with consideration of the impact categories outlined in the SIA Guideline 2021 (DPE, 2021a) which refers to potential changes to people's:

- **way of life:** how people live, work, play and interact
- **community:** its composition, cohesion, character, how it operates and sense of place
- **accessibility:** how infrastructure provided by public, private or not for profit organisations, including services and facilities is accessed and used
- **culture:** shared beliefs, customs, values and stories, and connection to Country, land, places, waterways and buildings, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
- **health and wellbeing:** physical and mental health
- **surroundings:** access to and use of ecosystem, public safety and security, access to and use of natural and built environment, aesthetic value and/or amenity
- **livelihoods:** how people sustain themselves through employment or business, their capacity to do so and whether disadvantage is experienced
- **decision-making systems:** extent community can have a say in decisions that affect their lives, access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms.

Identification of the Project's potential social impacts and benefits was completed through several complementary approaches, helping to triangulate the findings and confirm accuracy. These approaches included consideration of:

- environmental impacts – review of similar projects in the area, as well as available academic and grey literature to identify potential impacts
- local plans and policies – findings from the review aided to contextualise and understand the local priorities as well as to identify local values
- the existing social environment – demographic and social analysis in the form of a social baseline study
- feedback generated through stakeholder engagement including findings from SIA field studies along with broader engagement undertaken as part of the EIS process
- findings from other technical disciplines that contributed to the EIS were reviewed and potential social impacts defined. In EIS Appendix order, these included:
 - G Surface water impact assessment (EMM 2023)
 - H Groundwater impact assessment (EMM 2023)
 - J Biodiversity development assessment report (EMM 2023)
 - K Aquatic ecology assessment (Austral Research and Consulting, 2023)
 - L Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment (ACHA) (EMM 2023)
 - N Economic impact assessment (AEC Group 2023)

- O Noise and vibration impact assessment (EMM 2023)
- P Air quality and greenhouse gas impact assessment (EMM 2023)
- Q Visual impact assessment (EMM 2023)
- R Traffic and transport impact assessment (EMM 2023)
- S Historic heritage impact assessment (EMM 2023)
- U Agricultural impact statement (Minesoils Pty Ltd 2023)
- X Bushfire impact assessment (Cool Burn 2022)
- Z Mine closure and rehabilitation strategy (EMM 2023)

Drawing upon the primary and secondary research outlined above, social impacts specific to the Project were identified under the following themes:

- decision making systems
- housing and accommodation
- economy
- services
- transport
- surroundings
- water
- cumulative impacts.

A full description of each social impact is provided in Chapter 6 of this report.

d Stage 4 – Social risk assessment

This stage involved the systematic assessment of each identified social impact to predict the nature and scale of potential social risk associated with construction and operation of the Project. The risk approach adopted assesses the consequence and likelihood of potential positive and negative social impacts with and without mitigation. The social risk assessment matrix including the assessment framework, is provided in the SIA Guideline Technical Supplement (DPE, 2021b) and presented in Figure 2.2.

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

Source: SIA Guideline Technical Supplement, Social impact significance matrix

Figure 2.2 Social impact assessment matrix

e Stage 5 – Social impact mitigation and management

A mitigation and management framework was prepared with consideration of all potential social impacts and benefits to allow for the identification of:

- required impact mitigation measures
- enhancement measures to maximise potential benefits
- partnership opportunities to manage broader, cumulative effects.

Findings from Stages 1–5 were used to distil and analyse recommendations for the SIA report using a multidisciplinary approach led by EMM’s social scientists supported by environmental advisers.

f Stage 6 – SIA reporting

Development of this SIA technical report and internal peer review were conducted by EMM’s social scientists and environmental scientists.

2.2 Research limitations

This SIA has been based on the best available information relevant to the SEARs specific to the Project.

The SIA assessment is based on the current Project design. It has been noted that while Project components are generally fixed, some refinements to the physical layout or design of certain components of the Project may be required following further investigation and design. This may require further assessment to ensure the SIA assesses the social impacts and benefits of the final design adequately. The objective is to ensure that the final design can meet construction requirements while continuing to minimise social and environmental impacts and deliver benefits.

The SIA relies on several assumptions regarding workforce estimates and the associated accommodation strategy that will be refined during later stages of Project planning and development. The outcomes of the impact assessment and related mitigation strategies may differ upon confirming detailed Project plans.

Other assumptions and limitations of the research include:

- A key source of data describing social conditions is the ABS Census of Population and Housing, the latest of which was in 2021. There may have been changes to social characteristics since this census event. A consideration is that the 2021 Census occurred during the height of COVID epidemic restrictions which may have impacted upon socio-economic trends and characteristics as recorded.
- Social infrastructure reviewed in the social baseline predominantly considers government-provided facilities or services. In some instances, it is possible that local communities access services through private providers for which data is not available.
- Data presented from the SIA field study program is based on the interviewee's knowledge and experience and on their willingness to participate and share data openly. The data collected through the SIA engagement process may not be representative of the perspectives of all community members.
- During stakeholder interviews data is recorded in note form by the SIA specialist conducting the interview. Comments and quotes in this report are summarised as accurately as possible but may not be verbatim.
- The community survey was published through a variety of forums; however feedback is limited to those who chose to participate and may not be fully representative of broader community sentiment.
- Potential social impacts have been informed by evidence from primary and secondary data and engagement sources, including:
 - in-depth interviews conducted by EMM's social scientists
 - academic, government, and grey literature (research that has not been published commercially); examples include reports, working papers, government documents, white papers and evaluations, and
 - baseline data.

3 SIA context and scope

As outlined in the SIA Guideline, scoping is the first phase of SIA and focuses on gaining an appreciation of the social context and the nature of the Project in order to complete an initial assessment of the potential impacts and benefits which need to be taken forward for more detailed assessment in the SIA.

This section provides a summary of key features of the area within which the Project would be developed, details of what the Project will entail, the policy and planning context and the preliminary impacts identified in the SIA Scoping Report which was submitted to DPE to inform definition of the SEARs.

3.1 SIA context

3.1.1 Key features of the area

The CGO is located on the central western plains of NSW which includes within the Bland Shire Council, Forbes Shire Council and Lachlan Shire Council areas. . The land surrounding the mine is flat to gently undulating primarily supporting agricultural uses with scattered remnants of native vegetation.

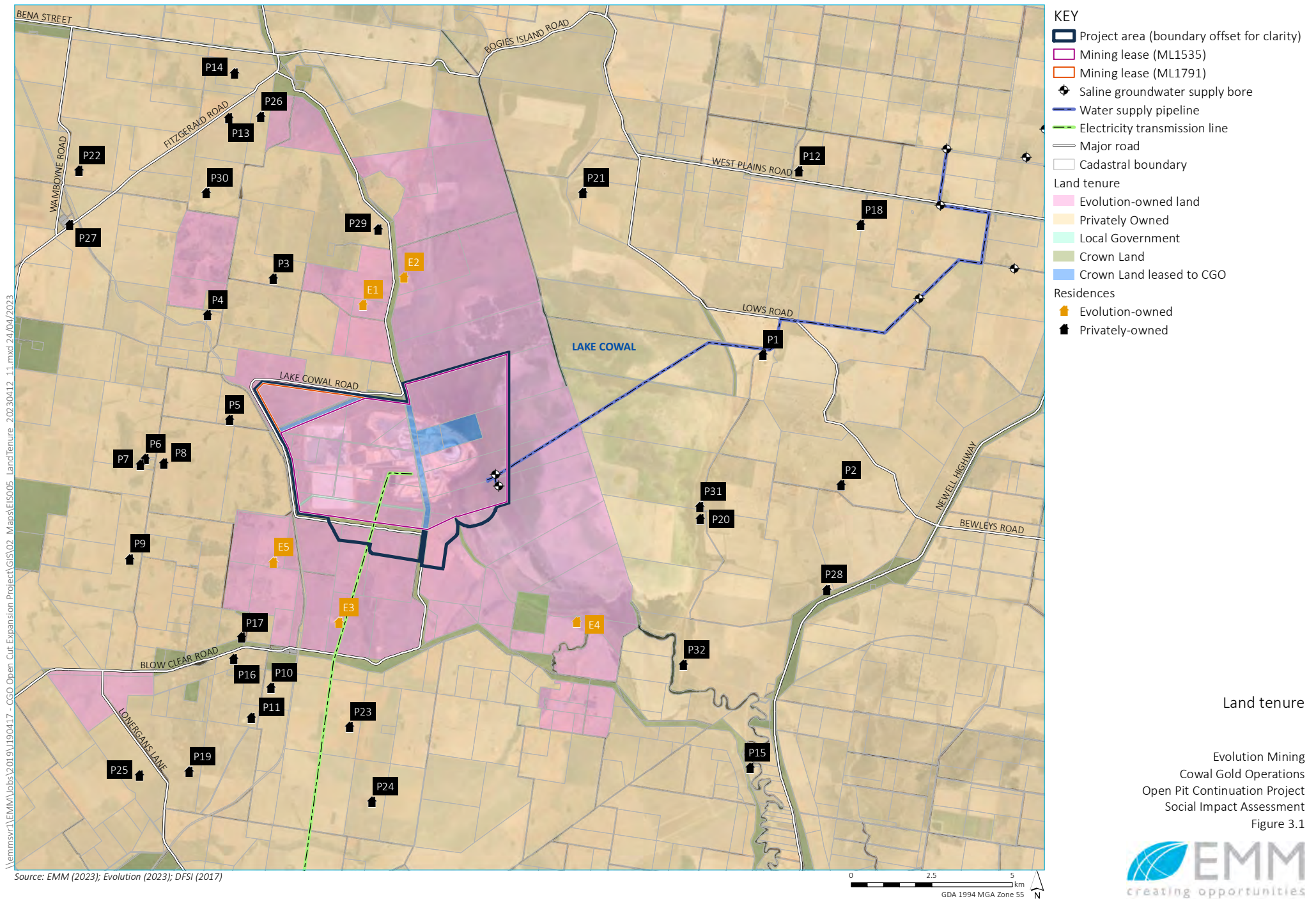
The Project area is bordered to the east by Lake Cowal, which is the dominant local feature in the area. Lake Cowal is a natural, ephemeral freshwater lake. In a regional context the lake forms part of the Wilbertroy-Cowal Wetlands located on the Jemalong Plain (refer to Figure 1.1).

Lake Cowal falls within the traditional country of the Wiradjuri peoples, the largest indigenous language group in NSW.

Lake Cowal is the largest inland lake in NSW. When the lake is full, it provides habitat for a range of migratory birds and other fauna. The lake is an overflow system which is filled by Bland Creek and/or by the occasional flooding of the Lachlan River and then spills into Nerang Cowal.

When dry, the lakebed has been historically used for broad-acre cropping for grain crops including wheat, sunflowers, barley and sorghum along with the grazing of sheep and cattle. Evolution owns 11,229.23 ha of land surrounding the mining lease area. This land provides a buffer between mining activities and surrounding agricultural uses.

The area surrounding the mine is sparsely populated, with residences located on large agricultural properties. There are a total of 32 privately owned residences and five residences owned by Evolution within approximately 10 km of the site. The nearest private residence is located approximately 1.2 km from the Project Area. Land tenure is depicted in Figure 3.1, with privately owned residents identified with a 'P' and Evolution owned residences identified with an 'E'.



3.2 Project description

3.2.1 Key Project elements

The key Project elements for which approval is sought are summarised in Table 3.1. Other than those set out in the Table, all activities that are currently approved under the existing CGO approvals are intended to continue.

Table 3.1 Key Project elements

Project element	Existing approved operations	Summary of the Project
Project area	The development consent boundary of DA 14/98 essentially follows the existing MLs. It should be noted the existing DA 14/98 development consent boundary also encompasses the water supply pipeline and Bland Creek Paleochannel Borefield.	Expansion of the existing development consent boundary to the south of the ML 1535 to accommodate the southern extent of the LPB, soil stockpiles, realigned UCDS and ancillary mining infrastructure. The water supply pipeline will be realigned within the additional disturbance area (refer Figure 3.2). There will be no other changes to the water supply pipeline and no changes to the Bland Creek Paleo Channel Borefield.
Disturbance area	Existing and approved disturbance area as shown on Figure 1.2	An additional disturbance area of approximately 1030 ha to accommodate Project components (refer Figure 3.2).
Life of mine	Operations are approved until 31 December 2040.	Proposed extension of mine life to approximately 2042.
Mining extent and method	Open pit: single open pit developed via conventional open-pit mining encompassing drill, blast, load and haul operations, with an approximate maximum area of 131 ha and final depth of -331 mAHD. Underground: top down SLOS to a depth of -850 m AHD with approximately 1,106 stopes developed over the life of the mine. Backfilling of stopes with cemented paste.	Development of new satellite open pits (E46, GR and E41) to the north and south of the existing E42 open pit. Proposed expansion of existing E42 open pit to the east and south (refer Figure 3.2) No change to open pit mining method or underground mining method or extent.
Ore production	Open pit – approximately 167 Mt of ore over the life of approved open pit mining at CGO. Underground – approximately 27 Mt of ore over the life of approved underground mining at CGO extracted at a rate of up to 2.6 Mtpa of ore.	Open pit – an additional approximately 112 Mt of ore over the life of the Project. No change to ore production from the underground.
Ore processing	Gold is extracted from the ore at the processing plant using a conventional carbon-in-leach cyanide leaching circuit. Ore is processed at a rate up to 9.8 Mtpa. Processing of approximately 39.3Mt of mineralised material.	No change.
Gold production	Approximately 7.9 million ounces (Moz) over the mine life.	An additional approximately 4.7 Moz over the life of the Project.
Lake isolation system	Lake isolation system (comprising the temporary isolation bund, lake protection bund and perimeter waste rock emplacement).	Modification of the lake isolation system to the north and south of the existing LPB to maintain separation and mutual protection between Lake Cowal and CGO (refer Figure 3.2).

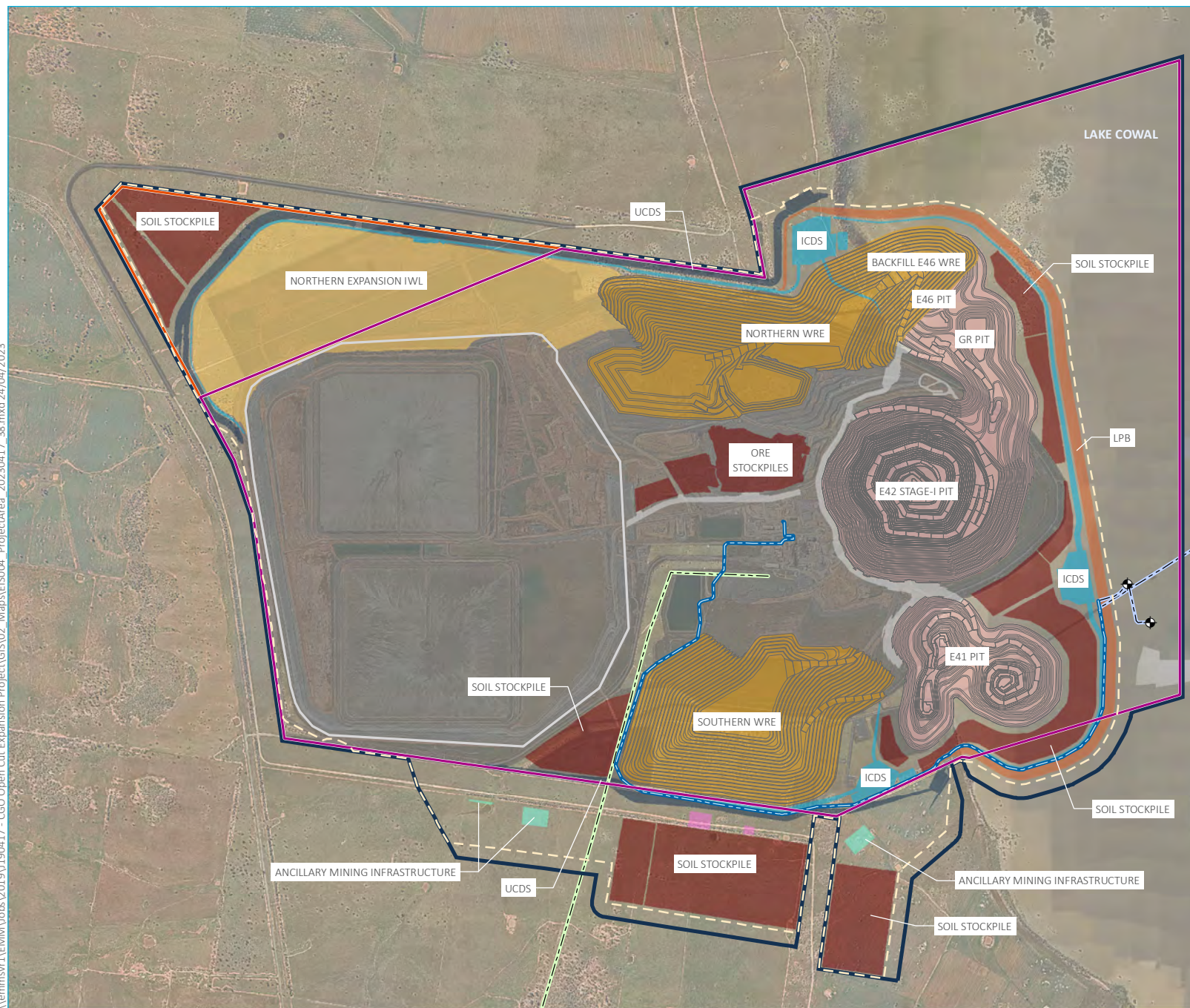
Table 3.1 **Key Project elements**

Project element	Existing approved operations	Summary of the Project
Management of waste rock	Open pit operations: Approximately 299 Mt of waste rock over the life of CGO. Underground operations: Approximately 5.74 Mt of waste rock over the life of CGO. Waste rock is emplaced in the Northern, Southern and Perimeter waste rock emplacements (WREs) over the life of the CGO, and it is used to form the perimeter of the IWL. The Northern WRE has an approved maximum height of 308 m AHD and the Southern WRE has an approved maximum height of 283 m AHD.	Approximately an additional 266 Mt of waste rock will be generated. No change to generation of waste rock from underground operations. The Perimeter WRE will be removed to accommodate the expanded LPB and new open pits, E42 cutback. The existing Northern and Southern WREs will be expanded to accommodate the additional waste rock. There will be no change to the approved maximum height of the Northern WRE (ie 308 m AHD). The expanded Southern WRE will have a maximum height of 308 m AHD Following the extraction of ore the proposed E46 pit will be backfilled and form an additional WRE merging with the Northern WRE
Mineralised material stockpiling	Temporary stockpiling of mineralised material on the Northern WRE to a maximum design height of approximately 320 m AHD. This material will be processed and the stockpile will be progressively removed to the height of the approved waste emplacement.	No change.
Tailings management	Tailings are deposited in the IWL which encompasses the two original tailings storage facilities (TSFs). The original northern TSF (NTSF) and southern TSF (STSF) are approved to be constructed to approximately 240 m AHD and 248 m AHD, respectively. These TSFs are also approved to be combined to form the IWL, which will provide a life of mine tailings strategy. The IWL is approved to be developed to a final height of 246 m AHD.	Expansion of the IWL to the northwest to accommodate tailings from processing ore from the new open pits and E42 cutback. The maximum height of the IWL will be 245 m AHD.
Ancillary surface infrastructure	A range of ancillary surface infrastructure is operated to support open-cut pit and underground mining operations, including that related to administration, water management, maintenance, pipelines, magazines and other functions.	Development of additional surface infrastructure and augmentation of existing infrastructure, including (but not limited to): administration facilities, car parking, helipad, magazine, warehouses and stores, vehicle washdown facilities, heavy vehicle and light vehicle maintenance workshop and maintenance bays, control room, fuel farm, core yards and drill sheds, hard stands and go lines, ablutions and changerooms, communications infrastructure, access roads, water storages and other minor ancillary infrastructure.
Soil stockpiles	Development of soil stockpiles within ML 1535 and ML 1971.	Development of new stockpiles within the additional disturbance area to the south of ML 1535. This will require a new tenement(s) under the <i>Mining Act 1992</i>.

Table 3.1 **Key Project elements**

Project element	Existing approved operations	Summary of the Project
Water management	The existing CGO water management infrastructure is comprised of the following key components: • Up-catchment Diversion System (UCDS) • In-catchment Diversion System (ICDS) (including the contained water storages) • lake isolation system (comprising the temporary isolation bund, lake protection bund and perimeter waste rock emplacement) • integrated erosion, sediment and salinity control system • open pit sump and dewatering borefield • pipeline from the tailings de-slimmer to the paste fill plant to send tailings to the paste fill plant and a return water pipeline from the paste fill plant to the processing facility. Augmentation of other on-site water storages from time to time depending on water supply and on-site requirements.	The Project will include the following: • realignment of the UCDS around new project components • adjusting the ICDS including removing replacing some existing and/or approved contained water storages with new contained water storages to assist with on-site water management and maximise onsite water conservation. The Project will continue to allow the augmentation of other on-site water storages from time to time depending on water supply and on-site requirements.
Water supply	Water is preferentially sourced from internal sources, and supplemented with water from external sources as follows: • internal sources: – recycled water from the TSF/IWL – open-cut pit sump and pit dewatering borefield – rainfall runoff from mine waste rock emplacements, and other areas within the site which is collected as part of the ICDS and contained site water storages • external sources: – Eastern saline borefield (ESB) located approximately 10 km east of Lake Cowal's eastern shoreline – saline groundwater supply borefield located in the south-east of ML 1535. – BCPB which comprises four production bores within the Bland Creek Palaeochannel, located approximately 20 km north-east of the CGO – water accessed from the Lachlan River under licence, which is supplied via a pipeline from the Jemalong Irrigation Channel.	The Project will not change the internal or external water supply sources for CGO or the order in which they are preferentially sourced. The operational water balance completed for the Project predicted a slight decrease on the reliance of external water sources during median rainfall conditions due to an increase in the amount of water reclaimed from the IWL and an increase in the catchment of CGO as a result of the Project (ie higher run off volumes captured in the CGO water management system).
Exploration	Exploration activities undertaken within ML1535 in accordance with existing tenement.	No change.
Biodiversity Offset Strategy	The Biodiversity Offset Strategy is shown conceptually in Appendix 4 of Development Consent (DA 14/98), and generally involves securing six offset sites.	Additional biodiversity offsets will be required under the <i>NSW Biodiversity and Conservation Act 2016</i> (BC Act) and <i>NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> (FM Act) for the Project to offset the Project's impact on biodiversity.
Power supply	Electricity to the site is supplied via a 132 kV electricity transmission line from Temora, approximately 90 km south of the CGO.	No change.

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KEY

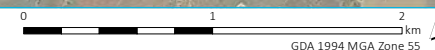
- Project area
- Additional disturbance area
- Approved disturbance area
- Approved IWL footprint
- Mining lease (ML1535) (offset for clarity)
- Mining lease (ML1791) (offset for clarity)
- Saline groundwater supply bore
- Water supply pipeline
- Electricity transmission line
- Conceptual project infrastructure**
- Open cut pit footprint
- Northern expansion IWL
- Waste rock emplacement (WRE)
- Lake protection bund (LPB)
- Stockpile
- Up catchment diversion system (UCDS)
- Internal Catchment Drainage System (ICDS)
- Ancillary mining infrastructure
- Magazine
- Road
- Water supply pipeline realignment

Project overview

Evolution Mining
Cowal Gold Operations
Open Pit Continuation Project
Social Impact Assessment
Figure 3.2



Source: EMM (2023); Evolution (2023); DFSI (2017); Nearmap (2021)



3.2.2 Project timeframes and schedule

The Project will extend open pit mining at CGO by approximately 10 years and total mine life by approximately 2 years to 2042.

This EIS refers to Project years rather than calendar years. Year 1, or commencement of the Project, will start when any of the construction activities related to the establishment of the required mine support infrastructure for the Project commence.

The Project will include a construction phase of approximately two years. Construction activities carried out during the construction phase will include construction of the expanded LPB, realigned portions of the UCDS and augmentation of the ICDS including construction of additional contained water storages. Operational activities, as currently approved (ie E42 pit operations, IWL development, ore processing, tailings disposal, underground operations and ancillary mining activities) will continue under the new development consent during this construction phase.

Following the official Project construction phase, ongoing construction activities will be conducted throughout the Project life as required, such as progressive development of the IWL embankments and ongoing augmentation of site access roads or the surface water management system as required. As is currently approved, these activities will be carried out by CGO's operational workforce will be considered part of the Project's operational phase as they will support ongoing CGO operations. Accordingly, these activities have therefore been assessed as operational activities in the relevant technical assessments. And indicative project schedule is provided in Figure 3.3.

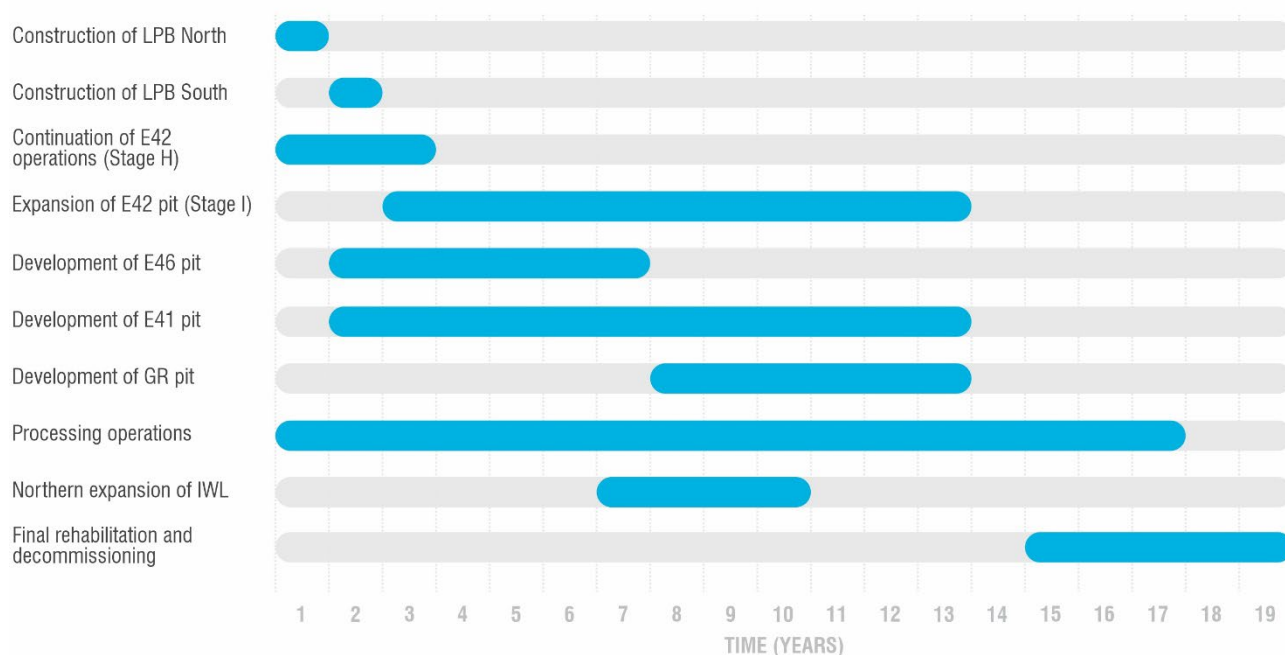


Figure 3.3 Indicative Project schedule

3.2.3 Project workforce requirements

i Construction workforce

The construction workforce will consist of machine operators, site foremen, labourers, project engineers, project managers and ancillary skilled tradespeople (electricians, concreters, plumbers etc.). The estimated size of the required construction workforce equates an average of 64 full time employees (FTE) across the 2 year construction period consisting of:

- an average of 71 FTE's in Year 1, with a peak of 102 workers
- an average of 51 FTE's in Year 2, with a peak of 83 workers.

As outlined in Figure 3.2, workforce numbers will vary across the construction period as different Project components are constructed. Predicted workforce peaks will occur in month 7 (102 workers) and month 12 (83 workers); and then tapering off from month 18 through to completion in month 24.



Figure 3.4 Number of workers throughout the construction period

ii Work hours and transportation

Project construction associated with the LPB and the UCDS will generally be carried out between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm seven days a week. From time to time, construction activities may extend into the evening (up to 10:00 pm) where necessary to meet the construction schedule.

This would result in two hourly peaks of construction related traffic movements, travelling inbound to the mine site between 5:00 am–6:00 am and travelling outbound from the mine site between 6:00 pm–7:00 pm.

A combination of private vehicle and project provided shuttle buses will be used for the transportation of the construction workforce to and from the work site to minimise individual light vehicle trips.

Project provided shuttle buses will be used to transport workers based in West Wyalong to and from the CGO site. Carpooling will also be encouraged.

From time to time, it may be necessary to extend construction hours into the evening period (ie until 10:00 pm) to maintain the construction schedule should extended wet weather or other delays impact construction activities.

iii Operations

The Project does not propose any change to the current open pit operations workforce, including processing and ancillary support workforce. The Project will also not change the approved operational underground mine workforce.

CGO currently has an operational workforce of approximately 510 personnel. Within this number there are currently around 230 personnel directly employed to support existing open pit mining operations (EMM, 2020) Mining operations, ore processing and ancillary mining activities are approved to be undertaken 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

a Shut down periods

Ongoing maintenance of mine processing equipment requires regular ‘shut down’ events. Generally, there is a requirement for two major shutdowns per year for a duration of 7 to 14 days each. From the review of workforce and accommodation data for the last five major shutdowns, it is evident that these can involve up to 250 – 300 contractors.

3.2.4 Site access

The Project would not change the preferred and alternate transport routes as outlined in CGO’s approved Transport Management Plan (Evolution 2022) with all operation and (Cowal Gold Operations , 2022) construction employee traffic movements and majority of site deliveries accessing CGO via these transport routes. These preferred transport routes are as follows:

- From West Wyalong: Ungarie Road, Wamboyne Road, Blow Clear Road and Bonehams Lane.
- From Condobolin: the CGO is accessed by Gipps Way, Burcher Road, Bena Street and Lake Cowal Road. Light vehicle access is from Condobolin is accessed by Gipps Way, Burcher Road, Bena Street and Lake Cowal Road, Fitzgerald Road, Lake Cowal Road and internal mine access road.
- From Forbes: the mine is accessed by Newell Highway, West Plains Road and Bogies Island Road, Lake Cowal Road, Fitzgerald Road, Lake Cowal Road and internal mine access road.

It is noted that since approval of the Underground Development and Modification 16, Evolution has entered into a lease in perpetuity with Bland Shire Council over the portion of Lake Cowal Road south of the Lake Cowal Road/Bonehams Lane intersection which runs east west through Lot 100 DP 1059150 (ie along the southern boundary of ML1535). As such this portion of Lake Cowal Road (ie from the Lake Cowal Road/Bonehams Lane/internal mine access road intersection) is now closed to the public and is effectively a private road.

Construction related deliveries and construction workforce-related heavy vehicle and light vehicle traffic will travel along the approved transport routes above and predominately access the site via the existing secondary access off the closed portion of Lake Cowal Road within the Project area to the south of the existing ML. This will minimise interactions between operational and construction traffic movements.

Operational Project traffic, as currently approved, will continue to access the CGO predominately via the approved primary site access off the Bonehams Lane/Lake Cowal Road intersection.

3.3 Policy and planning context

This section provides a summary of the relevant policy, plans and strategies that inform an appreciation of potential social impacts and benefits associated with the Project along with potential mitigation and management strategies. A more detailed discussion of the policy and planning context is provided as Appendix C. The Project's overall consistency with relevant policies and plans is also addressed in Section 2 of the EIS.

3.3.1 State

The Project is classified as State significant development (SSD) pursuant to Schedule 1 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 (Planning Systems SEPP). Accordingly, approval for the Project is required under Part 4, Division 4.1 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

Applications for SSD under Part 4, Division 4.1 of the EP&A Act must be accompanied by an environmental impact statement (EIS) prepared in accordance with the Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs). As outlined in Section 1.3 of this report, the SIA has been prepared in accordance with the relevant SEARs and Guidelines.

i Strategies and plans

Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW

The *Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW* (NSW Government, 2018b) guides the long-term economic vision and associated strategies for the South West Slopes region and Mid-Lachlan region.

a The South West Slopes region

The South West Slopes region covers five local government areas (LGAs), including Bland Shire.

As outlined in the *Economic Development Strategy*, the vision for the South West Slopes Region is for 'a thriving community of choice, working together to leverage its endowments and core competencies in agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism to achieve sustainable growth' (NSW Government, 2018a).

The strategy highlights the mining sector as one of the key elements requiring support and growth. The Strategy identifies five elements encompassing fifty-three actions for governments, of which the following are relevant to the Project:

- Element 1 – Support and grow the Agriculture, Food Production and Mining sectors.
- Element 2 – Improve utilities, energy and telecommunications to grow the Region's core industries, as well as business start-ups throughout the Region.
- Element 3 – Drive economic growth in the Region's core sectors by upskilling the workforce and facilitating innovation.

Regarding Element 1, the strategy states that the mining sector is a key driver of the Region's economy, particularly in generated value outputs and exports. The operation and performance of the sector is underpinned by a strong transport and logistics sector. The Strategy plans for the expansion and growth of the mining sector which will require maintenance and development of the existing transport and logistics network. These are summarised in Appendix C, Table C.2.

b The Mid-Lachlan Region

The Mid-Lachlan region covers three local government areas (LGAs), including Forbes and Lachlan Shires.

The vision for the Mid-Lachlan Region is ‘to be a progressive and prosperous regional community that leverages its competitive advantages in agriculture, mining and tourism, and to embrace industry growth and create job opportunities whilst supporting the thriving economy’ (NSW Government, 2018b).

The *Economic Development Strategy* highlights the mining sector in four of the six key elements of the region providing opportunities to expand current and future operations. The elements relevant to the Project include:

- Element 2 – Providing opportunities to expand current and future mining operations.
- Element 3 – Improve water security for the agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism industries.
- Element 4 – Improve the availability of skilled labour for high value mining, construction, transport and manufacturing industries.
- Element 5 – Improve access to markets for agriculture, mining and manufacturing by investing in intermodal network resilience and reliability.

Regarding Element 2, the economic structure and population of the region rely heavily on the mining Industry. The future of mining will focus on supporting current assets and developing additional opportunities that provide new, high value products and generate skilled employment opportunities. Additionally, the focus is on the upgrade of infrastructure and transport networks. These are summarised in Appendix C, Table C.2.

ii State guidelines

a SIA Guideline 2021

The SIA Guideline (DPE, 2021a) provides direction on assessing social impacts arising from State significant projects in the context of the environmental impact assessment process under the EP&A Act. The Guideline states that SIA is the process of identifying, predicting, evaluating and developing responses to the social impacts of a proposed State significant project which requires proportionate and tailored assessment to suit each project’s context and the nature and scale of its potential impacts and benefits. The SIA Guideline requires that all State significant projects have a clear and consistent approach to assessing social impacts. The SIA Technical Supplement 2021 accompanies the SIA Guideline to provide specific methods and techniques for the identification and assessment of social impacts and benefits (DPE, 2021b).

b Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects

The Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects 2021 (engagement guideline) (DPE, 2021c) describes the requirements for effective engagement on State significant projects in NSW. The engagement guideline outlines requirements for proponents to engage with the community, councils and government agencies at each phase of the environmental assessment. The engagement guideline also outlines the actions that DPE will take and identifies opportunities for community participation during each phase. It emphasises early planning and engagement, effective engagement, proportionate engagement, innovation, and transparency. The primary audience of this guideline is proponents and their teams, who are responsible for engaging with the community and other stakeholders during each phase of the environmental assessment process. The engagement guideline also provides the community and other stakeholders with a better understanding of how, when and on what they can provide feedback, and how it will be addressed by proponents and decision-makers.

3.3.2 Regional

a Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036

The *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036* (DPE, 2017) guides the land use planning priorities in the Riverina Murray Region, which covers 20 local government areas (LGAs), including Bland Shire.

The vision identifies that the Riverina Murray is a diversified economy founded on Australia's food bowl, iconic waterways and a network of vibrant connected communities.

The plan is the strategic planning framework to grow the region's cities and local centres. It supports developing a strong, diverse and competitive economy central to building prosperity and resilience in the region and the protection of high-value environmental assets. The Plan presents four key goals are:

- Goal 1: a growing and diverse economy – Direction 12: Sustainably manage mineral resources.
- Goal 2: a healthy environment with pristine waterways.
- Goal 3: efficient transport and infrastructure networks.
- Goal 4: strong, connected and healthy communities – Direction 22 – Promote the growth of regional cities and local centres.

The plan identifies economic opportunities for Bland LGA in agribusinesses, mining and tourism. Mining is noted as a priority growth sector, and the plan recognises that the region contains valuable mineral resources which need to be protected and not sterilised. Goal 1 (Direction 12) of the plan aims to achieve 'a growing and diverse economy' which includes the sustainable management and extraction of mineral resources. Further, the plan highlights the significant economic and employment benefits that the mineral resources sector provides to local communities and the broader region. The Project's contribution to achieving the overall goals of the Regional Plan is discussed in Appendix C.

b Draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041

The *Draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041* (DPE, 2022) is the five-year update to the *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036*.

The draft plan recognises that major projects and industries require temporary and permanent workers during construction and operation. These workers contribute to local economies and communities through direct and indirect employment opportunities and support growth and other investments across the region.

The draft Plan notes that workers will require housing in the region's towns and villages and this will require to be careful management during the construction of large-scale developments, such as renewable energy projects, mining, Murray River bridge crossings and Inland Rail. Seasonal agricultural employment and tourism also creates demand for short-term accommodation.

Actions include that DPE are to liaise with the Department of Regional NSW and councils to quantify the cumulative housing demand from major projects and infrastructure projects and for the planning system to determine suitable planning mechanisms to ensure the Project design and development assessment process considers these impacts early. Further information regarding Project alignment with the goals of the Regional Plan is discussed in Appendix C.

c Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2036

The *Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2036* (DPE, 2017) guides the land use planning priorities in the Central-West Orana Region for the next 20 years. It covers 20 LGAs, including the Forbes Shire and the Lachlan Shire.

The Regional Plan is currently undergoing its first five-year review to reset its priorities and extend its reach to 2041. The key goals of the plan are similar as those presented in the Riverina-Murray Regional Plan, in that the focus of the strategies and actions are to ensure the continuation of a diverse and strong economy using existing established industry as a base. These are summarised in Appendix C.

3.3.3 Local planning context

The Project is located in Bland Shire Council and borders the Lachlan Shire Council and Forbes Shire Council. The plans and strategies supported by local government are representative of the needs of local communities and identify strategies and opportunities to further improve the liveability and resilience of these communities.

Bland Shire Council, Lachlan Shire Council and Forbes Shire Council provide strategic plans and statutory directions to define and deliver their vision for the future of the community. These are summarised in the LGA Planning Context Appendix C.

3.4 SIA scoping report

As per the SIA Guideline (2021a), the purpose of the SIA Scoping Report presented the findings of initial Project consultation with the affected stakeholders by outlining the social context, the nature and scale of Project activities which might impact upon the receiving social environment and subsequent definition of the SIA study areas (social locality).

The Social Impact Assessment Scoping Report for the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project (EMM, 2022a) was submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) as part of the Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project Scoping Report (EMM, 2022b). Applying an approach consistent with the SIA Guideline (2021a), scoping is a key phase of the SIA process and provides an understanding of what the Project entails and how it might interact with the social environment.

The SIA Scoping report defined the following:

- potentially affected stakeholders
- an understanding of the SIA study area
- potential, negative and positive social impacts for further investigation
- the level of assessment required to address potential social impacts
- the methodology to be adopted in completion of the SIA.

The key role of the SIA Scoping Report is to inform the scope and content of the SEARS as outlined in Section 1.3 and ultimately, to ensure that government and the community is fully informed of potential social impacts and benefits in its decision-making in relation to the Project.

The SIA Scoping Report for the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project (EMM, 2022b) is provided as Appendix D.

Within the SIA Scoping Report, Section 6.1 provides a summary of key matters for consideration in the SIA. These matters are addressed in this SIA report.

Impacts from the SIA scoping report or from community engagement which were found to require no further assessment are outlined in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 **Matters identified in the SIA scoping report or through community engagement which require no further assessment**

Impact	Reason no further assessment is required
Housing and accommodation of the operations workforce	As per the SEARs, the SIA is required to "...consider workforce accommodation." As the Project proposes no change to the existing open pit operations workforce, there will be no impact on housing and accommodation. Subsequently the SIA only considers direct accommodation requirements associated with the Project construction workforce.
Reduced local connectivity	The Traffic Impact Assessment (EMM 2023, Chapter 6) states the construction traffic of the Project is not expected to have adverse impacts to the regional or local traffic or road networks. Therefore, reduced local connectivity is not considered a matter to be further assessed.
Emergency services	As discussed in Section 5.3.3, engagement with community providers cited no concern on service capacity for police or fire emergency services. The SES were not available to be interviewed at the time this report was being completed due to flood emergencies in the area, but it is not expected that the Project will impact SES operations.
Project induced population growth affecting community cohesion and composition	Project induced population change can adversely affect community cohesion. As the Project will not result in any change to the operations workforce, there is no expected long-term population change or impact on community composition or cohesion.
Fears for personal safety and security due to an influx of construction workers	The majority of the (non-local) construction workforce (peak of 81 workers) will be accommodated in West Wyalong when on shift. It is not expected that the temporary accommodation of this workforce will have any impact on perceptions of safety as the community of West Wyalong is highly familiar with the influx of temporary workforces (such as the six-monthly maintenance shutdowns at CGO).

4 Social baseline

This section provides a summary of baseline social conditions relevant to the SIA. It outlines existing social characteristics with reference to specific social indicators across the following key themes:

- population and demography
- vulnerability and vulnerable groups
- labour market and income
- local business and industry
- educational attainment
- housing and accommodation
- community health and wellbeing
- social infrastructure and services.

A key source of baseline information is data collected through ABS Censuses (ABS 2021, 2016 and 2011).

ABS statistical geographies for respective SIA study areas are summarised below:

- Local study area: Bland LGA, Forbes LGA and Lachlan LGA- ABS 'LGA' data category.
- Key townships: West Wyalong/Wyalong, Forbes, and Condobolin- ABS 'UCL' data category.
- Regional study area: NSW Central West Region- ABS 'SA4' data category.
- State: NSW-ABS 'STE' data category.

The SIA study areas are represented in Figure 1.3 in Section 1.4 of this report.

Provided below is a summary of the complete SIA baseline which is provided as Appendix E.

4.1 Community setting

The closest town and key service centre relevant to the Project is West Wyalong. It is approximately 38 km south west of the Project area on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri People in the Bland LGA.

The community of over 3,000 residents enjoys a safe, friendly and relaxed environment, providing a range of educational, medical and business facilities. Residents pride themselves on community spirit and a heritage founded on agriculture. Gold was first discovered in what is now the Bland Shire in 1893, and Wyalong was declared a colony in 1899. While mining remains a key contributor to the local economy, West Wyalong has also become the main service centre for agriculture in the surrounding district. The Bland Shire is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the NSW, with cereals and sheep being the major commodities, followed by poultry and other livestock (Bland Shire Council, 2023). Other key sectors include:

- transport and warehousing
- wholesale trade
- education

- retail.

Economic drivers and opportunities in Bland Shire include:

- Transport and logistics – Bland Shire is well positioned within South-Western NSW on the northern edge of the Riverina Murray region and West Wyalong lies at the cross-roads of the Newell and Midwestern Highways and Goldfields Way.
- Agricultural value-adding activities –manufacturing, retail, transport and agribusiness support services, which can leverage off Bland Shire’s mature agricultural industries.
- Mining support industries – including engineering and manufacturing, which can support local mining operations.
- Tourism – Bland Shire’s scenery, location on major travel routes and relaxed lifestyle provide an opportunity for tourism industry development.
- Renewable energy – the Bland Shire offers opportunities and potential investment in small to larger scale solar and biomass energy projects (Bland Shire Council, 2023).

Other key towns are Forbes (98 km north-east from West Wyalong), which is the second closest population centre to the Project site and in the Forbes Shire LGA. Condobolin is located 85 km north-west of West Wyalong in the Lachlan LGA. Both of these communities are rural agricultural centres offering a range of infrastructure and services.

4.2 Population and demography

The area immediately surrounding the Project site is primarily used for agricultural purposes and supports very low population density.

According to the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, the local area has a combined total population of 20,960. The largest proportion of this population resides in Forbes LGA (9,319 residents), followed by Lachlan LGA (6,094 residents) and Bland LGA (5,547 residents). The regional area had a 2021 population of 212,962 people.

Key townships had a combined total population of 12,605:

- 3,189 people reside in West Wyalong, representing approximately 57.5% of the Bland LGA population
- 6,837 people reside in Forbes which represents approximately 73.4% of Forbes LGA population
- 2,579 people in Condobolin equivalent to 42.3% of Lachlan’s LGAs population.

Between 2011 and 2021 the estimated resident population of the key townships declined by 139 people (-1.1%). Condobolin experienced a 6.4% decline in population, compared to small increases in population in West Wyalong (0.2%) and Forbes (0.5%).

During the same time period, the total population of the local area decreased by 551 residents (-2.6%). The population of Bland LGA (-5.4%) and Lachlan LGA (-4.4%) decreased, while Forbes LGA experienced positive growth of 149 residents (1.6%).

Comparison of population trends from 2011–2016 and 2016–2021 shows a general shift from population growth to decline. The exception is Lachlan LGA, which was initially in decline (-4.4% from 2011 to 2016), then stabilised (0.0% change) between 2016 and 2021. The local area (-3.6%) and key townships (-4.2%) experienced a negative growth rate and a decline in the overall population in the last four years, with the largest decrease experienced in the township of Condobolin (-10%).

Meanwhile, total population trends between 2011 and 2021 show overall growth in the regional area (8.2%) and NSW (16.7%).

Population trends within the study area are presented in Table 4.1 and Appendix E.

Table 4.1 Population trends, 2011 – 2021

Location	2011 ¹	2016	2021	Total % change 2011–2016	Total % change 2016–2021	Total % change 2011–2021
Bland LGA	5,865	5,955	5,547	1.5%	-6.9%	-5.4%
Forbes LGA	9,170	9,587	9,319	4.5%	-2.8%	1.6%
Lachlan LGA	6,476	6,194	6,194	-4.4%	0.0%	-4.4%
Local area	21,511	21,736	20,960	1.0%	-3.6%	-2.6%
West Wyalong UCL	3,183	3,264	3,189	2.5%	-2.3%	0.2%
Forbes UCL	6,806	7,035	6,837	3.4%	-2.8%	0.5%
Condobolin UCL	2,755	2,864	2,579	4.0%	-10.0%	-6.4%
Key townships	12,744	13,163	12,605	3.3%	-4.2%	-1.1%
Regional area	196,742	206,155	212,962	4.8%	3.3%	8.2%
NSW	6,917,658	7,480,228	8,072,163	8.1%	7.9%	16.7%

Source: ABS 2011; ABS 2016; ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles.

According to the population projections published by DPE, between 2021 and 2041 the estimated population of the local area is expected to increase by 1,949 people, from 22,067 people in 2021 to 24,016 people in 2041. This represents a total change of 8.8%, with an average annual growth rate of 0.4% (DPE, 2022). Population projections for the study area are presented in Appendix E, Table A.3 and Figure A.4.

In Bland LGA, the population is expected to remain stable, with 6,003 residents in 2021 and 6,016 residents by 2041. This represents a total change of 0.2% and an average annual growth rate of 0.01%. Forbes LGA is predicted to have the largest increase in population from 10,023 residents in 2021 to 13,231 residents by 2041. This represents a total change of 32% and an average annual growth rate of 1.3%. Lachlan LGA is expected to experience a decrease in population for the same period of -0.8% annually.

Vulnerabilities and vulnerable groups

Vulnerability relates to a group's capacity to adapt to, or cope with, changes to their social environment (Cutter, et al., 2008). An understanding of the vulnerable groups relevant to the Project is necessary as groups who display greater levels of vulnerability are likely to experience an impact differently. For example, low-income households may have less capacity to benefit from change. Understanding vulnerability and vulnerable groups in local and regional areas facilitates understanding of the differential distribution of impacts across stakeholder groups.

There are certain demographic and social characteristics that make some groups more vulnerable than others. Broadly, social indicators associated with vulnerability include:

- Age, such as the very young and the elderly who are more likely to require care.
- Socio-economic status, such as people who are recipient to welfare and/or social housing and/or who are unemployed.

- People with a need for assistance, such as those people requiring assistance in the core activities of self-care, mobility and/or communication because of disability, long-term health condition or old age.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse populations, such as those people who do not speak English as their primary language.

Table 4.2 lists indicators of potentially vulnerable groups in the SIA study area, with data for NSW provided for comparison.

Table 4.2 Indicators of potentially vulnerable groups in the SIA study area, 2021

Indicator	Bland LGA		Forbes LGA		Lachlan LGA		Local area – total		NSW
Population	5,547		9,319		6,194		20,960		8,072,163
People aged 14 years or under	1,084	19.7%	1,850	19.9%	1,299	21.3%	4,233	20.2%	18.2%
People aged 65 years or older	1,269	22.9%	2,156	23.1%	1,307	21.5%	4,732	22.6%	17.6%
Youth (15 to 24 years)	542	9.8%	1,021	11.0%	583	9.5%	2,146	10.3%	11.8%
Renter households where rent payments are less than or equal to 30% of household income	262	67.5%	566	59.1%	395	65.7%	1,223	62.8%	56.1%
Households earning less than \$650 per week	-	23.0%	-	22.6%	-	24.9%	-	-	16.3%
People who need assistance	292	5.3%	570	6.1%	357	5.9%	1,219	5.8%	5.8%
People who reside in social housing	49	12.6%	153	16.0%	181	30.1%	383	19.7%	12.8%
Unemployed	77	2.9%	164	3.8%	144	5.4%	385	4.0%	4.9%
Households where a non-English language is used	131	2.4%	191	2.0%	209	3.4%	531	2.5%	22.4%
People who do not speak English well or not at all of the total population	12	0.2%	16	0.2%	18	0.3%	46	0.2%	3.8%

Source: ABS 2016; ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles.

Note: the people who reside in social housing represents the total number of people in State or territory housing authority and Community housing provider.

Note: 'Households earning less than \$650 per week' percentages have been calculated using Quickstats (ABS 2023), as such, number of households are not available in this table.

According to the 2021 Census, when compared to NSW, the vulnerable groups in the local area include:

- people aged 14 years or under
- people aged 65 years or older
- people who need assistance, though likely related to the growth in elderly people

- renter households where rent payments are less than or equal to 30% of household income
- households earning less than \$650 per week
- people who reside in social housing.

These groups are likely to be more vulnerable to the impacts of the Project.

4.2.1 Disability

Disability can be understood as people who need assistance in their day to day lives with any or all of the following core activities: self-care, mobility or communication because of a disability, long-term health condition (lasting 6 months or more) or old age.

In the local area, 5.8% of the population is vulnerable and has a need for assistance in one or more of the three core activities of self-care, mobility and communication due to a long-term health condition (lasting 6 months or longer), a disability (lasting 6 months or longer), or old age. This compares to a rate of 6% of the population in the key townships, and 6.4% across the regional area and 5.8% in NSW. Ready access to services may be a factor influencing rates of need for assistance. Rates of core activity need for assistance is demonstrated in Appendix E, Section A.3.5.

4.2.2 Homelessness

Homelessness can be caused by a variety of factors including poor physical or mental health which reduces a persons' ability to earn an adequate income to support themselves (AHRC, 2008). Homelessness can also lead to health problems including poor nutrition, depression, substance abuse, poor dental health, and mental health conditions (AHRC, 2008). For homeless persons, hardships with finances, transport, identification, Medicare, and difficulty with appointment maintenance/treatment plans make accessing health care services more difficult than the average person (AHRC, 2008). As such, homeless persons are at greater risk of being negatively affected by potential impacts on livelihoods, cost of living and health and wellbeing.

According to the 2016 Census, rates of homelessness in the local area are lower than NSW rates, with a rate of 18.9 persons per 10,000 across the local area compared to the NSW average of 50.4 persons per 10,000. Within the local area, the highest rate the homelessness is within Forbes LGA with 31.3 persons per 10,000. These vulnerable groups are likely to be more vulnerable to the impacts of the Project. The rate of homelessness in Forbes may reflect greater availability of social services and larger population and town centre, including homelessness services, within Forbes LGA compared to Bland LGA and Lachlan LGA. Rates of homelessness in the study area is demonstrated in Appendix E.

4.2.3 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Population

According to the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, the local area has a combined total population of 2,719 indigenous Australians. The largest population of indigenous people resides in Forbes LGA (1,236 residents), followed by Lachlan LGA (1,118 residents) and Bland LGA (365 residents) (ABS 2021). Within the LGAs, Lachlan LGA (18.3%) has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people across the study area, followed by Forbes LGA (13.3%) and Bland LGA (6.6%). Aboriginal people within the local area are likely to be more vulnerable to the impacts of the Project.

Within the key townships, Condobolin (23.9%) has a particularly high rate of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Understanding the proportion of Aboriginal people within a community is important due to their connection to land and cultural values, as well as relative socioeconomic disadvantage often experienced by Aboriginal communities across Australia compared to non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people affected by a project can be more vulnerable to social changes such as sudden influxes in a population.

4.2.4 Socio-economic disadvantage

The Social-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is an aggregated score of factors reflecting relative socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage within an area. An area with a lower SEIFA score indicates higher levels of disadvantage, less access to material and social resources, and less opportunity to participate in society. For SIA, understanding vulnerable communities or subgroups within a community is critical in considering social change processes caused by a project. Disadvantaged communities are understood to be more vulnerable to socioeconomic change experienced in their communities. The SEIFA scores are grouped by deciles, from one to ten. For example, a score of one for Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage would indicate the LGA is within the 10% most disadvantaged LGAs in NSW. SEIFA scores are developed across four summary measures:

- the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD)
- the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD)
- the Index of Economic Resources (IER)
- the Index of Education and Occupation (IEO).

Bland LGA has SEIFA rankings of 5–7 across each of the SEIFA indexes. This could indicate that these areas likely have a medium amount of people with higher education qualifications and working in skilled occupations, and a more equal amount of people with high and low incomes. A ranking of 7 for the IER in Bland LGA indicates that there is relatively greater access to economic resources in the overall area, which could indicate more households earning higher incomes and owning their own homes compared to other LGAs within NSW. Compared to Forbes LGA, the SEIFA decile rankings from 3–4 across each of the indexes and Lachlan LGA, with SEIFA decile rankings from 2–4, Bland LGA is less disadvantaged.

Lachlan LGA has the highest levels of socio-economic disadvantage and the lowest level of advantage of the three LGAs. This is reflected by Lachlan LGA having the lowest SEIFA decline for the IRSD, IRSAD, and IER. This reflects a greater proportion of low-income households, a smaller proportion of high-income households, a greater proportion of persons in low-skilled occupations such as technicians and trades workers and a higher level of disadvantage. Lachlan LGA also has the highest proportion of the population who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (18.3%), more than three times that of the Bland LGA (6.6%). For further information refer to Appendix E, Section A.3.3.

4.3 Labour market and income

There is a range of data relevant to analysis of workforce skills and capacity. The workforce for this Project is likely to be sourced from the local area, key townships, the regional study area and further afield.

4.3.1 Labour force

According to the 2021 ABS census, the estimated labour force participation in the local area was 16,724 people, 7,563 people in the key townships, and the regional area was 171,594 people. The labour force participation rate within the SIA study area indicates the local study area was 57.4%, while the key townships were 74% and the regional area was 58%.

4.3.2 Unemployment

In 2021, the total unemployment rate for the local area was 4%, while the key townships were slightly higher at 6.2%. Variation between the LGA's and key townships is outlined below:

- Bland LGA (2.9%) and West Wyalong (2.7%) have the lowest unemployment rates.
- Forbes LGA (3.8%), and the unemployment rate in Forbes is 4.5%.
- Lachlan LGA (5.4%) and Condobolin (7.0%) hold the highest rates of unemployment.

Similar trends are apparent for the youth unemployment rate. According to the 2021 ABS census, the total youth unemployment rate for the combined local study area was 6.8%. Youth unemployment rates for the key townships were at 7.3% and the regional area was at 8.3%, though they remain lower than the NSW rate (9.8%).

Within the local area (6.8%), youth unemployment in Bland LGA is low (3.8%), compared to Forbes LGA (5.8%) and Lachlan LGA (12.4%), which holds the highest rates of youth who are unemployed.

Within the key townships (7.3%), youth unemployment rates in Condobolin are high, at 11.5%.

At the time of the 2021 Census, the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander unemployment rate in Bland LGA was 6.3% (9 people) compared to 8.2% (39 people) in Forbes LGA and were highest in Lachlan LGA at 16.4% (62 people).

4.3.3 Income

Individual income data is one of many indicators of socio-economic status and is linked to factors such as employment status, age (e.g. students and pensioners often receive a lower income), qualifications and type of employment (.id Consulting, n.d.). There is significant variation in individual and household median weekly incomes across the local area and regional area.

Mining towns are historically high-income towns. At the 2021 Census, median incomes of the household, family and individual in Bland LGA and West Wyalong were higher than that recorded for the rest of the local area and key townships. For example, the median household income in Bland LGA and West Wyalong was \$1,326 and \$1,374 respectively per week, which was higher than the other locations (see Table 4.3). Average household sizes were similar across the study area (2.2 persons per dwelling in Bland LGA and 2.4 persons per dwelling in Forbes LGA). Median total family incomes were \$1,811 per week and \$1,749 per week in Bland LGA and West Wyalong, respectively. Median weekly personal income in Bland LGA (\$730 per week) and in West Wyalong (\$751 per week) was higher than that of the other higher than the other locations (see Table 4.3).

Higher median incomes in West Wyalong are likely due to the relatively high wages paid to mine employees, many of whom reside in West Wyalong. Lower median weekly household and individual incomes in the local area is reflective of the area's SEIFA scores, which suggest higher levels of disadvantage and lower levels of advantage compared to other LGAs across NSW (see Appendix E, Section A.3.3).

Table 4.3 Selected medians and averages for SIA study area, 2021

Locality	Median total family income (\$/week)	Median total household income (\$/week)	Median total personal income (\$/week)	Average household size (persons)
Bland LGA	1,811	1,326	730	2.3
Forbes LGA	1,691	1,259	718	2.4
Lachlan LGA	1,576	1,218	644	2.4

Table 4.3 Selected medians and averages for SIA study area, 2021

Locality	Median total family income (\$/week)	Median total household income (\$/week)	Median total personal income (\$/week)	Average household size (persons)
West Wyalong UCL	1,749 ¹	1,374	751	2.2
Forbes UCL	1,559	1,172	698	2.2
Condobolin UCL	1,603	1,204	643	2.3

Source: 2021Census QuickStats, Australian Bureau of Statistics

4.3.4 Labour

Analysis of the regional labour market (occupations and unemployment) provides an understanding of the potential availability of skills to support Project construction. Industries of employment relevant to Project construction include, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste services; transport, postal and warehousing; construction, professional, scientific and technical services. Occupations relevant to the Project include, labourers, technicians and trades workers, and machinery operators and drivers.

In 2021, there were 1,719 people in the local area (i.e. 55.6% of the total workforce employed across the five industries) and 1,199 people within the key townships (i.e. 67.3% of the total workforce), who were employed in industries relevant to Project construction (Table 4.4). In Bland LGA, 608 people (representing 23.9 % of the total workforce) were employed across the five industries, within Forbes LGA, 783 people (equal to 18.8 % of the total workforce) and 328 people in Lachlan LGA (equal to 12.9%). Within the key townships, in West Wyalong 459 people (representing 30.6% of the total workforce) are employed across the five industries, 581 people within Forbes (20.1%) and 159 people in Condobolin (16.6% of the total workforce).

The mining industry accounted for 515 people (17.9%) across the local area, with the largest proportion within Bland LGA (i.e. 291 people, representing 11.4% of the total workforce), and 147 people in Forbes LGA (3.5%) and 77 people in Lachlan LGA (3%). While people employed in the construction industry account for the largest proportion of people employed within the local area, with 556 people (10.4%) across Bland LGA (158 people), Forbes LGA (295 people) and Lachlan LGA (103 people).

In the key townships, mining accounts for 415 people (25.6%) with the largest proportion within West Wyalong (i.e. 253 people, representing 16.9% of the total workforce), and 118 people in Forbes LGA (4.1%) and 44 people Condobolin (4.6%).

In 2021, there were 3,139 people in the local area and 2,051 within the key townships who were employed in occupations relevant to Project construction (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Employment in industries and occupations relevant to Project construction, 2021

Industry and occupation of employment	Local area				Key townships				Regional area	NSW
	Bland LGA	Forbes LGA	Lachlan LGA	Total local area	West Wyalong UCL	Forbes UCL	Condobolin UCL	Total key townships		
Mining	291	147	77	515	253	118	44	415	5,702	35,406

¹ Average of the ABS census data for West Wyalong UCL and Wyalong UCL

Table 4.4 **Employment in industries and occupations relevant to Project construction, 2021**

Industry and occupation of employment	Local area				Key townships				Regional area	NSW
	Bland LGA	Forbes LGA	Lachlan LGA	Total local area	West Wyalong UCL	Forbes UCL	Condobolin UCL	Total key townships		
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	22	44	25	91	9	32	8	49	1,146	35,584
Construction	158	295	103	556	108	220	51	379	7,479	315,520
Transport, postal and warehousing	84	168	79	331	48	127	42	217	3,486	35,584
Professional, scientific and technical services	53	129	44	226	41	84	14	139	3,417	326,595
Total number of people employed in industries relevant to Project construction² (no.)	608	783	328	1,719	459	581	159	1,199	21,230	748,689
Labourers,	276	526	267	1,069	170	360	100	630	10,694	127,817
Technicians and trades workers, and	372	551	279	1,202	269	435	135	839	13,982	335,425
Machinery operators and drivers	296	322	250	868	209	243	130	582	8,364	105,020
Total number people employed in occupations relevant to Project construction³ (no.)	944	1,399	796	3,139	648	1,038	365	2,051	33,040	568,262

Source: 2021 Census of Population and Housing, General Community Profiles (Cat. No. 2001.0), Australian Bureau of Statistics.

² ABS defined industries relevant to project construction: Mining, Electricity, Gas, Water, and Waste Services; Construction; Transport, Postal and Warehousing and Professional, Scientific and technical services.

³ ABS defined occupations relevant to project construction: Labourers; Technicians and Trades Workers; and Machinery Operators and Drivers.

4.4 Local business and industry

4.4.1 Industry of employment

The top three industry of employment across the local area at the 2021 census were:

- agricultural, forestry and fishing (22.5%)
- healthcare and social assistance (10.6)
- retail trade (10.5%).

The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry is the largest industry of employment in each of the LGAs that comprise the local area (25% in Bland LGA, 17.6% in Forbes LGA, and 28.1% in Lachlan LGA). Within Forbes LGA and Lachlan LGA, healthcare and social assistance and education and training are the second largest industries of employment, employing 12.5% and 10.5% of employed persons, respectively. However, mining is the second largest industry of employment in Bland LGA, employing 11.4% of employed persons.

In the key townships, the top three industries of employment were:

- healthcare and social assistance (18.1%)
- education and training (14.9 %)
- retail trade (14.4%).

Within Forbes UCL and Condobolin UCL, healthcare and social assistance is the largest industry of employment employing 14.6% and 13.6% people within the townships respectively.

Mining is the largest industry of employment in West Wyalong UCL, employing 253 people (representing 16.9% of the total workforce) compared to 44 people (4.6%) employed in the mining industry in Condobolin UCL and 118 people (4.1%) within Forbes UCL.

i Businesses by industry

Of the 2,920 registered businesses in the local area, 49.0% (1,431 business) were in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry. The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry is the most predominant industry across each LGA that comprises the local area, with upwards of 40% of registered businesses in each LGA operating within this industry. The industries with the next highest proportion of registered businesses across the local area was 252 businesses in construction (8.6%), and 208 businesses in rental, hiring and real estate services (7.1%).

Mining represents 0.3% (9 businesses) of registered businesses across the local area, including 0.3% in Forbes LGA and Lachlan LGA and 0.4% in Bland LGA.

4.4.2 Tourism

The term 'short-term accommodation' refers to accommodation options that are typically provided to visitors or tenants for a short period of time; for example, motels, hotels, serviced apartments, bed and breakfast, self-contained- homes, caravan and camping parks. The length of tenancy in these forms of accommodation can often extend to lengthy stays, depending on accommodation availability, price and personal circumstances.

A breakdown of available short-term accommodation is provided in Section 4.6.5 of this report.

Consultation with accommodation stakeholders in West Wyalong identified West Wyalong was a stopover locality rather than a specific tourism destination noting the town was halfway point for people travelling between Victoria and Queensland.

Key tourism and accommodation requirements highlighted by accommodation stakeholders included:

- CGO shutdown events. West Wyalong currently hosts a large proportion of the maintenance workforce for scheduled shutdowns with there being two major maintenance shutdown events per year.
- passing travellers
- key agriculture activities such as harvest times primarily during November and December (but also includes harvest times during October – March Stone fruit, and May – August Pruning) (Workforce Australia, 2018)
- other new projects in the region, the West Wyalong Solar farm, Road projects
- special town events:
 - West Wyalong Show in September
 - Forbes Elvis's festival in October
 - West Wyalong Rodeo in March.

4.5 Educational attainment and qualifications

Rates of educational attainment were significantly lower in both the local and key townships compared to NSW. In the local area 35.6% of the population completed Year 12 or equivalent and 34.8% in the regional area compared to NSW (63.3%).

The local area has a significantly smaller proportion of persons who have completed Year 12 or equivalent (36.2%) compared to the Key townships (47.9%), regional area (46.0%) and NSW (63.3%). Within the local area, Bland LGA and West Wyalong has a particularly low proportion of persons who have completed Year 12 or equivalent at 38.0% and 35.2% respectively.

In the local area and key townships, persons over 15 years of age with Years 11, 10 and 9 as the highest levels of schooling were all above the state average. The proportion of the population which has completed Year 12 or equivalent was substantially lower in the local area (36.2%) and key townships (47.9%) compared to that of NSW (63.1%). This indicates a relatively high proportion of the population within the local area and key townships have not completed secondary level schooling. A higher proportion of people within Bland LGA had completed schooling up to Year 10 or equivalent (38.1%) compared to the rest of the local area. This may reflect local employment options, particularly within the agriculture industry (see Appendix E, Section E.8). The highest level of schooling completed within the study area is presented in Table A.11 and Figure A.9.

4.5.1 Occupation

Occupations most relevant to the Project include labourers, technicians and trade workers, and machinery operators and drivers.

The top three occupations within the local area at the 2021 Census were:

- managers (23.4%)
- professionals (13.3%)
- technicians and trades workers (13%).

The significant proportion of managers in the local area, particularly in Bland LGA (24%), Forbes (19.9%) and Lachlan LGA (28.6%), is indicative of the agricultural sector being the dominant industry of employment.

Within the key townships the top three occupations are technicians and trades workers (21.8%), professionals (20.5%), and community and personal service workers (18%).

4.5.2 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workforce skill and capacity

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people display much higher unemployment rates compared to the broader Australian population due to a range of factors including education, training and skill levels, poorer health, limited market opportunities, discrimination, and lower levels of job retention (Korff, 2022).

The estimated labour force within the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population aged 15 years and over in Bland LGA was 142 (63.4% of the total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population). Whilst the estimated labour force within Forbes LGA was 478 people (59.4% of the total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population) and within Lachlan LGA was 379 people (50.4% of the total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population). The overall regional study area estimated labour force rates was 6,259 people (56.3% of the total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population).

At the time of the 2021 Census, the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander unemployment rate in Bland LGA was 6.3% (9 people) compared to 8.2% (39 people) in Forbes LGA and 16.4% (62 people) in Lachlan LGA.

Lower rates of Year 12 completion amongst Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students is a trend that is reflected across Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021). Within Bland LGA it was 22 people (9.8% of the total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population), within Forbes LGA was 102 people (12.7% of the total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population) and within Lachlan LGA was 97 people (12.9% of the total Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population). Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people face many obstacles to education including poor and overcrowded living conditions, lack of cultural awareness, fewer Aboriginal teachers, inappropriate teaching materials, loss of connection to community and inadequate support to maintain cultural identity (Korff, 2021).

The highest level of educational attainment with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over within Lachlan LGA was with 179 people who completed Year 10 (23.8%), followed by Forbes LGA (181 people and 22.5%) and Bland LGA (49 people and 21.9%).

The top three occupations of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population within Bland LGA were labourers (18.7%), managers (17.3%) and technicians and trades workers, sales workers and machinery operators and drivers (13.7%).

Similarly, the top three occupations within Forbes LGA were technicians and trades workers (16.9%), labourers (16.9%) and community and personal service workers (15.5%) and Lachlan LGA were community and personal service workers (22.7%), labourers (19.9%), and machinery operators and drivers (14.5%).

4.6 Housing and short-term accommodation

The following data, unless otherwise specified, is sourced from the 2021 Census of Population and Housing.

4.6.1 Dwelling occupancy and tenure

Dwelling characteristics recorded in the local area were similar to that recorded for key townships. Approximately 83.4% of private dwellings in the local study area were occupied compared with 86.7% in the key townships and 88.2% within the regional area. The highest proportion of private dwellings were in Forbes LGA (at 88.8%) and Forbes UCL (at 90.2%). Households in the local area also recorded the high proportion of dwellings owned outright or with a mortgage (at 68.7%) compared to key townships (at 62.2%) and regional area (at 69.2%). The higher proportion of homes owned outright may reflect the older population of the local area and regional area compared to NSW, as well as an undersupply of available rental housing.

Approximately 24.6% of dwellings (1,946 homes) in the local area were rented compared with 29% (1,447 homes) in the key townships.

Occupancy is based on ABS Census collector's determination of whether or not a property is occupied on census night, vacant houses, holiday homes, huts and cabins (other than seasonal workers' quarters) are counted as unoccupied dwellings. While not all of these dwellings will be available to lease, these unoccupied dwellings represent an opportunity for the significant demand for rental stock to draw available unoccupied private dwellings into the rental market. The stock of unoccupied private dwellings ranges from 451 in Forbes LGA (11.2%), to 637 in Bland LGA (22.9%). Most of these properties are probably not available for lease. Dwelling characteristics, 2021 are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Dwelling characteristics, 2021

Location	Occupied private dwellings		Unoccupied dwellings		Dwellings owned outright or with a mortgage		Dwelling rented	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Bland LGA	2,151	77.3%	637	22.9%	1,588	73.8%	388	18.0%
Forbes LGA	3,563	88.8%	451	11.2%	2,408	67.6%	957	26.9%
Lachlan LGA	2,191	81.7%	491	18.3%	1,434	65.4%	601	27.4%
Local area	7,905	83.4%	1,579	16.7%	5,430	68.7%	1,946	24.6%
West Wyalong UCL	1,296	85.3%	225	14.8%	935	72.1%	297	22.9%
Forbes UCL	2,752	90.2%	302	9.9%	1,793	65.2%	841	30.6%
Condobolin UCL	950	79.6%	244	20.4%	591	62.2%	309	32.5%
Key townships	4,998	86.7%	771	13.4%	3,319	66.4%	1,447	29.0%
Regional area	80,039	88.2%	10,752	11.8%	55,402	69.2%	21,278	26.6%

The proportions of rented dwellings typically owned by mining companies with some dwellings owned by Government to provide housing for employees are represented in 'other landlord type'. Around 11.2% of rented dwellings in the local area and 11.1% within the key townships were rented from 'other landlord type' (Table 4.5). This highest proportion of rented dwellings is represented in Bland LGA and West Wyalong (at 18.6%). A proportion of properties owned or rented in West Wyalong are owned or rented by Evolution. These properties are intended to allow the CGO workforce to transition to a residential based workforce. These properties tend to be set aside for long-term, operational personnel rather than to meet the needs of a short-term construction workforce.

Of the 1,946 dwellings rented (24.6%) within the local area at the 2021 Census, 383 dwellings (19.7%) were social housing⁴ (see Table 4.6). In Bland LGA, the number of social housing dwellings was 49 houses which comprised 12.6% of rented dwellings in Bland LGA, compared with Forbes LGA where the number of social housing was 153 dwellings (16.0% of rented dwellings) and in Lachlan LGA with 181 social housing dwellings (30.1% of rented dwellings). Table 4.6 below provides dwelling characteristics in the SIA study areas according to the 2021 ABS Census. Around 38.2% of rented dwellings in the local area were managed by real estate agencies and 60.1% of rented dwellings within the key township, with over half of the rented dwellings within Forbes LGA (52.5%) and Forbes UCL (57.6%).

Table 4.6 Rental landlord of occupied private dwellings, 2021

Location	Real estate agent (%)	Social housing (%)	Other (including employer) (%)
Bland LGA	31.7%	12.6%	18.6%
Forbes LGA	52.5%	16.0%	6.2%
Lachlan LGA	19.8%	30.1%	14.3%
Local area	38.2%	19.7%	11.2%
West Wyalong UCL	39.7%	7.1%	18.6%
Forbes UCL	57.6%	18.2%	3.6%
Condobolin UCL	28.8%	27.8%	13.6%
Key townships	60.1%	24.4%	11.1%
Regional area	59.4%	15.4%	4.2%

4.6.2 Housing availability and affordability

In January 2023 there were 15 properties for rent in the local area – one in Bland LGA, ten in Forbes LGA and four in Lachlan LGA (Table 4.7).

According to REINSW, rental vacancy rates are traditional market indicators that “measure the proportion of residential properties vacant and available for rent at any point in time” (REINSW 2019). A higher vacancy rate indicates a higher proportion of vacant (dwellings occupied) units based on the total number of units in an area. Vacancy rates under 3% indicate a tight rental market with an undersupply of options. A rental market with a vacancy rate of 3% is considered at equilibrium (Brewsters Property Group nd).

Rental vacancy rates for the area have remained below the 3.0% benchmark since May 2020, indicating an undersupply of rental units and housing (SQM Research 2022). The low vacancy rates align with the strong demand for rental accommodation and suggests a high level of competition, where rents are more likely to be increased and landlords can have their pick of tenants.

The number of dwellings for sale in the SIA study areas is provided in Table 4.7. Dwellings for sale include property types such as house, apartment and unit, townhouse, villa, block of units, and retirement living. As of January 2023, there were a total of 161 dwellings available for sale in the local study area.

⁴ Social housing includes state or territory housing authority and Community housing providers.

Table 4.7 Houses available for purchase and rent

Location	Available for purchase		Available for rent	
	November 2022	January 2023	November 2022	January 2023
Bland LGA	30	34	0	1
Forbes LGA	101	101	10	10
Lachlan LGA	28	26	4	4
Total	159	161	14	15

Source: www.realestate.com.au

4.6.3 Affordable housing

Affordable housing typically describes a range of subsidised housing products that are affordable to those on low to moderate incomes. More specifically, affordable housing can be defined as a dwelling available through a housing assistance program that provides a specific level of below market rent prices, such as public housing provided by the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works (AHURI, 2019).

Typically, housing affordability for low to moderate income households exists when housing costs are low enough to enable the household to meet other basic, long-term living costs. A measure of households experiencing housing stress is associated with housing costs that are more than 30% of household income.

At the 2021 Census, in the local study area around 15.2% of rental households in Bland LGA were experiencing housing stress compared with 26.4% of rental households in Forbes LGA and 17.6% in Lachlan LGA compared with regional area (at 29.2%). Across the key townships, around 29.1% of rental households in Forbes UCL were experiencing the highest housing stress, followed by 23% in Condobolin UCL and 14.3% in West Wyalong UCL.

While the rate of rental households experiencing housing stress in Bland LGA is lower than the measure of households experiencing housing stress (associated with housing costs that are 30 per cent or less of a household income) this could indicate a medium to low level of rental housing stress in Bland LGA. However, the data suggests the rate of rental household's experience housing stress in Forbes LGA and Forbes UCL is significantly high and could indicate a high level of rental stress in Forbes. Housing affordability in the study area is demonstrated in Appendix E.

4.6.4 Project workforce accommodation

Evolution will continue to implement its policy of encouraging its workforce to reside in local towns. It is cognisant of supporting local accommodation providers and reducing adverse impacts on the housing market by providing accommodation for the underground workforce through the construction and operation of the West Wyalong Accommodation Village.

i Evolution mining accommodation village

The CGO West Wyalong Accommodation Village will be used to accommodate the underground mining workforce as part of a strategy to alleviate pressures on housing and accommodation in West Wyalong. This village is within walking distance of the West Wyalong town centre.

The village has an accommodation capacity of 128 beds and will include communal facilities, including laundry units, dining and kitchen buildings, outdoor eating areas, first aid and nursing room, prayer room, quiet room, gymnasium, multipurpose outdoor court and running track. The village will be operational in 2023.

Evolution will operate a shuttle bus service from the village to transport the majority of its workforce to and from Cowal Gold Operations, similar to the service it currently operates from West Wyalong and Forbes. This will minimise additional traffic on local roads.

4.6.5 Short-term accommodation

The local area provides a range of accommodation options including hotels/motels, bed and breakfasts, apartments, and homestays along with camping/cabin options. An overview of short-term accommodation within the local area is provided in **Table 4.8**.

The primary form of tourist accommodation is hotels/motels. There were a total of 35 hotel and motel accommodation options in the local area, totalling approximately 614 rooms. This includes:

- 14 hotels/motels in West Wyalong, with around 292 rooms
- five hotels/motels in surrounding townships of Barmedman, Ungarie, Mirrool and Weethalle, with around 32 rooms
- nine hotels/motels in Forbes, with around 186 rooms
- seven hotels/motels in Condobolin, with around 104 rooms.

In addition to hotels and motels, there were around 20 other accommodation establishments including:

- four Airbnb's/b&b, cottages and apartments in West Wyalong, with around 10 rooms
- two caravan parks in West Wyalong, with around 41 cabins
- one establishment in the surrounding townships of Barmedman, Ungarie, Mirrool and Weethalle, each with 2 rooms
- eight B&Bs in Forbes, with around 21 rooms
- four caravan parks in Forbes, with around 26 cabins
- one caravan park in Condobolin with around 23 cabins.

These provide a total of 123 rooms with 51 rooms in West Wyalong, 2 in the surrounding townships of Barmedman, Ungarie, Mirrool and Weethalle, 47 in Forbes and 23 in Condobolin.

The combined total equates to 737 rooms, comprising 614 motel/hotel rooms and 123 additional rooms (airbnbs, B&Bs, cottages, apartments and caravan parks).

It was communicated by a number of accommodation providers that they are advancing further expansion of rooms in response to sustained high levels of demand. These additional rooms have been recognised as they would be available prior to the initiation of construction of the Project- refer to Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 **Short-term accommodation summary within the local area, 2023**

Accommodation type	No. of establishments	No. of Rooms	No. of Beds
West Wyalong			
Motels and Hotels	14	292*	397*
Airbnb's, Cottages and Apartments	4	10	15
Caravan parks	2	41**	83**
Sub total	20	343	495
Surrounding communities of Barmedman, Ungarie, Mirrool Weethalle			
Motels and Hotels	5	32***	59***
Airbnb's, Cottages and Apartments	1	2	2
Caravan parks	0	0	0
Sub total			
Forbes			
Motels and Hotels	9	186	-
Airbnb's, Cottages and Apartments	8	21	-
Caravan parks	4	26	-
Sub total			
Condobolin			
Motels and Hotels	7	104	-
Airbnb's, Cottages and Apartments	-	-	-
Caravan parks	1	23	-
Sub total			
Total		737	556

Note: * Includes 3 additional rooms and 3 additional beds proposed in West Wyalong

 ** Includes 3 additional cabins and 9 additional beds proposed in West Wyalong

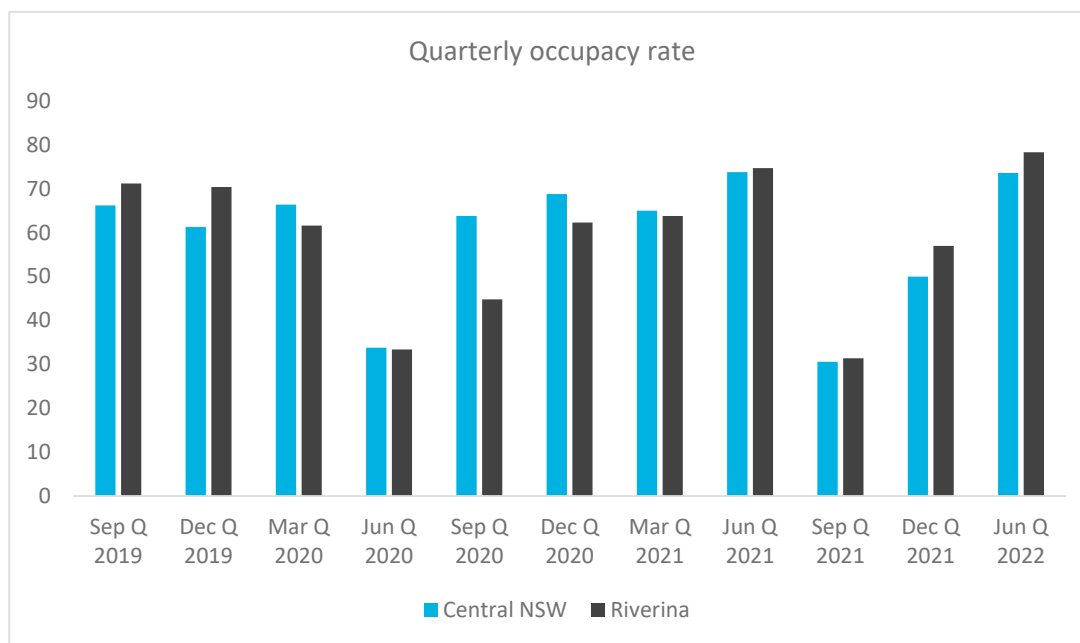
 *** Includes 4 additional rooms/cabins and approximately 12 additional beds proposed in Weethalle

i **Occupancy rates**

Quarterly occupancy rates for the Central NSW and Riverina regions from 2019 to 2022 are published by 'Destination NSW'. Occupancy rates within the Central NSW region includes the towns of Forbes and Condobolin and the Riverina region includes West Wyalong.

As depicted in Figure 4.1, there was variation in occupancy rates across both the regions. There was a notable drop in occupancy rates in the June 2020 quarter and September 2021 quarter. This was due to COVID 19 lockdown events. The average occupancy rate across between September 2019 and June 2022 was 59.4% for the Central NSW region and 58.9% for the Riverina region. Factoring in that the average rate was slightly lower due to COVID related travel restrictions, an occupancy rate of 60% has been adopted for short-term accommodation in Forbes and Condobolin.

Accommodation providers engaged to inform the SIA advised that occupancy rates for short term accommodation in West Wyalong were high (80% – 90%) and that this was driven by demand generated by a number of concurrent construction projects (two nearby solar farms and the CGO underground construction). These are due to be completed in mid to late 2023 and would likely result in occupancy rates returning to between 60% - 70%. In recognition of these factors, an occupancy rate of 65% has been assumed for short-term accommodation in West Wyalong and surrounding townships.



Source: Destination NSW, STR Tourist Accommodation snapshots

Figure 4.1 Quarterly occupancy rates in central NSW and Riverina from 2019 to 2022

Assumed occupancy rates have been applied to accommodation supply in West Wyalong and surrounds (occupancy rate of 65%) and Forbes and Condobolin (60%) to determine the likely availability of rooms. As outlined in Table 4.9:

- the total number of rooms West Wyalong and surrounds is 377 with an assumed occupancy rate of 65%, equating to 132 available rooms.
- the total number of rooms in Forbes is 233 with an assumed occupancy rate of 60% equating to 93 available rooms.
- the total number of rooms in Condobolin is 127 with an assumed occupancy rate of 60% equating to 51 available rooms.

Table 4.9 Accommodation supply

Location	Total rooms	Occupancy rate	Available rooms
West Wyalong and surrounds	377	65%	132
Forbes	233	60%	93
Condobolin	127	60%	51
Total	737		276

4.7 Community health and wellbeing

The SIA study area is located across the Western NSW and Murrumbidgee Local Health Districts (LHDs). A full description is in Chapter 5 and Chapter 9 of the SIA baseline (Appendix E).

4.7.1 Long-term health conditions

A long-term illness or chronic health condition is any condition lasting six months or longer, such as asthma, arthritis, cancer, dementia, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, lung condition, mental health condition (including anxiety or depressions) and stroke.

In the local area, 12% of the local population self-identified as suffering from arthritis, followed by 9.6% of the population identifying as having asthma and 8% of the local population indicated they have a mental health condition (including anxiety or depression). Similarly, the top three long term health conditions self-identified within the key townships are:

- 16.6% of the population with arthritis
- 12.1% with asthma
- 11.3% with a mental health condition (including anxiety or depression).

The prevalence of arthritis (12%) and heart disease (4.9%) in the local area compared to broader NSW (8.4% and 3.9% respectively) can also be attributed to the ageing local population (see Appendix E, Section E3.1).

Prevalence of asthma and lung conditions is an indicator of respiratory health within communities as well as signalling a vulnerability to dust and other air impacts. In the local area, whilst not as pervasive as asthma, the rate of people with a lung condition in the local area (2.5%), key townships (3.4%) were also higher than NSW (1.7%).

Other ABS data for the local area shows 53.7% of the local population have no long-term health conditions, in comparison with 70.9% across the key townships and 53.5% of people across regional area. This may be aligned with concentrations of older people within key townships, closer to amenities.

4.7.2 Mental health

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are health administrative areas which represent primary health care organisations across Australia. When comparing the number of patients with residents in the Western NSW and Murrumbidgee PHN accessing GPs for mental health services more patients within the local area are accessing GP mental health services in comparison to patients accessing allied health or specialists mental health services (see Appendix E, Section E.9).

Data relating to the number of people that have been hospitalised as a result of self-harm indicates poor and/or poorly managed mental health. Intentional self-harm hospitalisations trends in Western NSW LHD have generally been increasing from 2001–2021, with a significant increase from 2011–2017. Trends in Western NSW LHD have generally been decreasing from 2001–2021, however there was a significant increase from 2015–2018 (see Appendix E, Section E.9).

It is well recognised that some groups experience higher rates of mental illness and psychological distress than others (AIHW, 2022a). As well as it has also been acknowledged that while many people may not experience any long-term concerns, the pandemic has the potential to contribute to or exacerbate long-term mental illness (AIHW, 2022b).

4.7.3 Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

This SIA was conducted immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic. Population data and forecasts presented in this social baseline were developed prior to the onset of the pandemic and do not consider the potential impacts to assumptions stemming from COVID-19. However, they do provide an insight into the baseline condition of the regional area without this external shock.

In addition, COVID-19 has increased the likelihood of housing relocation among vulnerable households due to instances of low income, unemployment or insecure work and rental/mortgage stress (.id Consulting, 2020). These changes could impact upon household formations and migrations in a multitude of ways, such as younger people returning to live with their parents, elderly people moving to live with their children for care and the creation of larger households to share the burden of housing costs (.id Consulting, 2020).

Evidence indicates that COVID-19 generated similar impacts to the Global Financial Crisis in Australia, whereby apprehension associated with a global issue caused elevated demand for housing which was further contributed to by low interest rates and resulted in upward pressure on housing prices (Verdouw et al., 2021). Rising prices within the private housing market generally work to further exclude low income and vulnerable people from the property market, leading to housing stress and insecurity (Verdouw et al., 2021). The impacts of COVID-19 on the labour and housing market are ongoing and as such, there is difficulty in measuring the full extent of those impacts currently in and into the future.

4.8 Social infrastructure and services

Central to supporting the quality of life and well-being of communities, social infrastructure can be defined as the “community and individual support services and resources such as health, education, early childhood, community support, community development, culture, sport and recreation, parks and emergency services” (Australian Government Centre for Population, 2020). Due to the likely need for the Project to source 60% (at peak 61 workers in Year one) from outside the local area, it is important to identify the capacity of service provision and social infrastructure in the key urban centres and regional study area.

4.8.1 Education

In 2022 in the local area there were 16 childcare services providing long day care, preschool, and outside of school hours care (OSHC) that are mainly located in the key urban areas of West Wyalong and Forbes. There were 15 primary schools, four secondary schools, and five combined schools in the local area.

Within the local area in 2021 there was a slightly larger proportion of persons attending preschool (7.3%) and primary school (29.2%) compared to the key townships (6.9% and 27.2%) and regional area (7.1% and 28.3% respectively).

Within the local area the proportion of students attending secondary school was lower in the local area (18.9%) and key townships (18.8%) compared to the regional area and NSW. Within the local and regional areas and key townships, all categories of persons with a non-school qualification were below the state averages, with the exception of certificates which comprise the largest proportion of non-school qualifications held by people over 15 years in the local area (42.2%) and regional area (41.8%) compared to 28.3% across NSW. This may be in part due to the low rates of secondary schooling completion (i.e. within the local area the proportion of students attending secondary school was lower in the local area (18.9%) and key townships (18.8%), making it difficult to directly enter university programs. However, this may also be a result of the prevalent industries of employment in the local and regional areas, particularly the dominance of agriculture, which do not require tertiary qualifications.

There are four tertiary education campuses available within the local area. There is one TAFE campus in Bland LGA located in West Wyalong, one TAFE campus in Forbes LGA located in Forbes, and two TAFE campuses in Lachlan LGA located in Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo. There are no universities located within in the local area.

4.8.2 Health and emergency services

The closest public hospital service to the Project area is the West Wyalong Health Service (with 22 beds). There are three other public hospitals within the local area, one located in Forbes LGA (with 25 acute care and 2 maternity beds) and two located in Lachlan LGA (with 72 beds). Each of the hospitals within the local area are smaller multipurpose services with emergency departments and a range of community and allied health services available to residents. More complex health issues are referred to the regional hospital in Wagga Wagga and Parkes.

There is a total of 14 GP practices within the local area, with four GP practices identified in Bland LGA, four in Forbes LGA, and six in Lachlan LGA. Each location had services relating to community health, Indigenous health, mental health, maternal, child and family health, aged care and special services. The multipurpose services within each LGA offer the largest diversity of services within the area. In the local area there are eight police stations, four ambulance stations, four fire and rescue and four State Emergency Services. Most emergency services (excluding rural fire brigades) are located in West Wyalong in Bland LGA, Forbes in Forbes LGA, and Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo in Lachlan LGA, which service the surrounding areas.

4.8.3 Community services

Social infrastructure refers to community facilities, services, and networks that help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximise their potential for development and enhance community wellbeing. Social infrastructure and services can be found within all of the communities within the local area. Refer to Appendix E for the number and availability of services in each LGA.

The Baseline confirms that all 3 LGA's have:

- Aboriginal services
- child and family services
- youth services
- employment services
- disability services
- aged care services
- women's services

- arts and cultural facilities
- recreation services.

Forbes and Lachlan LGA's also have access to Housing and homelessness services, but these are not available in Bland LGA.

4.9 Baseline summary

When identifying strengths of the local community, it is evident that the local area is well serviced with social infrastructure and services (particularly services for vulnerable members of the community). Another key strength is the relatively high level of social advantage in Bland LGA, though Lachlan and Forbes are more vulnerable as a result of higher socio-economic disadvantage.

The key vulnerabilities within the study area as determined through the social baseline include a stable or slightly declining population trend in recent years, which may create uncertainty around infrastructure provision and the lack of availability within the local housing market. While generally unemployment is lower than broader NSW, unemployment still remains as a vulnerability, particularly in Lachlan shire where unemployment is almost double rates in broader NSW.

The high proportion of people occupied as technicians and trades workers and high proportion of construction businesses is recognized as a strength and opportunity in relation to the Project in terms of local procurement.

With regard to health services, whilst there is currently decent access to GP services in West Wyalong, there is a deficiency of other health professionals and emergency services personnel.

Potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts associated with the Project could occur across the local area. As the closest service centre and key township to the Project, West Wyalong (and Wyalong) in Bland LGA are likely to experience the most direct social impacts and benefits, particularly with regards to access to:

- jobs
- economic and business opportunities
- access to health services
- housing
- short term accommodation.

Where possible, Project benefits can be extended to Lachlan and Forbes LGA's to balance socio-economic opportunity and advantage in the region.

5 Community and stakeholder engagement

This section summarises the community engagement activities which have informed the SIA and provides an overview of stakeholder feedback. The SIA has drawn upon engagement which was:

- undertaken as part of the EIS engagement program
- designed specifically to collect data to inform the SIA.

In addition, as this is an existing operation, there is over 20 years of engagement records which were able to be drawn upon. A detailed description of the engagement activities undertaken as part of the EIS for the SIA and the feedback generated is provided as Appendix F.

Consultation for this assessment was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic and conducted in accordance with applicable Australian and NSW Government health agency advice.

5.1 EIS engagement

Evolution is committed to continuing its engagement with stakeholders throughout the EIS process for the Project. Since 2015, the Project team has implemented a diverse range of consultation approaches. Between 2015 and 2021, the primary contact point for community members was the Evolution website and email as well as via face-to-face meetings.

In 2021, a Project-specific webpage was added to the Evolution webpage to include up-to-date information on the EIS process, as well as preliminary designs, community information notification sessions, and news and notifications and newsletters. Additionally, a community toll-free 1800 information line, a Project specific email address and a staffed Evolution shop front in West Wyalong were established.

Between now and the end of the EIS exhibition phase, the EMM Community and Engagement team will continue to monitor the dedicated Project email inbox, 1800 number and provide staged webpage updates and advise Evolution on any emerging issues or requests for further individual or group consultation.

In addition to the direct community engagement initiatives outlined, Project information will also be provided to the local community and targeted stakeholders via local media outlets. An overview of engagement methods implemented throughout the EIS is provided in .

As part of the EIS engagement key stakeholders identified comprised:

- adjoining and local landholders
- the local community
- local businesses and service providers
- interest groups:
 - the Community Environmental Monitoring and Consultative Committee (CEMCC)
 - the Lake Cowal Foundation (LCF)
- Department of Planning and Environment
- Roads and Maritime Service
- Bland Shire Council, Forbes Shire Council, Lachlan Shire Council

- NSW Police
- NSW Health
- Federal, State and local members of parliament/council.

Table 5.1 **EIS engagement activities**

Activities	Description and purpose	Timing
Project website	Provide up-to-date Project information including news, newsletters, maps, preliminary designs, reports, and upcoming consultation events. Interested parties can also join the Project mailing list to receive ongoing project updates via the website (https://emm.mysocialpinpoint.com/cgo_opc).	Established 2015. Redeveloped 2021. Updated as required.
Project email address	The Project email offers stakeholders an opportunity to ask questions; share views, issues and concerns; provide feedback; and request additional information.	As required.
Dedicated Project phone line	The information line provides another way for the community to contact the Project team.	Established in 2021. Ongoing.
CEMCC	The Project Team met three times with the CEMCC.	March 2022, October 2022 and March 2023
Project briefings	Stakeholder briefings included face-to-face, virtual and phone meetings with each of the directly affected landholders, local councils, government authorities, and elected members of the parliaments of NSW and Australia.	March 2022, October 2022, March 2023
Landholder meetings	Landholder meetings include face-to-face, virtual and phone meetings with directly and indirectly impacted landholders near the Project area.	As required, ongoing.
Stakeholder meeting-water	One stakeholder water meeting was held during EIS Phase engagement to specifically discuss surface water concerns. This was attended by directly affected landholders who were concerned about surface water flows.	27 March 2023
Newspaper advertisement	The Project team has placed a total of 8 quarter-page advertisements to encourage participation in 6 community information sessions (4 in-person and 2 online) covering the regions of West Wyalong, Condobolin and Forbes.	As required, ongoing.
Community Information Sessions	The Project has held a total of 6 community information sessions (4 in-person and 2 online) capturing views from across the region including West Wyalong, Condobolin and Forbes.	In line with regional sponsorship opportunities.
Project newsletters	A total of 36,000 Project newsletters were delivered on three occasions to regional communities that may have difficulty accessing major townships. A total of 500 newsletters were distributed directly to key targeted stakeholders via email or post, including directly affected landholders, local Councils, elected representatives, government authorities, special interest groups and hard copies placed at public venues and made available at public events.	Project newsletters

An overview of EIS engagement activities undertaken to date is provided in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 EIS engagement

Date	Activity	Who was consulted	Matters discussed
March 2022	Distribution of the March 2022 Newsletter via email/registered post. Available at Evolution Mining shopfront, staff Crib Rooms and for download on the Project webpage Mass distribution to suburbs of West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin	Directly impacted landholders Local stakeholders Local and regional community	Introduced the Project and advertised the March 2022 CIS dates, option to register for Project updates.
21 March 2022	Community Information Session (CIS) Drop-in Session #1 – West Wyalong	Directly impacted landholders Local community. Local and regional stakeholders Attendees: 2	• Support for the mine and underground operations. • Depth of the new pits. • Workforce accommodation and capacity of the local motels. • Visual impacts and the changing landscape regarding the height of stockpiles and night lighting. • Water access and CGO water usage, including the water sources for operation and future rehabilitation.
21 March 2022	CIS Drop-in Session #2 - Condobolin	Directly impacted landholders Local community. Local and regional stakeholders	Zero stakeholders attended the Condobolin RSL community information session. A journalist from the Condobolin Argus newspaper attended to write an article about the Project.
22 March 2022	CIS Drop-in Session #3 - Forbes	Directly impacted landholders Local community. Local and regional stakeholders Attendees: 3	• Employment and mine lifespan – There are 30 to 40 mining staff that reside in Forbes and Evolution provide bus transport to and from work. Good employer and good for our town. Accommodation could be a problem. – Depth of the new pits and how many years will the life of the mine be extended for
22 March 2022	Online CIS Session #4	Local and regional stakeholders	Zero stakeholders registered to attend the online community information session. This session was cancelled.
29 March 2022	Project introduction briefing Online	Bland Shire Council	Supportive. • Housing and accommodation.
9 March 2022	Project introduction briefing In person/online	Community Environmental Monitoring and Consultative Committee (CEMCC)	• Bund extension and effects on localised flooding.
24 March 2022	Project introduction briefing Online	Forbes Shire Council	Supportive. • Housing and growth strategy, would like to encourage more mining staff to reside in Forbes. • Land rehabilitation planning following mine decommission.

Table 5.2 EIS engagement

Date	Activity	Who was consulted	Matters discussed
24 March 2022	Project introduction briefing In person	Jemalong Irrigation	• Surface water flows.
25 March 2022	Project introduction briefing In person	Lachlan Shire Council	Supportive. • Few mining staff reside in Condobolin, relaxation of rules around travel distances would assist. • Would like to see education/training programs established. • There is a housing and accommodation shortage.
21 March 2022	Project introduction briefing In person	Lake Cowal Foundation	• Location of southern soil stockpile. • Surface water flows. • Bund extension. • Effects on localised flooding.
21-25 March 2022	Project introduction briefing In person/online	Individual briefings with directly impacted landholders x 8	• Location of northern and southern stockpiles. • Surface water flows. • Extension of bund and effects on localised flooding. • Groundwater use during drought. • Night lighting. • Housing and accommodation. • Legacy.
July 2022	Distribution of the July 2022 Newsletter via email/registered post. Available at Evolution Mining shopfront, staff Crib Rooms and for download on Project webpage	Directly impacted landholders Local community Local and regional stakeholders	Provided a Project update and option to register for updates.
October 2022	Distribution of the October 2022 Newsletter via email/registered post. Available at Evolution Mining shopfront, staff Crib Rooms and for download on Project webpage Mass distribution to suburbs of West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin	Directly impacted landholders Local stakeholders Local and regional community	Provided a project update and option to register for project updates.
October 2022	Project update briefing	Directly impacted landholders and key stakeholders	An update was provided to all key stakeholders re: amendment to the OPC Project footprint and site layout during all in-person SIA meetings and interviews held during October 2022.

Table 5.2 EIS engagement

Date	Activity	Who was consulted	Matters discussed
December 2022	Distribution of the December 2022 Newsletter via email/registered post. Available at Evolution Mining shopfront, staff Crib Rooms and for download on Project webpage	Directly impacted landholders. Local community. Local and regional stakeholders	Provided a Project update and option to register for Project updates.
March 2023	Distribution of the March 2023 Newsletter via email/registered post. Available at Evolution Mining shopfront, staff Crib Rooms, for download on Project webpage and available at the Family Open Day on 5 March.	Directly impacted landholders Local community. Local and regional stakeholders	Advertised the March 2023 CIS dates, option to register for Project updates.
27 March 2023	Project briefing in person	Bland Shire Council	Supportive. • Legacy planning. • Surface water management. • Biodiversity offsets.
27 March 2023	Stakeholder Water Meeting In person	Directly impacted landholder families x 3 (Attendees: 6)	
28 March 2023	Project update briefing In person	Bland Creek Paleo Channel Group	• Suggest CGO need to diversify water sources and rely less on groundwater. • Concern existing ground groundwater licence has been granted in perpetuity.
28 March 2023	Project update briefing In person	Lake Cowal Conservation Centre	• Biodiversity offsets, avoid construction during bird breeding months (Sept-Nov). • Changes to surface water behaviour following upgrade of Newel Highway.
29 March 2023	Project update briefing In person	Community Environmental Monitoring and Consultative Committee (CEMCC)	• Water displacement, water management, legacy planning.
29 March 2023	CIS Drop-in session #5 – West Wyalong	Local community Attendees: 2 - Supportive community member & potential contractor/consultant.	• Support for CGO (no mine means no West Wyalong).

Table 5.2 EIS engagement

Date	Activity	Who was consulted	Matters discussed
27-30 March 2023	Project update briefing In person	Directly impacted landholders x 7	• Surface water flows. • Water displacement and flooding. • Biodiversity offsets. • Travelling Stock Route. • Night lighting. • Pest animals e.g. feral pigs.
3 April 2023	Project update briefing Online	Forbes Shire Council	Supportive. • Water management planning. • Housing and accommodation. • Legacy. • Rehabilitation planning.
3 April 2023	Project update briefing Online	Lachlan Shire Council	Supportive. • Accommodation for construction workforce. • Regional water sensitivities. • Biodiversity offsets.
6 April 2023	Online CIS Session #6	Local and regional stakeholders Attendees: 3	• Biodiversity: – Threatened plant species. – Threatened plant communities. – Opportunities and options for biodiversity offsets on Evolution, and surrounding agricultural, land. • Remediation planning and financial security for remediation action.
17 April 2023	Project update briefing and ACHA review in person	Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation	A project update was provided, and feedback received on draft ACHA chapter.
17 April 2023	Project update briefing and ACHA review in person	West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)	A project update was provided, and feedback received on draft ACHA chapter.

The issues and concerns identified by these groups have been considered in preparing this report and have been influential in the relocation or redesign of some aspects of the Project. Full details of community engagement activities and outcomes are described in Chapter 5 of the EIS.

5.2 SIA community and stakeholder engagement

This section outlines the engagement methods and activities undertaken specifically to inform the SIA.

5.2.1 Participation

The methods of engagement with community and key stakeholders and details of SIA engagement participation are outlined in Table 5.3. SIA stakeholder engagement comprised:

- In-depth interviews – a total 56 interviews with key stakeholders including:
 - landholders and nearby neighbours identified by tenure in Figure 3.1
 - community groups

- Indigenous groups
- social community services
- accommodation and real estate providers
- employment service providers
- business groups
- health services
- emergency services
- education services.
- Project updates briefings and discussions with:
 - Bland Shire Council
 - Forbes Shire Council
 - Lachlan Shire Council.
- Short-term accommodation providers across West Wyalong and surrounding areas.

Other activities included:

- one community survey (administered online).

Full details on the feedback generated through SIA engagement is provided as Appendix F.

Table 5.3 SIA field study participation

Method	How administered	Timing	Invited	Participated
Site visit	Face to face	1 visit in September 2022 and 1 visit in October 2022	EMM SIA team	1 representative of EMM SIA team
In-depth interviews with nearby residents	Face to face	September 2022	2 nearby landholders (totalling 4 people)	2 interviews with nearby landholders
	Face to face	October 2022	7 nearby landholders (totalling 11 people)	7 interviews with nearby landholders
In-depth interviews with key service providers	via telephone	December 2022	WW health service	1 interview with WW health service
	via telephone	December 2022	WW Police service	1 interview with WW police
	via telephone	December 2022	WW TAFE	1 interview with WW TAFE

Table 5.3 SIA field study participation

Method	How administered	Timing	Invited	Participated
In-depth interviews with community groups	Face to face	September 2022 – February 2023	Lake Cowal Foundation	3 interviews with Lake Cowal Foundation
	Face to face	October 2022	Community Environmental Monitoring and Consultative Committee (CEMCC)	1 interview with the CEMCC
Project briefings/Project discussions with accommodation/real estate providers	Face to face	September 2022, October 2022, February 2023	Moncrieff Livestock and Property Top Town Tavern Cameo Inn Miller and James Real Estate	4 interviews with accommodation and real estate providers
In-depth interviews with businesses	Face to face / online via teams	October 2022	Business West Wyalong Jemalong Irrigation Bland Creek Paleo Channel	4 interviews with local business providers
In-depth interviews with Indigenous groups	Face to face	October 2022	West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)	1 interview with West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)
	Online via teams	November 2022	Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC)	1 interview with Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC)
In-depth interview with Local Council	Face to face	September 2022	Bland Shire Council	1 interview with Bland Shire Council
	Face to face	October 2022	Lachlan Shire Council	1 interview with Lachlan Shire Council
	Face to face	October 2022	Bland Shire Council – second round	1 interview Bland Shire Council
	Online via teams	October 2022	Forbes Shire Council	1 interview with Forbes Shire Council
Short-term accommodation provider surveys	Via telephone	February 2023	28 short-term accommodation providers across the locations of West Wyalong, Wyalong, Barmedman, Ungarie, Weethalle and Mirrool	26 interviews with short-term accommodation providers.
Online survey	Online survey delivered through the 'Survey Monkey' platform	September – November 2022	Distributed to 12,000 residences of Condobolin, Forbes and West Wyalong	46 survey responses
Total in-depth interviews				56 interviews
Total online survey participants				46 responses

The SIA adopted a case study approach⁵ which has focused on developing a deeper understanding of the potential impacts on individuals and groups that will be potentially impacted and or interested in the Project. It should be noted that findings summarised below are based on a small sample of residents and groups. Participants opted into the engagement activity and the sampling method means findings are not necessarily statistically representative of the broader local and regional community.

5.2.2 In-depth stakeholder interviews

Interviews were conducted with surrounding landholders and key stakeholders between March 2022 and February 2023. The interviews typically involved a discussion of the values, vulnerabilities and strengths of the local community, as well as the identification of perceived impacts and benefits of the Project.

Surrounding landholders are a vitally important Project stakeholders. As part of the SIA, in depth interviews were held with 9 surrounding landholders (totalling 15 people). In-depth interviews were also held with Bland, Forbes and Lachlan Councils along with key service providers in West Wyalong. A total of 21 separate interviews were conducted via face to face meetings, videoconferences and telephone calls.

Each in-depth interview offered insights into the potential impacts and benefits of the Project within the community and local area. The key findings from the interviews are provided in Section 5.3. The in-depth interview notes are provided in Appendix F.1.

i Short-term accommodation provider surveys

Interviews were conducted with 26 short-term accommodation providers in February 2023 across the locations of West Wyalong, Wyalong, Barmedman, Ungarie, Weethalle and Mirrool. Accommodation in West Wyalong was explored to gain a detailed understanding of the broader availability of short-term accommodation and the experienced effects to date of CGO shut down periods and other projects (i.e. the construction of West Wyalong Solar Farm and road construction projects).

During the interviews, short-term accommodation providers offered insights into the short-term accommodation market including demand, occupancy/vacancy rates and experienced impacts.

5.2.3 Online community survey

A community survey was conducted to gain an understanding from the broader community of the perceived potential social impacts and benefits of the Project. It also gathered general demographic data about its respondents, as well as their level of awareness and their level of support for the Project.

The details of the community survey were shared a number of ways including:

- hand delivered to local business through targeted stakeholder walk-ins
- 60 hard copies printed and placed at key venues and locations within the study area
- email distribution to 17 key Project stakeholders
- downloadable from the Cowal Gold Operations webpage, with 1,300 hits for website visits
- letterbox drop to 12,000 residences of Condobolin, Forbes and West Wyalong.

The survey was also distributed in hard copy format directly to stakeholders during the two SIA field visits in September and October 2022.

⁵ A process or record of research into the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time.

The survey was open for responses between 12 September and 20 December 2022.

It is noted that the data collected through the SIA community surveys may not be representative of the perspectives of all community members in the SIA study area. The survey questions are provided in Appendix F.2.

i Survey results

The online survey received 46 responses. When asked which category best describes the respondent, 37% identified as local residents, 11% as business owners, 9% as a nearby landholder, 4% as 'other' and 2% as a service provider. The remaining respondents did not reply to this question.

In response to the suburb or postcode of the respondent, 72.1% confirmed they resided in West Wyalong, followed by 9.3% in Condobolin. The remaining 18.6% of the respondents were located in various communities across NSW and QLD, including one respondent residing in Lachlan Shire LGA and one person in Forbes Shire LGA and two respondents residing in Queensland.

The most prevalent age group were respondents aged 35–44 years which represented 37.8% of the survey population. This was closely followed by 31.1% of respondents being between the ages of 45–54 years and 15.6% of respondents being 25–34 years. Overall, males were more represented in the survey with 76.7% of respondents identifying as male and 23.3% identifying as female. Of the 46 respondents, 4.7% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, not one person identified as speaking another language other than English at home or as a person living with a disability and/or special need.

ii Project awareness

Of the 46 respondents, 65.2% had previous communications with CGO and 37% had not. Matters which had been the topic of previous communications included:

- information about the Project
- environmental attributes and potential impacts on Lake Cowal
- employment with CGO as an employee or contractor
- business opportunities
- community benefits for life of mine.

Of the 46 respondents, 84.8% identified themselves as having a good or very good awareness of the Project, with 13% of respondents having a fair awareness (Figure 5.1). Only 2.2% of respondents identified themselves as having a poor awareness of the Project.

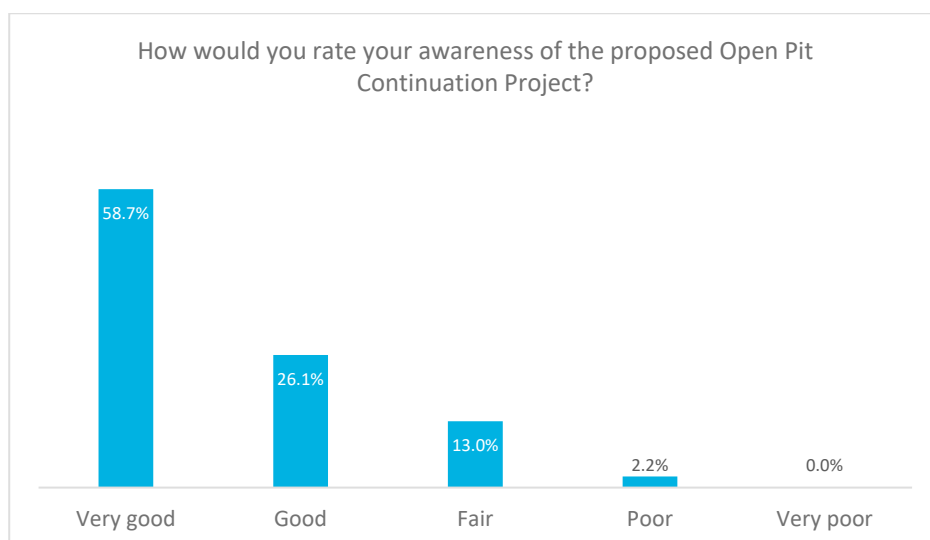


Figure 5.1 Project awareness – community survey

iii Project support

The survey results indicated a high level of support for the Project (Figure 5.2). Overall, 93.5% of respondents noted that they were either supportive or strongly supportive of the Project with 6.5% identifying that they were neutral, with no opposed or strongly opposed responses.

Reasons for Project support included:

- benefits to economic growth, employment and community support
- proven history of managing, mitigating and responding to potential/minimal environmental impacts
- economic benefits for the region
- continuation of support and stability for the community in the future
- continuation of support and opportunities for local businesses and contractors
- continuation of ongoing employment, job security for life of mine and future employment opportunities.

Reasons for Project neutrality included:

- impacts on environmental values of Lake Cowal
- concerns for the breeding grounds for the waterbirds
- legacy questions regarding the continuation and impacts on the area
- potential flood impacts.

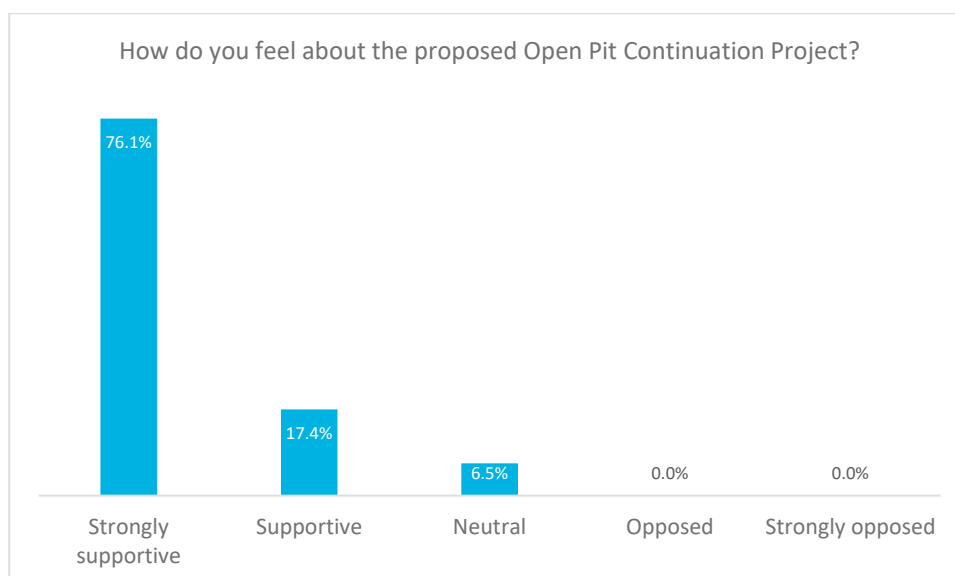


Figure 5.2 Project support – community survey

iv Perceived Project impacts and benefits

Figure 5.3 presents the survey responses regarding potential social benefits derived through the Project and include:

- benefits for small business with 100% of respondents identifying as very positive
- community contributions with 100% of respondents identifying as very positive
- employment continuation of the open pit operations workforce with 97.9% of respondents identifying as moderately positive or very positive
- employment creation of construction employment opportunities with 95.6% of respondents identifying as moderately positive or very positive.

Respondents were moderately positive about the following Project contributions:

- access to social infrastructure with 100% of respondents identifying as moderately positive
- ecology with 100% of respondents identifying as moderately positive
- Aboriginal cultural heritage with 100% of respondents identifying as moderately positive.

Respondents were only slightly positive about the following:

- water displacement, visual amenity – day and night, Blast vibration, air quality, agriculture and access to services with 100% of respondents identifying these as only slightly positive.

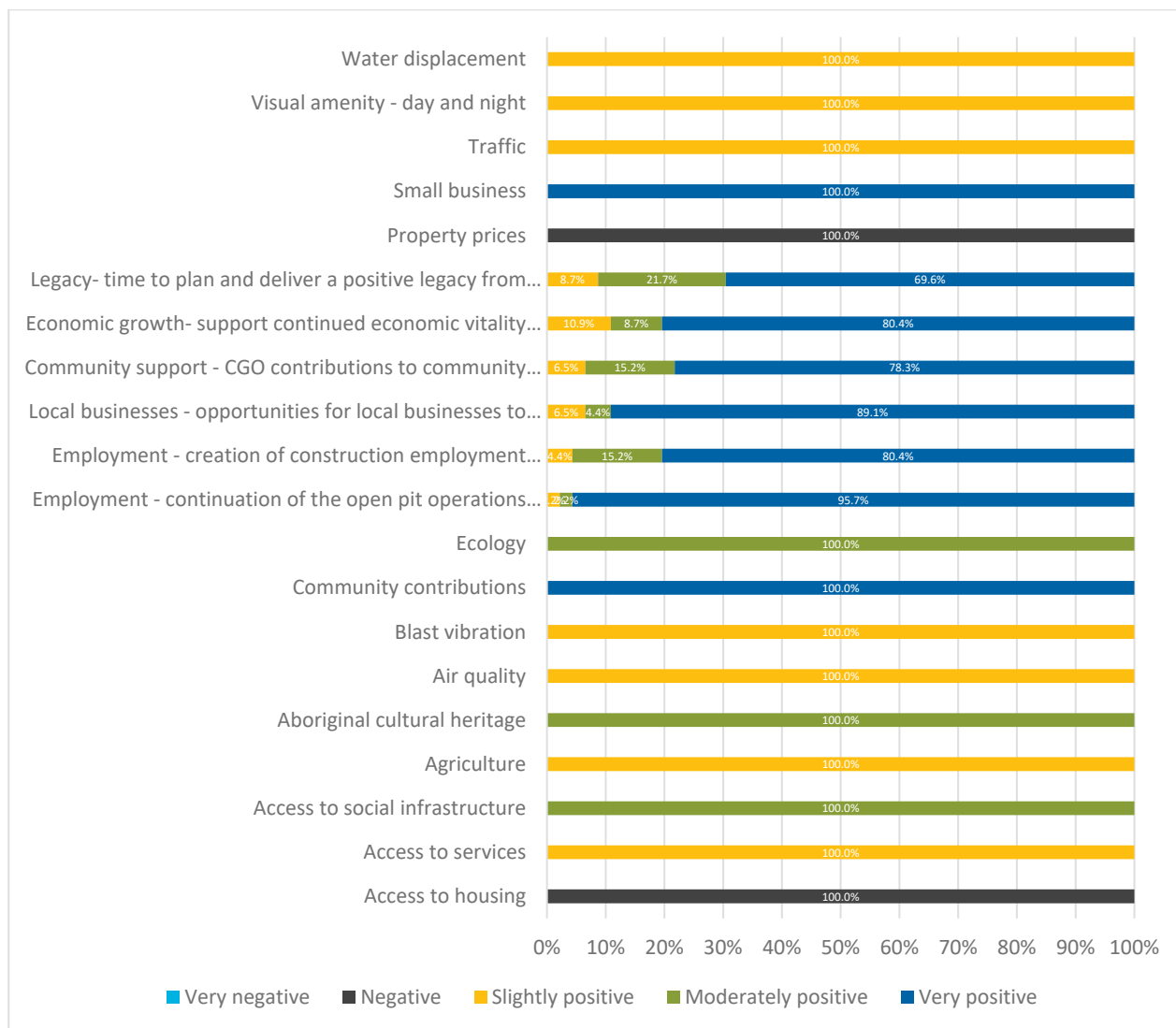


Figure 5.3 Responses to community survey – perceived positive contribution made by the Open Pit Continuation Project

Figure 5.4 presents survey responses to each potential negative effect associated with the Project and include:

- housing and accommodation: pressure on local housing and short-term accommodation with 61.9% of respondents identifying it as moderately negative and or very negative
- services: workforces place additional demands on local health services with 35.7% of respondents identifying it as moderately negative and or very negative
- water displacement: potential for the lake protection bund (LPB) to influence flood behaviour with 24.4% of respondents identifying it as moderately negative and or very negative
- traffic: additional traffic resulting in reduced safety on roads with 22.5% of respondents identifying it as moderately negative and or very negative.

Respondents where slightly negative about:

- culture: potential disturbance to Aboriginal cultural heritage with 82.9% of respondents identifying it as slightly negative

- agriculture: encroachment on agricultural land and potential competition for water resources – with 82.5% of respondents identifying it as slightly negative
- cohesion: presence of (short-term) construction workforce in local area with 80% of respondents identifying it as slightly negative.

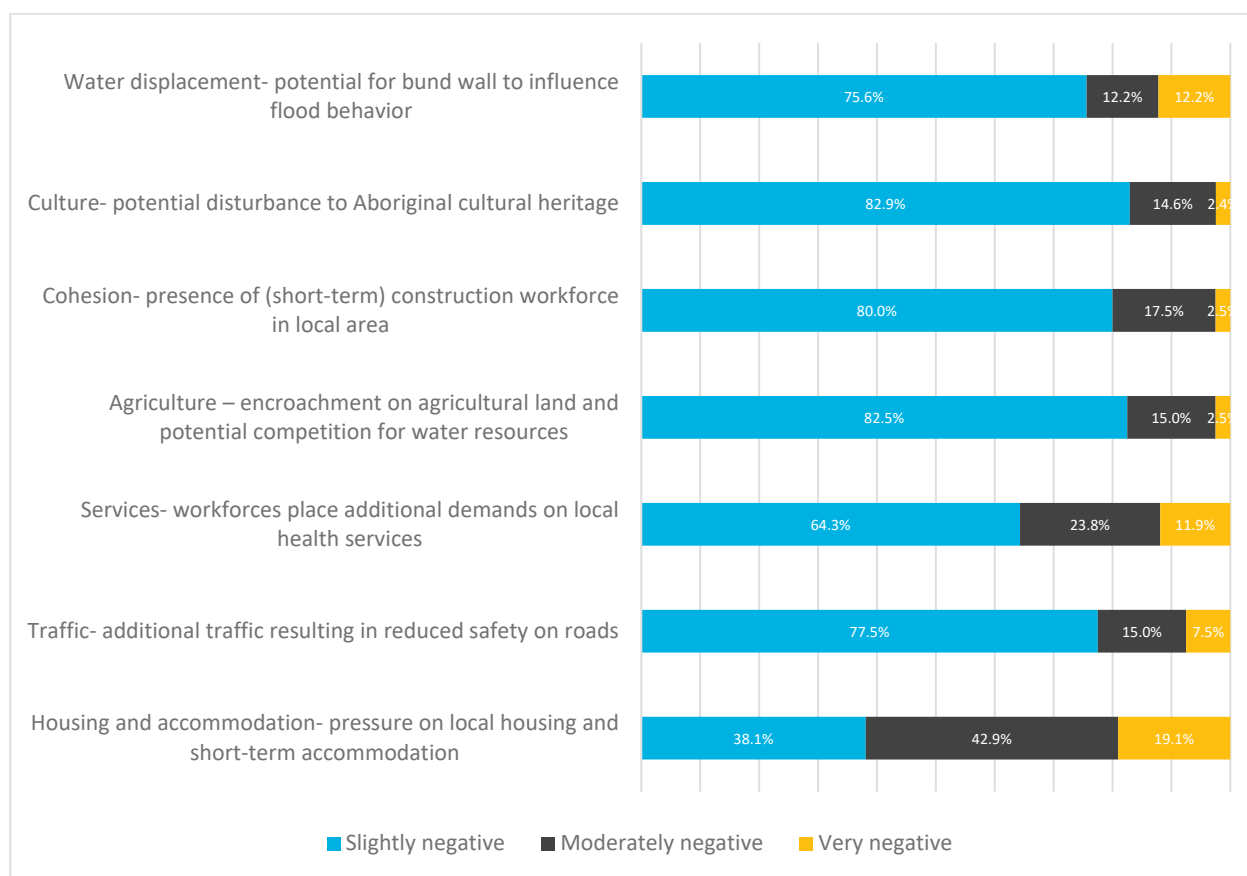


Figure 5.4 Responses to community survey – perceived negative contribution made by the Open Pit Continuation Project

5.3 Summary of engagement outcomes – key themes

A summary of the values, strengths and vulnerabilities and key impacts and benefits identified through community and stakeholder engagement is provided in Appendix F.

A variety of themes were identified from engagement feedback in relation to potential impacts, benefits and opportunities associated with the Project. Key themes were identified based on the frequency they were mentioned by stakeholders and provide an indication of what matters are of importance to the stakeholders who participated. This section summarises key identified recurring themes.

5.3.1 Decision making systems

Respondents across all forms of SIA engagement consistently expressed that they felt engaged and consulted by CGO, and that engagement was meaningful and has improved over time.

5.3.2 Legacy

Legacy benefits for the local and regional area was an issue raised by stakeholders including more time to plan mine rehabilitation, an appreciation for the ongoing contribution made by CGO to the community and the desire for the mine to ensure that a positive community legacy is achieved post-mining.

Several stakeholders, including a landholder, a special interest group member and an elected representative commented that there should be a 'relative' (financial) contribution made to the community to balance the perceived environmental and social impacts of the proposed Project. The potential for greater contributions to health, housing and accommodation, transport and tourism infrastructure were highlighted.

It was also identified that the Project may further enable continuation of benefits delivered to the Aboriginal community through ongoing support for the initiatives being progressed by the WCC and LALC. The mine has been instrumental in supporting numerous initiatives which have enabled Aboriginal people to restore cultural awareness and connections.

5.3.3 Housing and accommodation

Inhibited access to affordable housing and accommodation was an issue frequently raised by stakeholders in West Wyalong. Health workers, emergency workers and trades people reported being unable to find housing locally. Access to housing would also seem to be impacting communities beyond West Wyalong and into the Forbes and Lachlan LGAs.

Accommodation providers noted that they are benefitting from consistent occupancy rates as a result of mining workers and contractors staying in the area. Conversely, some other businesses are reportedly losing business due to accommodation shortages. Bland Shire Council noted that some community events have been impacted by a lack of available short-term accommodation. Opportunities for local tourism are also inhibited.

Some SIA interview participants identified that there was a high degree of competition for available rooms or rental properties. It was noted that when a property comes on the market (rental or sale), real estate agents sometimes go straight to Evolution. Bland Shire Council also noted challenges related to the release of land for residential development.

Several participants expressed that while other communities may resist workers camps, the West Wyalong community is supportive of the approved accommodation village associated with the underground mine, due to the housing and accommodation issues. Residents appear to appreciate the importance of the CGO mine and what Evolution does for the local communities.

5.3.4 Economy

Stakeholders appreciated the economic contribution made by CGO and the benefit the Project would provide in terms of ongoing job security for the open pit workforce. These jobs will continue to support local and regional economic vitality, providing a continued income stream for local suppliers. Employment and training opportunities for local people, particularly young people, was identified as a major benefit provided to local communities. This includes the (direct and indirect) provision of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people in the local and regional area.

5.3.5 Services

i Capacity of health services

The capacity of health services may be impacted by the construction phase of the Project. Difficulty in attracting and retaining health professionals and services (contributed to by housing constraints), health and wellbeing impacts and further pressure on struggling health and emergency services were issues identified by stakeholders. Social benefits include positive effects on mental health provided by job security and economic resilience and the contributions CGO directly makes to health and community services.

ii Capacity of other services

There were several concerns raised relating to the current access to services such as health and childcare, particularly from healthcare and emergency services workers. It was identified that the primary factors inhibiting the provision of services were a lack of skills (across the region and more broadly across NSW) and a local lack of suitable housing and accommodation. Health, education and emergency services all reported needing to individually develop housing solutions in order to attract and retain staff. Fire and Police service representatives identified that they do not expect the Project will have an impact on their level of service.

5.3.6 Transport

During the construction phase of the Project, there will be a peak construction workforce of around 102 FTE's. The Project would not involve any change to the existing operational workforce. It was appreciated that the Project will not change the approved primary and alternate access routes, primary site access or operational traffic movements.

This will minimise interactions between operational and construction traffic movements.

Stakeholders reported that there may be some issues caused by traffic associated with construction and the potential for increased operational heavy and light vehicle movements along local and regional roads. Traffic concerns included impact to the current Travelling Stock Route, increased operational light vehicle movements (including potential for deterioration of safety due to increased traffic throughout construction) and traffic associated during times of shift change overs (5:00 pm – 7:00 pm) due to the traffic – particularly the (too) bright LED lights of light vehicles travelling to and from the mine.

A representative from an emergency service provider raised concern over the potential for an increase in accidents should traffic increase in the area and queried whether the existing road infrastructure in the local area is suitable for an increase in traffic.

5.3.7 Surroundings

The Project is bordered to the east by Lake Cowal, which is the dominant local feature in the area. Lake Cowal is an ephemeral freshwater lake. In a regional context the lake forms part of the Lake Cowal Wilbertroy-Cowal Wetlands located on the Jemalong Plain, part of the Lachlan and Murray-Darling River systems.

Stakeholders reported that Lake Cowal is the largest inland lake in NSW and when full, which on average is approximately 3 years in every 10, it supports a range of migratory birds and other fauna. The lake is an overflow system which is filled by a number of sources including Bland Creek. When dry, the lakebed is largely used for agricultural purposes by surrounding landholders of the east side of the lake. The western side of the lake, which is owned by CGO, is not used for agriculture or grazing.

Some nearby landholders reported that they are occasionally impacted by noise, vibration, and visual amenity effects (lighting). Some landholders also expressed concerns about the visual impact to views and vistas related to the increase in the height of the IWL.

Several landholders around Lake Cowal and other stakeholders also raised concerns about the proposed increased bund (i.e. lake protection bund) and what that might mean for flooding and surface water flows in the area. Some landholders were concerned about access to their land during flooding events and the potential impacts that even a small change in water (flood) levels could have on their ability to farm and access their land.

Landholders expressed concern about the ongoing potential impacts on water, fresh groundwater and additional water supply requirements for the extended life of the mine with the potential to affect agricultural productivity and future essential groundwater resource availability. It was highlighted that fresh groundwater supply/security is critical to farming operations and livelihoods.

There was an appreciation of open and meaningful communication by CGO as this gives local landholders and the broader regional community reassurance and security around what they can expect.

5.4 Summary of community engagement and SIA field study findings

The tables provided in Appendix F.3 of this report outline the key social impacts identified by participants in the SIA field studies and is informed by the findings of in-depth interviews with local members of the community, community groups and local government staff, in addition to the findings from the Project briefings and discussions and online community survey. All consultation activities sought to understand how participants viewed their community and identify how the Project may impact on themselves and the community.

6 Assessment of social impacts and benefits

This section discusses potential social impacts generated by the project and provides an assessment of relative social risk utilising the methodology outlined in Section 2.3 of the SIA Guideline Technical Supplement (DPE, 2021b).

Findings from technical reports and stakeholder perceptions have been used to capture expert and local knowledge in the identification and assessment of impacts, and to develop appropriate impact mitigation, and enhancement strategies.

Assessment of social impacts considers a range of factors and potentially competing interests. The impact assessment is reflective of this and has:

- assessed some aspects of the Project as both negative and positive as they relate to different groups of people
- included potential impacts and benefits on local communities and the broader region
- considered potential impacts on vulnerable sectors of affected communities
- considered community access to services such as housing and health care.

Social impacts have been assessed on a worst-case scenario initially and then the residual impact is assessed on the basis that proposed mitigation or enhancement measures are effectively implemented. The assessment uses the terms unmitigated and mitigated when referring to negative impacts and un-enhanced or enhanced when referring to positive impacts.

The following data and information have been used to identify the impacts and their associated risks:

- data collected as part of the social baseline
- findings from community and stakeholder engagement activities
- findings from technical studies
- academic research
- relevant government and agency reports.

Application of the likelihood and magnitude framework as outlined in Section 2.1 of this report, informs assessment of the level of significance of a social impact as being low, moderate, high or very high. Both impacts and benefits have been assessed.

Potential social impacts and benefits are summarised in **Table 6.1** below, along with the related social themes as identified in Project engagement.

Table 6.1 **Potential social impacts and benefits**

Social impact theme	ID	Impact or benefit	Project aspect	Impact category as per SIA Guidelines
Decision making systems	D01	Ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement (benefit)	Construction Operation	Decision making systems
	D02	Opportunity to plan and deliver a positive mine legacy (benefit)	Construction Operation	Decision making systems
	D03	Opportunity to achieve improved mine rehabilitation outcomes (benefit)	Operation Rehabilitation	Decision making systems
Housing and accommodation	H01	Continued pressure on the local rental housing market (impact)	Construction Operation	Way of life, community, access
	H02	Reduced availability of short-term accommodation (impact)	Construction Operation	Way of life, community, access
	H03	Heightened confidence in the housing market (benefit)	Construction Operation	Way of life, community, access
Economy	E01	Ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience (benefit)	Construction Operation	Livelihoods
	E02	Provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities (benefit)	Construction Operation	Community, livelihoods
	E03	Provision of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people (benefit)	Construction Operation	Community, livelihoods
Services	S01	Community support and contributions from CGO operations (benefit)	Construction Operation	Way of life, access, culture
	S02	Improved access to services due to the Projects contributions to economic capacity (benefit)	Construction	Access, surroundings, health and wellbeing
	S03	Impact of increased competition for health care services in the local area (impact)	Construction Operation	Access, surroundings, health and wellbeing
Transport and access	T01	Impact to the Travelling Stock Reserve (impact)_	Construction Operation	Access, health and wellbeing
	T02	Increase in traffic on local roads and perceptions of safety (impact)	Construction Operation	Way of life, livelihood, access, surroundings
Surroundings	Su01	Generation of dust, noise and vibration affecting quality of life for nearby residents (impact)	Construction	Way of life, health and wellbeing, surroundings
	Su02	Changes to the visual character of the landscape (impact)	Construction Operation	Way of life
	Su03	Diminished Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values (impact)	Construction Operation	Way of life, health and wellbeing, surroundings

Table 6.1 **Potential social impacts and benefits**

Social impact theme	ID	Impact or benefit	Project aspect	Impact category as per SIA Guidelines
	Su04	Management of pest animals and bushfire risk (impact)	Construction Operation	Way of life
	Su05	Continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders (benefit)	Construction Operation	Livelihoods
	Su06	Improved environmental education outcomes (benefit)	Construction Operation	Access, culture
	W01	Perceived competition for groundwater resources (impact)	Construction Operation	Access, health and wellbeing, culture
	W02	Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall (impact)	Construction	Access, way of life, health and wellbeing
	W03	Impacts to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community (impact)	Construction Operation	Access, way of life, health and wellbeing

6.1 Decision making systems

This section provides an assessment of Project benefits and impacts upon the social impact theme – decision making systems.

Project derived benefits relating to decision making systems include:

- ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement
- the opportunity to plan and deliver a positive Project legacy
- the opportunity to achieve improved mine rehabilitation outcomes.

6.1.1 Ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement

The Project will contribute to ongoing meaningful engagement between Evolution and community stakeholders. This enables the community to influence Project decision making which builds trust and provides the foundation of a social licence to operate.

Feedback provided by stakeholders engaged as part of the SIA highlighted a positive relationship with the mine:

“Overall, the relationship with the mine is good”

“Since Evolution has come in engagement has improved a lot – they listen more than they (Barrick) used to.”

“[We] appreciate being kept informed about CGO operations.”

“If Evolution continue to grow and develop as they have, they will continue to do things better; over the years [I have] seen improved engagement and social benefits that [I] hope continues.”

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the SIA reported a high level of satisfaction with Project engagement to date, and as a result have confidence that the Project will be proactive in preventing impacts and supporting benefits. Of respondents to the community survey, 85% (39 people) indicated they had a ‘very good’ or ‘good’ awareness of the Project. Only 1 person responded they had ‘poor’ awareness of the Project, and there were no people with a ‘very poor’ awareness of the Project. Further, 65.2% (30 people) indicated they have had previous communications with CGO.

There is evidence that stakeholder feedback does influence Project decision making processes. In March and October 2022, Evolution sought feedback from local landholders on the Project design. This feedback has informed a redesign of the Project, including relocation of proposed topsoil stockpiles, due to concerns raised by the adjacent landholder that it would affect the flow of water into their dam. Further engagement on the new Project design took place in February and March 2023. This demonstrates how the Project has considered community feedback, then made appropriate adaptations to the approach and closed the loop with further engagement.

Stakeholders expressed a degree of approval and support for the Project that indicates currency of a social license to operate. The Project has developed acceptance over time with key stakeholders and the broader community through building respectful relationships, offering meaningful engagement (e.g. changing the Project based on feedback), supporting long term and intrinsic connections with the local community and offering shared economic value.

The unenhanced benefit of ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is assessed as **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit is **minor**.

There is a comprehensive Communication and Engagement Plan (CEP) in operation at the CGO site which will be amended to incorporate the Project post EIS. The CEP outlines an effective approach to communication and engagement underpinned by proactive issues-management, open and transparent two-way communication and responsiveness to the communication needs and expectations of key stakeholders and the broader community. The ongoing application of this approach is necessary for continuing to build trust and to support relationship development with key stakeholders.

While engagement to date has been effective, further improvements can be made. Interviews with local landholders and businesses found that opportunities for continued improvement include arranging more regular contact and having more consistency in points of contact with CGO. It was also expressed that the community wants to hear more about the Project and seeks further transparency.

The enhanced benefit of ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit is **moderate**.

Table 6.2 Benefit of ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Decision making	Community consultation and engagement	Local community	Construction Operation	Local area	Medium	High

6.1.2 The opportunity to plan and deliver a positive mine legacy

Continuation of the mine life provides an increased opportunity for the mine to plan and deliver a positive legacy in partnership with other key stakeholders. Throughout the operational phase, mining projects generate positive social outcomes through the creation of jobs, technical training and career pathways, injecting wealth into local economies and providing direct revenue for government investment.

The creation of a positive legacy was a key topic of discussion in interviews with the Bland, Lachlan and Forbes Shire Councils undertaken as part of the SIA.

“Bland Shire Council would like to further explore legacy opportunities in partnership with CGO. They would like to see investment in initiatives which provide long term benefit - not some facility (such as a swimming pool) which would only then become an additional financial burden on Council. Preliminary options identified include investment in skills development (including apprenticeships) for young people, facilities which encourage tourism at the Lake and enhancement of the main street in West Wyalong to create a more appealing environment for tourists and potential residents.

Forbes Shire Council recognised the lasting effect which jobs and skills development created by CGO will have upon the residents of the region for generations to come. They look forward to continuing to work with CGO to identify and define suitable legacy projects.

Lachlan Shire Council identified the potential for a high security water licence required to support ongoing future recreational activities on Gum Bend Lake; to protect this resource during future drought for the enjoyment of the community and visitors to the area but Council is unable to purchase additional water allocation due to prohibitive cost of the water licence.”

A benefit of the Project is a longer lead time to plan for closure and deliver a positive legacy for the community. Whilst legacy is an important issue for the local councils, it is evident that there is currently no clear vision of exactly what they would like to see delivered. There is an appreciation that the mine has diversified the economy by supporting different businesses and developing skills in the local community and that extension of the mine life provides an opportunity to further diversify local skills. It is also recognised that post mine use remediation will provide additional career paths and job opportunities. However, it is clear that there is a need for further collaboration between Evolution, local councils and other stakeholders to build a shared understanding and ownership of legacy and undertake the detailed planning required to ensure that legacy aspirations are realised. Further, the Project if approved there is the potential for long-term protection of the CGO Offset Areas by way of Biodiversity stewardship agreements.

Engagement with local landholders undertaken in March 2023 further supported the importance of legacy to the community, with feedback including:

“Ensure a good legacy is left at the end of it all, for example; boost tourism, [...] promote nature, assist business industry growth.”

An additional significant and ongoing benefit will be the continued support provided to the Lake Cowal Foundation (LCF) which is committed to enhancing the natural environment in the Lake Cowal region, as further discussed in Section 6.7. Further community contributions made by CGO are outlined in Section 6.4.1.

The unenhanced benefit of the opportunity to plan and deliver a positive Project legacy is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit is **minor**.

The benefits outlined above may be further improved through development of a social closure and legacy program and strategy involving collaboration with key stakeholders and the community. Integrated planning for transition and rehabilitation would serve to build a shared understanding of, and responsibility for, optimal post mining outcomes. CGO will engage with stakeholders to help to guide the closure process and manage the social effects. Stakeholders will include a range of State government agencies, including amongst others the Department of Planning and Environment, Department of Regional NSW and the Department of Primary Industries. Local Government Authorities (e.g., Bland Shire Council), business and service industry interests and the wider community will also be key stakeholders in the way the social impacts of mine closure are identified and managed. The social effects of closure will be guided in accordance with the strategic planning framework which will be put into effect at the State and local government levels at that time.

The Riverina-Murray Regional Plan 2041 (DPE 2023) is the key strategic planning document which guides outcomes for that region and covers the Bland Shire. Objective 12 of the regional plan notes that a strategic approach to rural land planning will enable communities and all levels of government to understand the importance of, and plan for, the future of rural industries, energy and mining.

Strategy 12.3 of Objective 12 contemplates the life cycle of resource projects, including the identification of future mine closure dates, potential changes to water, economic/skill profiles and demographics, and potential land use changes, mine rehabilitation activities and post-mining land use opportunities. These issues have been canvassed in the relevant sections of this EIS. It is recognised that a strategic and collaborative approach will be required to manage the social effects of the closure of the mine, with shared responsibility for the strategic planning of future land-uses in accordance with State and local strategic planning frameworks.

CGO will have input to this strategic planning process. Notwithstanding the outcomes of this collaborative planning exercise, it is noted from the Regional Plan that agricultural production in this region will remain the dominant industry, worth over \$2 billion each year and employing over 18,000 people. The regular and ongoing updates to the Riverina-Murray Regional Plan will consider social aspects, impacts and benefits of mine closure as they are better understood over time.

Ultimately the objective of the social closure and legacy program and strategy is to leave in place sustainable collateral for current and future generations.

The enhanced significance of the 'Project legacy' is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is assessed as being **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit is assessed as being **moderate**.

Table 6.3 **Benefit to decision making systems of Project legacy**

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Decision making	Community consultation and engagement	Local community	Construction Operation	Local area	Medium	High

6.1.3 The opportunity to achieve improved mine rehabilitation outcomes

A benefit of the Project is a longer lead time to plan for and progress mine rehabilitation. This has the potential to further improve rehabilitation approaches and outcomes and benefit the community post mine closure. Mine closure is a complex process and it requires careful planning and execution. CGO is required under its existing development consents and its Mining Leases to rehabilitate the site to a safe and stable environment and this will be undertaken in accordance with approved objectives and closure criteria as agreed with Resources Regulator and described in its approved Rehabilitation Management Plan. The rehabilitation strategy described in this EIS will also guide the progressive rehabilitation of the activities associated with the operation of the Project.

In terms of the social impacts of closure, these impacts are less understood and have not been assessed at this stage. The social environment will be subject to change over the life of the Project and therefore assumptions that can be made now in terms of the social, environmental and economic aspects and drivers which are evident now may not be the same as the Project nears completion and as CGO contemplates the closure phase of its operations. The standards and requirements which are put forward in the Strategic planning framework at the State and local level will also evolve over time, and this will affect the social outcomes related to closure.

A snapshot of the community's vision for the local area is provided in Bland Shire Council's Community Strategic Plan, (Bland Shire Council, 2021) which identified the community's vision as including "a focus on agriculture, environment, tourism and heritage, balanced with new business development". Council also supported the goals of the Lake Cowal Foundation (LCF) and the Lake Cowal Conservation Centre (LCCC) to improve land management practices and balance the environment with industry (Bland Shire Council, 2020).

It is evident that a preferred post mine operation use of the open pits has not yet been determined by Evolution and community stakeholders. Evolution has been engaging with numerous entities on potential future uses. One which identified during a community engagement session was as potential water storage sites. This and other long-term plans for the site were also discussed in meetings with various elected representatives.

Feedback received during SIA engagement demonstrated the value the community places in site rehabilitation and ensuring the best land management practices are applied to the area. Comments included:

“The mine operates within regulation but the mine is there now and always will be. It has changed the landscape forever. Rehabilitation efforts should mitigate this as much as possible.

The amount of investment in mine rehabilitation should reflect the amount of profit the operator has made out of the mine – every time the gold price increases, there should be more money committed to rehabilitation.”

Rehabilitation and final landform design are currently implemented in accordance with the objectives of the Rehabilitation Management Plan (RMP) (Evolution Mining, 2022). This RMP will be updated to outline the progressive rehabilitation and final land use of new Project (as well as the existing CGO components). Rehabilitation will include the reshaping and revegetation of disturbed areas to establish native ecosystems. Progressive rehabilitation and the ongoing revegetation of mined and/or disturbed areas would improve overall visual amenity and mitigate visual impacts experienced by sensitive landholders.

The VIA reported that the current mitigation of visual amenity impacts at CGO is the rehabilitation of final landforms sympathetic to the natural environment and screening with vegetation, where appropriate.

The Mine Closure and Rehabilitation Strategy (MCRS) highlights that knowledge of rehabilitation methods and techniques will be further developed and refined as the mine progresses. This means that extension of operations to 2042 may allow for new approaches to be adopted, including technological advances, adaptation of the local planning context and community transition planning.

The unenhanced benefit of the opportunity to achieve improved mine rehabilitation outcomes is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is assessed as being **possible** and the magnitude of the benefit is **moderate**.

To optimally balance environment and industry requirements, it is important that the mine follows the RMP’s strategy to adapt rehabilitation planning throughout the life of the mine and to maintain its connection with local aspirations and needs. This means the RMP must continue to respond to community and government expectations, engagement and planning. The mine may also advance transition planning and related adaptive design that is geared to facilitate future rehabilitation of the site and waste minimisation

The enhanced benefit of the opportunity to achieve improved mine rehabilitation outcomes is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit is assessed as **moderate**.

Table 6.4 Benefits related to mine rehabilitation planning for the local community

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Legacy	Mine rehabilitation outcomes	Local residents Environmental advocacy groups	Post-operation	Project site	Medium	High

6.2 Housing and accommodation

This section provides an assessment of Project benefits and impacts upon housing and accommodation.

The following Project derived impacts on housing and accommodation are assessed:

- continued pressure on the local rental housing market
- reduced access to short term accommodation.

The following Project derived benefit on housing and accommodation is assessed:

- heightened confidence in the housing market.

6.2.1 Continued pressure on local rental housing market

During engagement undertaken to inform the SIA, the community consistently raised concerns about the constrained availability of rental housing in West Wyalong. This particularly impacts vulnerable sectors of the community who are not able to afford escalating rental prices along with a broad range of services and businesses which struggle to access housing for staff. As the Project would enable retention of the open pit operational workforce and require a construction workforce for a period of two years, it may contribute to continued pressure on the local rental market.

As outlined in Section 4.6, 24.6% (1,946 dwellings) of all housing stock in the local area is rented. Of these dwellings, 388 are in Bland LGA and 297 are in West Wyalong. As of January 2023, there was only 1 dwelling available for rent in Bland Shire LGA.

Consultation with local real estate agents and community service providers confirmed the lack of rental availability in West Wyalong:

“The rental housing market is particularly tight in West Wyalong, with long waiting lists of people seeking this form of accommodation.

The housing and accommodation market has tightened over the couple years following the emergence out of COVID lock downs which coincided with a number of major projects requiring construction workforce accommodation.

Any houses are snapped up for ridiculous prices straight away by contractors.”

Key service providers including police and local schools, discussed how they are now required to invest in housing as otherwise, they struggle to attract and or retain staff as there is no available rental accommodation. Service providers also spoke of the difficulty of competing for housing with mine employees on relatively high wages:

“Housing, accommodation and employment go hand in hand; [we] can’t attract trained professionals if there is nowhere for them to live.

The Project reduces availability of affordable housing for key workers and increases pressure on service providers, reducing the appeal for potential key workers considering moving to the area.

There is a general shortage of skills in the region, and it does become difficult for employers to compete with mining organisations and other industries which can pay higher wages. The higher cost of living is an additional factor.”

Local Aboriginal community groups advised there is limited access to rental housing for the Aboriginal community. Currently there are only four community housing properties and six Aboriginal owned houses in West Wyalong, while the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Bland LGA was 249 people in 2021.

One accommodation provider advised they provide accommodation for someone who is homeless and have a standing 12-month agreement with this person.

As outlined in Section 4.2 (Table 4.2), in the local area nearly a quarter of the population (23% of households) earn less than \$650 per week, compared with 16.3% in NSW. In Bland LGA, 67.5% of households spend more than 30% of their income on housing, compared to 62.8% in the local area and 56.1 % in NSW. This means a substantial proportion of the local population are experiencing housing stress.

There have been multiple recent articles on housing scarcity in West Wyalong and how this inhibits access for key workers. This has affected paramedics (Gardner, 2023) nurses (HelloCare, 2023) and teachers (Steph Cooke, 2020). Initiatives to provide housing are underway and include mobile outreach teams (Allen, 2022), and NSW government provision of demountable housing for nurses and purchase of housing for teachers.

Stakeholder feedback suggested that a primary cause of the currently constrained rental market in West Wyalong was the demand created by the workforces of two solar projects and the Newell Highway Upgrade, all of which are currently under construction. However, the CGO workforces also contribute to demand as the UG accommodation village is not yet operational (estimated to occur in June 2023).

Evolution has a total of 510 full time employees at CGO, of which approximately 70% reside in West Wyalong, a proportion of which are in rental accommodation. CGO employs a housing coordinator who is responsible for managing approximately 150 rental properties occupied by CGO staff. CGO aims to have multiple workers residing in shared rental houses to reduce overall housing demand.

If the Project was not to proceed and the operational workforce was no longer required, there would likely be a release of some housing stock currently occupied by the CGO workforce. In addition, it is likely that if the Project were not to proceed, the open pit workforce of 230 people would likely cease to require local housing in 2026, thereby alleviating pressure on the local rental market. As such, continuation of the open pit workforce does contribute to a continued shortage of rental accommodation.

As detailed in Section 3.2.3, construction of the Project is estimated to require an average of 71 FTE in Year 1 and a peak workforce of approximately 102 workers and an average of 57 FTE and a peak of 83 workers in Year 2. Due to the relatively short-term construction timeframe, it is anticipated that non-local members of the construction workforce would predominantly seek short-term accommodation rather than rental accommodation. However, as has been the recent experience of the construction workforces associated with the solar farms, there is potential for Project construction to contribute to ongoing pressure on the rental market in West Wyalong.

During March 2023 engagement, nearby landholders and Lachlan Shire Council expressed that rising cost of living and land prices remain an issue in the local area, as do housing and accommodation shortages.

The unmitigated impact of continued pressure on the local rental market is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible** and the magnitude of the impact is **moderate**.

Evolution is highly aware of the housing constraints in West Wyalong and has actively worked to prevent impacts to the local housing market through development of a 128 bed accommodation village for underground mine workers. The underground mine accommodation village is approved to a maximum of 178 beds meaning the quantum of beds can be increased if required. Evolution also provides a bus service for employees who reside in Forbes and Condobolin. This alleviates some of the workforce demand for housing and accommodation which would otherwise occur in West Wyalong. During 2023 engagement, Forbes Shire Council representatives indicated they would like to encourage more workers to live in Forbes. Lachlan Shire Council representatives indicated that while fatigue management is a concern as Condobolin sits outside 1 hour's drive of the site, they would also like to see more mine workers reside in Condobolin.

A further key means of avoiding workforce derived demand for housing is prioritising local employment, where feasible and practical. Evolution is committed to maximising the employment of local residents through local recruitment policies and programs, provision of training and skills development opportunities and local awareness campaigns. As members of the existing open pit workforce either retire or find alternative employment, they may be replaced by an existing local resident, which has a positive effect on demand for housing and accommodation.

In interviews completed to inform the SIA, real estate agents and accommodation providers reported that Evolution maintains a high level of engagement and are generally good at sharing information on when workforce accommodation is required. It was identified that a more regular engagement forum (such as a housing and accommodation working group) or means of communication (such as regular email/phone call) could further improve communication regarding predicted workforce related demand and the current condition of the local housing and accommodation market.

Finally, any impact the construction workforce might have on the rental market may be avoided through procurement initiatives that prioritise and incentivise contractor use of short term accommodation.

The mitigated impact of continued pressure on the local rental market is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **unlikely**, and the magnitude **moderate**.

Table 6.5 Livelihood impacts related to reduced access to rental accommodation

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Housing and accommodation	Continued pressure on local rental market	Local residents	Construction and operation	Local area	Medium	Medium

6.2.2 Reduced availability of short-term accommodation

Short-term accommodation caters for the needs of tourists and people visiting family and friends and attending events. It also is relied upon by those needing to access health and other services and as emergency accommodation in times of high need and provides an important source of accommodation for vulnerable members of the community. The availability of short-term accommodation for community and visitor use could be impacted by the accommodation requirements associated with the Project construction workforce.

As outlined above, construction is estimated to require an estimated peak workforce of 102 workers in Year 1 and 83 workers in Year 2. Evolution is committed to maximising employment opportunities for local residents and it is expected that 40% of the construction workforce may be sourced from the local area which includes Bland, Lachlan and Forbes LGAs. It is recognised that a proportion of these workers would reside more than a 1 hour commute from the Project site and therefore may require accommodation in order to comply with a CGO HSSE policy of a maximum 60 minute commute either side of a 12 hour shift. It has been assumed that of the 40% of the construction workforce sourced locally, 20% will be residents of Bland LGA (within a 1 hour commute), 10% from Forbes LGA and 10% from Lachlan LGA. A summary is provided in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6 Peak construction workforce assumptions

Geographic area	Proportion of total workforce	Year 1 average number of workers	Year 1 Peak number of workers	Year 2 average number of workers	Year 2 Peak number of workers
Bland LGA	20%	14	20	10	17
Lachlan LGA	10%	7	10	5	8
Forbes LGA	10%	7	10	5	8

Table 6.6 Peak construction workforce assumptions

Geographic area	Proportion of total workforce	Year 1 average number of workers	Year 1 Peak number of workers	Year 2 average number of workers	Year 2 Peak number of workers
Outside the local area	60%	43	61	31	50
Total workforce	100%	71	102	51	83
Proportion of workforce requiring accommodation	-	57	81	41	66

Application of the assumption that up to 20% of the workforce will be sourced within a one hour commute distance, results in a peak accommodation requirement for 81 workers in Year 1 of OPC construction and a peak of 66 workers in Year 2. It is assumed that each worker will require a room. It is common for construction workforces to share a room with multiple beds if required, so this represents a 'worst case' scenario.

In terms of the supply of short-term accommodation, as outlined in Section 4.7.5 there are an estimated total of 337 rooms in West Wyalong and surrounds, 233 rooms in Forbes and 127 rooms in Condobolin. Accommodation providers in West Wyalong were engaged to inform the SIA, initially in October 2022 and again in February 2023. Providers universally reported they were experiencing high rates of demand with occupancy rates commonly between 80% to 90%. Elevated demand was driven by several construction workforces concurrently requiring accommodation in West Wyalong (two nearby solar farms and the CGO underground construction workforce). With the completion of these construction projects in mid to late 2023, occupancy rates are likely to return to between 60% - 70%. For the purpose of estimating availability of short-term accommodation, an occupancy rate of 65% has been assumed for West Wyalong and surrounds. The assumed occupancy rate for Forbes and Condobolin is 60% as informed by the Central NSW quarterly occupancy rate 2019 – 2022 (Destination NSW). An overview of short-term accommodation supply and availability is provided in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7 Short-term accommodation supply and availability

Location	Total rooms	Occupancy rate	Available rooms
West Wyalong and surrounds	377	65%	132
Forbes	233	60%	93
Condobolin	127	60%	51
Total	737		276

An assessment of demand and supply of short-term accommodation is presented in Table 6.8. The OPC Project would generate a peak demand for 81 rooms of short-term accommodation (FY25 H2). As there are an estimated 132 rooms available, the OPC construction workforce would not have any significant impact upon availability of short-term accommodation in West Wyalong.

Recent re-forecasting of the operations workforce for the CGO underground mine has revealed that there may be an additional estimated 30 to 40 contractors required on an ongoing basis in addition to the 128 being accommodated at the West Wyalong Village. As outlined in Table 6.8, factoring in the estimated 40 rooms for UG operations workforce, the CGO construction workforce is unlikely to have a significant impact on accommodation availability. A maximum total of 121 rooms (Year 1 H2 peak) are required and there are 132 rooms available in West Wyalong and surrounding area. There would be a surplus of approximately 11 rooms in a 'worse case' scenario and as the OPC construction workforce peak has a short duration (approx. 2 months) there would be no prolonged impact on accommodation availability.

Table 6.8 **Assessment of short-term accommodation demand and supply**

CGO Workforce component	Year 1 H1	Year 1 H2	Year 2 H1	Year 2 H2
OPC construction workforce (80% of peak workforce)	50	81	66	46
Underground operations (additional to village)*	~40	~40	~40	~40
Total demand (rooms)	~90	~121	~106	~86
Total supply- West Wyalong and surrounds (available rooms)	132	132	132	132
Available surplus (rooms)	~52	~21	~36	~56
Shut down workforce**	~140	~140	~140	~140
Total CGO cumulative peak number rooms required	230	261	246	226
Total supply- West Wyalong and surrounds, Forbes and Condobolin (available rooms)	276	276	276	276
Available surplus (rooms)	46	15	30	50
* Assumption of 40 rooms required				
** Assumption of 140 rooms required				

Ongoing maintenance of mine processing equipment requires regular 'shut down' events. Generally, there is a requirement for two major shutdowns per year for a duration of 7 to 14 days each. From the review of workforce and accommodation data for the last five major shutdowns, it is evident that these can involve up to 275 workers. Due to rostering and room share arrangements, this workforce is accommodated across an average of 140 rooms. These events have been regularly occurring for 20 years and a number of short-term accommodation providers in West Wyalong have standing agreements in place for servicing shut down workforces. Evolution maintains high levels of engagement with accommodation providers in West Wyalong to advise when shut down periods are scheduled, and the number of beds required. Feedback received from accommodation providers was highly

complementary of the way they are able to work with Evolution to find optimal accommodation solutions for shutdown work crews.

During quarterly shut down periods (maximum requirement for 140 rooms), there would be a shortage of short-term accommodation in West Wyalong and surrounding area should the shutdown occur during peak Project construction (which is unlikely and again represents a worst-case scenario). In this instance, the peak demand equates to 261 rooms and supply is estimated to be 132 rooms.

This has the potential to restrict availability of short-term accommodation for community and visitor uses, particularly if coincides with a key event such as the Agricultural Show, harvest season or a major sporting or cultural event. It may also have a negative influence on tourism and the businesses which rely on tourism. Engagement with Accommodation providers highlighted the impact on travellers with statements such as:

“We get lots of calls (up to 5 times per day) with people asking for accommodation and I have to say we have no room so if I have time I try and find them accommodation for the night. I felt bad as people are weary after they have been travelling so far.

West Wyalong is the major thoroughfare for persons travelling between QLD and VIC (halfway point), Travellers do not book ahead of time; they just stop in looking for accommodation.”

The unmitigated impact of reduced availability of short-term accommodation is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **likely**, and the magnitude of the impact is **moderate**.

In addition to mitigations provided in Section 6.2.1, the severity of impacts on the availability of short-term accommodation may be mitigated through the planning of shut down periods to avoid periods when the Project construction workforce requirement is high. Project construction workforce peaks occur in Year 1 H2 (81 workers) and Year 2 H1 (66 workers). There is only a 7 month period when the construction workforce is above 60 FTE's. There is an opportunity to plan shut down events to avoid times when construction workforce requirements peak and thereby substantially reduce overall demand for short term accommodation.

If there is a requirement for a shutdown period to occur at the same time as there is a relatively high Project construction workforce requirement and there is a shortage of accommodation in West Wyalong; members of the shutdown workforce may be accommodated in Forbes and Condobolin. There are an estimated 233 rooms in Forbes and 127 rooms in Condobolin. The regional occupancy rate of approximately 60% means there are an additional 144 rooms potentially available across Forbes and Condobolin with a total supply of 276 available rooms across West Wyalong and surrounds, Forbes and Condobolin. Considering that total demand (at peak and worst-case scenario) equates to 261 rooms, there would be a surplus of rooms (15 when demand at peak) and constrained availability of short-term accommodation should only occur for a relatively short duration.

The mitigated impact of reduced availability of short-term accommodation is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **unlikely**, and the magnitude **moderate**.

Table 6.9 Livelihood impacts related to reduced supply of short-term accommodation

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Housing and accommodation	Reduced supply of short-term accommodation	Local community	Construction and operation	Local area	High	Medium

6.2.3 Heightened confidence in the housing market

Evolution Mining is a major local and regional employer that supports local economic activity which provides flow-on benefits to West Wyalong and the surrounding region. Continuation of open pit mining and the employment and business opportunities this provides, would further support confidence in the local housing market and may stimulate additional investment in housing developments which would increase total housing stock.

During in-depth interviews, key service providers expressed that by maintaining employment associated with open pit operations, the Project would provide greater certainty for local developers and land use planners:

“The Project would serve to provide additional confidence in the local housing market which could assist in additional residential development being brought to market.”

Bland Shire Council is looking to open up additional supply of permanent housing and indicated one constraint has been that some land earmarked for sub-division has not been brought to market by landholders due to a lack of access to necessary capital, professional services and advice.

Evolution provided financial support to Bland Shire Council for the drafting of the Bland Housing Strategy which Council recently completed, however further amendments need to be made to the Bland Local Environmental Plan 2011 (LEP) to enable more residential land to be brought forward. The Strategy proposes some areas supporting higher density housing options, along with the release of standard residential and rural residential allotments. Bland Shire Council identified infrastructure challenges such as:

“There are a range of infrastructure constraints to residential growth- particularly stormwater and water supply infrastructure.

Council has received funding support to address water pressure issues in West Wyalong.”

One stakeholder raised a concern that the Bland Housing Strategy does not sufficiently address the impediments to bringing required forms of housing to market.

Opteon Property Group (2022) has undertaken significant analysis of the Bland LGA property market and reports there was a very strong increase in land values between July 2021 and July 2022. This upward trend was largely attributed to high demand for residential properties, low supply and a strong economy supported by confidence in CGO mine and increased interest in regional areas following the COVID pandemic. The report highlighted West Wyalong has also benefited from ongoing and sustained confidence in its economic future due to the presence of the CGO mine, construction and development of solar farms and continued demand for agricultural commodities.

Population predictions vary across the local area with an overall increase of 8.8% over the next 20 years and average annual growth rate of 0.4% (DPE, 2022). Population projections for Bland LGA suggest the population is expected to remain stable, Forbes LGA is expecting a total change of 32% with an average annual growth rate of 1.3% and Lachlan LGA is expected to experience a decrease in population for the same period. Numerous stakeholders engaged as part of the SIA commented on the positive impact the mine has had on population stability and growth in West Wyalong, with comments such as:

“West Wyalong was a town in decline before the mine was developed. It turned around the fortunes of the town almost overnight.

Development of the Cowal Gold mine was instrumental in population growth and has been a positive outcome for the town.”

Through maintaining and prolonging operational workforces and the population stability that provides, the Project would have a positive effect on investor confidence in the local housing market. Considering the housing constraints detailed in Section 6.2.1, such investor confidence could well stimulate additional investment in housing developments and increase total housing stock.

The unenhanced benefit of heightened confidence in the housing market is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **possible**, and the magnitude of the benefit is **moderate**.

Ongoing stakeholder and community engagement and dissemination of information regarding the Project would serve to foster further investment confidence in the local housing market.

The enhanced benefit of heightened confidence in the housing market is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **possible**, and the magnitude is **moderate**.

Table 6.10 **Heightened confidence in the housing market**

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Housing and accommodation	Heightened confidence in the housing market	Local community	Construction and operation	Local area	Medium	Medium

6.3 Economy

This section provides an assessment of Project benefits and impacts upon the local and regional economy.

Project derived benefits on the economy include:

- the ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience
- provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community
- provision of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people.

6.3.1 Ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience

The Project will enable CGO to continue its contribution to regional economic resilience. Sustained revenue streams improve resilience in the local economy and support the region's the ability to absorb shocks and stresses, such as floods and droughts which may adversely affect other industries.

Bland Shire's Local Strategic Planning Statement (Bland Shire Council, 2020) outlines that 12% of employed residents within Bland Shire LGA work in other LGAs, indicating a high level of employment self-containment. The largest employment sectors in Bland Shire are agriculture and mining. In a Bland Shire Council Report, it was mentioned that the Lake Cowal gold mine was a key reason for ongoing and sustained confidence in Bland Shire LGA's economic(Opteon Property Group, 2022).

The Social Baseline (in Section 4.5 of this report) identifies that outside of the mine, businesses in the agricultural, forestry and fishing (22.5%), healthcare and social assistance (10.6%), and retail trade (10.5%) also support economic diversity as the top 3 local industries of employment. The Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) (AEC Group, 2023) identified that the Project will increase gross regional product (the total value of the goods and services produced in a regional economy) by up to \$666.7 million in present value terms (at a 7% discount rate) relative to what would otherwise be expected to occur without the Project. The NSW economy is estimated to record an increase in gross state product valued at \$910.7 million in present value terms relative to what would otherwise be expected to occur without the Project (inclusive of the contribution to the Catchment).

The Project will increase industry outputs in mining (\$177.6 million), construction (\$18.8 million), business services (\$6.0 million), public services, health and education (\$0.8 million) and ownership of dwellings (\$1.2 million) in the local area. Overall the Project will deliver an increase in local industry output of \$184.2 million, both directly and through flow-on activity.

Despite the high degree of local reliance on agriculture for employment, the industry is subject to external adverse conditions (such as flooding, drought and disease). The Project offers a counterpoint to the skills and resource requirements for these industries, providing more secure options for workers embedded in these industries who otherwise would have few local employment alternatives. The Project's high anticipated returns and offering of alternative employment provides security when adverse conditions affect other sectors.

In addition, CGO has a policy of enhancing indirect social benefits by maximising economic benefits for regional communities through structuring procurement processes to enable businesses throughout the region to participate in the supply chain (Opteon Property Group, 2022).

The EIA also identified that 'some industries are expected to record lower levels of industry output relative to what would otherwise occur without the Project due to competition for constrained labour resources and increased costs of businesses as competition for resources drives input prices up.' These industries include agriculture (-\$2.5 mil), manufacturing (-\$11.9 mil), electricity and water (-\$1.8), trade (-\$0.1), transport and storage (-\$3.3), communication (-\$0.3), finance and insurance (-\$0.4 mil), and recreation and other services (-\$0.1 mil).

A portion of the potential economic loss to the agricultural industry may also be attributed to the Agriculture Impact Assessment's (AIA) (Minesoils, 2023) findings that overall there would be:

- Permanent reduction of land used for agricultural purposes, (only 244.4 ha of this is currently used for agriculture, the entirety of which will be returned to agriculture on rehabilitation; and, that the baseline maximum area includes approximately 470 ha of land within the lake bed that has historically been subject to opportunistic agriculture but has since been prioritised as a bio-conservation area by CGO over the last 10+ years due to its ecological importance in the context of the wider locality).
- Decreased secondary productivity, and
- Permanent downgrading of land and soil capability classes within the Project area.

The AIA affirms that these impacts will be restricted to the Project disturbance area, with no long-term impacts to the undisturbed portion of the Project area, and critically, that no temporary or permanent impacts to agricultural resources, enterprises, productivity or infrastructure within the surrounding Project locality or wider region are anticipated.

The manufacturing industry is expected to experience the largest adverse impacts from the Project in terms of lower levels of industry output compared to what would be expected to occur without the Project. The EIA notes that 'while the manufacturing industry is estimated to experience lower levels of industry output compared to what would otherwise occur, the contraction in percentage terms is small (0.03% in NSW) relative to the overall size of the industry'.

Responses to the SIA community survey rated the potential benefits of the Project to the local community, with the majority of respondents (80.4%) identifying that the Project will support continued economic vitality and population stability of local communities. Comments included:

"The mine has substantially benefited the town of West Wyalong. Not only has it generated direct employment with 60- 70% of the workforce living in Wyalong; there is also a multiplier effect with additional jobs being created through the injection of cash into local economy and local businesses.

If it weren't for the mine, West Wyalong would be in a bad state, especially coming off a hard drought. The mine has provided many local people with employment and even allowed farmers to work their land and have a job at the mine.

The Project will have flow on effects of mine employment and activity to other parts of the business community and general community."

In-depth interviews with key stakeholders identified:

“The economic diversification which the Project provides becomes particularly important in times of drought or agricultural commodity downturns.

Other businesses such as hotels, motels and food and beverage providers also benefit from continuation of local jobs as a result of the Project.

The mine has also led to diversification of businesses in the region – for example there are engineering and fabrication businesses which have started up.

West Wyalong is an example of agriculture, mining and conservation co-existing.”

The unenhanced benefit of the ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit **moderate**.

Economic diversification allows for a more stable economy that can absorb shocks and changes to the market (Esanov, 2012). The Project will contribute to regional economic diversity by providing additional benefits including construction employment, purchase of goods and materials required for construction and the generation of indirect jobs. While the project represents some challenges to certain industries, as discussed below, by contributing to the diversity of revenue streams, the Project can enhance its positive effect on the resilience of the local economy and continue supporting the regions ability to absorb shocks and stresses.

The EIA identifies that CGO has long standing relationships with local business and an established supply chain for its existing activities. To maximise local benefits derived from the Project, the proponent will continue to support local business by utilising these established supply networks and providing sufficient opportunities and information for local business to secure new supply contracts.

Feedback from the local business chambers suggested that procurement measures may be further enhanced by continuing to build relationships with local businesses. There may also be benefit in assessing, in detail, availability and capacity of regional suppliers, particularly with regards to the manufacturing, transport and storage and agriculture industries, and how the mine may best procure goods and services from these suppliers. Increased local demand may assist these suppliers in becoming more competitive and in attracting labour from other areas. This approach is aligned with Strategy 5 of the *South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update* ((DPE), 2023), as described in Table C.2 of Appendix C in this report. During March 2023 engagement, Forbes Shire Council also indicated that they assist in linking local contractors to regional business opportunities.

A direct means for developing CGO’s capacity to work with regional suppliers and for assessing suppliers availability and capacity would be to continue consultation with key stakeholders to support relationship-building with existing and potential suppliers.

The enhanced benefit of the ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is assessed as being **almost certain** and the magnitude of the benefit is assessed as being **moderate**.

Table 6.11 **Ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience**

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Economy	Ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience	Local community	Construction and operation	Local and regional area	High	High

6.3.2 Provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community

The Project provides ongoing opportunities by continuing to employ workers from the local and regional area, as well as by providing new employment opportunities. This contributes to the continuation of training and skills development opportunities for the local community.

Respondents to the SIA community survey strongly supported the Project due to the direct and indirect employment benefits it would provide. Topics concerning employment and the local economy were consistently rated as very positive aspects of the Project including the continuation of open pit operations workforce (95.7%), creation of construction employment opportunities (80.4%), and opportunities for local businesses to supply goods and services to the Project (89.1%). Comments received from respondents included:

“Supportive [of the Project] because of the benefits it will provide the community in regards to providing jobs and resources to the town.

Jobs for the region; support traders and businesses in the region; generate revenues through taxes for the government to fund infrastructure in the region.

There is no doubt that the mine has opened up employment opportunities and makes a valuable contribution to the local economy.

Overall, the mine is good for the town of West Wyalong and the surrounding area. It generates direct and indirect employment and career pathways for local people. Continuation of open pit mining would keep those jobs and wages in the town. It has a highly positive effect on retention of young people in the area.”

The extension of operations by 2 years means that the skills of the existing workforce will be retained in the region for longer. The Project is anticipated to hire a further 27 local residents, providing ongoing employment opportunities. The industries likely to be required include construction, labourers, technicians and trades workers, machinery operators and drivers and professional scientific and technical services.

The Economic Impact Assessment identified that the Project will increase direct and flow-on employment in the local area and in NSW during construction and operations. Over the 19-year Project timeline the Project is estimated to support a total of:

- 2,516 full time equivalent (FTE) job years across the Bland, Lachlan and Forbes LGA's (where one FTE job year is equivalent to one person working full time for a period of one year), averaging 132 FTE jobs per annum with a peak of 245 FTE jobs in Year 5.
- 2,045 FTE job years in NSW, averaging 108 FTE jobs per annum with a peak of 210 FTE jobs in Year 5.

The EIA expects that the increase in employment will also deliver increased incomes in the local area and NSW, both directly as a result of the jobs supported, as well as through a small lift in wages generated by increased competition for labour.

Over the 19-year Project timeline the Project is estimated to support a total of:

- \$181.4 million in additional wages and salaries in the region in present value terms. The average employee income is estimated to be 1.26% higher with the Project than would be expected without the Project.
- \$589.4 million in additional wages and salaries in NSW in present value.

Small rural townships such as West Wyalong typically have limited education and training opportunities. There are no universities in the local area, however there are four TAFE campuses: one in Bland LGA located in West Wyalong; one in Forbes LGA located in Forbes; and two in Lachlan LGA located in Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo. In interviews conducted to inform the SIA it was confirmed that large mining projects such as CGO have a highly beneficial effect on the courses offered in rural areas as they diversify employment opportunities. Comments included:

“Enjoy a very good relationship with Evolution and the mine has created a variety of career pathways for local people. First and second year apprentices in courses such as welding and metal fabrication are able to be employed locally. This is great in terms of keeping young people in the local community.

Further indirect benefits include the continuation of training courses such as those offered through TAFE – (fitting and turning, apprenticeships etc.)”

During March 2023 engagement, Bland Shire Council and the CGO Community Environmental Monitoring and Consultative Committee further reinforced the importance of the Project in terms of the development of a sustained skilled workforce in the local area.

The unenhanced benefit of the provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude **moderate**.

In order to further enhance the benefit of Projects existing and future employment into a long-lasting legacy for the local community, CGO may review existing employment and training measures to identify existing skills and gaps, transferrable skills and desired skills for futureproofing against Project closure. Continuation of engagement with local education service providers including TAFE and other local colleges may enable the Project to target and generate demand for appropriate upskilling courses. By securing transition arrangements for the existing local workforce early, the Project both benefits from a skilled workforce, and secure additional trust within and connection with the local community.

The enhanced significance economic benefits related to provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is assessed as being **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit is assessed as being **moderate**.

Table 6.12 Provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Economy	Provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community	Residents and businesses in the local and regional area.	Construction Operation	Regional area	High	High

6.3.3 Employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people

The Project is likely to allow CGO to extend existing beneficial partnerships with indigenous stakeholders and will provide extended opportunities for employment and training for Aboriginal people.

The three pathways the CGO uses to engage with First Nation Partners and the local indigenous community are through a Shared Value Project with Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC), direct Project employment and training and provision of cultural awareness training for employees.

Evolution Mining and the WCC have collaborated to form the Galari Agricultural Company (GAC). In this collaboration, Evolution Mining has provided financial support which is utilised by the Galari Agricultural Company (GAC) to provide employment, training, and business opportunities, particularly for young Indigenous men and women (Murphy, 2022). An article discussing the GAC highlighted that in 2022, there were four trainees undertaking a two-year Certificate of Agriculture course accredited by Australian Agricultural Training (Murphy, 2022).

The GAC was raised during interviews undertaken as part of the SIA. In a discussion with WCC, it was explained that employment and training initiatives associated with horticulture and livestock enterprises will focus on the production of beef cattle, lamb, and wool on 1,600 acres of Evolution land. The GAC will start with training in shearing and animal husbandry for eight trainees. Longer-term goals are to establish GAC as a Registered Training Organisation to support 80 youths annually to build careers in agriculture, livestock, mining, commercial cleaning, catering, and land management. This training will facilitate development of skills aligned with local employment market demand, based on industry of employment and local business data.

Comments included:

“This collaboration will enhance the employability and skill development of Indigenous youth in the region and establish an ongoing work readiness pathway program.”

Evolution Mining’s Inclusion and Diversity Policy outlines commitments across all aspects of employment, including recruitment, training and development, remuneration and performance management. This policy seeks to ensure fair hiring practice within the organisation. Currently, the Evolution Annual Report 2022 confirms that there is 6% indigenous representation in their national workforce

CGO runs an inclusion awareness and diversity program, through which Evolution leads workforce awareness and active participation in support of inclusion and diversity values. Roles for indigenous stakeholders across Evolution’s site include providing guidance and delivering ‘Inclusion and Diversity’ initiatives. At the CGO site, these have included regular cultural awareness training to employees which is delivered by local indigenous knowledge holders.

As outlined in Section 6.4.1, Evolution also provides the Wiradjuri Scholarship Program, which gives tertiary scholarships to indigenous students and Active Citizen: a program for Aboriginal students in Year 10 which aims to build leadership skills, confidence, increase employability and awareness in being an active citizen, and enhancing cultural knowledge.

The above outlines Evolutions commitment to actively supporting diversity in their workforce and confirms that contributions to the WCC and GAC create affirmative action in securing local indigenous employment and an ongoing positive legacy for the local indigenous community.

The unenhanced benefit of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **possible** and the magnitude **moderate**.

It is proposed that the Project implement further indigenous employment measures for future additions to the existing workforce. One opportunity to reinforce direct indigenous employment is through preparation of an Indigenous Participation Plan. CGO may also consider provision of ongoing funding to support indirect employment and training through the WCC and GAC.

The assessed benefit of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people is **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit **moderate**.

Table 6.13 **Employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people**

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Economic	Employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people	Local and regional indigenous community	Operation	Regional area	Medium	High

6.4 Services

This section provides an assessment of Project benefits and impacts upon services.

Project derived benefits regarding services include:

- Community support and contributions from CGO operations.
- Improved access to services due to the Projects contribution to economic capacity.

A Project derived impact on services is:

- Increased competition for health services in the local area.

6.4.1 Community support and contributions from CGO operations

In their ongoing relations with the local community, Evolution Mining has contributed to various clubs and non-profits to support initiatives, projects and events that will provide positive outcomes to residents within the Bland, Lachlan and Forbes LGAs. Each local organisation offers different social benefits in key categories including youth development, economic development, health & wellbeing, education, environment, arts, culture and sport. The community is extremely appreciative of Evolution Mining's support and the improved access it provides.

Funding contributions over the 2022/23 financial year included, but are not limited to, the following contributions:

- Tivoli Theatre Project: a community cinema in West Wyalong.
- West Wyalong Advocate: the relaunching of a regional newspaper.
- Galari Agricultural Company: an employment and training initiative and horticultural and livestock enterprise.
- Somewhere Down the Lachlan Sculpture Trail: a public art trail stretching from Forbes to Condobolin.
- Active Citizen: a program for Aboriginal students in Year 10 which aims to build leadership skills, confidence, increase employability and awareness in being an active citizen, and enhancing cultural knowledge.
- Grazing Down the Lachlan: a food event that celebrates Central NSW produce.
- Defibrillator support: an information session for educators on how to use an Automated External Defibrillator.
- Gratitude Project: a nomination project to recognise workers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Evolution Mining, 2022).

There has also been investment in education including:

- Endeavour Scholarships: assists the transition from secondary to tertiary studies.
- Wiradjuri Scholarship Program: tertiary scholarships given to indigenous students.

Such contributions to the community are reflected by a tangible community appreciation that was expressed throughout SIA engagement. For example, in interviews conducted with local landholders and businesses, it was stated:

“The mine does a great job maintaining the relationship with the community.

The mine has substantially benefited the town of West Wyalong.”

In the community survey 76% of respondents expressed support for the Project. Comments indicated that this support is founded in CGO’s existing positive relationship with the community, and included:

“Evolution provides so much for our community, jobs, grants and education for schools and our culture awareness.

The mine is a great asset for West Wyalong for jobs and community support.

The Evolution mine provides employment opportunities for many people within the community and contributes to the community in multiple ways.”

The Cowal Partnering Program Guidelines (Evolution Mining) provides a clear reference outlining how community organisations and initiatives can access potential support. This further demonstrates how CGO aspires to leave a positive legacy for the community post-operation, and the Project’s continuation offers an opportunity for further enhancement of this benefit.

During March 2023 engagement, local Councils indicated ongoing contributions would be welcomed, particularly “allocations for social upgrades to support strategic planning goals.”

The unenhanced benefit of ongoing community support and contributions is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is assessed as being **almost certain** and the magnitude **moderate**.

There are no additional enhancement measures proposed for this benefit.

A summary of the assessment is provided in Table 6.13.

Table 6.14 Benefits related to community contributions from CGO operations

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Services	Community contributions from CGO operations	Local residents	Operation	Local area	High	High

6.4.2 Improved access to services due to the Projects contribution to economic capacity

Primary barriers of access to services include the availability of the service and the ability to pay for the service. Economic capacity of individuals and communities refers to the ability to afford sought after goods and services. As discussed under Section 6.3, CGO makes a major contribution to local and regional economies. The injection of wealth through wages, procurement and flow-on economic activity improves the capacity of residents to pay for services, which also attracts services to the local or regional area. The Project will continue economic inputs into local and regional economies which will improve the availability of services and the capacity of residents to pay for such services.

The Australian Government Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) estimated that the average Australian spent approximately \$7,926 on health goods and services in the 2019 – 20 financial year. This represents 21% of the median annual personal income (\$37,336) of residents in the local study area. By increasing and continuing local employment opportunities and improving the income potential of households, the Project can contribute to essential services becoming more affordable for local residents.

There is a well-documented shortage of General Practitioners (GP's) across regional Australia such that there was a Senate Inquiry launched in 2021 to investigate the reasons for chronic shortages in regional areas. However, West Wyalong is currently relatively well serviced, with a total of seven GPs across three medical practices. In interviews conducted to inform the SIA, it was conveyed by health providers that a key reason why there is currently adequate access to GPs is that people can afford such services and that the mine has been primarily responsible for raising economic capacity.

Further to the ability to pay for services, there is evidence that job security has a major effect on individual mental health wellbeing. A 14-year study conducted in Australia from 2002–2015 found that improvements in job security were associated with improvements in mental health, and vice versa (LaMontagne, Too, Punnett, & Milner, 2020). The Project would have a positive impact on job security by enabling the open pit workforce to be retained and extending operations by an additional two years.

The unenhanced benefits of improved access to services due to the Project's contribution to economic capacity is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is assessed as being **likely** and the magnitude of the benefit is **moderate**.

There are no additional enhancement measures proposed for this benefit.

A summary of the assessment is provided in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15 Improved access to services due to the Projects contribution to economic capacity

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Services	Improved access to services due to the Projects contribution to economic capacity	Local businesses	Construction Operation	Local area	High	High

6.4.3 Impact of increased and ongoing demand for health care services in the local area

The addition of the Project's construction workforce to the continued existing CGO workforce could put pressure on local health and emergency services. Whilst there is currently adequate access to GP services in West Wyalong as discussed in Section 6.4.2, there is a deficiency of other health professionals and emergency services personnel. It is difficult to attract and retain such skills in regional areas, a situation exacerbated in West Wyalong by housing and accommodation shortages. Additional competition for limited services contributed to by the Project, could lead to supply pressures.

As outlined in Section 6.4.2, CGO provides a benefit by enhancing the economic capacity of individuals to access health services, however this also means there is greater demand for such services. Health services are limited in West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin and the vulnerability of limited access to health services was recognised by a Country Mayors Associated committee meeting in May 2022, which was attended by Bland Shire and Forbes Shire councillors. The committee noted that there are fewer doctors per person in remote and rural communities, despite improved number of specialists (Bland Shire Council, 2022). Consequently, specialist providers are increasingly the predominant provider for primary health care for remote and rural communities (Bland Shire Council, 2022). The drivers of the declining number of health professionals were noted as financial incentives, Medicare indexation freeze, and ineffective retention grants (Bland Shire Council, 2022).

These restrictions to accessing health care services operate within the context of broader issues with access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales. A report on the matter emerged from NSW parliamentary inquiry released in May 2022, which identified similar concerns to the Country Mayors Associated committee meeting of a declining workforce and maldistribution of skills. It was also identified that rural communities often require 'rural generalist' skills and that the needs of remote, rural, and regional communities are unmet by current health care systems.

The survey conducted during SIA engagement asked respondents to rate potential social impacts from the Project, in particular, the service impact of workforces placing additional demands on local health services. In response, 64.3% of respondents rated the Project as having a slightly negative impact, 23.8% rated it as having a moderately negative impact, and 11.9% rated it as having a very negative impact.

This is expanded on by interviews conducted for SIA engagement. An interview with the West Wyalong Health Service revealed that staffing levels are consistently stretched and there were currently four positions to be filled, the highest need being for two additional nurses. However, the main challenge highlighted was housing for staff. This was reinforced in an interview with Forbes Shire Council, who mentioned that the issue of attracting and retaining doctors and allied health professionals is often linked to accommodation/housing or wage offerings.

In interviews with Councils, local businesses, residents, and landholders in 2022 and 2023, it was noted that:

"The community needs improved access to all forms of health care and assistance.

Demand for health services is high. The number of emergency presentations over the last two years has doubled. This reflects more people and activity in the area.

There are constantly pressures on health services which constrains the ability to access such services.

Services have not kept up with growth in the region.

Teachers get teachers housing, what about medical staff?

West Wyalong hospital is 'in crisis', difficult to attract and maintain nursing staff/doctors due to lack of suitable housing/accommodation and lack of childcare options. The town needs a dedicated house built for medical staff.

The [Condobolin District] Hospital also struggles with the recruitment of staff. Telehealth services have increased dramatically, but this doesn't save lives. Allied health services, including mental health, are poorly supported. There is also limited suitable accommodation to house incoming staff."

The unmitigated impact of increased competition for health care services in the local area is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **unlikely** and the magnitude is **moderate**.

Possible mitigations include ongoing engagement with NSW Health and other health service providers to advise of workforce changes and confirm the capacity of existing service provision.

It is noted that CGO will continue to provide the workforce onsite health initiatives which include flu vaccines, skin checks for staff, and various other initiatives which in turn reduces the need to draw upon public health services.

The mitigated impacts of increased competition for health care services in the local area is assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **unlikely** and the magnitude of the impact is **minor**.

A summary of the assessment is provided in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16 Impacts related to increased competition for health care services in the local area

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Services	Increased competition for health care services in the local area	Residents	Construction	Local area	Medium	Low

6.5 Transport and access

This section provides an assessment of Project benefits and impacts upon the social impact theme – transport.

Project derived impacts on transport include:

- impact to travelling stock reserve
- increase in traffic on local and regional roads heightens community concerns around traffic and safety.

6.5.1 Impact to travelling stock reserve

When grazing or moving stock, landholders are able to use a network of travelling stock reserves (TSR) on Crown land. In addition to grazing and moving stock, the TSR network provides other values such as biodiversity conservation, Indigenous and European culture, recreation and emergency management (LLS, 2023).

Current and former TSRs are shown in Figure 1.2. As shown, the TSR alignment was substantially changed when the mine was constructed, as it originally ran along the western foreshore of Lake Cowal.

As noted in Section 3.2.4 above, Evolution has entered into a lease in perpetuity with Council over the portion of Lake Cowal Road south of the Lake Cowal Road/Bonehams Lane intersection which runs east west through Lot 100 DP 1059150 (ie along the southern boundary of ML1535). As such, this portion of Lake Cowal Road (ie from the Lake Cowal Road/Bonehams Lane/internal mine access road intersection) is now closed to the public and is effectively a private road managed by Evolution. This closure is only applicable to the road. The TSR remains available for use, although consultation with Local Land Services confirmed that these routes are very rarely used.

Evolution is currently in discussions with Council and Local Land Services (LLS), who manage and regulate the TSRs in the vicinity of Lake Cowal, regarding realignment of the TSR, a process which is under way outside of the EIS process. The objective of that process is to transfer the TSR to Evolution-owned land parallel to the former West Wyalong-Burcher railway line northwards from Blow Clear Lane and thereby ensure continuity of the TSR network around the CGO into the future. This has been inspected by Local Council, Local Land Services and Crown Lands. The re-route is collectively supported and agreed as an improvement on the existing route which is constrained due to topography .

Though this will not form part of the Project, re-routing of the TSR was identified by some stakeholders as an issue of concern as the stock route holds historical, operational and cultural values (LLS, 2023).

In interviews with nearby landholders undertaken to inform the SIA, the historical significance of the TSR was noted:

“The stock routes have always provided an important means of access to the lake and surrounding areas.

The stock route is a part of the heritage of the community. There seems to always be a tendency to abandon heritage to facilitate economic progress.”

Other nearby landholders recognised the benefit of access to the TSR to move stock in times of drought and that they should be protected and better managed:

“They are particularly important during dry years and would not like to see changes to the stock routes.

During times of drought, we rely on stock routes to keep stock condition.”

Based on the data currently available, it is expected that social impacts of changes to the TSR will be limited due to the fact that the alignment has already been changed in recent years and there is very little infrastructure and land disturbance as part of a re-route. However, the possible economic, biodiversity and heritage impacts of the realigned route have not been assessed in technical reports supporting the EIS, as the realignment does not form part of this proposal.

During March 2023 engagement, local landholders demonstrated continued interest by requesting further clarity from CGO on plans for TSR.

The unmitigated significance of impacts to the travelling stock reserve is assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible**, and the magnitude **minimal**.

In interviews conducted as part of the SIA, it was mentioned by one nearby landholder:

“It would be good if state and local government could work out an arrangement to better manage the stock routes. Perhaps Evolution could also contribute for those parts which have been affected by the mine.”

The existing TSR will be re-routed to a location that is an improvement on the existing route, as it is less prone to flooding. No further mitigation is proposed. Following further consultation with Local Land Services, the mitigated significance of impacts to the travelling stock reserve is assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible**, and the magnitude **minor**.

Table 6.17 Livelihood impacts related to Impact to travelling stock reserve.

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Transport	Impact to travelling stock reserves	Local landholders, users of the TSR	Operation	Surrounding the Project	Low	Low

6.5.2 Increase in traffic on local and regional roads may impact perceived safety

Traffic generated by large construction projects and the safety of local and regional roads is commonly highlighted as a key issue of concern by community stakeholders. In the course of interviews undertaken to inform the SIA, a number of stakeholders raised concerns that Project related increases in construction traffic and that heavy vehicle movements could affect safety and travel times. While the Project has found this to be unlikely, the perceptions of other users of designated Project transport routes should be recognised and managed.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the proposed and existing site access routes, which are described in Section 3.2 of this report.

During stakeholder engagement it was recognised that construction traffic was a key issue among stakeholders:

“Traffic through West Wyalong can be an issue, particularly if a large number of heavy vehicles is required for construction.

Traffic is an issue in terms of both construction traffic and ongoing operations traffic. However it is fortunate that a majority of residential areas are not exposed to heavy vehicle movements.”

Traffic concerns related to the potential for deterioration of the roads and road safety due to increased traffic including traffic associated during times of shift change overs (i.e. between 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm) was raised:

“[we] avoid driving in and out of West Wyalong during times of shift change overs (5pm – 7pm) due to the traffic. [We avoid these times because] the bright LED lights of new utes makes it difficult to see.

[there should be] support for local Councils in regard to the maintenance of local and regional road infrastructure

Roads and Traffic Maintenance regime in place however increased traffic flow will require more frequent maintenance.”

A representative from an emergency service provider raised concerns over the potential for an increase in accidents should traffic volumes increase in the area. However, West Wyalong police reported potential traffic impacts associated with construction should be able to be readily managed:

“The roads through to the mine site are in reasonable condition in spite of the battering they have taken due to the floods. If police escorts are required for extra wide loads etc., this resourcing requirement would come from where the heavy vehicle originates (such as Newcastle Port) rather than where it is going, so there would be no drain on local police resources.”

Interview respondents were extremely supportive of the bus service CGO currently operates and hoped this would continue:

“Bus service for employees (50–60 reside in Forbes), a relationship EVN should continue to foster.

Workers are restricted by safe travel distance to and from the mine, hence 15-20 mine workers reside in Condobolin and commute daily via a bus provided by EVN.

Current operational traffic was reduced through the use of buses from West Wyalong to the mine site.”

Of respondents to the SIA community survey, only 22.5% identified potential traffic impacts of the Project as a concern.

The Traffic impact assessment (TIA) report undertaken for the EIS (EMM 2023) sought to identify local road network and intersection traffic impacts due to Project construction and operational traffic. The TIA concluded that there will be no changes to operational traffic compared to what is currently approved, beyond an extension in duration. The TIA also found that affected roads have the capacity to accommodate the Project’s forecast construction movements (including daily and peak hourly traffic movements and workforce travel), without any need for further road widening or other capacity or safety improvements due to the lack of risk.

In addition, the TIA stated that construction traffic will travel at times which do not conflict with school bus traffic between the periods 7:30 am to 8:30 am and 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm on weekdays.

Regardless, the principal consideration for this impact is in managing community perceptions of Project-related traffic and the associated perceived risk to personal safety.

During March 2023 engagement, landholders and Councils expressed a continued interest in road quality and anticipated traffic volumes associated with the Project.

The unmitigated impact of increased traffic on local roads and perceived reduction of safety is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible**, and the magnitude **moderate**.

Assuming the mitigations outlined in TIA, including updates to traffic and transport management plans, are implemented, the construction traffic of the Project is not expected to have an adverse impact on regional or local traffic or road networks.

The existing planning agreements provide contribution to local roads. These contributions will be extended with the additional mine life.

The mitigated impact of increased traffic on local roads and perceived reduction of safety is assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible**, and the magnitude **minor**.

Table 6.18 Increase in traffic on local and regional roads may impact perceived safety

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Transport	Impact of increased traffic on local roads and perceptions of safety.	Local road users	Construction and operation	Local area	Medium	Low

6.6 Surroundings

This section provides an assessment of Project benefits and impacts upon areas and stakeholders surrounding the Project site.

Project derived impacts on surroundings include:

- generation of dust, noise and vibration affecting quality of life for nearby residents
- changes to the visual character of the landscape
- diminished Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values
- management of pest animals and bushfire risk.

Project benefits relating to surroundings are:

- continuation of relationships with Indigenous stakeholders
- enhanced environmental education outcomes.

6.6.1 Generation of dust, noise and vibration affecting quality of life for nearby residents

Project activities which have the potential to generate additional noise and dust include construction, day time and night time mine operations, blasting and additional road traffic movements. The social effect of any impacts related to noise and dust relate to disruptions to the way of life enjoyed by nearby residents.

During engagement undertaken to inform the SIA, multiple landholders advised that they sometimes experience noise effects due to reversing trucks and noise and vibration from occasional blasting events from mine operations. There was a concern that development of new pits may increase the proximity of noise and dust producing activities, thus increasing impacts experienced by nearby residents. With the exception of occasional instances, landholders consulted did not consider noise or dust impacts to be a major nuisance.

“We do sometimes experience noise effects from mine operations. It is only audible in overcast conditions and not consider much of a nuisance.

When there are large blasts there is an accompanying large plume of dust; however it was considered that the mine does not cause any ongoing dust issues.”

During a stakeholder briefing with Lake Cowal Foundation it was advised they are advancing development of 'InHabitat Lake Cowal' which is an eco-tourism accommodation and education project on the southern shore of Lake Cowal (415 Uncle Bill's Road). Noise generation and related potential impacts to tourism and educational activities was raised as a concern.

The Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment (NVIA) prepared by EMM for this EIS (EMM 2023) conservatively predicted noise and vibration levels for the day, evening and night periods during noise-enhancing meteorological conditions such as overcast weather, wind direction and lake levels. It found that:

- Operational noise and vibration levels are predicted to be relatively unchanged from existing approved operations with noise levels generally predicted to satisfy the existing limits in development consent DA 14/98 (with minor 1-2dBA exceedances).
- Notwithstanding the above, the Project has been assessed under the conservative NSW Government Noise Policy for Industry (Npfi) (EPA 2017). Accordingly, the findings of the operational noise modelling for the Project were as follows:
 - Seven assessment locations where a negligible exceedance (1-2 dB) is predicted in accordance with the Npfi and VLAMP (NSW Government Voluntary Land Acquisition Policy). Evolution currently has a noise agreement with the landholder of one of these assessment locations.
 - Five assessment locations where a marginal exceedance (3-5 dB and below the RANL) is predicted in accordance with the Npfi and VLAMP. Evolution currently has a noise agreement with one of these landholders while another land holder currently holds existing noise mitigation rights; both will continue.
 - One assessment location where a moderate exceedance is predicted in accordance with the Npfi. In accordance with the VLAMP, this predicted exceedance (>5 dB above PNTL during the night period) is considered to be significant, meaning that voluntary acquisition rights are triggered at this location. The landholder of this location currently holds land acquisition rights which will continue.
- Traffic noise is unlikely to impact nearby neighbours.
- Construction noise may exceed out of hours noise requirements during extension of the lake protection bund, and will need to be managed.
- Noise levels in bird breeding areas are not expected to change as a result of the Project, but will continue to be monitored.

The Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Assessment (AQGGA) prepared by EMM for this EIS (EMM 2023) assessed air quality impacts for the Project. The AQGGA concluded that when background concentrations are added, the annual cumulative predicted increases of air pollutants and dust from the Project is predicted to be below the relevant impact assessment criteria. Further, the maximum predicted 24 hour cumulative concentrations and 1 hour concentrations of pollutants were below the impact assessment criterion at all assessment locations.

During Project update engagement in March 2023, landholders identified that:

"Location of new stockpile to the north is 1km from workers cottage (and original family homestead) currently housing farm staff. Issues with dust, noise, encroachment in this location. Difficult to find accommodation for staff. If they don't find suitable housing, they don't come. Can't lose farmhand as [farmhand] is getting older and hired help is now essential. Without a farmhand the viability of the business would fail.

Noise emanating from the mine is increasing. Noise from modifications to the tailings dam. Noise from the construction of extra infrastructure. More of a continuous hum with truck reversing ‘beeps’ echoing across the landscape. Even though the mine is operating within it’s limits, in this otherwise quiet landscape it is highly noticeable.

Machinery on tailings dam, mostly trucks, sometimes dozers [produce noise], and especially now the stockpiles are getting so high and the reversing truck ‘beeps’ echo across the landscape.”

The unmitigated impacts of dust, noise and vibration are assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible** and the magnitude of the impact is assessed as **minimal**.

Noise and vibration emissions will continue to be managed in accordance with the Noise Management Plan including the implementation of best management practice where necessary to reduce CGO noise emissions.

According to the AQA, appropriate mitigation measures are currently implemented through the existing Air Quality Management Plan and these mitigations would continue during the Project.

Due to the low risk of the impact occurring, no further mitigations are recommended.

The mitigated impacts of dust, noise and vibration are assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible** and the magnitude of the impact is assessed as being **minimal**.

Table 6.19 **Generation of dust, noise and vibration affecting quality of life for nearby residents**

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Surroundings	Generation of dust, noise and vibration affecting quality of life for nearby residents	Surrounding landholders	Construction and operation	Local area	Low	Low

6.6.2 Changes to the visual character of the landscape

As mining commenced almost 20 years ago, the Project would be developed within an already disturbed landscape. However, further changes to the current landscape may affect nearby landholders and visitors to the Lake in terms of sense of connection to and experience of place.

A number of privately owned and Evolution-owned residences occur around the mine, and are illustrated in Figure 3.1 of this report.

i CGO history of expansion

The CGO disturbance footprint has been expanding its initial approval in 1999. A site history is provided in Section 1.1.1 of this report. A summary of Project planning approvals, including consent modifications, is provided in Chapter 3 of the EIS.

It was noted by stakeholders engaged as part of the SIA that the mine has continued to encroach more and more over the years with each modification/expansion. Concerns expressed included:

“The major issue is that the mine is just growing bigger all the time – with each Amendment or new Project which comes along.

When the mine first was initiated, it was promised that it would only be a certain height but over time the waste rock stockpiles have become higher and higher, and the mine encroaches closer and closer.

[Some residents] already experience overly intrusive lighting effects from the mine.”

Visual impacts associated with CGO’s existing mining operations have previously been assessed and approved. Some privately-owned residences and road corridors are already subject to a visual impact from the Projects current approved (VIA, EMM 2023).

ii Scenic quality

The rural and natural landscape of the Project locality was commonly expressed by stakeholders as a key community value. Land-uses surrounding the Project are dominated by agricultural activities; primarily for sheep and cattle grazing or dry land cropping; bird-watching and other recreational activities relating to Lake Cowal when it is holding water. The area also has scenic quality, particularly from Billy’s Lookout (located on privately owned land), 7 kms from the south-west of CGO.

The Project will include an extension of open pit mining into Lake Cowal north and south of the existing E42 pit and an expanded lake protection bund (LPB).

The VIA predicted a no- to low visual impact from the north, west and south of the Project area due to the location of stockpiles, except for the one dwelling closest to the Project boundary (P5). This dwelling is assessed to experience moderate visual impact. There were no dwellings predicted to have a high impact rating.

To the east, there are some open views of the site from two residences (P20, P31) which are located approximately 7 km from the boundary across the Lake, and changes would also be visible to motorists along Lake Road. The VIA predicted a low visual impact for these dwellings and passing motorists. The VIA also predicted a low impact on the newly developed LCCC camp-ground to the south of the mine.

iii Lighting

Lighting used for existing operations at CGO includes operational lighting for work areas, and mobile plant and machinery. The lighting is observable at night as a glow near the operational areas. Landholders raised concerned that Project construction and operation may create additional lighting impacts to those already being experienced:

“Barrick originally stated that we would not be able to see the lighting. This was incorrect and the Project is visible from our property. The lighting effects are such that it looks like a town over there. Occasionally there are strong lighting effects, but they are always quick to fix the positioning of the lighting when we report that it is a nuisance.

Impacts from lighting were more invasive during the previous construction of the wall for the expanded tailings facility.

There are occasionally flashing lights which cause annoyance. Usually after reporting to CGO the lights are stopped/moved.

When driving through elevated areas there are clear views to the mine and the lighting is quite prominent.”

Surrounding landholders’ sensitivity to lighting impacts is further demonstrated by complaints CGO has received as a result of existing mining operations. The most recent complaints were received in April 2019 and in June 2020 and were successfully resolved, however this does suggest visual amenity impacts related to lighting could be an issue for the Project. However, the LCF observed that CGO were usually quick to respond if there is an issue raised regarding obtrusive lighting.

The VIA determined new light sources have the potential to expand the visibly lit area at night. This includes temporary 24 hour LPB construction lighting and new lighting placement for the three proposed pits, the waste rock emplacement (WRE) and the stockpile. The VIA also concluded that Project lighting is expected to be similar to the existing operations in light intensity and variation, according to activity.

As CGO is an existing part of the local landscape, the Project is unlikely to significantly affect local landscape character. However, long term residents experience of place may be affected by the Project's continued expansion over time, resulting in an increased sensitivity to visual impacts. The visual scale of the Project may also be unexpected for visitors to the region and incongruous with the lake setting, however this is also within the context of CGO's long-term history on the site.

The unmitigated impact of changes to the visual character of the landscape is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible**, and the magnitude **moderate**.

The VIA indicated visual impacts at CGO are currently managed in accordance with the relevant conditions of DA 14/98 and SSD 10367 and indicated the guidelines presented in the VIA for construction night lighting would ensure lights would be inwardly focused and shielded to minimise light spill impacts to neighbouring properties or the night sky. Tree planting, locating lighting and operational areas sensitively and restoring or remediating any earthworks during construction will further alleviate visual impacts.

Ongoing consultation would serve to reduce the magnitude of this impact on local landholders.

Evolution also has a complaints and grievance procedure (including a dedicated Project phone number and email), which provides the opportunity for landholders to provide feedback. The complaints and grievances mechanism facilitates timely responses to impacts and enables monitoring and reporting.

The mitigated impact of changes to the visual character of the landscape is assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **unlikely**, and the magnitude of the impact is **minimal**.

A summary of the assessment of locality impacts is presented in **Table 6.20**.

Table 6.20 Changes to the visual character of the landscape

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Surrounding landholders	Changes to the visual character of the landscape (including lighting)	Surrounding landholders, recreational users, Community groups such as Lake Cowal Foundation	Construction Operation	Nearby neighbours	Medium	Low

6.6.3 Diminished Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values

Project activities and associated disturbance to the landscape may affect the following aspects of life, culture and heritage for Aboriginal people:

- artifacts demonstrating historical connection to place
- access to and use of land and waterways
- appearance of key landscape features and navigation points
- expressions of spiritual connections to place
- culturally important flora and fauna.

Engagement with a Local Aboriginal Land Council representative confirmed that long term impacts to nature and the natural areas of Lake Cowal are the most important concern for Aboriginal people. Access to artifacts and scar trees from the site and surrounds were also identified as important, due to a lack of oral history for the local area.

The ACHA (EMM 2023) determined that the Project would result in intergenerational and cumulative loss to material culture due to cumulative impacts to Aboriginal objects, sites and/or places, though the Project is expected to have minimal effect on cultural materials within the project footprint.

The Cultural Values Mapping (CVM) Report (PA Clarke 2023, provided in ACHA Appendix D) found six sites of significance within a 30 km radius of Lake Cowal. “None of these sites are within the Project area, although are in general proximity of Lake Cowal. Most of these sites are visible from the edge of Lake Cowal and in contemporary Wiradjuri belief, all six sites were part of their cultural landscape at the time of first European settlement, with five of them relating to their ceremonial life.” The report found in terms of cultural values, there is no threat of injury to, or desecration of significant cultural heritage posed by the Project.

The CVM Report (PA Clarke 2023, Section 10.2.3) identified “Cultural flows were explored and indicated the significance of river and creek flows into Lake Cowal to being crucial for the local Wiradjuri community as they occupy Country dominated by watercourses. The Wiradjuri people desire to have their Country ecologically restored, after the severe damage to parts of the ecosystem through European mismanagement of water resources.”

Wiradjuri representatives have stated the river must continue to flow for the benefit of the physical environment, the wellbeing of their community as well as for both their spiritual and physical health (PA Clarke 2023).

The ACHA (EMM 2023, Chapter 10) identifies that surface and flood water data indicates that changes to Lake Cowal as a result of the development activities would be negligible and unlikely to be perceptible to the naked eye. While there may be some short term issues in relation to aquatic ecology during construction, this is predicted to be temporary. Given this, no mitigation measures to further explore or address cultural flows are currently proposed. Further discussion on the environmental effects of the Project is provided in Sections 6.6.4 and 6.7 of this report.

The unmitigated impact of diminished Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible** and the magnitude of the impact is assessed as **moderate**.

The CVM Report (PA Clarke 2023) recommends that a close working relationship between Evolution Mining and the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) is maintained to ensure that Wiradjuri people continue to have access to Country, which is required for managing their cultural heritage. It also identifies members of the contemporary Wiradjuri community require assurance:

- that within the Lake Cowal area, the Project will not affect animal and plant species which are key to local identity.
- regarding the maintenance of water flows in the creek systems that ultimately drain into and out of Lake Cowal.

To deliver these outcomes, the CVM Report (PA Clarke 2023) recommended the development and implementation of an interpretation strategy and plan, focusing on:

- the ethnographic and historical record, which includes post-Contact and contemporary associations with the site and immediate environs;
- consultation and input from the RAPs; and
- information obtained from the archaeological excavations and findings undertaken for the Project on the cultural and environmental landscape within which past Aboriginal people interacted with in the past.

It was also identified that this may consider off-site public outreach opportunities at nearby townships such as West Wyalong or Condobolin.

During 2022 engagement, a LALC representative affirmed that the Project presents an opportunity for the approach to retention of artifacts from the site and surrounds to be reviewed. The ACHA process has enabled ongoing engagement around the Project's approach to retention of artifacts.

The ACHA ascertained that any Project impacts are largely offset through numerous planned cultural heritage benefits. These include additional on-Country opportunities for the local Aboriginal community through proposed archaeological mitigation, the project's contribution to a greater understanding of the past and contemporary values in the region, and opportunities for heritage interpretation and public outreach. No further mitigations are proposed.

The mitigated impact of diminished Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values is assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is assessed as being **unlikely** and the magnitude of the impact is assessed as being **minor**.

Table 6.21 Diminished Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Legacy	Diminished Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values	Indigenous stakeholders	Construction and operation	Local and regional area	Medium	Low

6.6.4 Management of pest animals and bushfire risk

Landholders raised some issues which result from the different way in which land owned by CGO is managed compared to adjoining privately held agricultural lands. Key concerns raised related to pest management and bushfire risk.

Lands surrounding the mine and associated buffer areas are primarily used to support agricultural livelihoods such as broad hectare cropping and the grazing of sheep and cattle. Much of the CGO owned land adjoining the operational areas of the site is retained as regenerative environmental buffers to adjoining land uses. These buffer areas can offer refuge to pests such as pigs and dogs and increase fire risk due to a build-up of vegetation.

The Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BDAR) prepared by EMM for this EIS (EMM 2023) notes mitigation including weed control, regular inspections to assess pest populations, pest control and follow-up inspections and fencing. Pest control has been implemented by CGO in the environmental buffer areas which may have pushed feral pig populations on to surrounding properties.

The Mine Closure and Rehabilitation Strategy prepared by EMM for this EIS (EMM 2023) notes CGO's existing weed management programs on all company-owned land. The Strategy proposes the continuation of pest control activities including regular property inspections and mandatory pest control for declared pests including feral pigs and inspections to assess the effectiveness of control measures.

The Bushfire Risk Assessment (BRA) prepared by Cool Burn for this EIS (EMM 2023) notes that although the Project area is not mapped as within bushfire prone land (BPL), there are areas around 2 km to the north and around 3 km to the south-west of the Project area that are land mapped as BPL. The BRA recommends bushfire protection measures such as the implementation of Asset Protection Zones (APZ) and landscape management actions including fire control lines, slashing and mowing, landscaping and maintenance, property fire breaks as well as access provisions, water supply and utilities provision and emergency management arrangements. CGO operates under an approved Land Management Plan, which details how CGO properties are to be managed, and is consistent with the findings and approaches recommended in the above relevant technical studies.

Landholders located near buffer areas may continue to perceive, or remain concerned about, impacts to their agricultural livelihoods as a result of pests and bushfire risk close to their land.

The unmitigated impact related to the management of pest animals and bushfire risk is assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible** and the magnitude of the impact **minor**.

Measures recommended in the EIS reports are likely to be effective in mitigating risks to adjoining land users. Additional action may be taken in the form of fence repair around CGO site boundaries, as suggested by the landholders.

The mitigated impact related to the management of pest animals and bushfire risk is assessed as **low**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible** and the magnitude of the impact is **minimal**.

Table 6.22 **Management of pest animals and bushfire risk**

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Surroundings	Management of pest animals and bushfire risk	Surrounding landholders	Construction and operation	Local area	Low	Low

6.6.5 Continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders

The Project is not expected to alter established commitments to indigenous stakeholders. Indigenous stakeholders have identified that the existing arrangements are the result of a constructive relationship built over the mine's life to date, and support positive outcomes for Aboriginal people.

As outlined in Section 4.3.3 of this report, the local area has a combined total population of 2,719 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The ACHA report (2023) outlined the extensive Aboriginal consultation that occurred between March 2022 and February 2023, which included over 50 interactions, including discrete meetings with RAPs in groups or one-on-one meetings. The outcomes of these discussions were considered in the development and content of the ACHA report. The report highlighted the 30 year timeline of activities, including the extensive number of archaeological assessments undertaken since the mine's inception. The report also indicated that engagement has also included an extensive archaeological recovery and mitigation program and ongoing engagement and support of the local Aboriginal community. The Project is expected to apply for a further Mining Licence(s) for the proposed ancillary mining areas to accommodate topsoil stockpiles and ancillary infrastructure, as described in Section 4.2 of the EIS. However, any disturbance outside the nominated disturbance footprint area will continue to be appropriately managed through CGO's existing permit and disturbance processes.

A representative of the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation expressed:

"The Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) has worked constructively with mining operations at Cowal for over 19 years. The primary issue of concern is whether the Open Pit Continuation Project could jeopardise the outcomes which are being achieved for Aboriginal people through this partnership.

A key feature of the partnership arrangement negotiated with Barrick was that it was not driven by an attempt to maximise royalty payments. It was considered that a focus on monetary payments often results in the fracture of communities.

The intent of WCC has always been to derive genuine improvements to the lives of Aboriginal people through investments in both local skills and material wealth. WCC has a very good working relationship with West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC).

The position WCC took with regard to native title rights and interests translating to royalty payments from the mine was very much criticised at the time and there is still some lingering resentment from some parties. However the results which have been achieved through establishing a constructive partnership with Barrick and subsequently Evolution is delivering far better outcomes for Aboriginal people in the region.”

A West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council representative expressed that:

“The mine does a great job maintaining relationships with the community.

(The representative) has always felt respected and the GM of Evolution Mining has always come to speak to the LALC well before any plans are put in place.”

The LALC representative identified the following Project benefits derived from communication:

“WCC, the Lake Cowal Foundation and the LALC have discussed using the Lake Cowal Conservation Centre (LCCC) as a shared facility for community education; the relationship between these organisations is slowly improving.

If Evolution continues to grow and develop as they have they will continue to do things better; over the years (they) have seen improved engagement and social benefits that [he hopes] will continue.”

The unenhanced benefit of continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude **moderate**.

The ACHA report recommends implementing an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan (ACHMP) to be developed by a heritage specialist in consultation with the RAPs to provide the post-approval framework for managing archaeological mitigation and Aboriginal heritage within the Project area. The ACHMP will clearly define the processes, timing, communication methods and Project involvement (e.g. on-site activities) for maintaining Aboriginal community consultation and participation throughout the remainder of the Project. The plan will also include a grievance mechanism which may be accessed by the local Aboriginal community.

The ACHA report also recommended additional engagement and on-Country activities, such as salvage excavations, opportunities to undertake heritage interpretation, development of narratives and visual representation of Aboriginal values, stories and places. This would improve the understanding of cultural heritage held by the broader community in the future. The Aboriginal participants have also expressed a desire to remain involved in the Project and continue to access the broader Project area (notably Lake Cowal) to visit/maintain identified Aboriginal sites and places into the future. As such, the Project can enable and support an ongoing connection to Country for the local Aboriginal community, which has previously not been readily available. Assuming these opportunities are realised, the Project provides an important continuation and reimagining of the region's cultural heritage for future generations.

The enhanced benefit of continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude **moderate**.

Table 6.23 Continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Surroundings	Continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders	Indigenous stakeholders	Construction and operation	Local and regional	High	High

6.6.6 Improved environmental education outcomes

CGO sponsors the Lake Cowal Foundation (LCF), whose goal is to protect and enhance the natural environment of Lake Cowal (Lake Cowal Foundation, n.d.). The LCF operates the Lake Cowal Conservation Centre (LCCC). The LCCC is the result of a partnership between the Lake Cowal Foundation Ltd, West Wyalong High School and Evolution Mining Pty Limited, with support from NSW Local Land Services.

The LCCC is a regional attraction (Destination NSW, 2023) and education centre for school students, land managers and community members. The education opportunities it offers include approaches to natural resource management, such as catchment management, land management and sustainable integration of land use with the local environment.

Supported by CGO, the LCF is advancing a commendable environmental education and awareness program. The LCF provides one of the 25 accredited Environmental and Zoo Education Centres in NSW. It is the only accredited Centre which is privately funded – all others are supported by the NSW State Government.

The LCF has a fully accredited teacher who delivers environmental education and awareness lessons in the local schools- all the way through from Kindy to Year 12. This is a recognised part of the NSW educational curriculum.

A representative of the LCF confirmed that the organisation is in the final stages of developing the InHabitat Lake Cowal project which is an education and tourism initiative on the southern shore of Lake Cowal.

InHabitat Lake Cowal will feature 15 semi-permanent eco tents along with associated kitchen, dining, bathroom, environmental education/presentation facilities. InHabitat Lake Cowal will incorporate the LCCC to provide a whole of community educational facility for school students, land managers, community members and visitors. Accommodation facilities will enhance environmental and tourism outcomes by providing the opportunity for longer visitor stays at Lake Cowal and engaging in practical outdoor research and awareness.

Through a negotiated royalty agreement, CGO contributes a significant proportion of funding for LCF activities and programs. This continued support has delivered enhanced environmental education outcomes in the local community, and the OPC Project will contribute to such support being maintained.

Stakeholders were supportive of benefits of the Project's support for education outcomes from the LCCC, and suggested possible enhancements:

“[The LCCC adds] value to Lake Cowal Foundation by providing financial sustainability. As well as increasing demand and raising awareness of Lake Cowal and physical experience.”

Evolution Mining's ongoing support of the LCF and LCCC enhances access to and quality of environmental education, and also has the potential, through education, to benefit the local environment.

The unenhanced benefit of improved environmental education outcomes is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude **minor**.

Stakeholders have suggested that improving public access to the Lake would enhance the existing benefits offered by the local environment and LCCC:

“It would be great if public access to the Lake was substantially improved. It is a public resource and should be better utilised. People want to visit the Lake, however the poor standard of access makes it very difficult.

Enhanced public access to Lake would be good way to expand the tourism offering. There is one public access point to the Lake. Upgrading of this road was costed at under \$100k and would make a substantial improvement – particularly if bbq's and other facilities were also provided. This should be integrated into the eco-glamping initiative being advanced by the Lake Cowal Foundation.

WCC, Lake Cowal Foundation and LALC have discussed using the LCCC as a shared facility for community education.

The access road to the camping/glamping facility remains an issue. Recent flood conditions have further deteriorated the road and it requires an upgrade to improve access to the proposed tourism (glamping) and educational facility.

Other natural features of the area should be promoted for tourism, for example, Lake Cowal”

The Project may assist in delivery of enhanced lake access through rehabilitation planning and by continuing existing partnerships with community organisations such as the LCCC.

The enhanced benefit of improved environmental education outcomes is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the benefit occurring is **likely** and the magnitude **moderate**.

Table 6.24 Improved environmental education outcomes

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unenhanced	Enhanced
Surroundings	Improved environmental education outcomes’	school students, land managers and regional community members	Operation	Regional area	Medium	Medium

6.7 Water

This section provides an assessment of Project derived social impacts on water.

Project derived social impacts on water include:

- perceived competition for groundwater resources
- landholder concerns relating to the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall
- social values associated with the environment and biodiversity of Lake Cowal.

6.7.1 Perceived competition for groundwater resources

Groundwater is a vital and limited resource, and equity of access and licensing arrangements is a sensitive issue for all water users. In interviews with surrounding landholders and interest groups, a number of issues relating to groundwater use and licencing arrangements were raised:

“When the mine first began operation the groundwater depth plummeted, which was an issue of great concern for landholders as they rely heavily on groundwater to maintain agricultural production during drier years. The issue was initially not acknowledged by the original mine operator (Barrick); however eventually it was recognized and the impact of the mine on groundwater levels has since reduced.

The agreed maximum level of drawdown for agricultural producers [is believed to be less than] the mine. This is viewed by some landholders as unequitable.

In terms of mine water requirements, groundwater should be the last resort only. Surface water should be utilised when available, including use of Jemalong Irrigation channels.

The use of groundwater for the mine should be avoided as groundwater is a finite resource which should only be drawn on in times of drought. No-one understands how the aquifer gets recharged because the groundwater system is extremely complex.

It is considered that use of groundwater by the mine should only occur when other water sources (such as surface water and recycled water) are unavailable. It is perceived that there is a lack of flexibility in designated water entitlements which does not enable this to occur.”

The above feedback indicate concerns regarding historical entitlements to groundwater and how Project continuation may continue to affect availability for agricultural uses.

The Groundwater Impact Assessment (GIA) (EMM 2023) has been undertaken in strict accordance with applicable legislation and guidelines, including the Aquifer Interference Policy 2012 (AIP).

The GIA concludes that there is no significant incremental (ie Project only) groundwater level drawdown associated with the continued operation of the CGO borefields greater than 2 m, nor is there any incremental drawdown greater than 2 m at any private landholder bore. No landholders are predicted to be impacted by changes to groundwater quality.

Under the Aquifer Interference Policy (AIP) (DPI 2012) specific cumulative impact evaluation (i.e. incorporating the approved operations, the local private bore operations, the CGO borefields plus the Project post commencement of the 2012 Water Sharing Plan), the maximum cumulative drawdown is predicted to exceed the AIP minimal impact considerations (2 m drawdown) at four bores.

Water regulation in NSW has an established way of dealing with the potential to affect private groundwater bores, which is application of a development consent condition including a ‘make good’ strategy (or compensatory water supply). CGO has an established consent condition for compensatory water supply, which will continue if the Project proceeds.

As required under the existing consent condition for compensatory water supply, CGO may need to intervene if groundwater levels decline beyond the AIP 2 m criteria at a private bore and it is proven that CGO caused the impact.

In March 2023, landholders and the Bland Creek Paleochannel Group were provided with an update on EIS technical study findings and proposed mitigations, including the GIA. Stakeholders raised the following matters:

“Concerned about use of the Bland Creek Paleochannel Borefield (BCPB) as an alternative mine water source. Many farmers rely on this in drought and fear levels may be depleted sooner if the mine commences using this. Needs a major cultural shift away from using this water source. Outback communities solely rely on this water source. Would prefer mine uses fresh in stream water resources (Wyangala Dam flows) as water levels are more easily assessed. BCPB fresh water should be a last resort.

Why does Evolution continue to extract water from the BCPB when there is ample water available in Wyangala Dam that could be extracted via the Jemalong pipeline?

Ten year licence for underground water extraction commenced in 2005 and should have ended in 2015. Since then a modification to the licence was made making it in perpetuity. Once initial agreements have been made they are often extended or modified without further consultation.

BCPC water users are concerned that going into a future drought, and the need to share water with the mine, could see them losing out on water allocation before the mine does. Landowner trigger levels are met much sooner in a drought when the mine is also drawing down on the BCPC. If there is a severe drought, landowners will be trucking in water (at their own expense) and not the mine.

Attendees surprised that 10% chance of hitting trigger level in 100 years. Trigger level information doesn’t take into account full range of bores. When irrigating in drought, 8ML/day means meeting this limit much quicker when the mine is drawing down. Dropping water levels affects all landowners. Lots of pressure on this resource. Landowners bottom out much quicker.

BCPC Group feel that CGO need to find alternate water sources, pay for water from Jemalong and rely less on the BCPC.”

Such feedback demonstrates a continued perception amongst groundwater users that the current water use arrangements do not secure the future sustainability of groundwater resources landholders rely on. There is a concern that there is an inequity between water users with different drawdown capacities and water quality needs, the legacy of which may have implications for the long-term sustainability of farming and agriculture in the region. Due to the complexity of elements influencing groundwater levels and use, it is likely landholder concerns around this issue will continue.

The unmitigated impact of perceived competition for groundwater resources is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **likely** and the magnitude of the impact is **moderate**.

CGO is committed to minimising impacts of mine operations on surrounding landholders. It has implemented a program for exploration and development of additional saline bores which may replace water extracted from (high quality) freshwater bores. Progress of the program has been stalled by years of high rainfall and Lake Cowal being inundated. As water recedes and access for exploration activities enabled, it is expected that saline bores will continue to be identified and developed which would serve to reduce the mines reliance upon high quality water required for agricultural purposes. During March 2023 engagement, the BPBC Group, nearby landholders and Forbes Shire Council expressed support for further exploration of saline bore options. It is noted that as drought is a particular concern for landholders in relation to water access for agricultural purposes, exploration of alternative water sources would ideally be completed as soon as possible, prior to the commencement of the next dry period.

Further mitigation measures as outlined in the GIA include:

- Provision of a compensatory water supply to any landowner of privately-owned land whose rightful water supply is adversely and directly impacted as a result of the Project.
- Groundwater level and quality, and model assumption monitoring and ecosystem health assessments at high priority GDEs, with the possible provision of supplementary water should Project-related impacts eventuate.
- Ceasing pumping from the BCPB if required to meet the trigger levels in accordance with the Groundwater Contingency Strategy and consideration of alternate water supplies.
- Physical controls to manage water quality.

In addition to the above, CGO will continue to engage in an open and transparent manner with surrounding landholders, entities such as the Bland Paleo Monitoring Group and regulatory agencies. This dialogue will enable sharing of information on water resource requirements and utilisation, increase the accessibility of information about groundwater resources that would serve to reduce potential perceptions of inequity.

The mitigated impact of perceived competition for groundwater resources is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible** and the magnitude of the impact is **moderate**.

Table 6.25 **Competition for groundwater resources**

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Water	Perceived competition for groundwater resources	Regional agricultural users	Project life	Bland Creek Paleochannel Borefield	High	Medium

6.7.2 Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall

Project interviews with key stakeholders conducted in 2022 identified concerns about the Project's effect on surface water levels during flood events.

Local landholders noted the existing bund wall may affect water levels in the Lake, and raised concerns about the potential effects of water level rises on surrounding properties:

"When the initial bund was constructed, there was no compensation for water displacement paid to landholders surrounding the Lake (by Barrick). Landholders who have been in the area for a long time know that the bund has had an impact on flood characteristics; however there is a lack of data which proves that this has been the case. In the 2016 floods, there were areas on Taroona Station which were flooded that had never been flooded previously.

It needs to be understood that a very small increase in water displacement can have a substantial effect on land surrounding the Lake as the terrain is so flat. It is recognized that CGO have stated that the new bund would only have a maximum of 15mm increase to flood levels; however this sounds a little like just a convenient number. What we need to know is the actual effect which 15mm (or whatever it ends up being) will have on the operation of surrounding landholders.

Crops are very sensitive to soil moisture. A small increase in inundation levels due to water displacement could result in substantial areas of land being too wet to crop- or even to graze. Winds play a big role in the pattern of water. When the winds are in a certain direction, it pushes the water that way and make a big difference to the areas inundated or cut off. Has particular concerns that a portion of land right on the Lake which was purchased for cropping and livestock will potentially be impacted. Would like to know whether the rate of water discharge may be affected and subsequently the duration of flood events.

It was noted that there are no gauging stations on the Lake, so there is a lack of reliable data on flooding characteristics. Flood modelling needs to also take into account the broader catchment. It is the Bland and the Lachlan systems working together- the regional characteristics have a major influence on flood behavior in and around the Lake. There is a need for holistic modelling so that true effects are able to be predicted and understood.

There are long periods when doesn't flood on the eastern side of road. It has not only been the mine and construction of the bund wall which has made a difference to flood dynamics- the Highway has a major effect as it is one great long bund which traps the water and doesn't allow it to flow out through the system."

The Lake Cowal Foundation observed that:

"Eastern side inundation and flooding are linked, and flooding at the highway and new highway is a concern for farmers."

The Local Aboriginal Land Council further identified the significance of changes to water levels in Lake Cowal:

"There is a deep awareness of what happens out on the Lake, and related impacts on the natural environment. Lake displacement may potentially influence flood behavior, but this is managed quite well by Evolution.

The key issue of concern is the effect the new bund wall will have upon displacement of water on to lands which include our property."

The Surface Water Assessment (SWA) (ATC Williams, 2023) predicts peak flood levels west to east cross-sections across Lake Cowal. The increase in predicted peak flood level was small, with an average change of 0.013 m in the cross-section for the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP), 0.014 m for the 0.1% AEP, and 0.010 m for the

Probable Maximum Flood. This demonstrates a minor additional increase, and is not anticipated to have a significant impact on land uses or homes when compared with existing flood levels or heights. However, it is possible that the duration of flooding may extend marginally because of water level increases.

As discussed in Section 5.2.2 of this report, surrounding landholders are vitally important Project stakeholders, and proactive management of considerations which may affect this relationship is critical for ongoing landholder support for the Project. As such, the Project undertook a second round of engagement with landholders in March 2023 to advise them on the findings of the SWA. Landholder feedback included:

“Concerned about the Lake Cowal bund extension displacement of water and effects on Lake water levels that potentially could impact grazing and cropping in the lakebed by increasing drying times for [his] land in the lake and hence his income streams.

Wind is a super concern - wind pushes the water and floods his land

A lot more water over the landscape to drain out before it can dry

Flood potential and effects in relation to the extension of the bund. Lost a crop in Nerang Cowal this year due to rains. Will Lake Cowal fill and drain quicker to Nerang Cowal with the bund extension? This will be part of water modelling studies.”

Given that despite the findings of the SWA, landholders remain concerned about flooding impacts, the unmitigated impact of landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall is assessed as **high**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **likely** and the magnitude of the impact is **moderate**.

The Project can reduce the likelihood of ongoing concern through continued engagement with local landholders to explain flood dynamics and the findings of technical studies.

The mitigated impact of Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is **possible** and the magnitude of the impact is **moderate**.

Table 6.26 Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Water	Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall	Landholders within flood prone land adjoining Lake Cowal	Construction/ Operation	Flood extent	High	Medium

6.7.3 Impacts to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community

Project interviews and surveys, as well as a review of the planning policy context of Lake Cowal identified that the community values the lake’s biodiversity and cultural heritage and its role in providing opportunities for environmental education and recreation, including birdwatching.

A representative of the Lake Cowal Foundation initially observed:

“Northern boundaries of the site are pushing up against the main breeding area for the Lake . Operation is impacting where birds nest. Noise and light, while within parameters, is over time driving birds nesting and feeding patterns.

The Lake Cowal Foundation is in the final stages of establishing the InHabitat Lake Cowal education and tourism project on the southern shores of the Lake.”

However, after the Project proposed changes to the location of soil stockpiles, the LCF representative observed:

“.. this looks a lot better than what was originally proposed.”

In engagement with local landholders and the Lachlan Shire Council, feedback included:

“Concerned about breeding water birds which are very sensitive the lake water levels.

The Lachlan community will be most concerned about environmental issues for [the Project]”

As demonstrated in Appendix F.3 of this report, the community has identified the following social ‘values’ related to the Lake:

- Lake Cowal and Wilbertroy-Cowal Wetlands and the diversity and number of species that inhabit the lake
- the Lake Cowal Conservation Centre
- Aboriginal cultural heritage and spiritual values discussed in Section 6.6.3.

Survey respondents also identified the following relevant ‘strengths’ linked to the lake:

- recreational activities, including boating and bird watching
- CGO management of environmental and sustainable processes is valued.

The importance of Lake Cowal for Aboriginal people is discussed in Section 6.6.3.

The Bland Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement (2020) (LSPS) identifies that “The significance of Lake Cowal is evident through the diversity of animals, including 277 bird species and Aboriginal items which reside there” (Bland Shire Council, 2020). The LSPS also emphasises the economic importance of CGO for the LGA.

While impacts to biodiversity are principally felt by the local and regional community due to their proximity, as demonstrated by the Bland LSPS, Lake Cowal is included in Australia’s Register of the National Estate and its Directory of Important Wetlands. The National Trust of Australia (NSW) has also listed Lake Cowal as a ‘Landscape Conservation Area’ for the diversity and the number of species that inhabit it.

Key activities associated with biodiversity of the lake are recreational bird watching and tourism.

The Birding NSW website (Carnegie, 2017) outlined the significance of the site for birding as a past time, identifying that significant species, including the Glossy Ibis, were present and breeding during the previous floods in Spring, Summer and Autumn of 2016 and 17. ABC Australia (2020) and ABC Central West (2021) report on the status of the wetland and bird visitations, and identify Lake Cowal as “one of Australia’s most important wetlands” (ABC Australia, 2021) (ABC News, 2020).

Lake Cowal and its visual and birdwatching significance are referenced in multiple tourism resources for the region, including accommodation suppliers (Mayfair Motel West Wyalong, 2021) and Visit NSW (Destination NSW, 2023).

The Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) (EMM 2023) finds that the Project will likely impact several significant bird species including the Austral Pillwort, Australasian Bittern, Latham’s Snipe, Australian Painted Snipe, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Glossy Ibis, Superb Parrot and the Painted Honeyeater. Various habitats may also be impacted, including the habitat important to migratory shorebirds.

The BDAR found that impacts associated with the bund wall are limited to the construction period only. Once constructed, the bund wall would have a negligible impact on bird nesting. If a dry period aligns with bund wall construction, there may be reduced impact.

The GIA groundwater dependant ecosystems (GDE) modelling found that under a 'worst case' incremental increase in groundwater drawdown associated with the Project, two plant community types (PCT) may experience drawdown to the extent that it may make it difficult for eucalypts to access groundwater, including:

- PCT 10: River Red Gum swampy woodland wetland on cowals (lakes) and associated flood channels in central NSW.
- PCT 249: River Red Gum – Black Box woodland wetland of the semi-arid (warm) climatic zone (mainly Riverina Bioregion and Murray Darling Depression Bioregion).

The Aquatic Ecology Assessment (AEA) report (Austral Research and Consulting 2023) found that aquatic systems in the Lake are compromised by existing agricultural land uses and exotic species. A range of potential impacts were identified as part of this study and include loss of key fish habitat associated with the Project, potential impacts to water quality resulting from the construction of the Lake Protection Bund (LPB) and the use of primary waste rock in the construction of the LPB. Minor impacts to geomorphic stability are likely within the mine foot print and minor impacts to the hydrology of Lake Cowal have been predicted. There are potential impacts to water quality, aquatic fauna and the Lowland Lachlan River endangered ecological community. Aquatic systems have social value as they are important from an overall environmental appreciation standpoint, as well as for recreational activity and fishing, though interviews did not evidence fishing as a pastime for key stakeholders, perhaps due to access limitations.

During the online community information session in March 2023, the 3 participants expressed a continued interest in biodiversity and in particular requested updates on how the Project was addressing endangered and threatened ecological communities and remediation. Landholders and Forbes Shire Council also demonstrated continued interest in biodiversity offset approaches and locations during March 2023 interviews.

The unmitigated impact to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is assessed as being **possible** and the magnitude assessed as **moderate**.

The GIA recommends adaptive management of groundwater impacts, including that potential GDEs are ground-truthed and monitored via vegetation plots in locations where a potential drawdown impact has been identified. The AE report clarifies that once mitigated, impacts to GDEs are considered unlikely.

The AEA report proposes an indicative offsets approach to offset the loss of KFH within Lake Cowal and plans for a rehabilitation strategy for the Lake Foreshore have been prepared. The AEA confirms that all impacts are considered minimal assuming management plans and mitigation measures are in place.

The BDAR proposes an adaptive approach, whereby the situation at the time of impact (i.e. construction) is monitored and appropriate actions implemented as required, including avoidance of times of peak bird nesting activity.

As per the mitigations discussed in Section 6.6.6, it is proposed that future rehabilitation planning may consider enabling improved public access to Lake Cowal, as this may have flow-on recreational benefits.

The mitigated impact to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community is assessed as **medium**. The likelihood of the impact occurring is assessed as being **possible** and the magnitude assessed as **minor**.

Table 6.27 Impacts to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community

Social impact	Matter	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated	Mitigated
Water	Impacts to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community	Regional community	Project life	Regional area	High	Minor

6.8 Cumulative impacts

6.8.1 Introduction

This section provides consideration of the Project's potential to generate cumulative social impacts. Simultaneous development or decommissioning of multiple projects in a geographic area can exacerbate the social and economic impacts and benefits associated with a single project, as well as stimulate additional unique impacts.

The *Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines for State Significant Projects* (DPIE 2021) are part of the Rapid Assessment Framework introduced in 2021, aimed at improving the assessment of major projects in NSW.

The scoping phase for CGO preceded the implementation of these guidelines and as such, a scoping assessment for cumulative impacts was not completed.

The EIS (Section 7.18) includes a holistic assessment of cumulative impacts of future projects for the Project, focusing on key matters that could be materially affected.

This assessment has factored in the EIS cumulative context, and has also incorporated current and future projects within 2 hours travel time from of the site (Bland Shire, Forbes Shire and Lachlan Shire LGA's). These were identified through a review of the Major Projects Portal as at 8 February 2023.

The following projects were considered relevant to the social cumulative impact assessment:

- West Wyalong Solar Farm (SSD-9504) – 20 km south-west of the Project area
- Wyalong Solar Farm (SSD-9564) – 29 km south-west of the Project area
- Moomba to Wilton Pipeline Compressor Station MW880 (SSD-15548591-Mod-2) – 43 km north-west of the Project area
- Moomba to Wilton Pipeline Accommodation Camp 6 (SSD-15548591-Mod-4) – 16 km south-east of the Project area
- Darroobalgie Solar Farm (SSD-10387) – 75km north-east of the Project area
- Peninsula Solar Farm (SSD-14757962) – 78km east of the Project area.

The Newell Highway Upgrade between West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin identified in the EIS has not been addressed in this assessment, as it was determined to be unlikely to coincide with the construction phase of the Project.

Projects considered in the identification of cumulative impacts were identified on the basis that there would be a likely scheduled overlap with the construction phase of the Project. The estimated timing of projects is based on the best information available, but is subject to change as some projects have not yet gained regulatory approval and others require internal stakeholder approval and access to finance. These factors may affect whether projects

proceed to development, and subsequent timelines for construction and operation. Where projects are currently under construction environmental and process factors can cause uncertainty regarding the completion date.

The cumulative projects in closest proximity to the Project are presented in Table 6.28 and Figure 6.1

Table 6.28 **Concurrent development projects**

LGA	Project name	Distance from the project site	Construction timeframe and project life	Development type	Status	Construction workforce	Operational workforce
Bland Shire	West Wyalong Solar Farm	20 km south-west	9 month construction period, currently ongoing ¹ 30–40-year operational life	SSD	Determination	300	3
Bland Shire	Wyalong Solar Farm	29 km south-west	9 month construction period, finishing at the end of 2023 40 year operational life	SSD	Determination	150	4
Bland Shire	Moomba to Wilton Pipeline Compressor Station MW880	43 km north-west	3 month construction period, planned commencement in 2022 25 year operational life	SSI	Prepare modification report	80	2
Lachlan Shire	Moomba to Wilton Pipeline Accommodation Camp 6	16 km south-east	4–6 weeks construction period, commencing in 2025 3–5-month occupancy period	SSI	Prepare modification report	80	5
Forbes Shire	Daroobalgie Solar Farm	75 km north-east	12–18-month construction period, commencing no earlier than 2024 30 year operational life	SSD	Assessment	320	6
Forbes Shire	Peninsula Solar Farm	78 km east	16 month construction period, commencing in 2023 30 year operational life	SSD	Response to submissions	250	5
Total						1,180	25

Source: Planning Portal, NSW Government

Notes: 1. (Lightsource bp, 2023)

6.8.2 Cumulative construction workforce demands and availability

Assuming a 'worst case' scenario, and all projects identified occur as scheduled, the peak cumulative requirement for construction labour in the timeframe proposed for Project construction (2023–2026) is presented in Figure 6.2 below. These construction workforce calculations are based on available data relating to the estimated peak workforces for each project. It is unlikely these peak estimates would occur throughout the construction period, with construction workforce numbers likely to fluctuate depending on specific project requirements.

Contingent on current planning and estimates, the other developments included in this are scheduled to conclude construction in 2025, which is the assumed Year 2 of the construction phase of this Project. As such, cumulative impacts relating to construction workforces is assessed predominantly within the first two years of the Project's construction phase.

Workforce availability is outlined in Section 4.4 of the baseline. Relevant industries include mining, electricity, gas, water, and waster services; transport, postal and warehousing; construction, professional, scientific, and technical services; labourers, technicians and trades workers; and machinery operators and drivers. In the local study area, there were 1,719 people employed within those industries (55.6% of the total workforce employed across the five industries). The mining industry accounted for 515 people (17.9%) across the local area while people employed in the construction industry accounted for 556 people (10.4%) across the local area.

As is presented in Figure 6.2, these projects would generate a cumulative labour demand of up to 672 construction workers (i.e. 320 workers at Daroobalgie Solar Farm, 250 workers Peninsula Solar Farm and including project peak of 102 workers) in 2024. The Project's contribution of 102 workers is equal to 15% of the cumulative construction employment demand in 2024. This contribution to cumulative workforce demand will decrease throughout the course of the Project's construction phase.

This cumulative labour demand has the potential to generate significant social impacts for the communities of West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin. While the Project's total contribution to this matter will be minor, cumulative impacts may include:

- competition for labour, however it is assumed that a proportion of the workforce would be sourced from outside the local area
- reduced housing and accommodation availability and affordability due to increased demand , which has potential to displace low-income and vulnerable households
- reduced access to social infrastructure and services due to influx of non-resident construction workers increasing service demand
- reduced local and regional connectivity on the road network due to increased heavy vehicle and construction workforce traffic
- increased community tension and disunity due to influx of non-resident construction workers
- reduced rural amenity due to construction activities generating noise and dust.



Figure 6.2 Cumulative construction demand

i Competition for labour

Due to a cumulative demand for construction workers, particularly in the first 2 years of Project construction, in addition to possible benefits from availability of work opportunities, local businesses may be impacted as a result of:

- labour draw from other businesses and industries who are dependent on construction labour and skills
- competition for construction labour affecting proposed construction schedules of other projects in the region.

Competition for labour was identified in the community survey. Survey respondents noted cumulative projects in the local area taking about labour from other businesses:

Local businesses are experiencing a shortage of workers.

This sentiment was mirrored during in depth interviews with local residents:

The mine has created high levels of competition for labour ... It was considered impossible to compete with the mines in terms of wages.

It was recognised that a lack of availability of construction skills/ contractors would curtail development in the current environment.

General demand for skilled labour is high throughout the region. Construction skills are in particularly in short supply, with ongoing high levels of demand.

It is already difficult finding farmhands as competition for labour is high, which is also contributed to by the mine.

Estimates from the Australian Constructors Association (ACA) suggest that the Australian construction industry faces a critical workforce shortage of more than 100,000 workers (Paper submitted to the Jobs Summit September 2022). A report published by Infrastructure Australia (Infrastructure Australia, 2021), estimates that the anticipated demand for infrastructure workers will outstrip supply by up to 48% in 2023. The construction industry in NSW is facing an unprecedented amount of work with increased volatility in the levels of staffing, due to reliance on immigration for key trades. This has been exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19, with skilled migrant workers not being able to come to Australia to fulfil this labour demand.

Competition for labour due to the cumulative demand for construction skills could affect the viability of some existing businesses in the local and regional study area and the livelihoods which they support.

6.8.3 Employment benefit

i Construction

With the Project's extension, there will be a continuation of opportunities for employment alongside the employment benefits from cumulative projects. For the construction workforce, 40% of employees will be local hires and 60% will be non-local hires from NSW. Thus, employment benefits during construction will be experienced in the broader regional area. The regional area has a total labour force with compatible skills of 54,270 people. In particular, there are 33,040 people in the regional area and 3,139 people in the local area within the occupations of labourers; technicians and trades workers; and machinery operators and drivers.

In terms of the Project's operation, CGO is a key contributor to the mining sector. The mining industry accounted for 515 people (representing 17.9% of the total workforce) across the local area, with the largest proportion within Bland LGA (i.e., 291 people, representing 11.4% of the total workforce), and 147 people in Forbes LGA (3.5%) and 77 people in Lachlan LGA (3.0%). During its operation, CGO contributes 230 mining jobs to the local area which the Project intends to extend until 2042. There is also a CGO technical team which will consist of 25 people at its maximum, with 50% LH and 50% NLH. There are a maximum of 202 contractors required during operation which will be 100% NLH.

By providing more employment opportunities there is a flow on effect to the educational opportunities within the local area. As mentioned in Section 6.6.4, the Evolution Mining and the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) collaboration of the Galari Agricultural Company (GAC) has allowed for trainees to undertake certificate courses accredited by Australian Agricultural Training.

ii Operation

A potential cumulative benefit for the local area is employment continuity for resident construction workers. For example, Project construction, which requires up to 40 workers who live in the local area, is expected to conclude in 2025. Should the Solar Farm project construction commence by early 2024, project construction workers will have the opportunity to obtain similar employment as the two projects require similar skillsets. A further cumulative benefit is continuity of supply and procurement opportunities for local and regional businesses, which would contribute to economic prosperity for communities.

6.8.4 Housing and accommodation impact

Housing and accommodation were raised as one of the key issues throughout SIA stakeholder engagement. The prospect of additional construction workers was identified by key stakeholders as an impact on short term accommodation and rentals in the local area.

Cumulative social impacts during the construction phase for this Project are expected to be minimal as there will be only two other projects (i.e. the Daroobalgie Solar Farm and the Peninsula Solar Farm) that may potentially undergo construction at the same time- both of which are located closer to Forbes than West Wyalong. The Daroobalgie Solar Farm is in the assessment phase and if approved it will be a 12–18-month construction period, commencing no earlier than 2024 and the Peninsula Solar Farm is in the response to submissions phase and if approved it will have a 16 month construction period commencing no earlier than 2024.

While it is unlikely that construction of the Moomba to Wilton Pipeline Compressor Station MW880, Moomba to Wilton Pipeline (MWP) Accommodation Camp 6, Daroobalgie Solar Farm and Peninsula Solar Farm project would occur concurrently, they may generate demand for accommodation for up to 832 construction workers in Bland and Forbes LGA’s. This has the potential to cause significant social impacts in Forbes and West Wyalong which are already experiencing significant strain on housing and accommodation. Reduced housing and accommodation availability and affordability as a result of increased demand from Project workers has the potential to displace low-income and vulnerable households. The presence of workforce accommodation villages may alleviate this impact.

In addition to the CGO West Wyalong Accommodation Village, the Moomba to Wilton Pipeline (MWP) is currently seeking approval for six temporary camp locations for up to 20 years (GHD, 2022).

Once complete, Camp 6 of the MWP will be located approximately 42 km north-east of West Wyalong along the Newell Highway in Bland Shire Council LGA. It is expected that commencement of operations at Camp 6 would be in 2025. Camp 6 is proposed to house up to 100 MWP workers, with an average of 60. It is expected that five full-time employees or contractors would be required to manage the onsite daily operations at each camp.

Camps will be serviced with power, communications, water, laundry and kitchen facilities.

Each MWP camp is likely to be used approximately every three years, in line with the maintenance schedule for each section of the MWP. The camps are temporary and will be demobilised from site after each mobilisation of pipeline inspection and maintenance works are completed over the 20 year period.

Table 6.29 Worker Accommodation Villages in West Wyalong, 2023

Accommodation village	Capacity (beds)	Location	Description
Evolution mining accommodation village	128	Within walking distance of West Wyalong.	Closed camp for CGO employees. All facilities provided on-site, however due to the proximity to the town centre, residents are likely to interact with West Wyalong town and community.
Camp 6: North-east of West Wyalong	100	42 km north-east of West Wyalong along Newell Highway	Closed camp to be demobilised on completion of construction and re-mobilised intermittently for pipeline maintenance
Total	228		

Collaborative work programming between local projects may assist in alleviating this impact.

6.8.5 Service provision

Many concurrent developments within the local study area will have begun their construction phase prior to or during the Project. As discussed in Section 6.4, difficulty in attracting and retaining key workers may result in services, which are currently at capacity, being unable to accommodate a further cumulative influx of workers. In particular, the key township of West Wyalong is closest to the Project site, and will also be a central resource and servicing hub for Wyalong Solar Farm, West Wyalong Solar Farm and the Moomba to Wilton Pipeline. Thus, it is assumed that a majority of the cumulative construction workforce will seek access to social infrastructure in West Wyalong. The compounding impacts of workers from CGO and existing solar farm projects have already been identified as problematic during interviews with West Wyalong health service providers, who corroborated the limited availability of health services in local area and that residents often travel to larger towns to access services.

Beneficially, the socio-economic growth (temporary or permanent) and population stability stimulated by the Project could lead to an increase in State and Federal funding for social infrastructure and thereby increase total supply.

6.8.6 Traffic

The EIS (Section 7.18) identifies that it is unlikely concurrent projects will significantly affect traffic in the region. However, increased presence of other projects in the region may increase public awareness of workforce presence. Planning for and minimisation of Project workforce and vehicle movements in consultation with nearby projects may assist in alleviating any concerns around the potential increase in traffic on local roads and any related public safety concerns for road accidents and capacity of road networks.

7 Mitigation and management

This section provides a summary of the identified social impacts along with the corresponding perceived stakeholder risk rankings and mitigated technical risk rankings. In addition, key potential stakeholder partners have been identified to participate in the monitoring and management of impacts, along with a range of proposed social impact mitigation and management strategies.

7.1 Mitigation and management strategies

A summary of mitigation and management strategies is provided in **Table 7.1**.

Table 7.1 Summary of mitigation and management strategies

ID	Social theme	Impact or benefit	Perceived impact (unmitigated or unenhanced)	Proposed mitigation and management measures	Significance (mitigated or enhanced)
D01	Decision Making Systems	Ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement (Benefit)	Medium	Continuation of regular contact with the community through the existing the Communication and Engagement Plan (CEP), and providing consistency in CGO points of community contact.	High
D02		Opportunity to plan and deliver a positive mine legacy (Benefit)	Medium	Preparation of a social closure and legacy program and strategy involving collaboration with key stakeholders and the community. Integrated planning for transition and rehabilitation would serve to build a shared understanding of, and responsibility for, optimal post mining outcomes. This is not a process for CGO to lead, however CGO can be involved as required.	High
D03		Improved mine rehabilitation outcomes (Benefit)	Medium	To optimally balance environment and industry requirements, it is important that the mine follows the Rehabilitation Management Plan's strategy to adapt rehabilitation planning throughout the life of the mine to maintain its' connection with local aspirations.	High
H01	Housing and accommodation	Continued pressure on the local rental housing market	Medium	• Prioritising local employment of construction workers would effectively reduce the significance of this impact by reducing reliance on additional workforce housing. • Continuation of bus service for employees who reside in Forbes and Condobolin. • Continuation of engagement with key stakeholders Procurement initiatives that prioritise and incentivise the use of short term accommodation.	Medium

Table 7.1 **Summary of mitigation and management strategies**

ID	Social theme	Impact or benefit	Perceived impact (unmitigated or unenhanced)	Proposed mitigation and management measures	Significance (mitigated or enhanced)
H02		Reduced availability of short-term accommodation	High	- Where possible, planning of shut down periods to avoid peak construction workforce requirements and community events. - Members of the shutdown workforce may be accommodated in Forbes and Condobolin.	Medium
HA03		Heightened confidence in the housing market (Benefit)	Medium	Ongoing stakeholder and community engagement and dissemination of information regarding the Project would foster investment confidence in the local housing market.	Medium
E01	Economy	Ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience (Benefit)	High	Improving the visibility of Project economic opportunities and actively reaching out to local business is a simple mechanism for improving local economic benefits. Proposed mechanisms for this include: - supporting local, state-run initiatives which have a broader reach in the media and more communication - advertisement of opportunities for potential partnerships with CGO operations - continuing to build relationships with local businesses, and - assessing availability and capacity of regional suppliers and how the mine may best procure goods and services from these suppliers.	High
E02		Employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community (Benefit)	High	- Review existing employment and training measures to identify existing skills and gaps, transferrable skills and desired skills for futureproofing against mine closure. - Continue to liaise with local education service providers including TAFE and other local colleges, to support local hiring and upskilling of the local workforce, to increase the demand for (and availability of) TAFE courses.	High

Table 7.1 **Summary of mitigation and management strategies**

ID	Social theme	Impact or benefit	Perceived impact (unmitigated or unenhanced)	Proposed mitigation and management measures	Significance (mitigated or enhanced)
E03		Provision of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people (Benefit)	Medium	- Implement further indigenous employment measures for future additions to the existing workforce, including preparation of an Indigenous Participation Plan. - CGO may also consider provision of ongoing funding to support indirect employment and training through the WCC and GAC.	High
S01	Services	Community support and contributions from CGO operations (Benefit)	High	No further enhancement is proposed for this benefit..	High
S02		Improved access to services due to the Projects contributions to economic capacity (Benefit)	High	No further enhancement is proposed for this benefit.	High
S03		Impact of increased and ongoing demand for health care services in the local area	Medium	- Ongoing engagement with NSW Health and other health service providers to advise of workforce changes and confirm the capacity of existing service provision. - Continue to provide the workforce onsite health initiatives which include flu vaccines, skin checks for staff, and various other initiatives	Low
T01	Transport and access	Impact to travelling stock reserve	Low	The existing TSR will be re-routed to a location that is an improvement on the existing route, as it is less prone to flooding. No further mitigation is proposed.	Low

Table 7.1 **Summary of mitigation and management strategies**

ID	Social theme	Impact or benefit	Perceived impact (unmitigated or unenhanced)	Proposed mitigation and management measures	Significance (mitigated or enhanced)
T02		Increase in traffic on local roads and perceptions of safety	Medium	The existing planning agreements for infrastructure provide contribution to local roads. These contributions will be extended with the additional mine life.	Low
Su01	Surroundings	Generation of dust, noise and vibration affecting quality of life for nearby residents	Low	Due to the low risk of the generation of dust, noise and vibration affecting quality of life for nearby resident's impact occurring, no further mitigations are recommended.	Low
Su02		Changes to the visual character of the landscape (including lighting)	Medium	Ongoing consultation with surrounding landholders during the finalisation of the design would ensure the final design minimises visual impacts on local landholders.	Low
Su03		Diminished Aboriginal Cultural and Spiritual Values Impact	Medium	As the ACHA and CVM have recommended mitigations which reduce the risk of this impact, no further mitigations are proposed.	Low
Su04		Management of pest animals and bushfire risk	Low	In addition to pest and bushfire recommendations provided in technical studies supporting this EIS, fence repair around the site boundaries may reduce risk of pest animal movement and pressure on adjoining landholders for management.	Low

Table 7.1 **Summary of mitigation and management strategies**

ID	Social theme	Impact or benefit	Perceived impact (unmitigated or unenhanced)	Proposed mitigation and management measures	Significance (mitigated or enhanced)
Su05		Continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders (Benefit)	High	The Project could secure continued support for the growth and initiatives of the WCC to enhance the benefit of Project continuity.	High
Su06		Improved environmental Education outcomes (Benefit)	Medium	The existing operations may assist in delivery of enhanced lake access through rehabilitation planning and by continuing existing partnerships with community organisations (for example, the LCCC).	Medium
W01	Water	Perceived competition for groundwater resources	High	It is proposed that where feasible and necessary, CGO will explore alternative water sources, including saline bores. The Project may also continue to engage in an open and transparent manner with surrounding landholders, entities such as the Bland Paleo Monitoring Group and regulatory agencies to enable sharing of information on water resource requirements and utilisation, increase the accessibility of information about groundwater resources that would serve to reduce potential perceptions of inequity.	Medium
W02		Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall	High	The Project can reduce the likelihood of ongoing concern through continued engagement with local landholders.	Medium
W03		Impacts to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community	High	It is proposed that future rehabilitation planning may consider enabling improved public access to Lake Cowal.	Medium

7.2 Monitoring and management framework

It is proposed that a monitoring and management framework be developed to ensure that the identified positive benefits and negative impacts are monitored over time to measure the effectiveness or otherwise of the proposed management measures, including the changing conditions and trends in the Riverina and Central West Regions over the same period. This framework should identify how unanticipated events, breaches, grievances, and non-compliance would be managed.

It is proposed that the monitoring and management framework identifies the following key aspects:

- track progress of mitigation and management strategies
- assess actual project impacts against predicted impacts
- identify how information will be captured for reporting to impacted stakeholders including landholders, communities and government on progress and achievements
- key performance indicators, targets and outcomes
- responsible parties, and
- mechanisms for ongoing adaption of management measures when and if required.

To ensure the effectiveness of the management measures for the identified positive and negative impacts, it is recommended that a continuous improvement approach be adopted allowing for the review and adaption of impacts, management measure and outcomes. This approach would ensure stakeholders from various sections of the community are regularly informed and can participate in and collaborate on the Project. The continuous improvement approach is used successfully to manage social impacts from infrastructure operations throughout Australia and around the world.

The existing Project community and stakeholder engagement strategy will continue to implement a range of communication approaches and opportunities for the community to provide feedback. Existing engagement mechanisms which also contribute to ongoing improvement of social outcomes include:

- social media channels;
- website contact forms;
- community grievance mechanism (i.e. complaints register);
- community information sessions;
- briefings;
- e-newsletters; and
- letterbox drops.

The strategy will consider all options and will apply the instruments that best fit the overall needs of the Project. However, the approach will ensure that mechanisms for both information dissemination and feedback collection are incorporated.

8 Conclusion

This SIA identifies and evaluates the potential social impacts and benefits of the Project. The SIA was completed in compliance with applicable legislation and guidelines, including the SIA Guideline (DPE 2021a) and the SEARS specific to the Project.

The SIA study areas were defined to reflect the geographic distribution of different types of social impacts and benefits.

The local study area and key townships consist of the communities that may experience both direct and indirect social impacts from the Project and includes:

- Bland Shire Council area
- Forbes Shire Council area
- Lachlan Shire Council area

Key townships within the local study area expected to provide supporting services and accommodation hubs are:

- West Wyalong
- Forbes
- Condobolin

The regional study area is the Central West region, which is likely to experience few direct and more indirect social impacts of the Project.

Through primary and secondary research, this SIA has sought to identify social impacts and benefits associated with the construction and operation of the Project. The Project will have various social impacts and benefits, accruing particularly in the local area but also in the key urban areas and regional study area.

This study has found that expected impacts and benefits for the local and regional area fall within the themes of decision making systems, housing and accommodation, economy, services, transport, surroundings and water. The Project will result in various highly rated benefits for the local community. By comparison, the Project impacts are relatively few and can generally be managed through mitigation consistent with existing CGO approaches, or recommended in other reports supporting the EIS.

Community and stakeholder feedback derived through engagement activities revealed that stakeholders were almost universally supportive of the Project. It was highlighted by multiple stakeholders that CGO has established a positive reputation in the community founded on the tangible economic and social benefits which have been delivered and the effort they have invested in managing impacts and establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships with community stakeholders. There is a high degree of trust that Evolution will continue to be a responsible operator which forms the basis of a social licence to operate (Santiago et al, 2021).

A key finding of the SIA was that as this Project is a continuation of existing operations, Project impacts are principally derived from Project construction and small operational changes to existing features of the site. The mitigations section of this report generally proposes minor changes or the continuation of existing management approaches.

Listed below are impacts which were assessed as having a high or medium mitigated significance.

- Continued pressure on the local rental housing market (Medium)
- Reduced availability of short-term accommodation (Medium)

- Perceived competition for groundwater resources (Medium)
- Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall (Medium)
- Impacts to recreational and environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community (Medium)

A defining feature of the Project is the positive relationship which CGO has with the community in which it is already operating. This has been achieved through high levels of ongoing engagement and ensuring that social and economic benefits generated by the mine are being realised. Such a context provides a very good platform for the Project to further community benefits and make a positive contribution to maintaining CGO's existing social licence to operate.

Listed below are benefits which were assessed as having a high enhanced significance:

Ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement'

- Opportunity to plan and deliver a positive Project legacy
- Improved mine rehabilitation outcomes
- Ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience
- Provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community
- Community support and contributions from CGO operations
- Improved access to services due to the Projects contributions to economic capacity
- Community support and contributions from CGO operations
- Improved access to services due to the Projects contributions to economic capacity
- Continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders

A summary of impacts and benefits and their associated level of significance is provided in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Summary of identified social impacts and benefits

ID	Social impact theme	Impact	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated / Unenhanced	Mitigated / Enhanced
D01	Decision Making Systems	Ongoing meaningful community consultation and engagement	Local community	Construction Operation	Local area	Medium (Benefit)	High (Benefit)
D02		The opportunity to plan and deliver a positive Project legacy	Local community	Construction Operation	Local area	Medium (Benefit)	High (Benefit)
D03		The opportunity to achieve improved mine rehabilitation outcomes	Regional community	Post-operation	Project site	Medium (Benefit)	High (Benefit)
H01	Housing and accommodation	Continued pressure on the local rental housing market	Local residents	Construction and operation	Local area	Medium	Medium
H02		Reduced availability of short-term accommodation	Local community	Construction and operation	Local area	High	Medium
HA03		Heightened confidence in the local housing market	Local community	Construction and operation	Local area	Medium (Benefit)	Medium (Benefit)
E01	Economy	Ongoing contribution to regional economic resilience	Local community	Construction and operation	Local and regional area	High (Benefit)	High (Benefit)
E02		Provision of employment, training, and skills development opportunities for the local community	Residents and businesses in the local and regional area.	Construction Operation	Regional area	High (Benefit)	High (Benefit)
E03		Provision of employment and training pathways for Aboriginal people	Local and regional indigenous community	Operation	Regional area	Medium (Benefit)	Medium (Benefit)
S01	Services	Community support and contributions from CGO operations	Local residents	Operation	Local area	High (Benefit)	High (Benefit)
S02		Improved access to services due to the Projects contributions to economic capacity	Local businesses	Construction Operation	Local area	High (Benefit)	High (Benefit)

Table 8.1 Summary of identified social impacts and benefits

ID	Social impact theme	Impact	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated / Unenhanced	Mitigated / Enhanced
S03		Impact of increased and ongoing demand for health care services in the local area	Residents	Construction	Local area	Medium	Low
T01	Transport and access	Impact to travelling stock route	Local landholders, users of the TSR	Operation	Surrounding the Project	Low	Low
T02		Increase in traffic on local roads and perceptions of safety	Local road users	Construction Operation	Local area	Medium	Low
Su01	Surroundings	Generation of dust, noise and vibration affecting quality of life for nearby residents	Surrounding landholders	Construction Operation	Local area	Low	Low
Su02		Changes to the visual character of the landscape	Surrounding landholders, recreational users, Community groups such as Lake Cowal foundation	Construction Operation	Nearby neighbours	Medium	Low
Su03		Diminished Aboriginal cultural and spiritual values	Indigenous Stakeholders	Construction Operation Post-operation	Local and regional area	Medium	Low
Su04		Management of pest animals and bushfire risk	Surrounding landholders	Construction and operation	Local area	Low	Low
Su05		Continued constructive relationships with Indigenous stakeholders	Indigenous Stakeholders	Construction and operation	Local and regional area	High (Benefit)	High (Benefit)
Su06		Improved environmental education outcomes	School students, land managers and regional community	Operation	Regional area	Medium (Benefit)	Medium (Benefit)
W01	Water	Perceived competition for groundwater resources	Regional agricultural producers	Project life	Bland Creek Paleochannel Borefield	High	Medium

Table 8.1 Summary of identified social impacts and benefits

ID	Social impact theme	Impact	Affected parties	Duration	Extent	Unmitigated / Unenhanced	Mitigated / Enhanced
W02		Landholder concerns regarding the effect of water displacement due to the bund wall	Landholders within flood prone land adjoining Lake Cowal	Construction/ Operation	Flood extent	High	Medium
W03		Impacts to environmental qualities of Lake Cowal valued by the community	Regional Community	Project life	Regional area	High	Medium

9 Acronyms

Table 9.1 Acronyms

Acronym	
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACHA	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment
AEP	Annual Exceedance Probability
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AQGGA	Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Assessment
BC Act	NSW Biodiversity and Conservation Act 2016
BCPB	Bland Creek Palaeochannel Borefield
BDCP	Bland Development Control Plan
BLEP	Bland Local Environmental Plan
BSC	Bland Shire Council
CGO	Cowal Gold Operations
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment
EA	Economic Assessment
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EMM	EMM Consulting Pty Ltd
EP&A Act	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
EP&A Regulation	Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
Evolution	Evolution Mining (Cowal) Pty Limited
FCPP	Forbes Community Participation Plan
FCSP	Forbes Community Strategic Plan 2018 – 2028
FLSPS	Forbes Local Strategic Planning Statement
FM Act	NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994
FSC	Forbes Shire Council
GIA	Groundwater Impact Assessment
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
IEO	Index of Education and Occupation

Table 9.1 Acronyms

Acronym	
IER	Index of Economic Resources
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IRSAD	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage
IRSD	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage
IWL	Integrated waste landform
km	Kilometres
LCSP	Lachlan Community Strategic Plan
LCCC	Lake Cowal Conservation Centre
LCF	Lake Cowal Foundation
LDCP	Lachlan Development Control Plan
LED	Light Emitting Diode
LGA	Local government area
LLEP	Lachlan Local Environmental Plan
LLSPS	Lachlan Local Strategic Planning Statement
LSC	Lachlan Shire Council
LPB	Lake Protection Bund
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LGA	Local Government Area
LHD	Local Health District
MCRS	Mine Closure and Rehabilitation Strategy
NSW	New South Wales
NVIA	Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
OPC	Open Pit Continuation
PHN	Primary Health Network
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
ML	Mining Lease
Mt	Million tonnes
Mtpa	Million tonnes per annum
SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SES	State Emergency Service

Table 9.1 Acronyms

Acronym	
RMP	Rehabilitation Management Plan
SIA	Social impact assessment
SIA Guideline 2021	Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects
SIA Technical Supplement 2021	Technical Supplement: Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State significant Projects
SSD	State significant development
SWA	Surface Water Assessment
the Project	Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project
TIA	Traffic Impact Assessment
UCDS	Upstream Catchment Diversion System
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment
VLAMP	NSW Government Voluntary Land Acquisition and Mitigation Policy
WRE	Waste Rock Emplacement

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Appendix A

SIA Guideline Response

The SIA review questions as outlined in the SIA Guideline 2021 (DPE 2021a) and corresponding responses are presented in Table A.1.

Table A.1 Responses to SIA Guideline review questions

Reference number	SIA Guideline review question	Response
General		
1	Does the lead author of the SIA Report meet the qualification and experience requirements?	Yes – see Section 1.4.1 and Appendix B
2	Has the lead author of the SIA Report provided a signed declaration certifying that the assessment does not contain false or misleading information?	Yes – see Section 1.4.1
3	Would a reasonable person judge the SIA Report to be impartial, rigorous, and transparent?	Yes.
Project's social locality and social baseline		
4	Does the SIA Report identify and describe all the different social groups that may be affected by the project?	Yes – see Chapters 3,5, 6,
5	Does the SIA Report identify and describe all the built or natural features that have value or importance for people, and explain why people value those features?	Yes – see Chapters 5, 6, 7
6	Does the SIA Report identify and describe historical, current, and expected social trends or social changes for people in the locality, including their experiences with this project and other major development projects?	Yes – see Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7	Does the social baseline study include appropriate justification for each element, and provide evidence that the elements reflect both relevant literature and the full diversity of views and potential experiences?	Yes – see Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and Appendix E
8	Does the social baseline study demonstrate social-science research methods and explain any significant methodological or data limitations?	Yes – see Chapters 3, 5 and Appendix F
Identification and description of social impacts		
9	Does the SIA Report adequately describe potential social impacts (whether negative, positive, tangible, intangible, perceived, and/or cumulative) from the perspectives of how people may experience them, and explain the research used to identify them? Where the assessment is partially complete, and expected to be completed in Phase 2 SIA, has this been explained?	Yes – see Chapters 6, 7, and 8
10	Does the SIA Report apply the precautionary principle to social impacts, and consider how they may be experienced differently by different people and groups (i.e. distributive equity)?	Yes – see Chapters 3.4, 5, and 7 and Appendix F
11	Does the SIA Report describe how the preliminary analysis influenced both the project design and EIS Engagement Strategy?	Yes – see Chapters 7 and 8
Community engagement		
12	Were the extent and nature of engagement activities appropriate and sufficient to canvass all relevant views, including those of vulnerable or marginalised groups?	Yes – see Chapters 3, 5, and 6 and Appendix F
13	How have the views, concerns, and insights of affected and interested people influenced both the project design and each element of the SIA Report (e.g. the social baseline, predicting impacts, and mitigation/enhancement measures)?	Yes – see Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 and Appendix E and Appendix F

Table A.1 Responses to SIA Guideline review questions

Reference number	SIA Guideline review question	Response
Predicting and analysing social impacts		
14	Does the SIA Report impartially focus on the most material social impacts at all stages of the project life cycle, without any omissions or misrepresentations?	Yes – see Chapters 7, 8
15	Does the SIA Report identify the matters to which the precautionary principle could or should be reasonably applied?	Yes – see Chapter 7
16	Does the SIA Report analyse the distribution of both positive and negative social impacts, and the equity of this distribution?	Yes – see Chapter 7
17	Does the SIA Report identify its assumptions, and include sensitivity analysis and alternative scenarios (including ‘worst-case’ and ‘no project’ scenarios where relevant)?	Yes – see Chapters 3.4, 5, 6, 7 and 8
Evaluating significance		
18	Do the evaluations of significance of social impacts impartially represent how people in each identified social group can expect to experience the project, including any cumulative effects?	Yes – see Chapters 6, 7, 8
19	Are the evaluations of significance disaggregated to consider the potentially different experiences for different people or groups, especially vulnerable groups?	Yes – see Chapters 5, 5.3, 6 and Appendix F
Responses, monitoring and management		
20	Does the SIA Report propose responses (i.e. mitigations and enhancements) that are tangible, deliverable by the proponent, likely to be durably effective, and directly related to the respective impact(s)?	Yes – see Chapters 7 and 8
21	How can people be confident that social impacts will be monitored and reported in ways that are reliable, effective, and trustworthy?	See Chapter 8
22	How will the proponent adaptively manage social impacts and respond to unanticipated events, breaches, grievances, and non-compliance?	See Chapters 8

Appendix B

Authors Curriculum vitae



Chris Mahoney

Associate Director, National Technical Leader
EMM Consulting Pty Limited

Professional Overview

Chris is a highly experienced social scientist with specialist skills in the design and delivery of social performance programs, social impact assessment and community and stakeholder engagement programs. With over 25 years of professional experience across the infrastructure, resources and international development sectors, he has provided specialist social services to a wide range of complex initiatives throughout Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

Chris has consistently demonstrated a commitment to assisting major projects manage the interface with the community in which they operate so as to attain the best possible outcomes for all parties. With an extensive body of experience to draw upon, he is able to offer genuine insights into how complex and contentious projects can achieve and maintain a social license whilst successfully balancing corporate, operational and social objectives. Such experience extends to managing multi-faceted community development programs and design and delivery of comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement programs.

Qualifications and licences

Master of Urban and Regional Planning (Environmental Planning),
Griffith University

Bachelor of International Economic Relations, Griffith University

Member of the International Association of Impact Assessment
(IAIA): Social Impact Assessment Group

Member of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)

Specialisation

Provision of Social Performance specialist advice

Delivery of Impact Assessments (SIA) for large projects

Provision of community engagement programs

Design and delivery of community development initiatives

Representative experience

Social specialist

- Valeria project, provided technical oversight of the social impact assessment and associated social impact management plan along with strategic communications and engagement support to the project. Completion of a detailed assessment of housing and accommodation options including potential utilization of the Glencore occupied township of Tieri. Implementation of an engagement program which included requirements for the Progressive Rehabilitation and Closure Plan (PRCP). Central QLD (Glencore)
- Winchester South project, lead author and project manager of the social impact assessment and social impact management plan for a proposed coal project involving developing comprehensive suite of management plans relating to housing and accommodation, workforce management, local industry procurement and community health and wellbeing, Central QLD (Whitehaven Coal)
- Meadowbrook project led author and project manager for delivery of the social impact assessment and social impact management plan for the underground expansion of the existing Lake Vermont coal mine. A focus of the SIA was analysis of the social opportunity cost of the project not proceeding and the subsequent closure of open cut operations. Project included a targeted program of stakeholder engagement informed the development of social commitments measures formalised through the social impact management plan, Central QLD (Jellinbah Resources)
- ARTC Inland Rail project, provided specialist technical assessments and expert advice as lead advisor, review of social and economic impact assessments, community development and social management plans, overseeing the development of frameworks supporting the projects monitoring and evaluation program, National (ARTC)
- Isaac Downs Coal project, author of the social impact assessment and social impact management plan in the EIS for a greenfield coal project, completed a detailed assessment of land use compatibility and potential conflict, Central QLD (Stanmore Coal)
- Wafi Golpu project, lead social performance advisor for the approvals phase of the project, responsible for the delivery of the Socio-economic Baseline and Socio-economic Impact Assessment in accordance with national and international standards, development of social management plans relating to community development, in-migration management and re-settlement, Papua New Guinea (Newcrest/Harmony Gold)
- Ravenswood Gold project, update and revision of the social impact management plan to align with the requirements of the Queensland Social Impact Assessment Guideline (2018) and document the current social context and community sentiment towards the project's planned transition. A primary objective was to design a SIMP which is a useable adaptive management tool, providing the rationale and schedule of delivery for investments in community infrastructure and other initiatives which serve to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the Ravenswood township, Central QLD (Ravenswood Gold).
- Cross River Rail project – community infrastructure assessments, lead social planner advising on the community infrastructure elements of the project precincts, preparation of detailed baseline assessments and negotiation with stakeholders, Brisbane QLD (Cross River Rail Development Authority)
- Salisbury to Beaudesert Corridor Protection Study, project manager for the delivery of engineering design and consultation programs to support the gazettal of a passenger and freight 70 km rail corridor, involving the development of innovative engagement mechanics such as interactive web-based tools and collateral and direct engagement methods to refine project design and enable gazettal of the corridor, Brisbane, QLD (Qld Dept. of Transport)

- Warragamba Dam Raising project, lead author of the Socio-economic Impact Assessment, including delivery of multi-phased community and stakeholder engagement program and innovative assessment methodology, assessment of social vulnerability, Sydney, NSW (Water Infrastructure NSW)
- Cape York Water Planning Project, delivery of a social values assessment which included engagement with 12 communities, and the development of a decision support tool to assist the government to properly consider community values in natural resource planning processes (Queensland Department of Natural Resources)
- Frieda River project, social technical lead for the approvals phase for a large proposed open cut mine, delivery of the social impact assessment and social studies including resettlement, alluvial mining and in-migration management, Papua New Guinea (PanAust)
- PNG LNG Expansion project (P'nyang Project), development of a major gas field and pipeline including oversight across all social aspects of the project approvals process including socio-economic baseline, socio-economic impact assessment, stakeholder engagement program, health impact assessment and cultural heritage assessment, Western Province of PNG (Exxon Mobil)
- Waisoi Copper Project, technical oversight across all social elements of the environmental and social impact assessment, expansive fieldwork in 23 villages was undertaken to inform the ESIA and included implementation of stakeholder engagement programs involving studies on macro-economic effects, cultural heritage, traffic and land use, Fiji (Newcrest)
- Ok Tedi Mine Life Extension Review, gold and copper mine project involving peer review and adequacy assessment of social components of the feasibility study including community land and water resource utilization and potential health risks associated with mine life extension (OK Tedi)
- Telfer Mine, socio-economic baseline assessment of Traditional Owners of lands surrounding the mine which involved primary data collection in remote Aboriginal communities, included the preparation of a business development plan to assist in meeting ILUA obligations, Pilbara Region WA (Newcrest Mining)
- Kiribati Urban Development Program, project manager for the in-country implementation of New Zealand aid program comprising of urban development, water and sanitation, infrastructure delivery, economic development and capacity building projects, New Zealand (New Zealand Aid)
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP), social expert responsible for completing social and environmental risk assessments for climate change projects nominated by the countries for Global Environment Fund funding, Egypt, Bangladesh and Kyrgyzstan (UNDP)
- Bruce Highway Upgrade, author of the social impact assessment and social impact management plan for a major road infrastructure development, northern QLD (Department of Main Roads)
- Pacific Motorway Transit project, social impact assessment for the Pacific Motorway upgrade involving consultation with affected parties including the loss of affordable housing and an evaluation of social vulnerability (Department of Main Roads)
- Surat Basin Rail, technical lead responsible for the delivery of the social impact assessment, economic impact assessment and visual amenity assessment for a major proposed rail line, QLD (ATEC Rail Group)
- Toowoomba Pipeline project, completion of the social elements of the environmental impact statement for the construction of a 40 km pipeline, involving extensive community consultation and negotiation with landowners and Traditional Owners, Toowoomba (Toowoomba Pipeline Alliance)
- Bus Rapid Transport Project, author of the social impact assessment and the economic impact assessment of the Bus Rapid Transit System connecting inner Brisbane suburbs and the CBD (Brisbane City Council)
- Connors Range Rail Duplication, delivery of the social impact assessment and economic impact assessment for a coal rail line EIS, also co-managed delivery of the overall environmental impact assessment (Queensland Rail)
- Townsville Port Expansion, project manager for the delivery of the social impact assessment and economic impact assessment for a major port expansion project, including the development and implementation of an extensive stakeholder engagement program (North Queensland Bulk Ports)
- Legacy Way TransApex Tunnel, author of the social impact assessment for a road infrastructure project, involving design and delivery of the community consultation program supporting the project and specific consultation to inform the socio-economic impact assessment, Brisbane (Department of Transport)
- Social Infrastructure Model, development of a GIS-based social infrastructure model to determine social infrastructure gaps and the prediction of social infrastructure requirements in line with growth across the Mackay Regional Council area (Mackay Regional Council)
- Airport Link TransApex Tunnel, author of the social impact assessment for a major road infrastructure project (Department of Transport)
- Stuart Oil Shale Project, delivery of a social impact assessment addressing the proposed development of an oil shale industry, included extensive engagement with the community and key stakeholders and development of social impact management plans, QLD (Queensland Energy Resources)
- Exploration Projects, delivery of a community and stakeholder engagement program to support oil and gas exploration projects in the Otway and Cooper Basins, involved completing environmental management plans, VIC and SA (Beach Energy)
- LNG Plant Environmental Impact Statement, technical oversight of the social impact assessment and author of the social, economic and greenhouse gas assessment chapters of the EIS for a proposed LNG plant, QLD (Arrow Energy)
- Coal Infrastructure Masterplan, author of the 'social effects' chapter in the coal infrastructure master plan, QLD (Department of the Coordinator General)
- South East Queensland Priority Infrastructure Plan, preparation of policy guiding the delivery of essential infrastructure to service a region comprising 2.5 million people, involved extensive population modelling and collaborative policy development (QLD Department of Planning)



Breannan Dent

Senior Social Planner

EMM Consulting Pty Limited

Professional Overview

Breannan is a Senior Social Planner with 8 years' experience in urban planning and community engagement.

With a track record of robust research and a comprehensive understanding of planning policy, Breannan can distil complex information into simple and approachable documents and conversations.

Breannan has managed and delivered planning proposals, new local planning controls and community engagement strategies.

Breannan taps into existing expertise and opportunities by fostering collaborative relationships through genuine interest and integrity.

Breannan's outstanding customer focus, intrapersonal skills, problem solving skills and work ethic have allowed her to support her colleagues in delivering future-focused projects with excellent design, sustainability and resilience outcomes for the community.

Qualifications and licences

Masters of Urban Management and Planning, University of Western Sydney, 2014

Bachelor of Social Science, University of Western Sydney, 2013

Major in Urban Geography, University of Western Sydney, 2013

Sub-Major in Peace and Development Studies, University of Western Sydney, 2013

Specialisation

Social Impact Assessment

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Statutory Planning

Representative experience

Senior Planner Penrith City Council

- Employment Zones Reform, reviewing and reconciling proposed changes to Commercial Centre and Heavy Industrial zones from the existing Penrith Local Environment Plan (LEP) 2010 controls to the proposed changes under the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006.

Acting Senior Planner Penrith City Council

- 61–79 Henry Street, Penrith Planning Proposal to amend Penrith LEP 2010, assessment of a planning proposal which involved extensive negotiations with the proponent and reporting to the Local Planning Panel and Councillor Briefings.
- DCP Controls for Urban Heat, revised and refined considerations previously posted as part of the proposed future sustainability controls in Development Control Plan Review 2022 which involved working on project deliverables, leading internal and industry engagement and reporting the project to Council for endorsement.

Planner Penrith City Council

- DCP Review 2022, Stage 1, reviewing and amending controls for Stage 1 of Penrith's Development Control Plan Review, developing controls for sustainability and industrial land, amending and developing controls for business and commercial land, manor houses and the Erskine Park precinct. Involved reviewing strategies, studies, demographic information and community engagement responses to determine the community's needs.

- Rodgers Street Planning Proposal to amend Penrith LEP 2010, managing the Gateway process, Local Planning Panel referral, public exhibition, heading and traffic, flood evacuation and property history matters; managing the engagement of consultants and demonstrating transparency and superior stakeholder management.
- Four Sites in Penrith and St Marys Planning Proposal to amend Penrith LEP 2010, planning proposal for a gateway determination with DPIE, engagement and reporting within prescribed timeframes and planning legislation and processes.
- Penrith DCP 2014 amendment to Site Planning and Design, Vegetation Management, Notification and Advertising, Boarding Houses and Outdoor Dining and Trading chapters. Involved managing a series of amendments to improve consistency with local and state policies, address contentious boarding house development matters, coordinate internal contributions, address community needs and ensure legal consistency.
- Seven sites at Reynolds Road and The Driftway, Londonderry Planning Proposal to amend Penrith LEP 2010, managing initial stages of the planning proposal including communication and developing proponent relations.
- Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan (CPP), development and participation in specialised engagement processes for the CPP; prepared, exhibited, reported and finalised housekeeping amendments to the CPP.
- Australian Arms Hotel Planning Proposal to amend Penrith LEP 2010, project managed the planning proposal from commencement to conclusion in accordance with the procedure for preparing a Local Environmental Plan.
- 176–202 Victoria St, Werrington Planning Proposal to amend Penrith LEP 2010, assessment of a planning proposal seeking reclassification and rezoning of Council owned land involving key considerations of rezoning and traffic management.
- 11–13 Chesham St, St Marys Planning Proposal to amend Penrith LEP 2010, managing the public exhibition, public hearing and reporting processes for the project within tight deadlines.

- Boarding Houses and Multi Dwelling Housing DCP 2014 amendment, amendment of DR Residential Development and chapters of the DCP 2014, included addressing priority issues with boarding houses and multi-dwelling housing developments, identifying outcomes through community submissions, application assessments and management plans.

Community and Stakeholder Relations Office RPS

- Garden Island Wharf Extension Proposal, proposal to extend the Garden Island wharf, involving communicating elements of the proposal to the public and developing communication strategies and materials to ensure the project complied with conditions of consent (Department of Defence).
- Green Square Stormwater Drain Project, community and stakeholder relations office responsible for internal communications and liaising with the community and stakeholders (City of Sydney Council and Sydney Water Corporation).
- Sydney Water Delivery Management team, assessed the community impact of new infrastructure and renewal projects, delivered communication strategies for work on multiple assets across the Sydney Water network (Sydney Water Corporation).
- Balmain Pumping Station renewal, delivered effective communication to the community for the high profile project, assisting to complete both project work and manage existing community issues (Sydney Water Corporation).

Graduate Community Relations Officer

- Priority Sewerage Program, community relations officer. Communicating the complex infrastructure project program, liaising with government officials, stakeholders and project leaders, communicating with and representing community members and producing communications materials including newsletters and web content. Breannan offered expert advice on the projects history during project planning for an investigation of customer connections into the PSP systems (Priority Sewerage Program Alliance and Sydney Water Corporation).
- Lime Kiln Bay Overflow, graduate consultant for the project involving collating community responses and producing reports outlining community feedback on the proposed site (Sydney Water Corporation).
- Northern Beaches Hospital Project, worked to establish first contact with residents regarding contentious infrastructure plans, provided community relations services including stakeholder engagement and collating community feedback (Roads and Maritime Services).
- Lord Howe Island LEP Review, developed community surveys to capture community views on the plans and identify opportunities for project improvement which involved data management, reporting and research, events management and project launch management (Lord Howe Island Board).

Appendix C

Planning context

This section provides a summary of the relevant plans and strategies across the Project that inform the social risk assessment and mitigation and management strategies.

C.1 Federal

At a federal level, the project is located within the federal electorate of Riverina.

There are no specific federal legislative or regulatory instruments that directly impact on the social impact assessment for the project, however, the Keep it in the regions report (Parliament of Australia, 2018) in November 2018 is relevant. The report recommends several measures aimed at increasing the potential for local communities to benefit economically from resourcing projects located near their community.

C.2 State

The New South Wales Parliament consists of a Legislative Assembly (lower house) and Legislative Council (upper house).

At a state level, the proposed project sits within the New South Wales state electorate of Cootamundra. There are no specific state regulatory instruments which set directions for the social impact assessment of the project, other than those which direct the EIS process listed in Chapters 2 and Chapter 5 of the EIS (EMM 2022), and requirements which affect the technical studies supporting the EIS process. These are listed in the EIS and the appendices.

C.2.1 State strategies

i Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW, 2018 – 2022

a South-West Slopes region - 2018

The *Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW - South-West Slopes region* (DPIE 2018) guides the long-term economic vision and associated strategy for the South-West Slopes region, which covers five local government areas (LGAs), including Bland Shire.

The Vision for the South-West Slopes Region is for ‘a thriving community of choice, working together to leverage its endowments and core competencies in agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism to achieve sustainable growth’.

The strategy highlights the mining sector as key drivers of the Region’s economy and one of the key elements requiring support and growth. The Strategy identifies five elements encompassing fifty-three actions for Governments. Elements relevant to the Project are outlined in Table C.1.

Table C.1 Relevant goals and strategic directions outlined in Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW- South-West Slopes region, 2018

Relevant goals	Relevant strategic directions
Element 1 – Support and grow the Agriculture, Food Production and Mining sectors	Action - Investigate and upgrade key roads in Bland to improve productivity for agricultural and mining freight movements Action - Develop fully serviced residential and industrial estate in West Wyalong to provide for current and future demand from the mining and agriculture sectors

Table C.1 Relevant goals and strategic directions outlined in Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW- South-West Slopes region, 2018

Relevant goals	Relevant strategic directions
Element 2 – Improve utilities, energy and telecommunications to grow the Region’s core industries, as well as business start-ups throughout the Region	Connected and ready-to-go industrial estates and land located proximally to major producing sectors such as agriculture and mining could also provide a path for growing or attracting manufacturing businesses to the Region. Improved telecommunications and lower energy costs could also improve the Region’s appeal as a potential migration destination
Element 3 – Drive economic growth in the Region’s core sectors by upskilling the workforce and facilitating innovation	Capitalise on existing TAFE campuses in the Region to provide newly required skills and qualifications Grow the presence of universities in the Region e.g. Country Universities, ANU, CSU

Regarding Element 1, the strategy states that the mining sector is the key drivers of the Region’s economy, particularly in generating value of output and growing exports. The operation and performance of those drivers need to be underpinned by a strong Transport and Logistics sector, however many of these sectors are constrained by issues with roads that limit the ability to utilise heavy vehicles and maximise their productivity. As such, the Strategy plans for the expansion and growth of the mining sectors that will require improved connectivity and access to utilities.

Additionally, the CGO accommodation village in West Wyalong will continue to be used with other local temporary accommodation options as part of a strategy to accommodate part of the workforce during the early stages of the project while Evolution continues its current policy to encourage its workforce to settle in regional towns near the mine.

The Project will enable the retention of 510 existing jobs at CGO as well as supporting the continuation of indirect employment through services contracts.

b South-West Slopes region - 2023

The *South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update* ((DPE), 2023) reviews the 2018 strategy’s goals using updated demographic data, statutory context and engagement.

Table C.2 outlines the relevant Strategies and Enablers from the updated strategy.

Table C.2 Strategic directions and enablers from the South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023

Relevant strategy	Relevant new enabler
Strategy 1 - Support and grow the agriculture, Food production, mining, and renewable energy sectors.	Identify barriers to investment in engine and emerging industries to inform potential policy changes and grant funding opportunities.
Strategy 2 - Drive economic growth in the region’s core sectors by attracting and upskilling the workforce and facilitating innovation.	Collaborate with industry and training providers to deliver training programs that increase the skills base across priority sectors, including agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and service-based sectors.
Strategy 4 - Improve and deliver enabling infrastructure and services to enhance liveability and sustainably grow the population of the South West Slopes region.	Explore opportunities, maximising the use of unused or underutilised lots to ensure sufficient supply of affordable housing to meet current needs and projected growth. Improving the supply of housing will aid skills attraction and retention initiatives. Support the diversification of the region’s housing offering to provide affordable and accessible housing for the ageing population and those living with disabilities.

Table C.2 Strategic directions and enablers from the South West Slopes Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023

Relevant strategy	Relevant new enabler
Strategy 5 - Monitor impacts of major projects to ensure long-term community benefits are generated.	Work collaboratively with local councils to identify opportunities to leverage investment in major projects in order to grow local supply chains to serve the needs of major projects and the community.

Elements 1 and 3 outlined above have been retained with new enablers (previously relevant strategic directions). The above assessment of the Project's relationships with these elements, (re-labelled as Strategy 1 and Strategy 2 respectively) stand.

Element 2 has been amended to Strategy 4: "Improve and deliver enabling infrastructure and services to enhance liveability and sustainably grow the population of the South West Slopes region". The above assessment of the Project's relationship with housing stands, and alignment with Strategy 4 has also been addressed in Section 6.2.1.

Strategy 5 has also been added, and has been considered in proposing mitigations for the Project outlined in Section 6.3.1.

c Mid-Lachlan Region - 2018

The *Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW - Mid-Lachlan region* (DPIE 2018) guides the long-term economic vision and associated strategy for three local government areas (LGAs), including the Forbes and Lachlan Shires.

The vision for the Mid-Lachlan Region is 'to be a progressive and prosperous regional community that leverages its competitive advantages in agriculture, mining and tourism, and to embrace industry growth and create job opportunities whilst supporting the thriving economy'.

The strategy highlights mining sector as four of the six key elements of the Mid-Lachlan region providing opportunities to expand current and future mining operations and mining improvements. The elements relevant to the Project are outlined in Table C.3.

Table C.3 Relevant goals and strategic directions outlined in Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW- Mid-Lachlan region

Relevant goals	Relevant strategic directions
Element 2 – Providing opportunities to expand current and future mining operations	The economic structure and population of the region rely heavily on the mining Industry. The future of mining will focus on growing valuable assets and opportunities that provide new, high value products and will require a higher level of skilled employment. Infrastructure Priorities – Upgrade and develop infrastructure and transport networks: These would aid the continued operation and growth of existing mines and improve access to the Lake Cowal Evolution mine which is a significant employer in the region. Organisational Priorities include create suitably zoned and serviced land for commercial and industrial use; encouraging the continued location of mining supply companies to the region; support a proactive approach to land use and planning: an ongoing priority for councils that needs to be addressed with the future expansion of the mining industry in avoiding land use conflict; Strategy outcome – to enhancing the region's infrastructure and services capabilities to assist in attracting new industry growth and expanding current high value mining production and future opportunities.

Table C.3 Relevant goals and strategic directions outlined in Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW- Mid-Lachlan region

Relevant goals	Relevant strategic directions
Element 3 – Improve water security constraints for the agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism industries;	Mining sectors also rely heavily on a consistent water supply. Improved water security would allow the Region's Agricultural sector to diversify through greater emphasis on high value crops Strategy outcome – address weaknesses and improve water security in the region, to enhance the sustainability of the community and business environment.
Element 4 – Improve the availability of skilled labour for high value mining, construction, transport and manufacturing industries	Addressing shortages will allow local industries to boost employment and demonstrate to younger adults that they have a future in the region. The actions within this strategy are a platform for attracting 'boomerang residents' (people aged 18-25 leaving the region to gain skills and experience before returning) back into the region. Strategy outcome –to Increase the pool of skilled individuals living in Mid-Lachlan who can support the high value industries of mining, construction, transport and manufacturing.
Element 5 – Improve access to markets for agriculture, mining and manufacturing by investing in intermodal network resilience and reliability	Local agricultural, mining and manufacturing business depend on road and rail networks to access markets for their products. Strategy outcome –to Identify and address weaknesses or vulnerabilities in the intermodal network to enhance transport reliability and capitalising on opportunities where available.

d Mid-Lachlan region - 2023

The *Mid-Lachlan Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update* (DPE 2023) reviews the 2018 strategy's goals using updated demographic data, statutory context and engagement.

Table C.4 outlines the relevant Strategies and Enablers from the updated strategy.

Table C.4 Relevant goals and strategic directions outlined in Mid-Lachlan Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update

Relevant strategies	Relevant new enabler
Strategy 2 – Provide opportunities to expand current and future mining and energy generation sectors	Support investigation of critical minerals mining opportunities and potential for value-add processing activities, including processing and manufacturing of downstream products. Deliver a Regional Housing Delivery Plan, which identifies opportunities to increase housing supply in the region, accounting for the impact of major projects on housing demand.
Strategy 3 – Address energy and water security constraints for the agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism industries	Support collaboration between land holders, government and Central West-Orana REZ investors to develop an integrated supply chain between the mining and energy sectors
Strategy 4 - Improve local training opportunities to attract and retain a skilled workforce and strengthen local benefit from public and private investments	Engage with local businesses to support skill development in agtech, mining, energy, manufacturing, tourism and health care, and investigate options for developing local apprenticeship schemes within the region. Support local businesses by providing guidance on attracting workers through the Regional Skills Relocation Grant.

Table C.4 Relevant goals and strategic directions outlined in Mid-Lachlan Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update

Relevant strategies	Relevant new enabler
Strategy 5 - Improve access to markets for agriculture, mining and manufacturing by investing in intermodal network resilience and reliability	Investigate the infrastructure needs required to connect surrounding businesses to the Parkes SAP and the planned Condobolin Warehousing and Logistics Centre.

ii Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036, 2016 – 2036

The *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036* (DPIE 2017) guides the land use planning priorities in the Riverina Murray Region, which covers 20 local government areas (LGAs), including Bland Shire.

The vision identifies that the Riverina Murray is a diversified economy founded on Australia's food bowl, iconic waterways and a network of vibrant connected communities.

The Plan presents four key goals, of which three of the Plan's goals align with the Project are:

- Goal 1: a growing and diverse economy – Direction 12: Sustainably manage mineral resources
- Goal 3: efficient transport and infrastructure networks; and
- Goal 4: strong, connected and healthy communities – Direction 22 – Promote the growth of regional cities and local centres.

The plan notes that care must be taken to manage the impacts of mining to produce long-term sustainable economic, social and environmental outcomes and so there is potential for other land uses to co-exist with mining. The assessments undertaken for the Project show that the Project will meet strict impact standards set out in legislation and policy and that the Project can co-exist with other land-uses, including nature conservation, agriculture and recreation.

It also notes in the local area narrative that the Bland Shire economy is underpinned by agriculture and mining, with the region's most significant mining activity occurring at Lake Cowal Gold Mine.

Table C.5 Relevant goals and strategic directions outlined in Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036

Relevant goals	Relevant strategic directions
Goal 1: a growing and diverse economy	Direction 6: Promote the expansion of education and training opportunities Direction 8: Enhance the economic self-determination of Aboriginal communities Direction 12: Sustainably manage mineral resources
Goal 2: A healthy environment with pristine waterways;	Direction 13: Manage and conserve water resources for the environment
Goal 3: efficient transport and infrastructure networks	Direction 18: Enhance road and rail freight links
Goal 4: strong, connected and healthy communities	Direction 22: Promote the growth of regional cities and local centres Direction 25: Build housing capacity to meet demand Direction 26: Provide greater housing choice Direction 29: Protect the region's Aboriginal and historic heritage

Source: NSW Government 2016

The Project is consistent with the abovementioned directions and goals of the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036. Therefore the strategic directions align well with the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036 as it will continue to contribute to strong economic development in the region and will result in a range of socio-economic benefits that would accrue during its life. These are summarised in Table C.2.

iii Draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041

The *Draft Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041* (DPE 2022) is the five year update to the *Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036*. The draft plan has been the subject of consultation with the community. Its economic development a community and region resilience building goals are similar to the *Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2036*.

The draft plan notes that workers will require housing in the region's towns and villages and this will require to be managed carefully during the construction of large-scale developments, such as renewable energy projects, mining, Murray River bridge crossings and Inland Rail. Seasonal agricultural employment and tourism also creates demand for short-term accommodation.

Its actions are for the Department to liaise with the Department of Regional NSW and councils to quantify the cumulative housing demand from major projects and infrastructure projects and for the planning system to determine suitable planning mechanisms to ensure the project design and development assessment process considers these impacts early. In relation to the Project, the draft plan recognises that major projects and industries require temporary and permanent workers during construction and operation. These workers contribute to local economies and communities through direct and indirect employment opportunities and support growth and other investments across the region.

Evolution supports the conclusions in the draft plan. It has quantified its anticipated construction and operations workforce for the project. Evolution will continue to implement its long-standing and successful policy of encouraging its workforce to reside in local towns which has limited the number of its workers being located outside of the region. It is cognisant of supporting local accommodation providers and reducing adverse impacts on the housing market by providing additional accommodation (short and long-term) through the operation of its West Wyalong Accommodation Village.

iv Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2016, 2016 – 2036

The *Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2036* (DPIE 2017) guides the land use planning priorities in the Central-West Orana Region for the next 20 years. It covers 20 LGAs, including the Forbes Shire and the Lachlan Shire.

The key goals of the plan are similar as those presented in the Riverina-Murray Regional Plan, in that the focus of the strategies and actions are to ensure the continuation of a diverse and strong economy using existing established industry as a base. In particular the goals relevant to the project are:

- Goal 1: The most diverse regional economy in NSW – Direction 8: Sustainably manage mineral resources
- Goal 2: A stronger, healthier environment and diverse heritage – Direction 14: Manage and conserve water resources for the environment
- Goal 4: Dynamic, vibrant and healthy communities – Direction 22: Manage growth and change in regional cities and strategic and local centres and Direction 27: Deliver a range of accommodation options for seasonal, itinerant and mining workforces.

Table C.4 Relevant goals and strategic directions outlined in Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2036

Relevant goals	Relevant strategic directions
Goal 1: The most diverse regional economy in NSW	Direction 6: Expand education and training opportunities Direction 7: Enhance the economic self-determination of Aboriginal communities Direction 8: Sustainably manage mineral resources
Goal 2: A stronger, healthier environment and diverse heritage	Direction 14: Manage and conserve water resources for the environment Direction 16: Respect and protect Aboriginal heritage assets
Goal 4: Dynamic, vibrant and healthy communities	Direction 22: Manage growth and change in regional cities and strategic and local centres Direction 24: Collaborate and partner with Aboriginal communities Direction 27: Deliver a range of accommodation options for seasonal, itinerant and mining workforces

Although there will be no major physical infrastructure related to the Project located in the Lachlan Shire and the Forbes Shire apart from water supply pipelines and bores, these local government areas will continue to benefit from the increased economic opportunities that will result from the project, the potential to provide housing for the construction and/or operational workforce, as well as providing a portion of the temporary accommodation for the construction workforce. These areas will also continue to provide key support and transport links to the Project. These are summarised in Table C.5.

v Draft Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2041

The draft *Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2041* (DPE 2021) is a five-year update to the *Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2036*. The draft plan has been the subject of consultation with the community. Its goals are similar to the *Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2036*. The plan highlights the need for strategies to provide short-term accommodation options for the region which are relevant to the Project.

In particular, Objective 10 – *provide accommodation options for temporary workers* and associated Action 6 which relates to investigating options to accommodating life of project workforces are relevant in that it recognises that addressing demand for housing and associated needs of workers will provide safe, secure, and suitable housing while also contributing to the economic growth of towns, particularly those near large investment projects.

The key message in the draft plan is that mining and agriculture remain in the top 5 regional industries, which together creating 28% of the region's economic output.

Accordingly, the Project aligns with the key goals of the draft *Central-West Orana Regional Plan 2041*.

C.3 Local

The project is located in Bland Shire Council LGA and borders Forbes Shire Council LGA and Lachlan Shire Council LGA which has the highest proportion of directly impacted stakeholders.

The local Council has regional and strategic plans that articulate their vision for the future of their community. These are summarised in Table C.6.

Table C.5 Local Government Area Planning Context

Plan/Strategy	Summary	Responsibility	Timeframe
Bland Shire Council			
Bland Shire Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027	The Bland Shire Community Strategic Plan 'Your Vision, Our Future' 2017-2027 is the key strategic document which outlines directions of the Bland Shire. The Bland Shire Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027 acknowledges the importance of CGO to the economic prosperity and diversity in development, through Evolution's support of local initiatives, employment opportunities and housing of workers in local towns. This Plan identified the following considerations for what the community needs: • a vibrant and connected community spirit; • an engaged community with access to services and facilities to meet the needs of the people; • a focus on agriculture, environment tourism and heritage, balanced with new business and development; • management of assets are important especially roads, footpaths and town beautification; and • collaborative leadership balancing community needs with financial sustainability. The Bland Shire's vision for 2027 is stated as being 'a place where people are valued, an environment that is respected, a future that is bright, a community that is proud'. To achieve this vision, Plan articulates four main focus areas: • Our People - A Strong, healthy, connected and inclusive community • Our Places - Maintain & improve the Shire's assets & infrastructure • Our Leadership - A well run Council acting as the voice of the community • Our Prosperity - Growing our population and jobs. These long-term priorities have been captured by the Bland Shire Council through the feedback and data gathered through numerous community surveys, events and organisations.	BSC	2017 – 2027
Bland Local Environmental Plan (BLEP) (BSC 2021)	The BLEP "...aims to make local environmental planning provisions for land in Bland in accordance with the relevant standard environmental planning instrument under section 3.20 of the [EP&A] Act". The particular aims of the BLEP include: • protecting and promoting the use and development of land for arts and cultural activity, including music and other performance arts; • protecting, enhancing, and conserving agricultural land through the proper management, development, and conservation of natural and man-made resources; • encouraging a range of housing, employment, recreation and facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents of Bland; • promoting the efficient and equitable provision of public services, infrastructure, and amenities; • conserving, protecting, and enhancing the environmental and cultural heritage of Bland; • promoting the twin townships of West Wyalong and Wyalong as the major commercial and community service centres for Bland; and encouraging the sustainable growth of the villages of Bland.	BSC	2011 - present

Table C.5 Local Government Area Planning Context

Plan/Strategy	Summary	Responsibility	Timeframe
Bland Development Control Plan 2012 (BDCP) (BSC 2021)	The BDCP outlines the development application process in BSC. It is made under the LEP which contains the statutory planning controls for development with the Bland Shire.	BSC	2012 – present
Section 94 Development Contribution Plan <i>Traffic Generating Development</i> 2011 (BSC 2021)	The Plan assists in determining the levy of contributions for the upgrading and rehabilitation of effected public roads from a development proposing heavy vehicle use of public road in Bland Shire that may damage bitumen and gravel road pavements.	BSC	2011 – present
Forbes Shire Council			
Forbes Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028	The Forbes Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028 also highlights the value of the significant investment and growth opportunities that will flow from rural industry developments, Inland Rail, the nearby intermodal transport hub and current and prospective mining operations in the region. The Project aligns with the strategic focus of the Forbes Community Strategic Plan given that the town of Forbes is seen as a key location to continue to provide housing and short-term accommodation for CGO employees. The FCSP outlines FSC's vision for Forbes Shire: <i>The Forbes Shire is a safe, connected, and welcoming community. We aspire to create job opportunities, improve our infrastructure and support a diverse and thriving economy (FSC 2018, p.5).</i> The FCSP outlines the aspirations, needs, and priorities for the Community of Forbes. It is a 10-year plan that sets strategies for achieving such goals. The plan provides Forbes Shire with "a blueprint for its long-term growth, community development and infrastructure renewal".	FSC	2018-2028
Forbes Local Strategic Planning Statement (FLSPS) (FSC 2020)	The LSPS is a 20-year plan setting out the land use vision and planning priorities for the future of Forbes Shire. The plan aims to: • "manage future growth, new technology, and changing community needs; • conserve our heritage, local character, and environment; • support our diverse economy and all our industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, mining, retail, education, and health; link the community's strategic vision to that of the region and the state to achieve the best economic and social outcome for Forbes".	FSC	2020 – 2040
Forbes Community Participation Plan (FCPP) (FSC 2019)	The FCPP aims to: • "build community confidence in the planning system; • ensure that the needs and concerns of the community are identified and addressed wherever possible; and ensure Council's planning functions reflect the aspirations of our community" (FSC 2019).	FSC	2019 – present

Table C.5 Local Government Area Planning Context

Plan/Strategy	Summary	Responsibility	Timeframe
Lachlan Shire Council			
Lachlan Community Strategic Plan 2017/18 – 2026/27 (LCSP) (LSC 2017)	LSC commits to: • “maintain principles of democracy, public participation, and fairness in decision making; • have a positive influence on community attitudes; • promote, provide, and plan for the needs of people of all ages; encourage and stimulate economic growth and prosperity in the Shire; establish a safe, caring, and clean community environment; and create a dynamic area sustaining its agricultural and natural heritage” (LSC 2017).	LSC	2017 – 2027
Lachlan Local Environment Plan 2013 (LLEP) (LSC 2013)	The aim of the LLEP is to: • to encourage the provision of a range of housing, employment, and recreation facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents of Lachlan; • promote the efficient and equitable provision of public services. Infrastructure, and amenities; • protect, conserve, and enhance the environmental and cultural heritage of Lachlan; • encourage the sustainable growth of Lachlan; and encourage development that is matched by adequate land supply for long-term needs and that is linked with key services and infrastructure” (LSC 2013).	LSC	2013 – present
Lachlan Development Control Plan 2018 (LDCP) (LSC 2018)	The purpose of the LDCP “...is to guide development within Lachlan Shire to be consistent with the aims and objectives of the LLEP” (LSC 2018)	LSC	2018 – present
Lachlan Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020 – 2040 (LLSPS) (LSC 2020a)	The LLSPS works with the LCSP and the LLEP and “...sets the framework for Lachlan Shire’s economic social and environmental land use needs over the next 20 years” (LSC 2020a). Planning priorities, directions, and actions within the LLSPS outline how land will be used in Lachlan Shire to achieve broader community goals. The LLSPS also includes: • special characteristics which contribute to local identity in Lachlan Shire; and a range of planning priorities and 30 actions related to tourism, infrastructure, agriculture, cultural heritage, housing, environment, and resources in Lachlan Shire. The Lachlan Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020-2040 goals include the promotion of industry sustainability. The statement highlights that mineral resource extraction can benefit and affect communities in different ways during the mining lifecycle. Further, the sustainable management of mineral resources must consider and balance varying impacts to produce long-term economic, social and environmental outcomes. The Project aligns with the goals of the Lachlan Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020-2040 as it will provide local economic stimuli to the shire through job creation and services and supply contracts well into the future	LSC	2020 – 2040

Table C.5 Local Government Area Planning Context

Plan/Strategy	Summary	Responsibility	Timeframe
Lachlan Shire Community Participation Plan (LSCPP) (LSC 2020b)	The main purpose of the LSCPP is to make participation in planning processes more simple, straightforward, and clear for the Lachlan community. The aim of the plan is to: • “build community confidence in the planning system; • create a shared sense of purpose, direction, and understanding of the need to manage growth and change, while preserving local character; and provide access to community knowledge, ideas, and expertise” (LSC 2020b).	LSC	2020 – present

Appendix D

SIA Scoping Report for the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project



Social Impact Assessment - Scoping Report

Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project

Prepared for Evolution Mining (Cowal) Pty Limited
May 2022





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Social Impact Assessment - Scoping Report

Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project

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4 May 2022



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4 May 2022

This report has been prepared in accordance with the brief provided by the client and has relied upon the information collected at the time and under the conditions specified in the report. All findings, conclusions or recommendations contained in the report are based on the aforementioned circumstances. The report is for the use of the client and no responsibility will be taken for its use by other parties. The client may, at its discretion, use the report to inform regulators and the public.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project overview

Evolution Mining (Cowel) Pty Limited (Evolution) is the owner and operator of Cowal Gold Operations (CGO) located approximately 38 kilometres (km) north-east of West Wyalong, New South Wales (NSW). CGO is located immediately adjacent to Lake Cowal, an ephemeral waterbody.

CGO is an open pit and underground gold mining operation. The open pit mining operations commenced in 2005. Underground mining operations were approved on 30 September 2021 and are projected to commence in 2023.

CGO is regulated by two Ministerial development consents; one for 'surface' operations (ie open pit mining and associated infrastructure) and one for 'underground' operations.

Development Consent DA 14/98 covering surface operations has been modified 16 times since it was granted, and allows Evolution to:

- extract 167 million tonnes (Mt) of ore by open pit mining methods, with a life of mine until 2040;
- process ore on-site at a rate of up to 9.8 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa);
- produce up to 6.1 million ounces (Moz) of gold;
- emplace tailings and waste rock on site in an integrated waste landform (IWL) – which includes the current northern and southern tailings storage facilities (TSFs), and in waste rock emplacement (WRE) areas;
- operate a water supply pipeline to the Bland Creek Palaeochannel Borefield (BCPB); and
- progressively rehabilitate the site.

Development Consent SSD 10367 covers underground operations and allows Evolution to:

- develop and operate an underground stope mine, a box cut to the underground and a pastefill plant;
- extract 27 Mt of ore by underground stoping mining methods at a rate of 1.8 Mtpa, until 2040;
- deliver ore and waste rock from the underground mine to the surface;
- backfill the extracted stopes with paste made from tailings; and
- produce up to 1.8 Moz of gold.

Evolution operates within Mining Lease (ML) 1535 and ML 1791. The current surface and underground mining area is wholly contained within ML 1535. ML 1791 accommodates part of the IWL and soil stockpiles. Together, ML 1535 and ML 1791 host all facilities of the CGO and occupy a total area of approximately 2,873 hectares (ha). The CGO site also hosts a range of ancillary infrastructure to support mining operations. This includes an ore processing plant, the IWL, WREs, ore stockpiles, laydown areas, water storage dams and drainage diversion systems, workshops, offices, reagent storage and explosives magazine.

Evolution seeks to develop further open pit mining operations at CGO as part of the Open Pit Continuation Project (the Project). This will involve further development of the existing E42 Pit and the development of open pit mining in three new and adjacent orebodies, known as the 'E46', 'GR' and 'E41'.

It is anticipated that this development will extend the mine life to the end of 2042. No change to the approved ore processing rate of 9.8 Mt per annum is proposed at this time.

To enable the Project to be developed, a new state significant development (SSD) consent is required under Part 4, Division 4.1 of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will therefore be required for the Project.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this social impact assessment (SIA) scoping report is to accompany the main scoping report that requests and informs the content of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the Project. The SEARs will state the NSW Government's requirements for the environmental assessment required in the EIS that accompanies the SSD application for the Project.

The primary objective of the SIA scoping study is to define the scope of the SIA for the Project by:

- identifying potentially affected people;
- identifying and understanding the SIA study area;
- identifying the potential, negative and positive, social impacts for further investigation; and
- determining the level of assessment required for each potential social impact.

This report has been prepared by EMM Consulting Pty Limited (EMM) on behalf of Evolution in accordance with the *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (SIA Guideline) (DPE 2021a).

2 Scoping methodology

2.1 Baseline review

A description of the Project and its proximity to and interaction with residents, businesses, and services, along with Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) demographic and economic data were used to determine the Project SIA study area and to identify potentially affected communities and key stakeholders (refer Section 3).

2.2 Identification of SIA study area

Potential stakeholders in the SIA study area were assessed to see who could be directly or indirectly affected by the Project. This included identifying landholders, businesses and social services.

2.3 Stakeholder engagement activities

A wide range of the stakeholders identified were then consulted as part of the scoping phase of the Project. COVID-19 safe practices were employed during the engagement program, which included the following activities:

- scoping meeting held as a videoconference via Microsoft Teams with NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE);
- face-to-face interviews and videoconference via Microsoft Teams with Bland, Forbes and Lachlan Shire Councils, landholders, and other key stakeholders;
- meeting with the CGO Community Environmental Monitoring and Consultative Committee (CEMCC);
- distribution of information sheets; and
- on-line and hard copy surveys.

Engagement activities were undertaken during March 2022 in Bland Shire, Forbes Shire and Lachlan Shire local government areas (LGAs) with a range of key stakeholders as summarised in Table 2.1. A detailed breakdown of consultation activities can be found in Chapter 5 of the Scoping Report.

CGO and EMM representatives met with Bland Shire, Forbes Shire and Lachlan Shire Council representatives to present the conceptual Project components, key approval processes and timeframes, seek feedback on issues and concerns for consideration and to provide a briefing on the preparation of the SIA.

Face-to-face interviews took place between stakeholders listed in Table 2.1 and an EMM representative who:

- provided a Project briefing;
- provided an overview of the EIS and SIA processes; and
- documented stakeholder concerns regarding the Project.

Table 2.1 Consultation activities undertaken relevant to the SIA

Stakeholder	Location	Date
Local council		
Bland Shire Council (one representative present)	Online via Microsoft Teams	29 March 2022 1.30 pm – 2.30 pm
Forbes Shire Council (four representatives present)	Face-to-face in Forbes Shire Council Chambers	24 March 2022 9.00 am – 10.00 am
Lachlan Shire Council (one representative present)	Face-to-face in Lachlan Shire Council Meeting Room	25 March 2022 10.00 am – 11.00 am
Additional stakeholder groups		
CEMCC (ten representatives present)	Online via Microsoft Teams	9 March 2022 9.00 am – 11.00 am
Lake Cowal Foundation (one representative present)	Face-to-face at the Lake Cowal Conservation Centre	21 March 2022 11.30 am – 12.30 pm
Jemalong Irrigation (two representatives present)	Face-to-face at Jemalong Irrigation offices, Jemalong Weir	24 March 2022 1.00 pm – 2.00 pm
Service providers	Via telephone x 4	17 March 2022 – 22 March 2022
Near neighbours x 12		
Landholders and identified near neighbours	Face-to-face x 10	22 March 2022 and 23 March 2022
	Via telephone x 1	24 March 2022
	Via online meeting x 1	8 April 2022
Local community meetings		
Local landholders and community	Three in person sessions (5 attendees in total)	21 March 2022 and 22 March 2022
	One online session (0 attendees)	

A community survey (refer Appendix A) was also conducted, which posed questions to identify:

- awareness of and previous interactions with CGO;
- previous matters raised and satisfaction with CGO response;
- current awareness of the Project; and
- potential impacts and benefits related to the Project.

Hard copies of the information sheet and survey were mailed out to allow residents without access to the internet to provide feedback and respond to the survey in writing. No responses were received from the hard-copy surveys. A total of seven online responses were received. For a full summary of the EIS engagement activities refer Chapter 5 of the scoping report.

3 SIA study area

3.1 Identification of the SIA study area

The SIA study area is the geographical area that EMM believes requires examination of the potential social impacts associated with the Project on the affected communities and key stakeholders. The SIA study area considers the way people organise themselves, connect with each other and move around the broader geographic area.

The study area was determined by identification of the main population centres where people live, work and visit, as well as the existing transport networks between them. Consideration of the following requirements outlined in the SIA Guideline (DPE 2021a) and international leading practice inform the identification of the SIA study area:

- the proximity of landholders and nearby neighbours to the project boundary;
- the potential impacts and benefits on the local communities as a consequence of the project;
- the scale, location and nature of the project;
- workforce accommodation facilities location(s);
- major connecting roads and transport routes, including those used by the project;
- who may be affected by the project;
- whether vulnerable or marginalised people will be affected by the project;
- built or natural features on or near the project that could be affected;
- relevant social, cultural, demographic trends or social change processes occurring now or in the past near the project site and in the broader region; and
- the history of the proposed project and the area, and any similar experiences people near the project have had.

Within the SIA study area there are two considerations:

- **Local area:** which include landholders and nearby communities and are most likely to be directly affected.
- **Regional area:** which include residents and businesses within the study area that are likely to experience impacts and benefits of the project. The regional area and the State of New South Wales will be used in the project socio-economic baseline for reference and comparative purposes against the local area.

Within the local area, the SIA will also explore and assess identified place-based communities where people live, work, travel and visit, and where there are existing socio-economic networks and services. The SIA study area for this Project includes the following local communities within proximity to the Project site and their related local government areas:

- Local area:
 - Bland Shire local government area;
 - Forbes Shire local government area; and
 - Lachlan Shire local government area.
- Regional area:
 - Central West.

Each of the locations are mapped to their ABS data categories shown in Table 3.1 and will be used to develop the community profile and social baseline. The local and regional areas (hereto referred to as local area or regional area) are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Table 3.1 **Locations with the SIA study area mapped to ABS categories**

Study area	Geographic area	ABS data category
Local area	Bland Shire local government area	Bland Local Government Area (LGA)
	Forbes Shire local government area	Forbes Local Government Area (LGA)
	Lachlan Shire local government area	Lachlan Local Government Area (LGA)
Regional area (NSW)	Central West	Statistical Area 4 (SA4)
NSW*	State of NSW	New South Wales State/Territory (STE)

*Data will be used for reference and comparative purposes.

3.2 Geographical

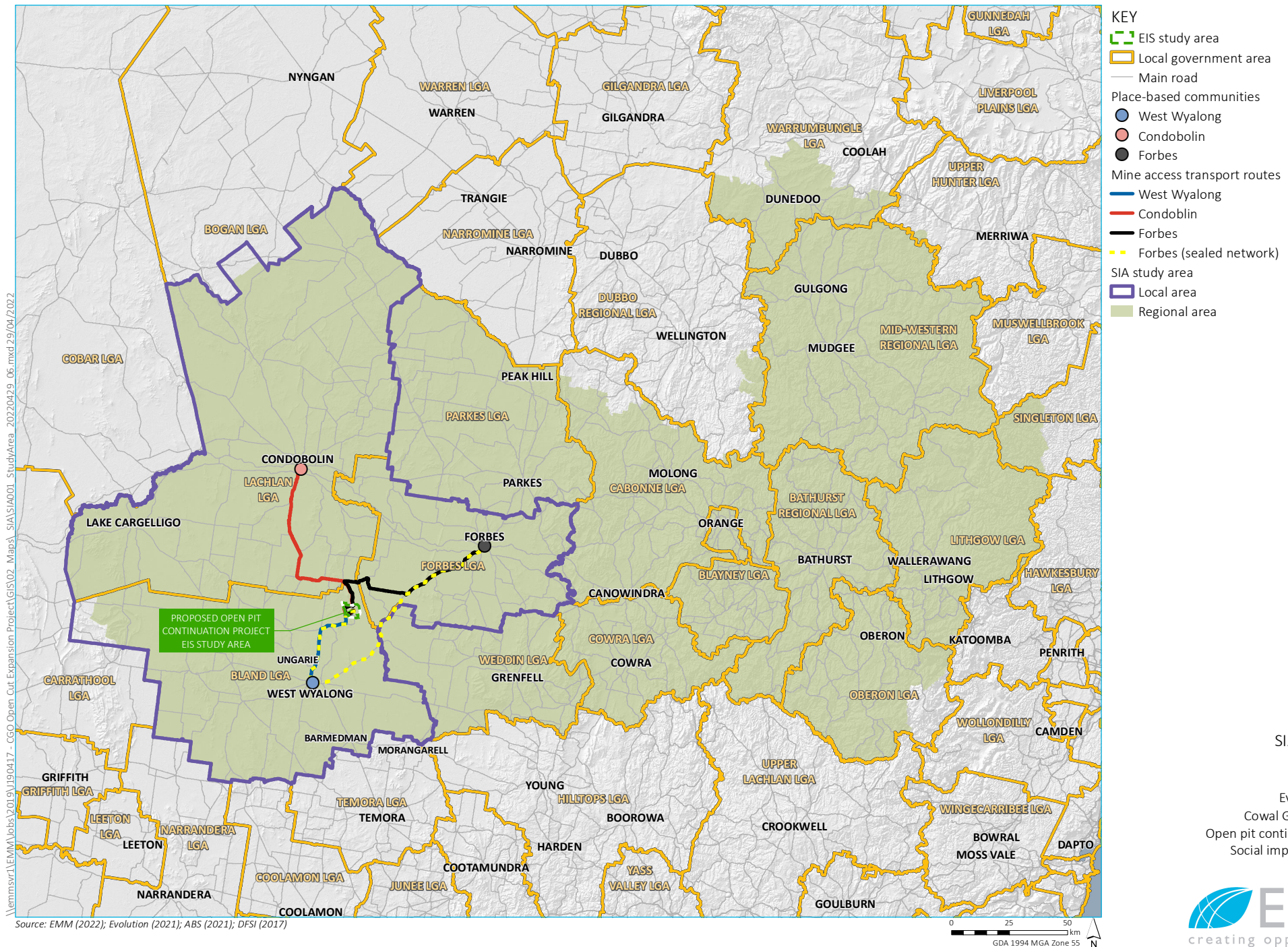
The Project is located within the Bland LGA and has the potential to directly affect many landowners, residents, and businesses within the vicinity of the Project site. The LGAs of Bland, Forbes and Lachlan are nearest to the Project site and therefore, most likely to be the communities directly affected by the Project.

The Project is likely to have a broader reach due to for example, the purchase of goods and services, use of transport infrastructure (road, rail and warehousing), community services (health, education, power, water, sewerage, government services, accommodation), and cumulative impacts arising with other projects within the area (DPE 2021a). These factors require the study area to include regional areas likely to be impacted by the Project which will extend to the Central West Region (refer to Figure 3.1), which is the identified regional area.

3.3 Potentially directly impacted people

Potentially directly impacted people include:

- residents of Bland, Forbes and Lachlan LGAs;
- service providers in Bland, Forbes and Lachlan LGAs;
- Aboriginal community members;
- landholders and nearby neighbours, including businesses;
- local business community; and
- employee workforce of the CGO.



SIA study area

Evolution Mining
Cowal Gold Operations
Open pit continuation project
Social impact assessment
Figure 3.1

4 Community profile

4.1 Overview

This section provides a brief overview of the social conditions of the local and regional communities in which the Project will operate.

4.2 Local area

The Project is located within the Bland LGA and may directly impact landowners, residents, and businesses within the vicinity of the CGO site. Direct and indirect impacts and benefits may be far reaching. The potential direct and indirect impacts, which are anticipated to occur primarily within the Bland, Forbes, and Lachlan LGAs, relate to local social infrastructure and services, local workforce, local business and industry, transport routes, local housing and accommodation, and community health and wellbeing.

West Wyalong, located within the Bland LGA, is the closest town to the CGO site and is approximately 46 km by road, with a population of 3,141 people and a median age of 42 years (ABS 2016). West Wyalong is the central hub within the Bland Shire LGA accounting for close to half of the LGA's total population (ABS QuickStats 2017). West Wyalong reported 83% labour force participation with a comparatively low unemployment rate when compared to NSW and Australia. Of the employed people in West Wyalong, 10.9% worked in gold ore mining. Other major industries of employment included local government administration (5.9%), supermarket and grocery stores (4.4%), secondary education (3.0%) and grain-sheep or grain-beef cattle farming (2.7%) (ABS QuickStats 2017).

The town of Forbes, within the Forbes LGA, is located approximately 86 km by road from CGO. The population of Forbes is approximately 8,432 with a median age of 42 (ABS 2016). Forbes is the largest town in Forbes LGA and reported 64% labour force participation. The main industries of employment for workers in Forbes are health care and assistance, retail trade, agriculture, forestry and fishing, and education and training. Mining accounted for 3% of employment (REMPPLAN Community Profile 2016).

The town of Condobolin, within Lachlan LGA, is located approximately 80 km by road from CGO. Condobolin has a population of 3,486 people with a median age of 38 (ABS 2016). The suburb has a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (22.1%) compared to NSW and Australia. Condobolin has a higher unemployment rate than both Forbes and West Wyalong (8.1%). Top industries of employment include local government administration, primary education and grain-sheep or grain-beef cattle farming (ABS QuickStats 2017).

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the population size for the place-based communities and their relevant LGAs in the local area and their approximate distance to the Project site.

Table 4.1 Populations and estimated travel time from the Project site to local communities

Location	Population (according to ABS 2016 Census)	LGA population (according to ABS 2016 Census)	Approximate distance by road (km)	Estimated travel time (min)
West Wyalong (Bland LGA)	3,141	5,955	46	32
Forbes (Forbes LGA)	8,432	9,587	86	60
Condobolin (Lachlan LGA)	3,486	6,194	80	60

While the Weddin LGA is in proximity (10 km) to the Project site, CGO has no interactions with landholders, service providers or the local government in the Weddin LGA. Similarly, it has no significant impacts on the Weddin community or its economy. Transport routes of goods, services and workers do not go through the Weddin LGA (refer Figure 3.1). This is not expected to change with the Project. Therefore, the Weddin LGA will only be considered in the regional area, as the Weddin LGA falls within the Central West region (see Section 4.3).

4.3 Regional area

The Project is likely to have a broader reach due to the use of infrastructure, supply chains, haulage routes, transportation of goods, materials and equipment, and cumulative impacts arising with other projects within the area (DPE 2021a). These factors require the study area to include regional areas likely to be impacted by the Project which will extend to the Central West Region (refer Figure 3.1) which is the identified regional area. The Central West is identified as per the ABS Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4) with a population of 213,384 in 2019.

The Central West Region provides a comparison for the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the local area. Furthermore, aids the understanding of the Project's location in relation to the region in which is located and to understand the regional socio-economic characteristics and potential impacts.

5 Outcomes of SIA scoping study and issue identification

This section summarises the findings of the scoping phase engagement activities. The consultation had two key objectives:

1. Provision of information to the community about:
 - the Project;
 - the EIS process; and
 - opportunities for the community/stakeholders to provide feedback on the Project and the EIS.
2. Identification of community and stakeholder issues relating to the Project.

The findings summarised below are based on a small sample of residents and groups. Due to the following factors, the findings cannot be assumed to represent the views of the local or regional communities:

- participants chose to be part of the SIA;
- sampling method; and
- small sample size.

5.1 Summary of SIA scoping engagement

The *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (DPE 2021a) defines ‘social impacts’ as ‘the consequences that people experience when a new project brings change’. The issues listed below are some of the areas the community identified which can be investigated further. These are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Issues identified by community stakeholders

Issues areas	Bland Shire Council	Forbes Shire Council	Lachlan Shire Council	CEMCC	Landholders and nearby neighbours	Special interest groups	Community Survey	Service providers
Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cumulative mining	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to housing	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Access to services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Access to social infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Property prices	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Lake Cowal	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

Table 5.1 Issues identified by community stakeholders

Issues areas	Bland Shire Council	Forbes Shire Council	Lachlan Shire Council	CEMCC	Landholders and nearby neighbours	Special interest groups	Community Survey	Service providers
Rehabilitation	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Aboriginal cultural heritage	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Land management	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Noise	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Small business	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Groundwater	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Visual Amenity	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Agriculture	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Air quality	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Climate change	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Ecology	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Health	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Traffic	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Blast vibration	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗

Note: ✓ = Issue identified; ✗ = Issue not identified

5.1.1 Stakeholder interviews

The most common issues raised by community stakeholders were ongoing employment and the potential for cumulative impacts, with many noting other existing and potential new projects (ie two solar farms, various mining projects and road upgrades) planned for the area.

Those interviewed noted that CGO contributes to the community, with the benefits that CGO provided during recent drought periods, in terms of employment security, community assistance and financial contributions noted repeatedly. However, some stakeholders interviewed did feel that there is an opportunity to do more, particularly in terms of the legacy left in the community post-mining.

Although outside the scope of the EIS being prepared by EMM, Lachlan and Forbes Shire Councils raised the issue of early negotiation of Planning Agreements (PAs) as part of the approvals process.

The following sub-sections summarise key issue identified during the interviews.

i Housing and accommodation

Access to housing and accommodation and access to services such as health and childcare were raised frequently. Health workers, emergency workers and trades people are unable to find housing locally. Access to housing is also impacting communities beyond West Wyalong and into the Forbes and Lachlan LGAs.

Accommodation providers noted that they are benefitting from consistent occupancy rates as a result of mining workers and contractors staying in the area. Conversely, businesses associated with tourism in the area are reportedly losing business due to accommodation being used by the mine. Bland Shire Council noted that a basketball tournament was unable to be held in West Wyalong due to shortage of accommodation locally. It was also raised that as part of the Riverina Murray area there are tourist opportunities that are being missed due to occupancy rates in West Wyalong being consistently high due to mining.

Some SIA interview participants also raised that they have experienced an increase in property prices due to the shortage of accommodation. It had been noted that when a property comes on the market (rental or sale), real estate agents sometimes go straight to Evolution. In addition, during consultation it was raised that large corporates are reportedly offering higher than market rates for farming land which is pushing local family farmers out of the market. Bland Shire Council also noted challenges related to the release of land for residential development.

Several participants expressed that while other communities may resist workers camps, the West Wyalong community is supportive of the approved accommodation village associated with the underground mine, due to the housing and accommodation issues. Residents appear to appreciate the importance of the CGO mine and what Evolution does for the local communities.

ii Capacity of health services

As stated previously, health professionals, nursing staff and emergency workers are amongst a number of professions struggling to find local housing. Consultation with health service providers has noted that this has exacerbated the health service problem in attracting and retaining nurses and other medical staff, with the health service currently classed as in crisis.

iii Surroundings

Some landholders reported that they occasionally experience unwelcome noise, vibration or light from the existing CGO mine.

Several landholders around Lake Cowal and other stakeholders also raised concerns about the proposed increased bund (ie lake protection bund) and what that might mean for flooding and surface water flows in the area. Some landholders were concerned about access to their land during flooding events and the potential impacts that even a small change (eg 5 cm) in lake level could have on their ability to farm and access their land. Some felt that elements of the proposed Project infrastructure (eg topsoil stockpiles) could divert water away from the dams used for farming.

One landholder interviewed expressed concern about the ongoing extraction by CGO of fresh groundwater supply from the Bland Creek Palaeochannel Borefield and the potential impacts this might have on groundwater security. This landholder highlighted that fresh groundwater supply/security is critical to their farming operations and livelihood.

Some landholders and special interest group participants also expressed concern over the location of some elements of proposed Project infrastructure (ie topsoil stockpiles and lake protection bund) as potentially affecting perceived sensitive biodiversity habitat.

iv Legacy

Those interviewed noted that CGO contributes to the community but did feel there is an opportunity to do more, particularly in terms of the legacy left in the community post-mining. Several stakeholders, including a landholder, a special interest group member and an elected representative commented that there should be a 'relative' (financial) contribution made to the community to balance the perceived environmental and social impacts of the proposed Project. The potential for greater contributions to health, housing and accommodation, transport and tourism infrastructure in particular were highlighted.

v Traffic

A representative from an emergency service provider raised concern over the potential for an increase in accidents should traffic increase in the area and asked whether the existing road infrastructure in the local area is suitable for an increase in traffic.

One special interest group raised the issue that the traffic route from CGO to Forbes along the western side of Lake Cowal means that 25 properties in 3 shires are affected. They suggested a route where only 4 properties in 1 Shire would be affected. It was suggested that this would also improve fatigue management and quality of the road, as well as maintenance.

5.1.2 Community survey

A survey was distributed to the community along with a newsletter that provided a summary of the Project. The survey was administered on-line with hard copies available at the Community Information Sessions in West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin, and during in-depth interviews.

A total of seven responses were received. Respondents were mostly supportive of the Project.

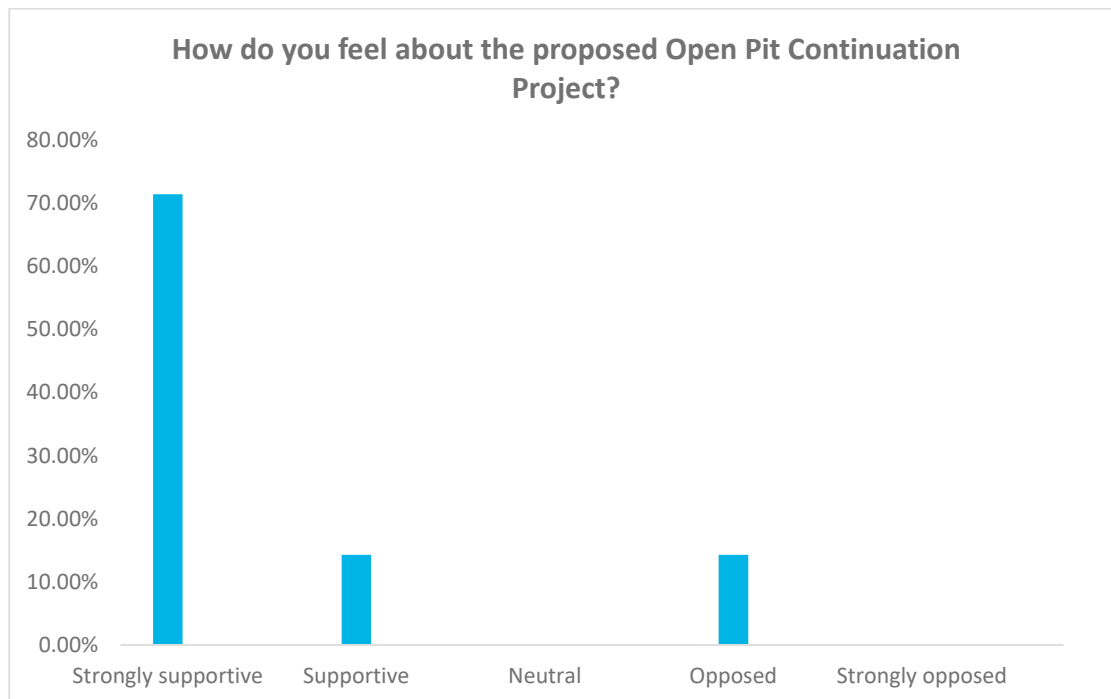


Figure 5.1 Survey responses related to stakeholder feeling about the Project

When asked why they felt this way, respondents who supported the Project provided the following responses:

“The mine is great for the community. Not only for employment for the area but the mine supports lots of charities and projects around the area.”

“Continuation of jobs and contribution to state and federal coffers through royalties, taxes and employee payments.”

“Provides longer term security of jobs in the region. West Wyalong would die if the mine closes.”

“Jobs in the area, infrastructure spending for the town.”

“Great for the town and current work force.”

“Job security”.

The one respondent that objected to the Project raised concerns regarding rehabilitation of the site and groundwater impacts and felt the short-term benefits did not outweigh the longer-term environmental impacts. In addition, one respondent stated that the increase in property prices would be bad for those not working in the mine.

Respondents were asked to rank a list of potential impacts and benefits that are commonly associated with large mining projects and consider how the Project may affect the community. The rankings are shown in Figure 5.2. For a full summary of the survey results see Appendix B.

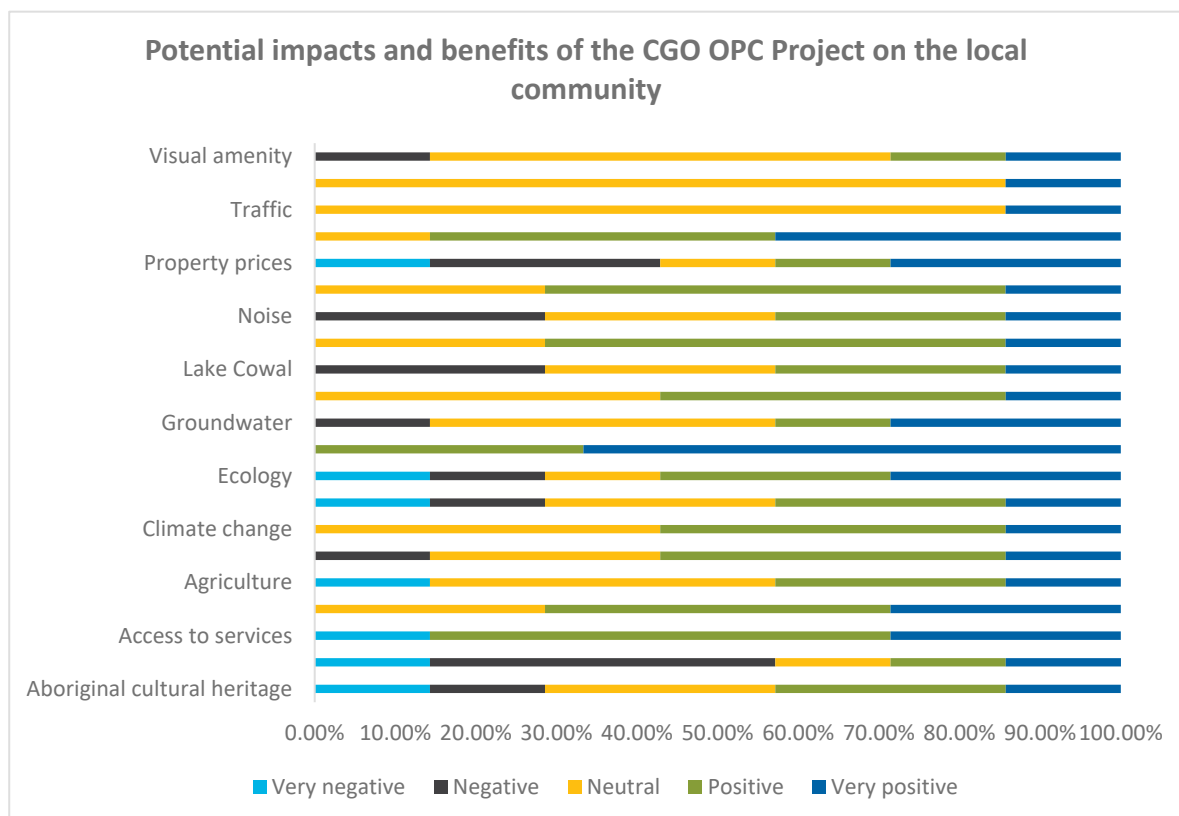


Figure 5.2 Online survey results – potential impacts and benefits of the CGO OPC Project on the local community

6 Proposed SIA scope

This section outlines EMM's proposed scope of the SIA for the OPC Project EIS.

6.1 Potential social impacts

Potential adverse and beneficial impacts of the Project have been identified during the scoping assessment based on the outcomes of a community survey, community and stakeholder engagement and observations of the local community and Project area. The purpose of identifying them at this preliminary stage is to ensure the EIS preparation focusses on:

- the potential social impacts identified by, and of greatest concern, to the community as a whole; and
- an appropriate range of stakeholders, and that affected groups or individuals are included in the SIA engagement activities.

Potential adverse impacts that have been identified requiring further assessment, together with the likelihood of potential beneficial social impacts, are detailed in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 **Proposed SIA study areas**

Study Category	Potential adverse impacts	Potential beneficial impacts
Accessibility	- Housing shortages. - Accommodation shortages – tourism.	- Worker’s accommodation village and use of motel accommodation reduces impact on housing. - CGO’s ongoing provision of housing to police.
Health and wellbeing	- Health and emergency services in crisis – loss of health services would affect local residents. - Fear that extending the bund (lake protection bund) surrounding the pits would increase flooding.	- Employment security providing positive mental health benefits. - Positive social and financial contributions to community.
Surroundings	- Noise and vibration. - Visual amenity related to lights. - Flooding. - Groundwater. - Biodiversity.	Not provided.
Culture	- Potential loss of aboriginal cultural heritage. - Lake Cowal encroachment.	Continued investment in Lake Cowal Foundation and the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC).
Livelihoods	Tourism providers miss out on business due to lack of tourist accommodation.	- Ongoing work for local workforce. - Continued income stream for accommodation providers during tourism downturn due to covid.
Legacy	Mine closure outcomes (socioeconomics and environmental).	Mine closure outcomes (socioeconomics and environmental).
Decision-making systems	Not provided.	Landholders have access to complaints mechanisms that are responded to and remedied.

Many stakeholders feel there is an opportunity for CGO to leave a legacy in the community post-mining. The potential for greater contributions to health, housing and accommodation, transport and tourism infrastructure should be explored in the social impact assessment through the social impact management plan.

6.2 Proposed methodology

The SIA will be led by a suitably qualified Social Scientist who will adopt the methodology illustrated in Figure 6.1 and will use social science methods and tools for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data.

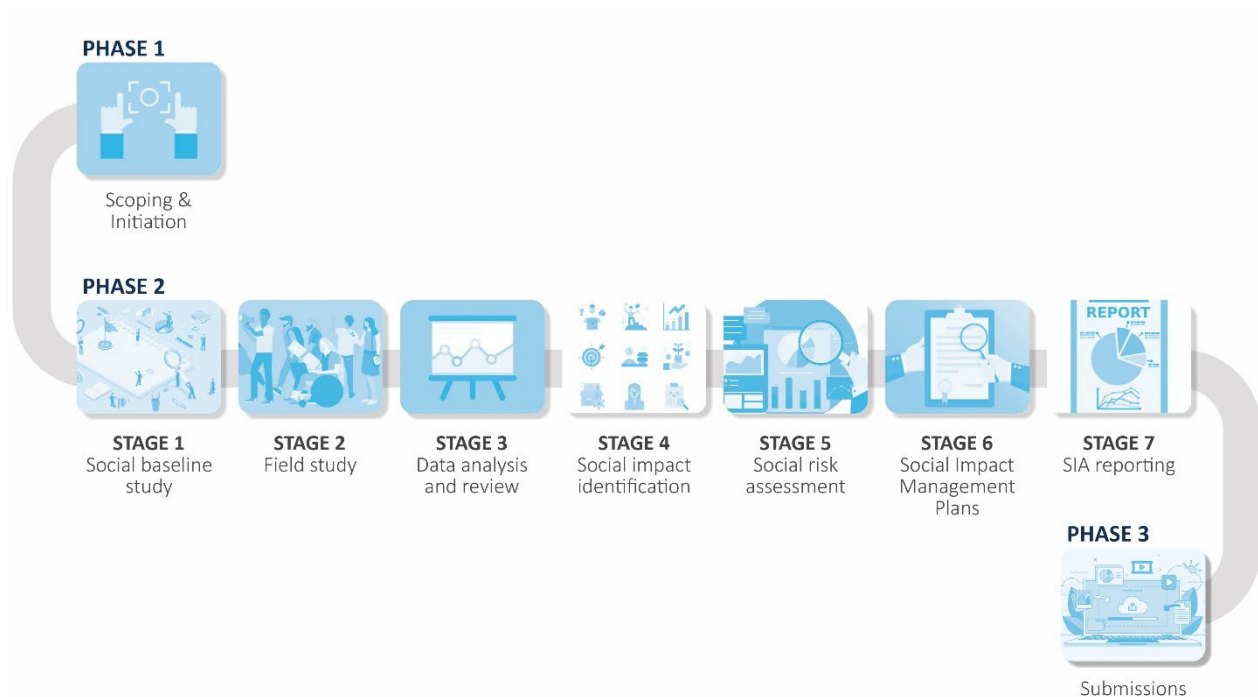


Figure 6.1 SIA methodology

The identification of social impacts will be informed by community and stakeholder engagement activities as well as SIA field study activities and will be conducted in an integrated manner to ensure consistency, reduce duplication, and allow for management of consultation fatigue. In addition, findings from the EIS specialist technical studies will be considered to understand the potential consequences for the community and existing research and previous SIAs will inform the identification of the social impacts.

Potential social impacts and benefits will then be assessed according to the requirements of the *Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects* (DPE 2021a) and will use the risk matrix presented in the *Technical Supplement* (DPE 2021b) (refer Table 6.2). Proposed mitigation measures for identified social impacts will be developed during the later stages of the SIA process.

Table 6.2 Social impact significance matrix

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

References

ABS 2016a, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

ABS 2017, *QuickStats* (Available: <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/quickstats>).

DPE 2021a, Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

DPE 2021b, Technical Supplement: Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

REMPLAN 2016, *Community Profile* (Available: <https://www.remplan.com.au/community/>)



Appendix A

Community survey



Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project Community Survey

Introduction

Evolution Mining Limited (Evolution) is in the early planning stages of developing a proposed continuation of the Cowal Gold Operations (CGO), known as the Open Pit Continuation (OPC) Project.

What is the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project?

The existing CGO open-cut gold mine at Lake Cowal is located 38 kilometres northeast of West Wyalong, in central western NSW. The mine includes associated surface infrastructure, comprising an ore processing plant, waste rock emplacements and an integrated waste landform, for tailings disposal.

The OPC will extend open-cut mining by approximately 10 years to 2036 and the total mine life by approximately two years to 2042. The project will enable the retention of the open-cut mining workforce, allowing CGO to continue to contribute to the local and national economies, through local employment, community advancement and environmental protection.

The key components of the OPC include:

- new open-cut mining pits;
- lake protection bund;
- integrated waste landform;
- waste rock emplacements;
- temporary soil stockpiles; and
- water storage upgrades.

Planning and assessment process

The OPC is classified as state significant development and will require approval under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. This means an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared, and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces or the Independent Planning Commission will determine the development application.

The OPC has commenced a Scoping Phase, involving early planning of the specialist environmental, social and economic studies to be undertaken, including a SIA, as part of preparing an EIS. A Scoping Report will be prepared and submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment, requesting the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the project. The SEARs will identify the type and detail of technical and environmental assessments, and the level of consultation required to be undertaken.

For more information about the proposed OPC Project please contact the project team:

Phone: 1800 161 205 (free call)

Email: cgo_opc@emconsulting.com.au

Website: emm.mysocialpinpoint/cgo_opc

Survey Purpose

EMM Consulting Pty Ltd (EMM Consulting) has been engaged by CGO to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the OPC Project, including a Social Impact Assessment.

As part of the Social Impact Assessment scoping phase, EMM Consulting have designed a survey to get community input into the identification of potential social impacts and benefits related to the OPC Project for further investigation during the Environmental Impact Statement delivery phase. The results of this survey will be presented in the Scoping Report.

Please complete the survey by **27 March 2022**. If you have any further questions about the project please contact the project team using the details above.

Please note your responses to this survey are voluntary and the confidentiality of the information you provide will be safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act.

1. Have you had any previous communications with Cowal Gold Operations (CGO)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. If yes, what was the topic of discussion?

3. How would you rate your awareness of the proposed Open Pit Continuation Project?

Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. How do you feel about the proposed Open Pit Continuation Project?

Strongly supportive	Supportive	Neutral	Opposed	Strongly opposed
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Why do you feel this way?

5. How supportive are you of continued mining in the Lake Cowal area?

Strongly supportive	Supportive	Neutral	Opposed	Strongly opposed
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Why do you feel this way?

6. Below is a list of potential impacts and benefits that are commonly associated with large mining projects.

Consider how the Open Pit Continuation Project may affect the local community and select the appropriate ranking for each **potential impact and benefit** using the buttons provided.

	Very negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very positive
Aboriginal cultural heritage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access to social infrastructure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Air quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Climate change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cumulative mining impacts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ecology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Groundwater	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lake Cowal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Land management	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Noise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rehabilitation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Property prices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small business	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Traffic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blast vibration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visual amenity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Any other potential impacts or benefits not listed above:

7. Do you have any other comments?

8. What is your suburb?

9. What is your postcode?

10. Which of the following age brackets do you fall into? (optional)

☐ 14 and under

☐ 45 - 54

☐ 15 - 24

☐ 55 - 64

☐ 25 - 34

☐ 65+

☐ 35 - 44

11. Which of the following do you identify as? (optional)

Please select all that apply to you.

☐ Male

☐ Torres Strait Islander

☐ Female

☐ I speak a language other than English at home

☐ Non-binary

☐ I have a disability and/or special need

☐ Aboriginal

12. Which of the following best describes you?

Please select all that apply to you

☐ Business owner

☐ Local resident

☐ Landholder

☐ Service provider

☐ CGO Employee/Contractor

☐ Other (please specify)

13. Would you like to provide further input on the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project?

☐ Yes (please contact the Project team via email: cgo_opc@emmconsulting.com.au or phone: 1800 161 205)

☐ No



Appendix B

Community survey results



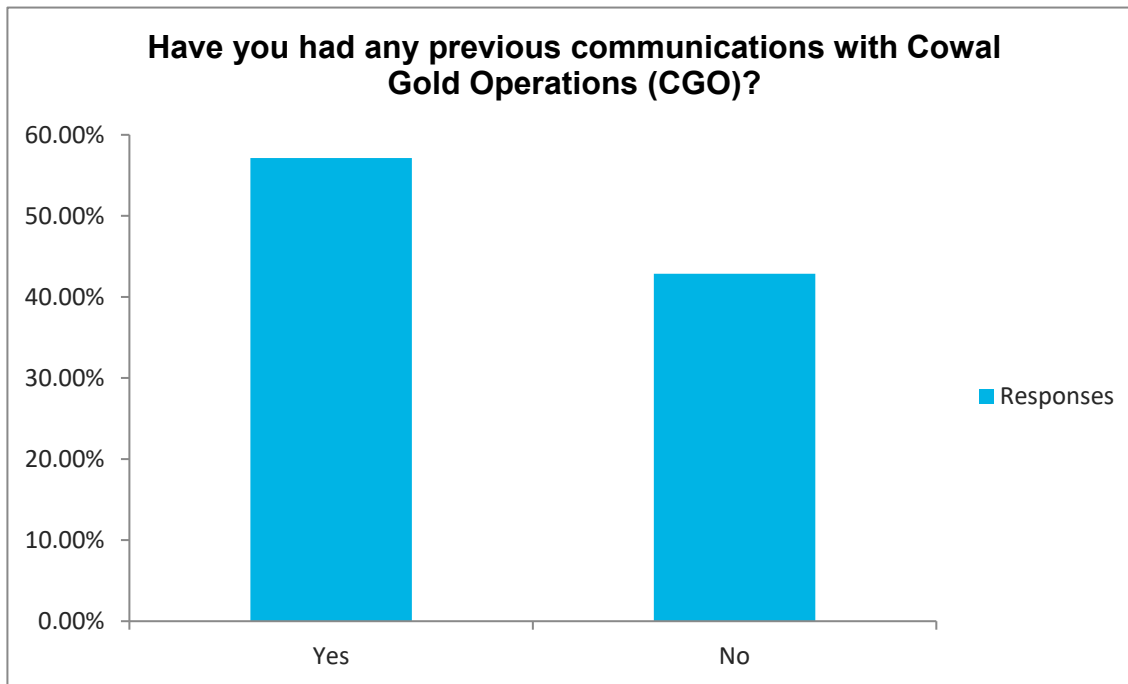
B.1 Community survey results

B.1.1 Question 1

How would you rate your awareness of the proposed Open Pit Continuation Project?

Answered 7

Skipped 0



B.1.2 Question 2

If yes, what was the topic of discussion?

Answered 4

Skipped 3

Respondent comments:

- “As an employee, I have constant comms”
- “Newsheets in local town”
- “Family day at the mine”
- “Stage H development, Underground development”

B.1.3 Question 3

How would you rate your awareness of the proposed Open Pit Continuation Project?

Answered 7
Skipped 0



B.1.4 Question 4

How would you rate your awareness of the proposed Open Pit Continuation Project?

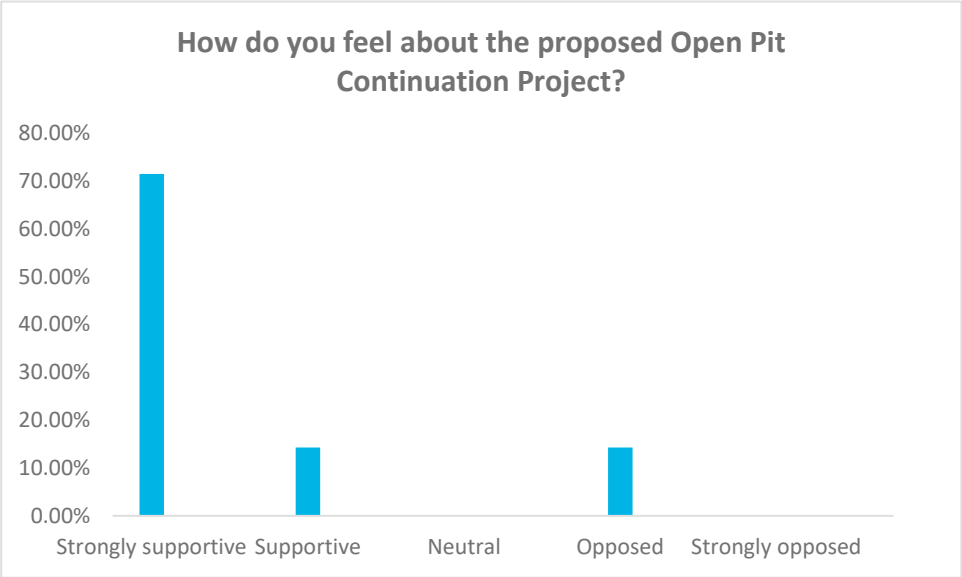
Answered 7
Skipped 0



B.1.5 Question 5

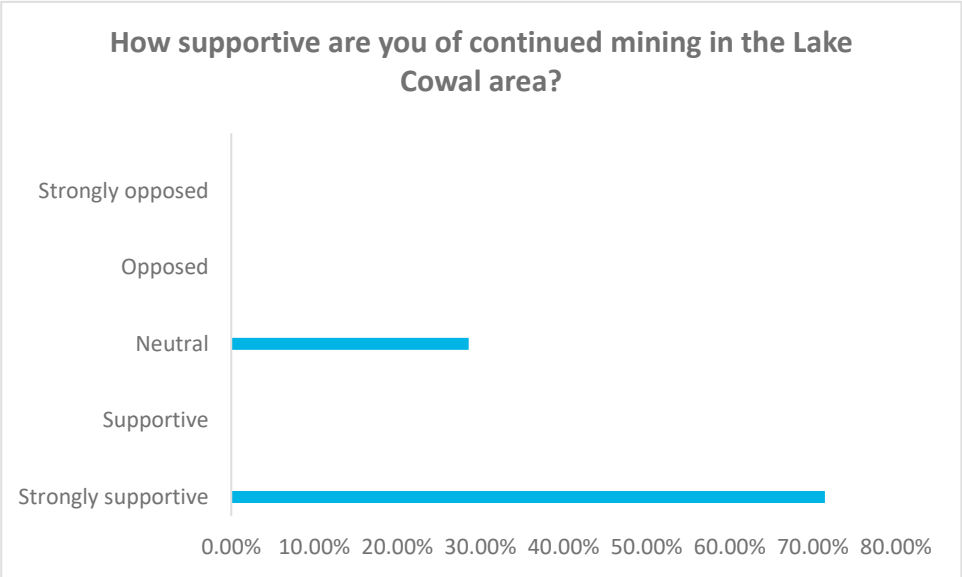
How do you feel about the proposed Open Pit Continuation Project?

Answered 7
Skipped 0



B.1.6 How supportive are you of continued mining in the Lake Cowal area?

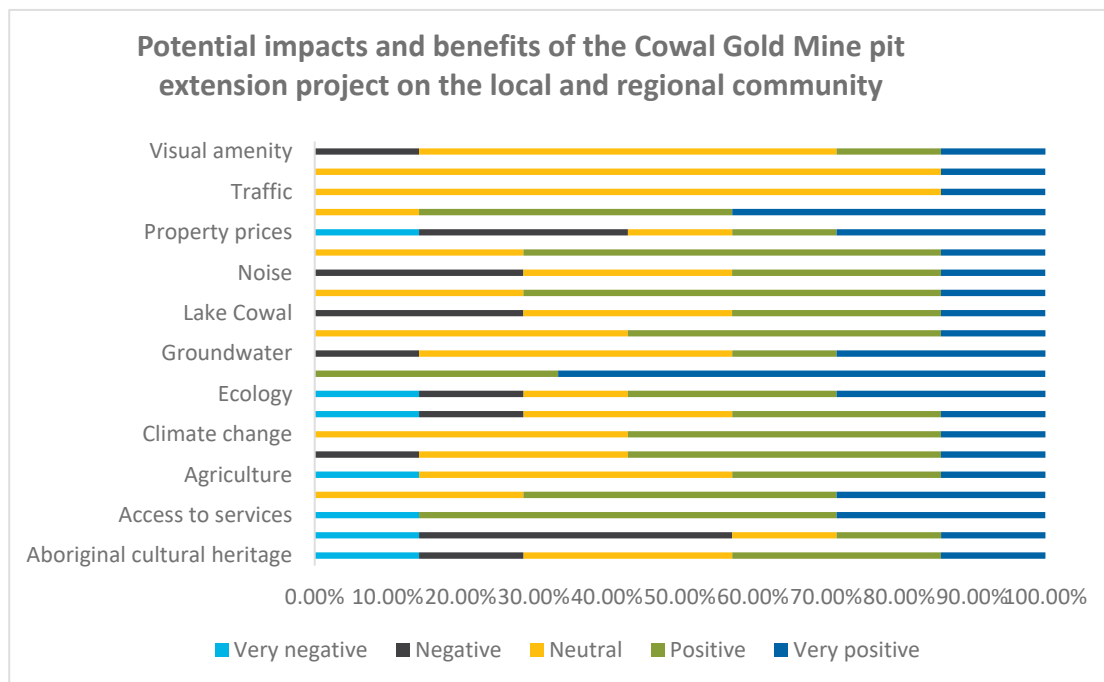
Answered 7
Skipped 0



B.1.7 Question 6

Below is a list of potential impacts and benefits that are commonly associated with large mining projects. Consider how the Open Pit Continuation Project may affect the local community and select the appropriate ranking for each potential impact and benefit using the buttons provided.

Answered 7
Skipped 0



B.1.8 Question 7

Do you have any other comments?

Answered 4
Skipped 3

Respondent comments:

- "None at this stage"
- "I think the mine has shown it can operate safely and environmentally responsibly in the environment. The benefit of longer term jobs and employment justify the incremental impact"
- "None"
- "No"

B.1.9 Question 8

What is your suburb?

Answered 7
Skipped 0

Respondent answers:

- West Wyalong
- West Wyalong
- West Wyalong
- Forbes
- West Wyalong
- West Wyalong
- West Wyalong

B.1.10 Question 8

What is your postcode?

Answered 7
Skipped 0

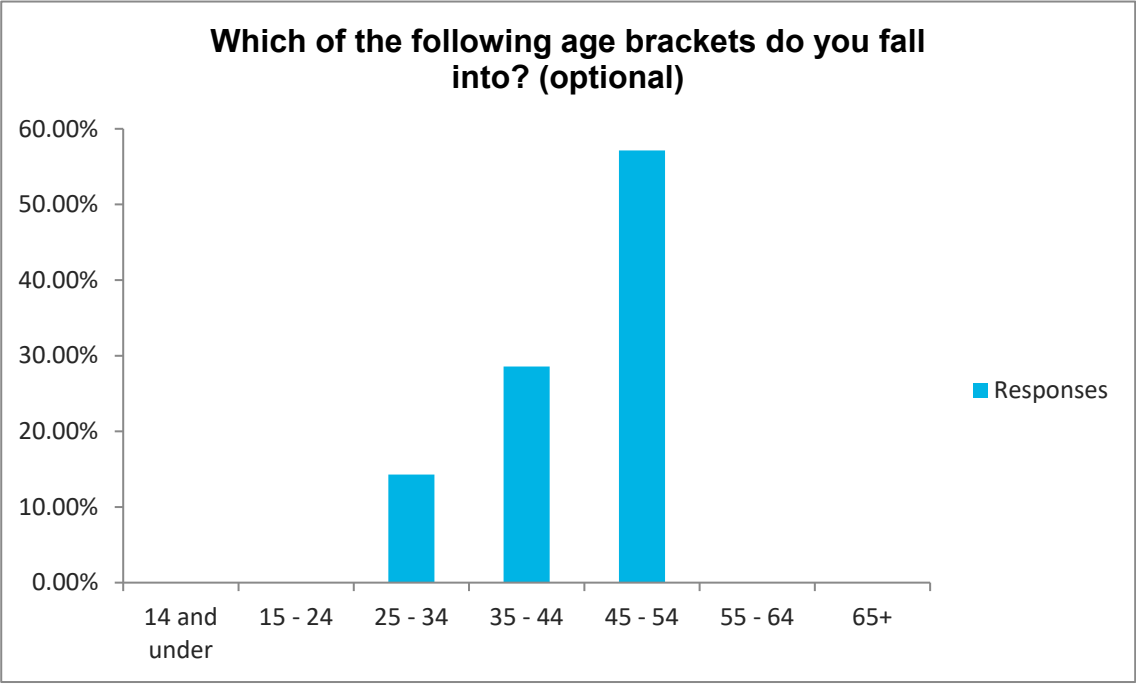
Respondent answers:

- 2671
- 2671
- 2671
- 2871
- 2671
- 2671
- 2671

B.1.11 Question 9

Which of the following age brackets do you fall into? (optional)

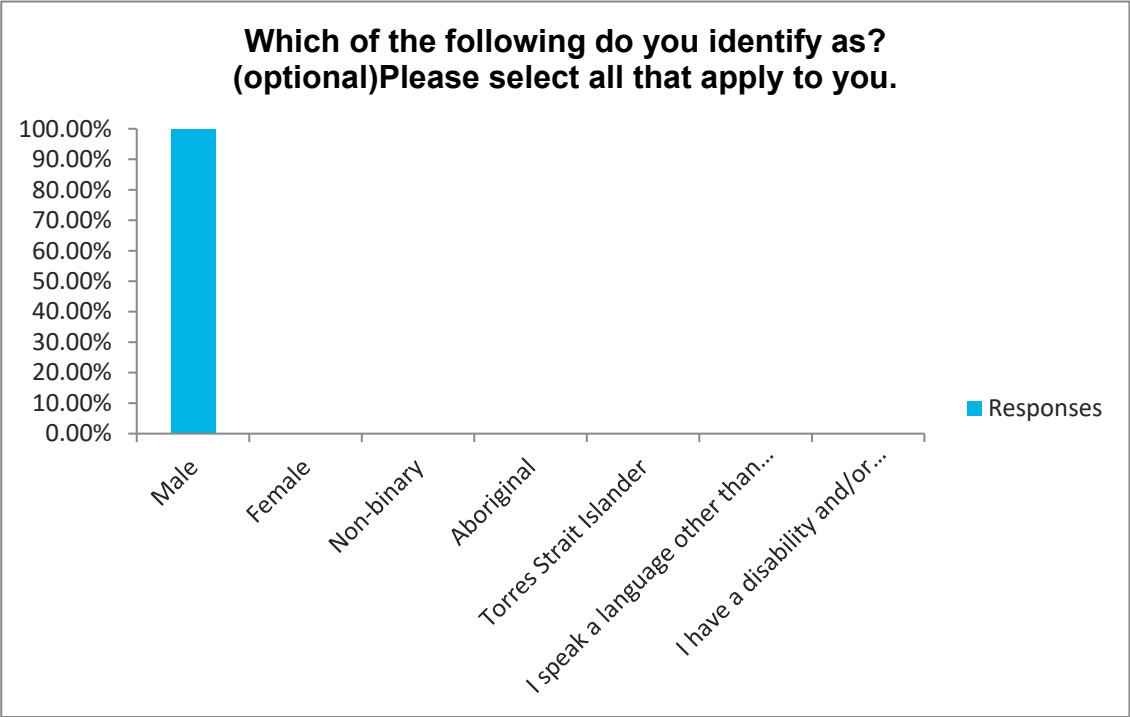
Answered 7
Skipped 0



B.1.12 Question 10

Which of the following do you identify as? (optional)Please select all that apply to you.

Answered 6
Skipped 1

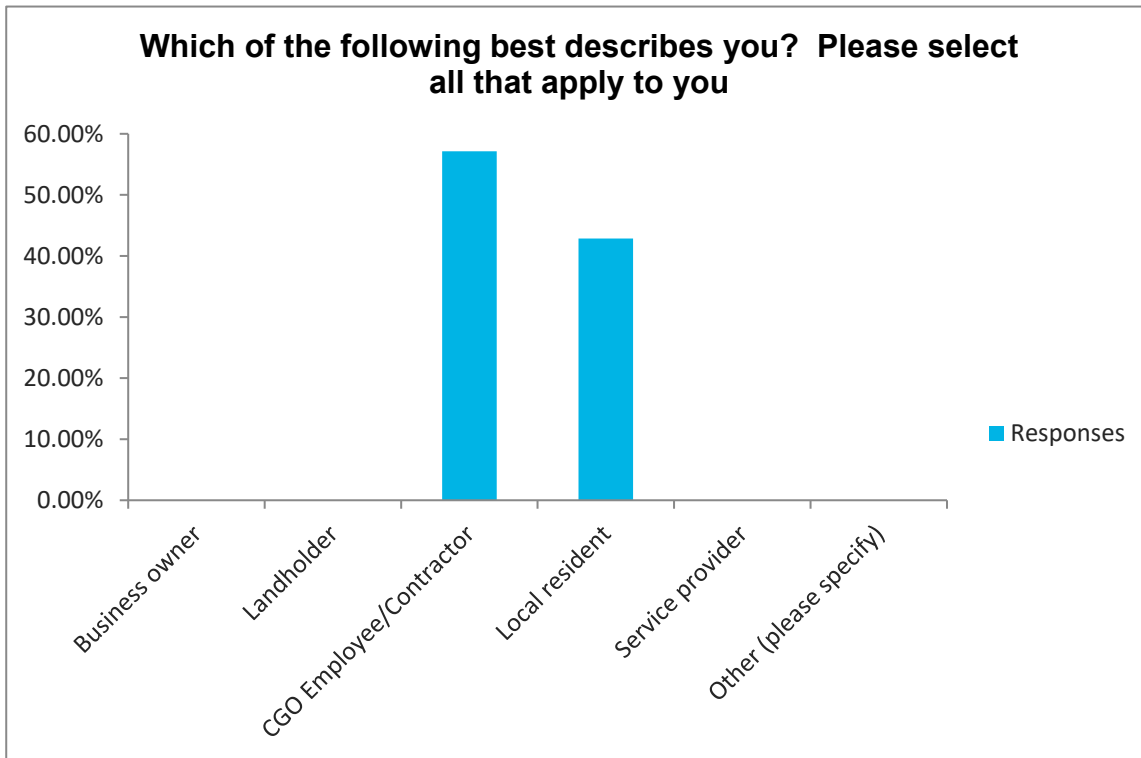


B.1.13 Question 11

Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply to you

Answered 7

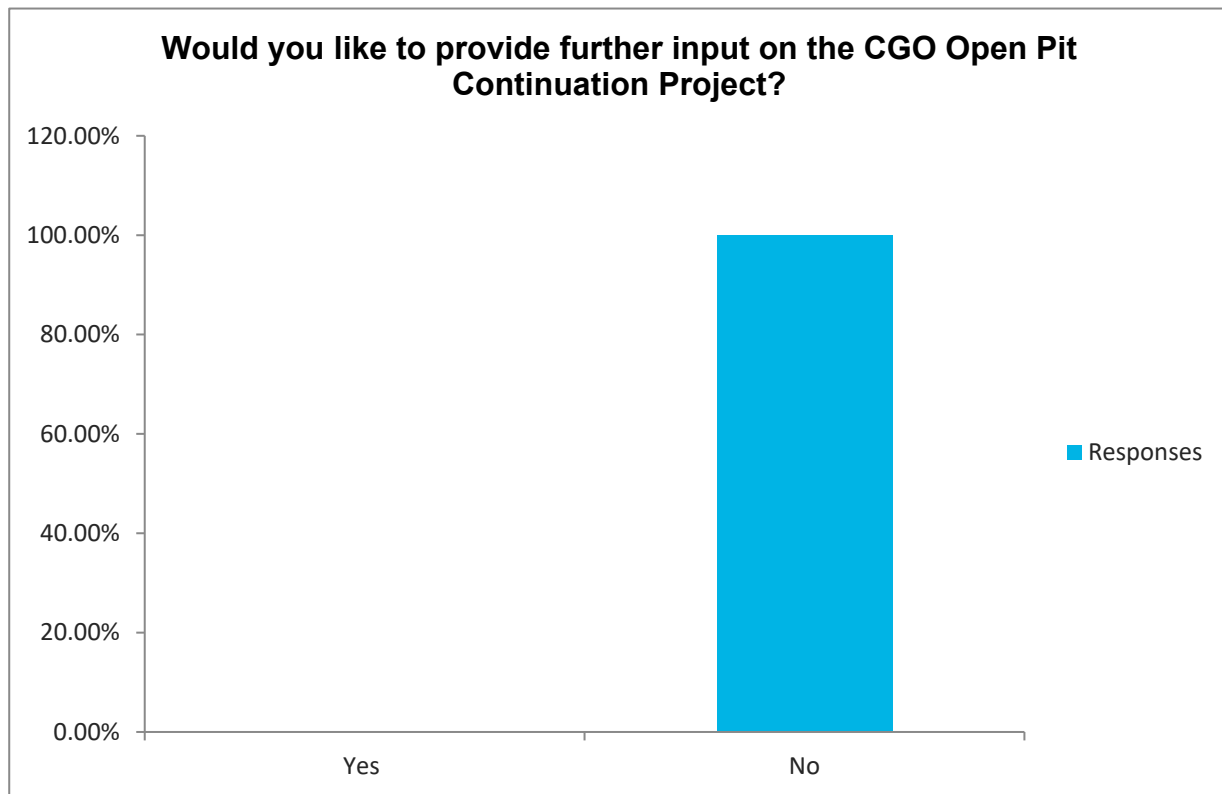
Skipped 0



B.1.14 Question 12

Would you like to provide further input on the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project?

Answered 7
Skipped 0







Appendix E

Social baseline study

E.1 Overview

A social baseline study is a key part of the SIA as outlined in the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) *Social impact assessment guideline 2021* (SIA Guideline). The baseline study describes the characteristics of the social environment within which the Project would operate and provides a benchmark against which direct, indirect and cumulative impacts can be predicted and analysed. Although all social indicators assessed in the social baseline study will not necessarily be impacted, it is imperative to obtain a thorough understanding of the social conditions and trends across the study area. Gaining a broad understanding of the study area allows us to differentiate between, and measure, a change that is likely to occur as a result of the project as opposed to what would have likely occurred without the project (IAIA 2015). Accordingly, this social baseline identifies the study area for the Cowal Gold Operations (CGO) Open Pit Expansion Project (the OPX Project) and defines existing known and predicted social conditions.

E.2 Study area

The Project is located within the Bland Local Government Area (LGA) on the periphery of Lake Cowal. Three Local Government Area's (LGA's) adjoin Lake Cowal; Bland LGA, Forbes LGA and Lachlan LGA. The area immediately surrounding the Project site is primarily used for agricultural purposes and supports very low population density. The closest surrounding townships are West Wyalong (44 km south-west from the township), Forbes (98 km north-east from west Wyalong) and Condobolin (85 km north-west of west Wyalong). Potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts associated with the Project could occur across all the surrounding LGA's. As the closest township to the Project, West Wyalong and Wyalong are likely to experience the most acute social impacts and benefits, however impacts may also be experienced in Forbes and Condobolin.

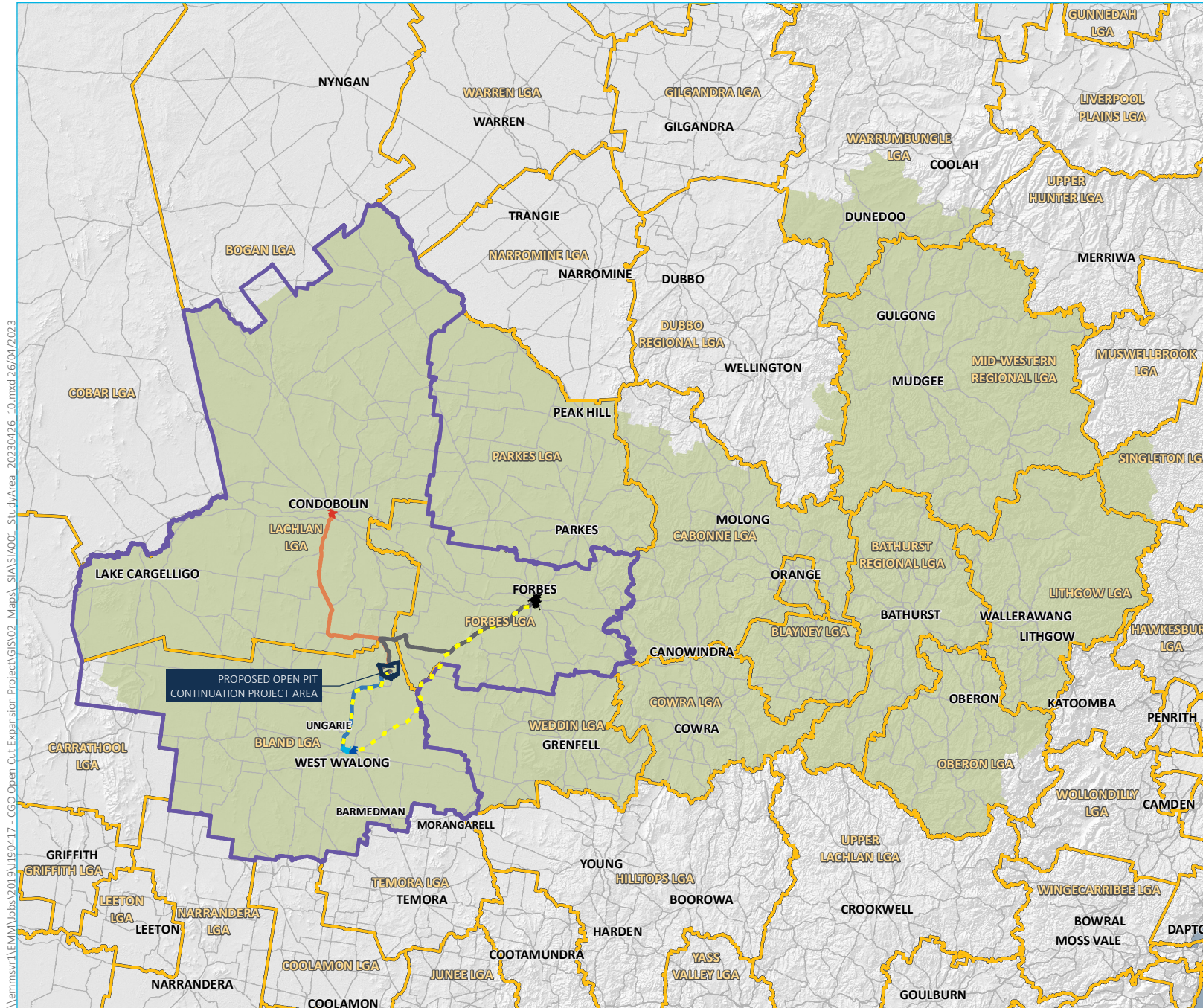
The SIA study area comprises of the following localities:

- local study area: Bland LGA, Forbes LGA and Lachlan LGA;
- key townships: West Wyalong/ Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin; and
- area of reference: NSW Central West Region.

To facilitate the collection and presentation of data, potentially affected communities have been mapped to respective ABS statistical geographic areas (Table E.1). The SIA local study area, key townships and regional study area are illustrated in Figure E.1.

Table E.1 **Study area**

Study area	Geographic area	ABS data category	Referred to in report as:
Local study area	Bland Shire Council area	Bland LGA	Local area
	Forbes Council area	Forbes LGA	
	Lachlan Council area	Lachlan LGA	
Key townships	West Wyalong	West Wyalong UCL	Key townships
		Wyalong UCL	
	Forbes	Forbes UCL	
	Condobolin	Condobolin UCL	
Regional study area	Central West region	Central West Statistical Area 4 (SA4)	Regional area
State of New South Wales	State of New South Wales	New South Wales STE	NSW



- KEY**
- Project area
 - Local government area
 - Major road
 - Key townships**
 - Condobolin
 - Forbes
 - West Wyalong
 - Wyalong
 - Mine access transport routes**
 - West Wyalong
 - Condobolin
 - Forbes
 - Forbes (sealed network)
 - SIA study area**
 - Local area
 - Regional area

SIA study area

Evolution Mining
Cowal Gold Operations
Open Pit Continuation Project
Social Impact Assessment
Figure 1.3

E.3 Demographic profile

According to the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, the local area has a combined total population of 20,960, which includes a population of 5,547 in Bland LGA, 9,319 in Forbes LGA, and 6,194 in Lachlan LGA (ABS 2021). The key townships had a population of 12,605, with 3,189 people in West Wyalong, 6,837 in Forbes and 2,579 in Condobolin. The regional area had a 2021 population of 212,962.

Analysis of ABS data for population trends shows that the population of the local area and key urban townships experienced an overall decline in population growth between 2011–2021 (-2.6% and -1.1% respectively), in comparison to the regional area (8.2%) and NSW (16.7%) for the same period.

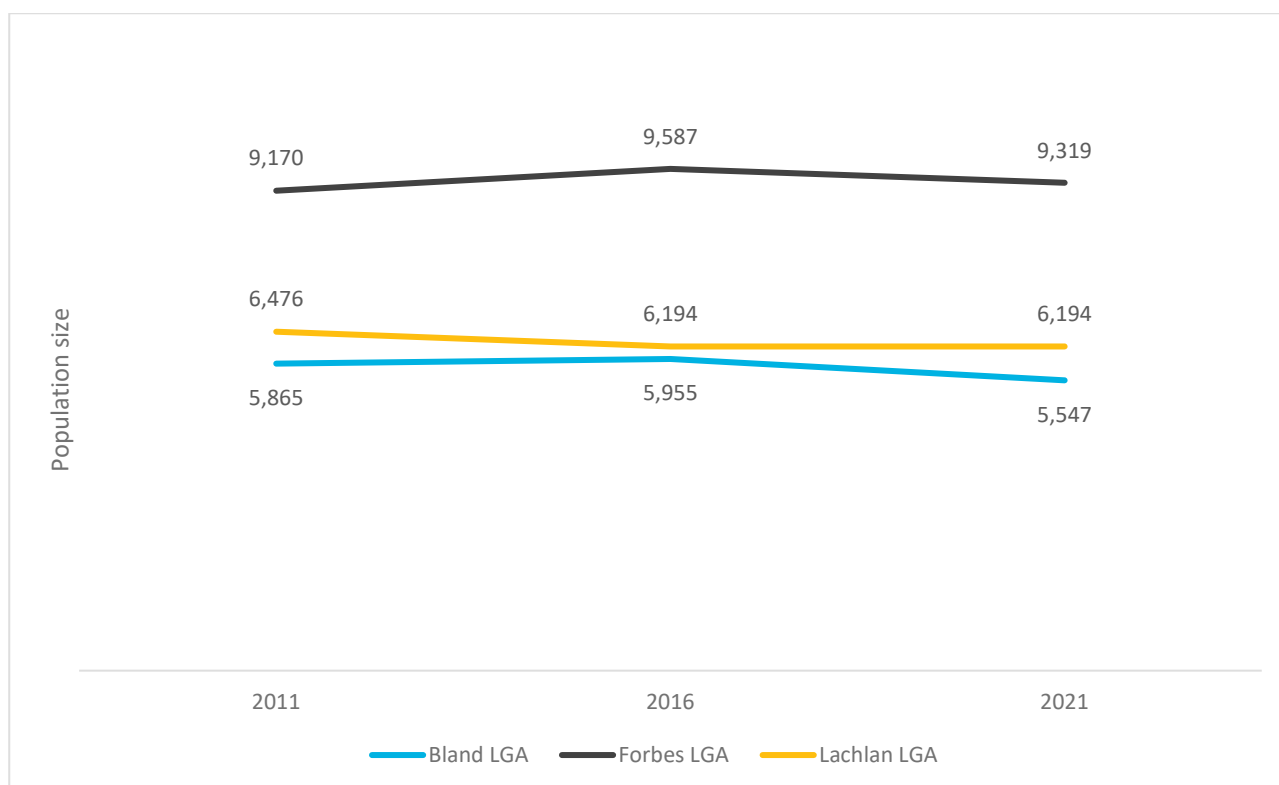
However, there is a notable variation between the growth rates of the local area between the 2011–2021 time period. While the population of Bland LGA (-5.4%) and Lachlan LGA (-4.4%) shows a steady decline in population from 2011–2021, Forbes LGA experienced a positive growth during this same timeframe (1.6%).

Likewise, the notable variation within the key townships shows only one of the three townships experienced an overall decline in population growth from 2011–2021. The population of Condobolin shows a decline in population of -6.4% from 2011–2021 while West Wyalong (0.2%) and Forbes (0.5%) show a slight increase in population. Population trends within the study area are presented in Table E.2, Figure E.2 and Figure E.4.

Table E.2 Population trends, 2011–2021

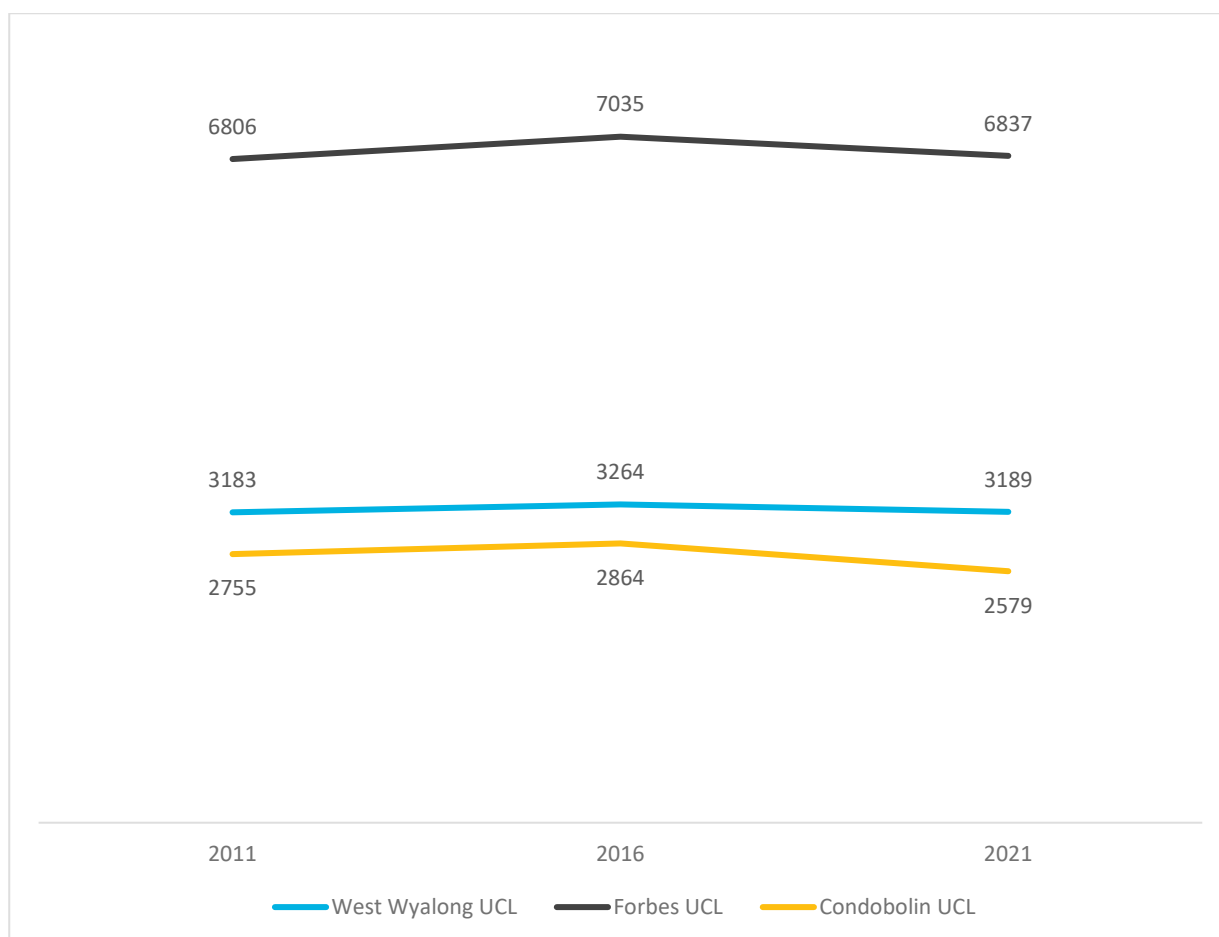
Location	2011	2016	2021	Total % change 2011–2016	Total % change 2016–2021	Total % change 2011–2021
Bland LGA	5,865	5,955	5,547	1.5%	-6.9%	-5.4%
Forbes LGA	9,170	9,587	9,319	4.5%	-2.8%	1.6%
Lachlan LGA	6,476	6,194	6,194	-4.4%	0.0%	-4.4%
Local area	21,511	21,736	20,960	1.0%	-3.6%	-2.6%
West Wyalong UCL	3,183	3,264	3,189	2.5%	-2.3%	0.2%
Forbes UCL	6,806	7,035	6,837	3.4%	-2.8%	0.5%
Condobolin UCL	2,755	2,864	2,579	4.0%	-10.0%	-6.4%
Key townships	12,744	13,163	12,605	3.3%	-4.2%	-1.1%
Regional area	196,742	206,155	212,962	4.8%	3.3%	8.2%
NSW	6,917,658	7,480,228	8,072,163	8.1%	7.9%	16.7%

Source: ABS 2011; ABS 2016; ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles.



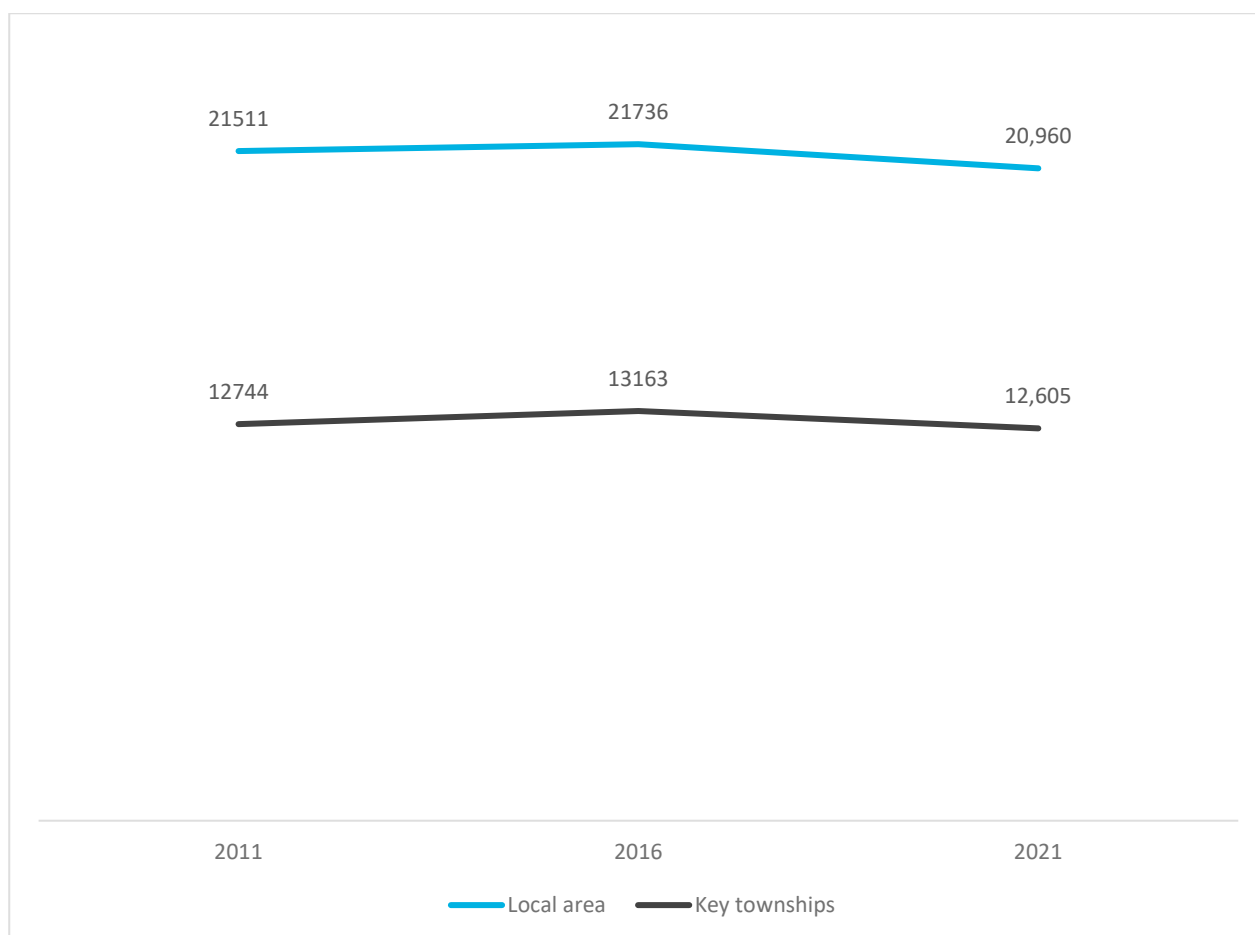
Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Figure E.2 Population trends in the local area, 2011 – 2021



Source: Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Figure E.3 Population trends in the key townships, 2011–2021



Source: Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Figure E.4 Population trends across the study area, 2011 – 2021

Population projections published by DPE (2021) for the period 2021–2041 at the LGA level and therefore is not available for the key townships. Population projections suggest that the local area is estimated to increase by 1,949 people from 22,067 people in 2021 to 24,016 people in 2041, representing a total change of 8.8% and an average annual growth rate of 0.4% (DPE 2021).

Within the local area, the most significant population decrease is projected to occur within Lachlan LGA (-21.1%), while the population of Forbes LGA is projected to increase by 32.0%. Bland LGA is projected to slightly increase by 0.2%. By comparison, for the population of NSW is projected to increase by 20.9% by 2041.

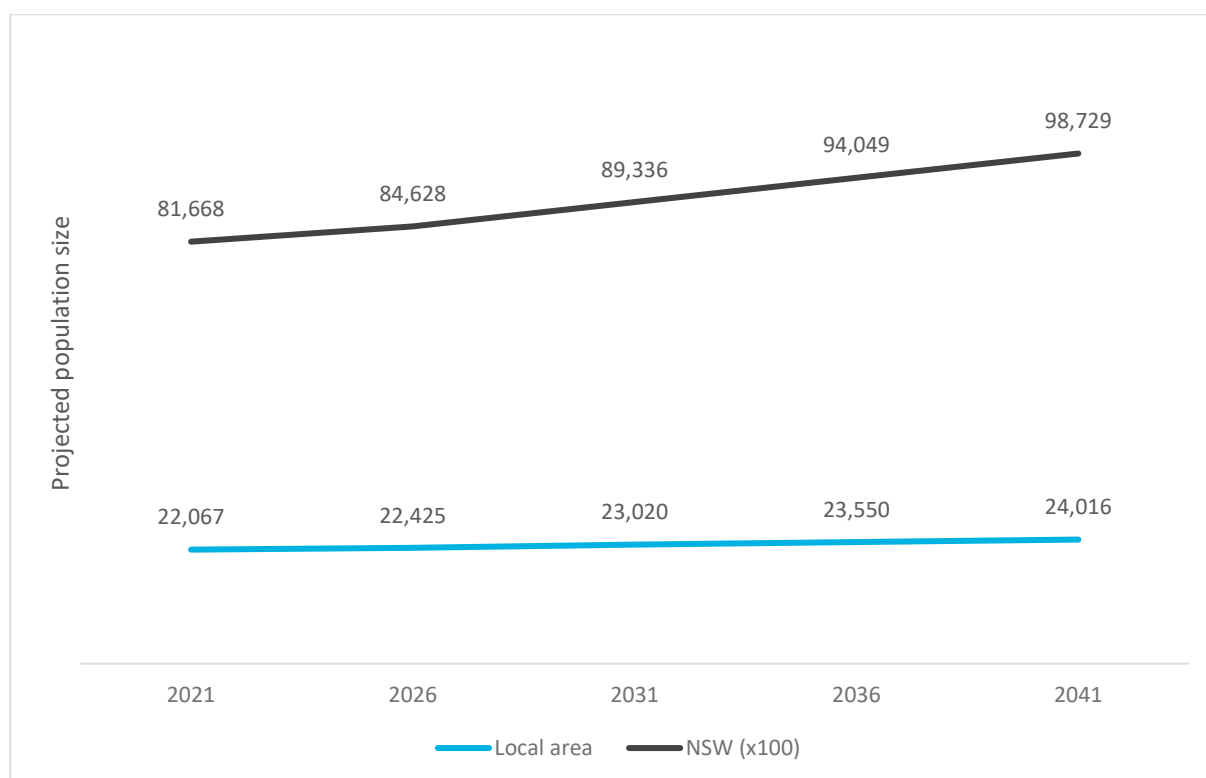
Such projections indicate a trend of rural to urban migration, particularly from smaller and potentially more remote areas. Migration could be influenced by people seeking education or work opportunities which are not readily available in regional communities along with access to community, social and health services (AIHW 2005; Hugo, & Harris 2011; D'Alessandro & Bassu 2015). Population projections for the study area are presented in Table E.3 and Figure E.5.

Table E.3 **Projected population, 2021 – 2041**

Area	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041	Total change 2021–2041	Total % change 2021–2041	Average annual growth rate 2021–2041
Bland LGA	6,003	6,022	6,046	6,046	6,016	13	0.2%	0.0%
Forbes LGA	10,023	10,612	11,483	12,356	13,231	3,208	32.0%	1.3%
Lachlan LGA	6,041	5,791	5,491	5,148	4,769	-1,272	-21.1%	-0.8%
Local area	22,067	22,425	23,020	23,550	24,016	1,949	8.8%	0.4%
NSW	8,166,757	8,462,770	8,933,640	9,404,886	9,872,934	1,706,177	20.9%	0.8%

Source: DPIE 2021, NSW 2021 Population Projections: ASGS 2021 LGA projections

Notes: 1. Population projection data was not available at the SSC and UCL level.
2. The projected population has been determined by using the ABS ERP population count which takes Census counts of people where they usually live (accounting for interstate visitors and removing overseas visitors), adjusts for Census undercount and overcount using the Census Post Enumeration Survey (PES), adds in Australians who are temporarily overseas, and applies further demographic adjustments.



Source: DPIE 2021, NSW 2021 Population Projections: ASGS 2021 LGA projections

Figure E.5 **Projected population, 2021–2041**

E.3.1 Population by age and sex

In the local area, the most populous age cohorts are children 5–14 (14.0% of the total population), and persons aged 55–64 years (13.5%) and 65–74 years (12.0%). In the key townships, the most populous age cohorts are children 5–14 (13.2%), and persons aged 55–64 years (12.7%) and 25–34 years (12.0%).

The local area also recorded a higher proportion of persons aged 14 years and younger (20.2%) compared to the key townships (19.3%), regional area (19.4%) and NSW (18.2%). The key townships had a higher proportion of persons aged 65 years and older (23.9%) compared to the local area (22.6%), regional area (21.0%) and NSW (17.6%).

There was a slightly smaller proportion of persons aged of 20–44 in the local area (26.8%) compared to key townships (28.2%) and the regional area (28.2%) and NSW (34.0%). This suggests a significantly older population in the local area compared to NSW, with 47.6% of the local area, 47.1% in key townships and 46.4% in the regional area with a population aged 45 years or older.

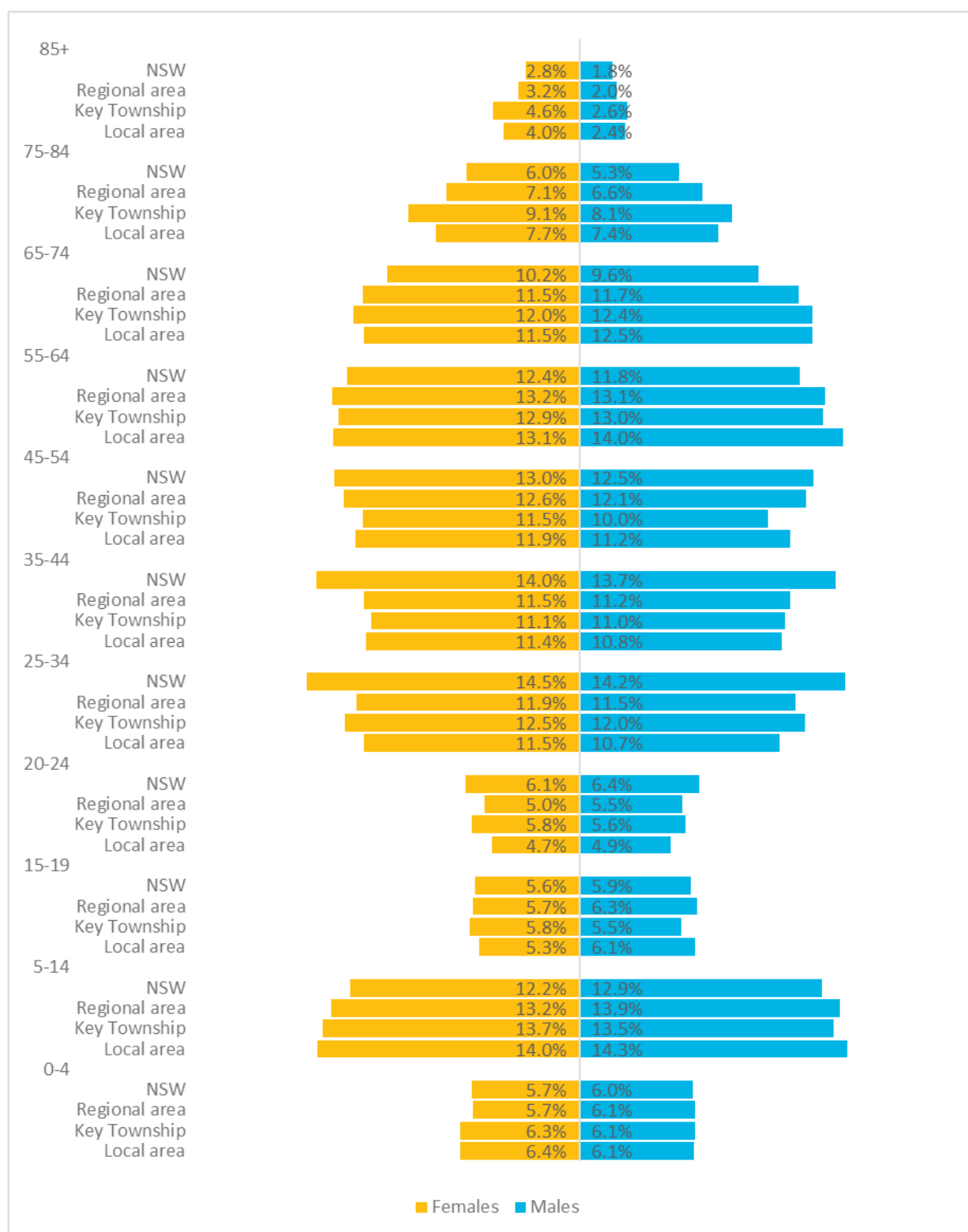
Median ages across the local area reflect an older population, with 43 years in Bland LGA, 42 years in Forbes LGA, and 41 years in Lachlan LGA, which compares to 38 years in NSW. Across the key townships the median ages include 44 years in West Wyalong, 42 years in Forbes and 39 years in Condobolin.

The distribution of males and females in the local area is 49.8% male and 50.2% female (ABS 2020). Regarding the distribution of males and females across age cohorts, males aged 5–14 years accounted for the highest proportion at 14.3%, followed by females aged 5–14 years (14.0%), and males aged 25–34 years (14.2%). A smaller proportion of the local area population were aged 20–44 years for both males and females. A relatively high proportion of persons aged 45 years and older aligns with the demographic characteristics of persons working within the agriculture industry (as this is the dominant industry in the local area – see Section E.6 and E.8), which has an older median age than that of the general Australian workforce (Binks et al 2018). The age group distribution and median age for the study area is presented in Table E.4. The distribution of the population by age and sex is presented in Figure E.6.

Table E.4 Age group distribution and median age, 2021

	0–4 years	5–14 years	15–19 years	20–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55–64 years	65–74 years	75–84 years	85 years and older	Median age of persons 2016
Bland LGA	6.4%	13.2%	5.2%	4.5%	10.6%	11.3%	11.6%	14.2%	12.2%	7.4%	3.3%	43
Forbes LGA	5.9%	14.0%	5.8%	5.1%	10.7%	10.7%	11.4%	13.1%	12.0%	8.0%	3.0%	42
Lachlan LGA	6.5%	14.8%	5.2%	4.3%	11.7%	11.2%	11.5%	13.4%	11.4%	6.8%	3.4%	41
Local area	6.2%	14.0%	5.5%	4.8%	11.0%	11.1%	11.5%	13.5%	12.0%	7.5%	3.1%	-
West Wyalong UCL	6.4%	11.8%	5.6%	4.9%	12.0%	11.2%	9.8%	12.9%	12.2%	8.8%	4.5%	44
Forbes UCL	5.6%	13.6%	5.7%	6.0%	11.3%	10.7%	10.9%	12.3%	12.4%	8.6%	2.9%	42
Condobolin UCL	6.9%	14.2%	5.2%	4.9%	13.3%	10.2%	10.1%	13.5%	10.5%	7.5%	4.0%	39
Key townships	6.1%	13.2%	5.5%	5.5%	12.0%	10.7%	10.5%	12.7%	11.9%	8.4%	3.5%	-
Regional area	5.9%	13.5%	6.0%	5.2%	11.7%	11.3%	12.3%	13.1%	11.6%	6.8%	2.6%	-
NSW	5.8%	12.4%	5.7%	6.1%	14.1%	13.7%	12.6%	11.9%	9.8%	5.6%	2.3%	39

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles



Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Figure E.6 Population distribution, 2021

E.3.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

At the time of the 2021 Census, 13.0% of the total population of the local area identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, with the highest proportion recorded in Lachlan LGA (18.3%). In the key townships 15.1% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, with a particularly high rate recorded in Condobolin (23.9%). Across all study areas the proportion of the population who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander was substantially higher than that of NSW (3.4%), as presented in Table E.5.

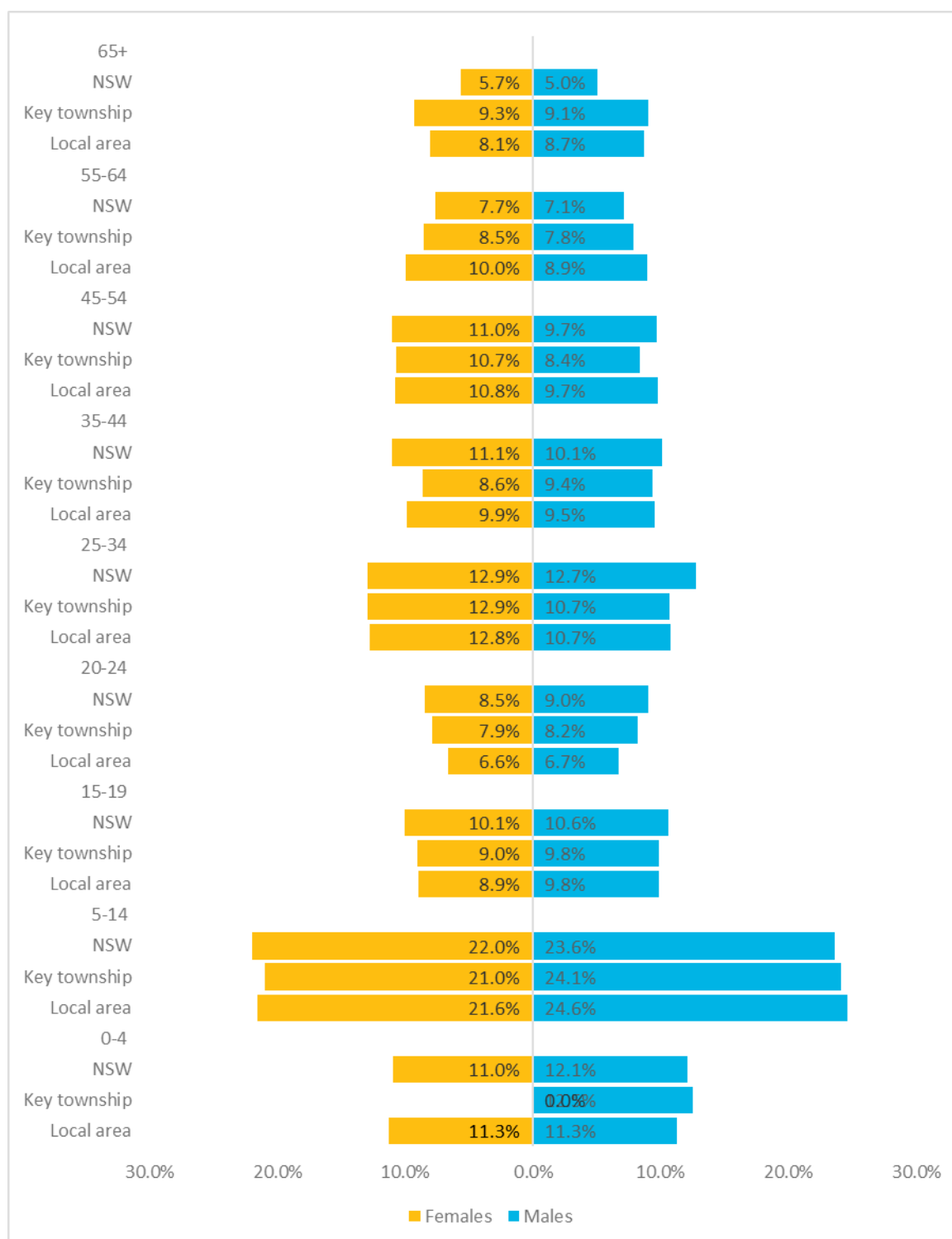
Table E.5 **Indigenous persons as percentage of population, 2021**

Location	Indigenous population
Bland LGA	6.6%
Forbes LGA	13.3%
Lachlan LGA	18.3%
Local area	13.0%
West Wyalong UCL	7.8%
Forbes UCL	15.2%
Condobolin UCL	23.9%
Key townships	15.1%
Regional area	8.1%
NSW	3.4%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Overall, there is a higher proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander females (51.7% and 52.7%) compared to males (48.1% and 47.7%) in the local area and key townships respectively.

The largest age cohort in the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community of the local area was children (aged 5–14 years). Compared to the total population of the local area, there is a much smaller proportion of persons aged 65 years and older who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This aligns with the lower life expectancy among Indigenous Australian's nationally and particularly acute in Indigenous males (AIHW 2019). Much of this gap is explained by the relationships between increased socio-economic disadvantage, worsened mental health outcomes, and related health risk behaviours (AHMAC 2017). The distribution of persons who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander within the study area is presented in Figure E.7.



Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Figure E.7 Population distribution of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons, 2021

E.3.3 Socio-economic advantage and disadvantage

An indication of relative disadvantage or advantage of populations is provided by the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) produced by the ABS. Scores are derived using a range of socio-economic indicators including income, education, employment and housing. SEIFA scores are developed across four summary measures:

- the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD);
- the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD);
- the Index of Economic Resources (IER); and
- the Index of Education and Occupation (IEO).

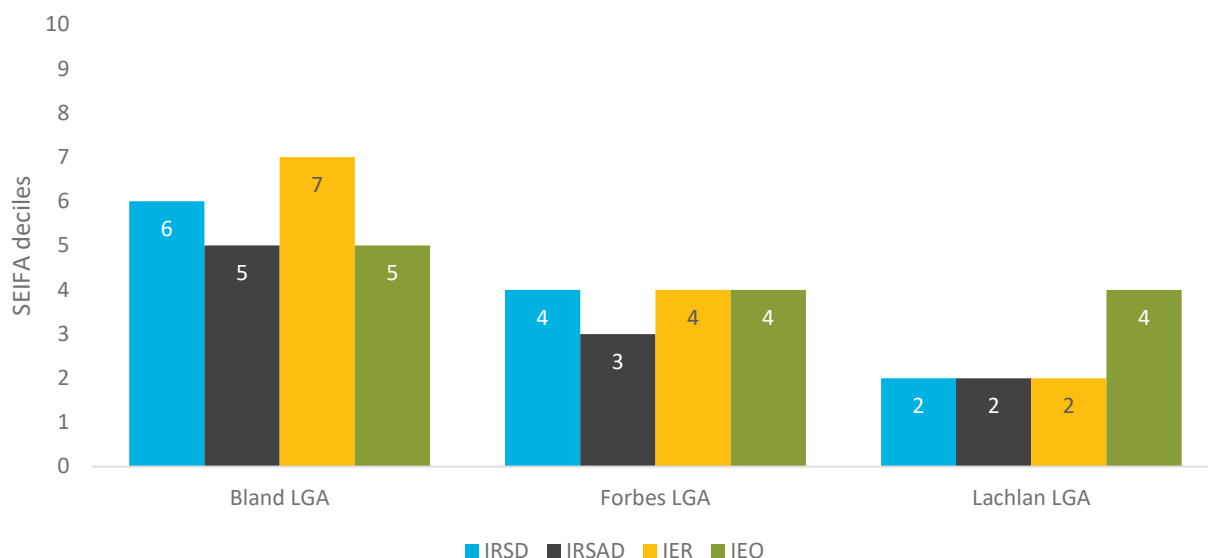
The rankings of the communities within the study area for each of the Index's are outlined in Figure E.7.

At the time of preparing the baseline, the third release of the 2021 Census (which includes the SEIFA indicators) had not yet occurred therefore SEIFA data will be drawn from the 2016 Census.

According to the 2016 SEIFA, there is substantial variation in terms of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage between communities within the local area. Bland LGA is in the 7th or lower decile for all indexes, with Forbes LGA and Lachlan LGA in the 4th or lower decile for all indexes. Within the local area, Lachlan LGA exhibits the highest levels of disadvantage and the lowest level of advantage with a decile ranking of 2 for the IRSD, IRSAD, and IER. This reflects a greater proportion of low-income households as well as a smaller proportion of high-income households (see Section E.6), and a greater proportion of persons in low-skilled occupations such as technicians and trades workers (see Section E.6). The higher levels of disadvantage and lower levels of advantage in Lachlan LGA may also reflect the higher proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population (see Section E.3).

Within Bland LGA, the SEIFA scores indicate that this area experiences a median level of relative socio-economic disadvantage and advantage, with rankings of 5–7 across each of the SEIFA indexes. This could indicate that these areas likely have a medium amount of people with higher education qualifications and working in skilled occupations, and a more equal amount of people with high and low incomes. However, a ranking of 7 for the IER in the Bland indicates that there is relatively greater access to economic resources in the overall area, which could indicate more households earning higher incomes and owning their own homes compared to other LGAs within NSW. Within Forbes LGA, the SEIFA decile rankings from 3–4 across each of the indexes indicates a slightly higher level of disadvantage and lower level of advantage compared to other LGAs across NSW.

This combination of high and low disadvantage suggests there will be a distribution of households paying low rent in the area, as well as paying higher rent or owning property. Throughout the study area the IEO index falls in the decile ranking of 4–5, which can be attributed to a lower level of highly skilled occupations and educational or formal qualification attainment which is below the NSW average (see Section E.5). The rankings of the communities within the study area for each of the four summary measures are demonstrated in Figure E.8.



Source: ABS 2016, 2033.0.55.001 – Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)

Figure E.8 SEIFA deciles in the study area, 2016

E.3.4 Cultural diversity

Compared to NSW averages, the local area and regional area have a lower level of cultural diversity compared to NSW. In 2021, 84.7% of the local area population was Australian born. Australian-born persons also constitute a much higher proportion of the population in the key townships (94.1%) and regional area (84.2%) compared to NSW (65.4%). The local area, key townships and regional area also have a much higher proportion of intergenerational Australians, accounting for 78.9% of people in the local area, 78.0% of people in the key townships, and 73.4% of people in the regional area with both parents born in Australia, compared to 43.7% across NSW (ABS 2021). Accordingly, a relatively small proportion of households in the local area (2.5%), key townships (3.2%) and regional area (4.2%) speak a non-English language at home compared to 22.4% in NSW.

The low proportion of migrants in the local area, key townships and regional area is representative of the trend of migrants within Australia to settle in major cities rather than regional areas. This could be driven by a greater availability of support services for newly arrived migrants, job opportunities, education opportunities, well-established transportation and service infrastructure, and long-term multicultural histories of major cities (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2019). Cultural diversity in the study area is presented in Table E.6.

Table E.6 Country of birth, 2021

	Born in Australia	Both parents born in Australia	English only spoken at home	Households where a non-English language is spoken
Bland LGA	84.3%	78.1%	88.3%	2.4%
Forbes LGA	86.6%	80.4%	89.7%	2.0%
Lachlan LGA	82.3%	77.5%	84.5%	3.4%
Local area	84.7%	78.9%	87.8%	2.5%
West Wyalong UCL	84.6%	77.8%	88.3%	3.5%

Table E.6 Country of birth, 2021

	Born in Australia	Both parents born in Australia	English only spoken at home	Households where a non-English language is spoken
Forbes UCL	85.6%	79.5%	88.8%	2.3%
Condobolin UCL	79.7%	74.1%	81.5%	5.4%
Key townships	94.1%	78.0%	87.2%	3.2%
Regional area	84.2%	73.4%	88.1%	4.2%
NSW	65.4%	43.7%	67.6%	22.4%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

E.3.5 Vulnerable groups

i Disability

In the local area, 5.8% of the of people have a need for assistance in one or more of the three core activities of self-care, mobility and communication due to a long-term health condition (lasting 6 months or longer), a disability (lasting 6 months or longer), or old age. This compares to a rate of 6.0% in the key townships, 6.4% across the regional area and 5.8% in NSW. Ready access to services may be a factor influencing rates of need for assistance. Baxter, Hayes and Gray (2011) of the Australian Institute of Family Studies found that people living in major cities are less likely to have problems accessing services such as doctors and disability services, while those in outer regional or remote areas have the most trouble accessing these services. Rates of core activity need for assistance in the study area are provided in Table E.7.

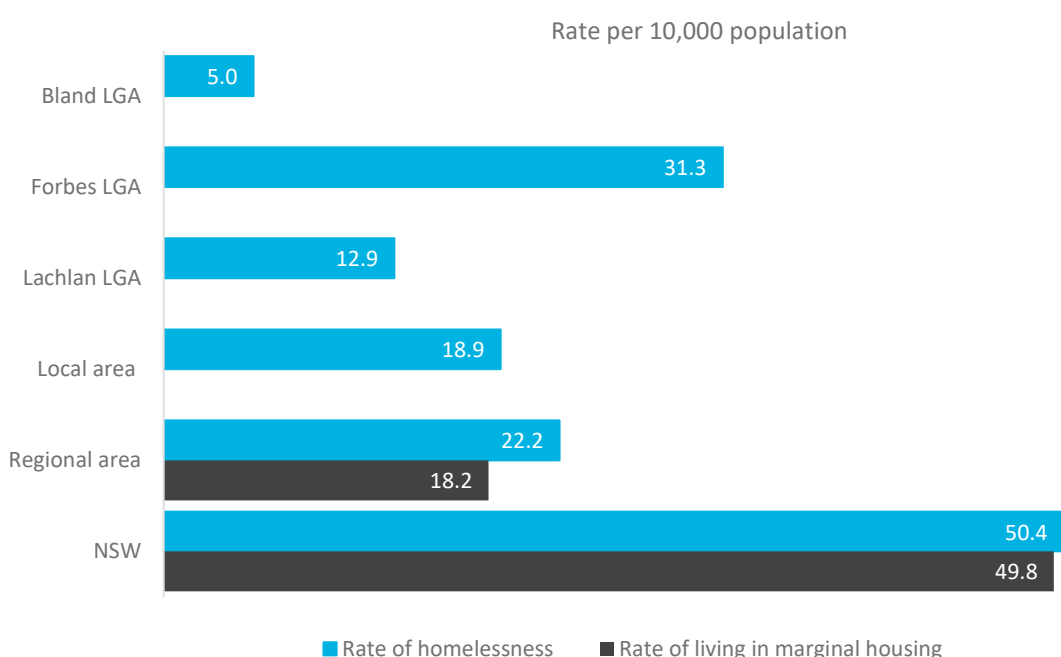
Table E.7 Core activity need for assistance, 2021

	Has need for assistance	Does not have need for assistance
Bland LGA	5.3%	85.6%
Forbes LGA	6.1%	85.7%
Lachlan LGA	5.9%	82.1%
Local area	5.8%	84.6%
West Wyalong UCL	5.4%	86.6%
Forbes UCL	5.9%	85.2%
Condobolin UCL	7.2%	80.2%
Key townships	6.0%	84.5%
Regional area	6.4%	86.0%
NSW	5.8%	88.3%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Homelessness can be caused by a variety of factors including poor physical or mental health which reduces a persons' ability to earn an adequate income to support themselves (AHRC 2021). Homelessness can also lead to health problems including poor nutrition, depression, substance abuse, poor dental health, and mental health conditions (AHRC 2021). For homeless persons, hardships with finances, transport, identification, Medicare, and difficulty with appointment maintenance/treatment plans make accessing health care services more difficult than the average person (AHRC 2021). As such, homeless persons are at greater risk of being negatively affected by potential impacts on livelihoods, cost of living and health and wellbeing.

According to the 2016 Census, rates of homelessness in the local area are lower than NSW rates, with a rate of 18.9 persons per 10,000 across the local area compared to the NSW average of 50.4 persons per 10,000. Within the local area, the highest rate of homelessness is within Forbes LGA with 31.3 persons per 10,000. This may reflect greater availability of social services, including homelessness services, within Forbes LGA compared to Bland LGA and Lachlan LGA. Rates of homelessness in the study area are presented in Figure E.9.



Source: ABS 2016, 2049.0 – Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness

Figure E.9 Rates of homelessness per 10,000 persons, 2016

E.4 Culture, values, and aspirations

The Bland Community Strategic Plan 2017 describes the vision for Bland LGA as a strong, healthy, connected and inclusive community, where job opportunities and health and support services support a growing population. (Bland Shire Council 2017).

Forbes Shire Council describes Forbes LGA as “a safe, connected and welcoming community” and “aspires to create job opportunities, improve infrastructure and support a diverse and thriving economy” (Forbes Shire Council 2018, p.5). Key planning priorities for Forbes Shire Council include managing future growth, maintaining a diverse economy, embracing new technology, adapting to changing community needs whilst conserving heritage, local character, and the environment (Forbes Shire Council 2022).

Lachlan Shire Council's vision for the future is to be "a progressive, vibrant and prosperous community where families come to stay and enjoy a relaxed, healthy way of life and community spirit" (Lachlan Shire Council 2022). Council recognises the need to encourage and stimulate economic growth and prosperity in the Shire; establish a safe, caring, and clean community environment; and create a dynamic area sustaining its agricultural and natural heritage.

E.4.1 Indigenous history

Information about the socio-cultural structure of Aboriginal society prior to European contact largely comes from ethno-historic accounts made by Europeans. These accounts and observations were made after massive social disruption due to disease and displacement. As a result, this information is often contentious, particularly in relation to language area boundaries.

The Project area falls within the Aboriginal language group boundary of the Wiradjuri. Norman Tindale (1974) recorded the Wiradjuri country as stretching from the Wongaibon country in the west, and Wailwan country in the north, which he recorded as stretching between Gilgandra, Nyngan, Brewarrina and down to Coonabarabran. Later Horton (1994) recorded Wiradjuri country as extending to the Gilgandra, Nyngan and Bogan River areas.

Wiradjuri means "people of the three rivers" – these being the Lachlan, Macquarie and Murrumbidgee rivers (Bland Shire Council 2021). The Wiradjuri were the largest language group in NSW, however it is now comprised of smaller language groups with different dialects. The Wiradjuri people were a hunter-gatherer society comprising small clans and close family groups whose movements followed seasonal food gathering and ritual patterns (Forbes Shire Council 2021).

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons throughout Australia have experienced trauma due to the violence and loss of culture associated with colonisation, and subsequent settler policies including the forced removal of children, known as the Stolen Generations (Australians Together 2020). This trauma can be passed down from the first generation of survivors to future generations in the process of intergenerational trauma. According to Healing Foundation (nd), those experiencing intergenerational trauma "may experience difficulties with attachment, disconnection from their extended families and culture and high levels of stress from family and community members who are dealing with the impacts of trauma. This can create developmental issues for children, who are particularly susceptible to distress at a young age. This creates a cycle of trauma, where the impact is passed from one generation to the next". Within Australia, intergenerational trauma mainly affects the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations. Intergeneration trauma is often associated with violence, harmful substance use, and mental health issues amongst Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander populations (Healing Foundation nd).

E.4.2 Non-Indigenous history

Explorer John Oxley was the first European to investigate the Bland LGA area in 1817. Squatters began to settle the district in 1833 in recognition of the area's agricultural potential. Significant sheep and cattle runs were introduced and the area became known as "The Blands" after a Sydney doctor (Bland Shire Council 2021). A centralised settlement began to develop in 1893 following the discovery of gold by Joseph Neeld, with the town of Wyalong established in 1894 to accommodate the new population of up to 10,000 people. However, a settlement to the west at the 'Main Camp' had already developed which also boasted the 'White Tank', the only established water supply. This led to the official establishment of West Wyalong in 1895 (Bland Shire Council 2021). West Wyalong's crooked Main Street reflects these early days as it follows the original bullock track that curved around trees and gold diggings. The Wyalong fields were reported as one of the most productive gold fields in the NSW until the 1920s.

European settlement in Forbes also followed the exploration of John Oxley through the area in 1817. Following the discovery of gold in 1861 the population increased significantly, with the fledgling diggings township named Forbes (Forbes Shire Council nd). According to Forbes Shire Council (2022), the gold rush “brought an influx of some 30,000 people creating a massive tent city and leading to the development of the substantial hotels, churches, civic and other buildings”. However, by the end of the 1860s gold had become secondary to the pastoral and developing agricultural industry in the area and Forbes began to transform into the rural community it is today (Forbes Shire Council 2022).

The Lachlan LGA area was first visited by British explorers, pushing south and west from around Bathurst as early as 1815. Between May and June 1815, surveyor George Evans led the first British party to the Lachlan River (Lachlan Shire 2020). Squatters began to infiltrate the grasslands around the Lachlan River from 1817–1836. As more squatters moved west, the area was included in the new Lachlan Pastoral District established in 1839 to control settlement between the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Rivers. The charting of the area, including the land around the future Condobolin, further encouraged pastoralists into the region and the town of “Condoublin” was gazetted in 1859 (the name was officially changed to Condobolin in 1949) (Lachlan Shire 2020). Following discovery of copper in 1885 and gold in 1896 the population of the area began to boom, with a major copper and gold mine operating in Condobolin from 1898 until approximately 1910 (Lachlan Shire 2020). Following the damming of the Lachlan River in 1935, the agriculture industry began to expand in Lachlan LGA (Lachlan Shire 2020).

Today, agriculture is the dominant industry across the local area. Significant agricultural industries of employment include grain-sheep and grain-beef cattle farming, other specialised sheep farming, and other grain growing enterprises (Quick stats ABS 2021). Gold Ore Mining continues to be a top industry of employment in Bland LGA.

E.5 Social Infrastructure

E.5.1 Childcare and early learning

In 2022 in the local area there were 16 childcare services providing an estimated total of 849 places for enrolment (ACECQA 2022). The services available include long day care, preschool, and outside of school hours care (OSHC). All of the available services are centre-based service providers. Within the local area, childcare services are mainly located in the key urban areas of West Wyalong, Forbes and. The childcare services available in the local area are presented in Table E.8.

Table E.8 Childcare services, 2022

Area	Service name	Type	Service	Number of places
Bland LGA				
	Bland Preschool	Centre-based care	Preschool/kindergarten – standalone	65
West Wyalong	Bland Shire Council - West Wyalong	Centre-based care	OSHC - vacation Care	30
	Bland Shire Council – West Wyalong (Children Service Unit)	Centre-based care	OSHC – vacation care	30
	Little Wattle Park Street Preschool & Childcare Centre	Centre-based care	Long day care; OSHC – before/after school and vacation care	56

Table E.8 **Childcare services, 2022**

Area	Service name	Type	Service	Number of places
Forbes LGA				
Forbes	Bright Beginnings Early Learning Centre	Centre-based care	Long day care; OSHC – before/ after school and vacation care	70
	Forbes Community OSHC	Centre-based care	OSHC – after school and vacation care	60
	Forbes Preschool Incorporated	Centre-based care	Preschool/Kindergarten – stand alone	100
	Forbes Learning Ladder	Centre-based care	Long day care; OSHC – before school	90
	Forbes Primary School OSHC	Centre-based car	Outside school Hours Care – before school, after school and vacation care	36
	Goodstart Early Learning Forbes	Centre-based care	Long day care	75
Lachlan LGA				
Condobolin	Condobolin Preschool Kindergarten	Centre-based care	Long day care; preschool/kindergarten	90
	Lachlan Children's Services	Centre-based care	Preschool/kindergarten – stand alone; OSHC – after school and vacation care	20
Tullamore	Tullamore Pre-School & Child Care Centre	Centre-based care	Long day care; preschool/ kindergarten – stand alone; OSHC – vacation care	20
Lake Cargelligo	Lake Cargelligo Early Learning Centre	Centre-based care	Long day care; preschool/ kindergarten – stand alone	52
	Murrin Bridge Preschool	Centre-based care	Preschool/kindergarten – stand alone	35
Tottenham	Tottenham War Memorial Early Childhood Centre	Centre-based care	Long day care; preschool/ kindergarten – stand alone	20

Source: ACECQA 2022

E.5.2 Education

Within the local area in 2021 there was a slightly larger proportion of persons attending preschool (7.3%) and primary school (29.2%) compared to the key townships (6.9% and 27.2%) and regional area (7.1% and 28.3% respectively) and the whole of NSW (6.8% and 26.5% respectively) (ABS 2021).

However, the proportion of students attending secondary school was lower in the local area (18.9%) and key townships (18.8%) compared to the regional area and NSW – particularly in Lachlan LGA (16.8%). Within the local area and key township, there was a significantly smaller proportion of persons attending university or other tertiary institution (4.9% and 5.3%) compared to NSW (15.3%). Educational institution attendance in the study area is demonstrated in Table E.9.

Table E.9 Educational institution attendance, 2021

	Preschool	Infants/primary	Secondary	Technical or further educational institution	University or other tertiary institution	Other type of educational institution
Bland LGA	7.1%	29.2%	19.2%	6.6%	5.0%	1.0%
Forbes LGA	7.9%	29.2%	20.1%	7.1%	5.7%	1.8%
Lachlan LGA	6.7%	29.1%	16.8%	5.9%	3.6%	0.5%
Local area	7.3%	29.2%	18.9%	6.6%	4.9%	1.2%
West Wyalong UCL	8.0%	27.6%	20.0%	7.6%	6.0%	1.4%
Forbes UCL	7.0%	28.0%	18.7%	8.1%	6.0%	1.8%
Condobolin UCL	5.5%	24.8%	17.7%	7.0%	2.9%	1.1%
Key townships	6.9%	27.2%	18.8%	7.8%	5.3%	1.6%
Regional area	7.1%	28.3%	21.8%	8.2%	7.8%	1.5%
NSW	6.8%	26.5%	20.9%	8.5%	15.3%	3.0%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

i Primary and secondary

In 2022 there were 15 primary schools, four secondary schools, and five combined schools in the local area. Of these schools, 19 were government schools and five were non-government schools. The schools range from kindergarten to Year 12, with 3,854 student enrolments. Information on primary and secondary schools in the local area is presented in Table E.10.

Table E.10 Schools in the local area, 2021

Area	School	Sector	Type	Year range	Student enrolments	Full-time equivalent teaching staff
Bland LGA						
	St Mary's War Memorial School	Non-government	Primary	K – 6	113	10.7
West Wyalong	West Wyalong High School	Government	Secondary	U, 7 – 12	284	32.8
	West Wyalong Public School	Government	Primary	K – 6	211	15.5

Table E.10 Schools in the local area, 2021

Area	School	Sector	Type	Year range	Student enrolments	Full-time equivalent teaching staff
Wyalong	Wyalong Public School	Government	Primary	K – 6	57	4.0
Ungarie	Ungarie Central School	Government	Combined	K – 12	84	12.3
Naradhan	Naradhan Public School	Government	Primary	K – 6	13	1.3
Barmedman	Barmedman Public School	Government	Primary	K – 6	10	1.4
Tallimba	Tallimba Public School	Government	Primary	K – 6	23	3.1
Weethalle	Weethalle Public School	Government	Primary	K – 6	15	1.8
Forbes LGA						
Forbes	Forbes High School	Government	Secondary	U, 7 – 12	328	41.5
	Forbes North Public School	Government	Primary	K – 6	249	15.8
	Forbes Public School	Government	Primary	U, K – 6	300	22.3
	Red Bend Catholic College	Non-government	Secondary	7 – 12	805	73.7
	St Laurence's Parish School	Non-government	Primary	K – 6	301	21.6
Bedgerabong	Bedgerabong Public School	Government	Primary	K – 6	41	2.7
Lachlan LGA						
Condobolin	Condobolin High School	Government	Secondary	U, 7 – 12	208	35.5
	Condobolin Public School	Government	Primary	U, K – 6	291	20.6
	St Joseph's Parish School	Non-government	Primary	K – 6	99	7.2
Tullamore	Tullamore Central School	Government	Combined	K – 12	57	10.8
Lake Cargelligo	Lake Cargelligo Central School	Government	Combined	K – 12	208	27.9
	St Francis Xavier's Primary School	Non-government	Primary	K – 6	45	6.2

Table E.10 **Schools in the local area, 2021**

Area	School	Sector	Type	Year range	Student enrolments	Full-time equivalent teaching staff
Tullibigeal	Tullibigeal Central School	Government	Combined	K – 12	39	9.7
Tottenham	Tottenham Central School	Government	Combined	K – 12	73	10.2

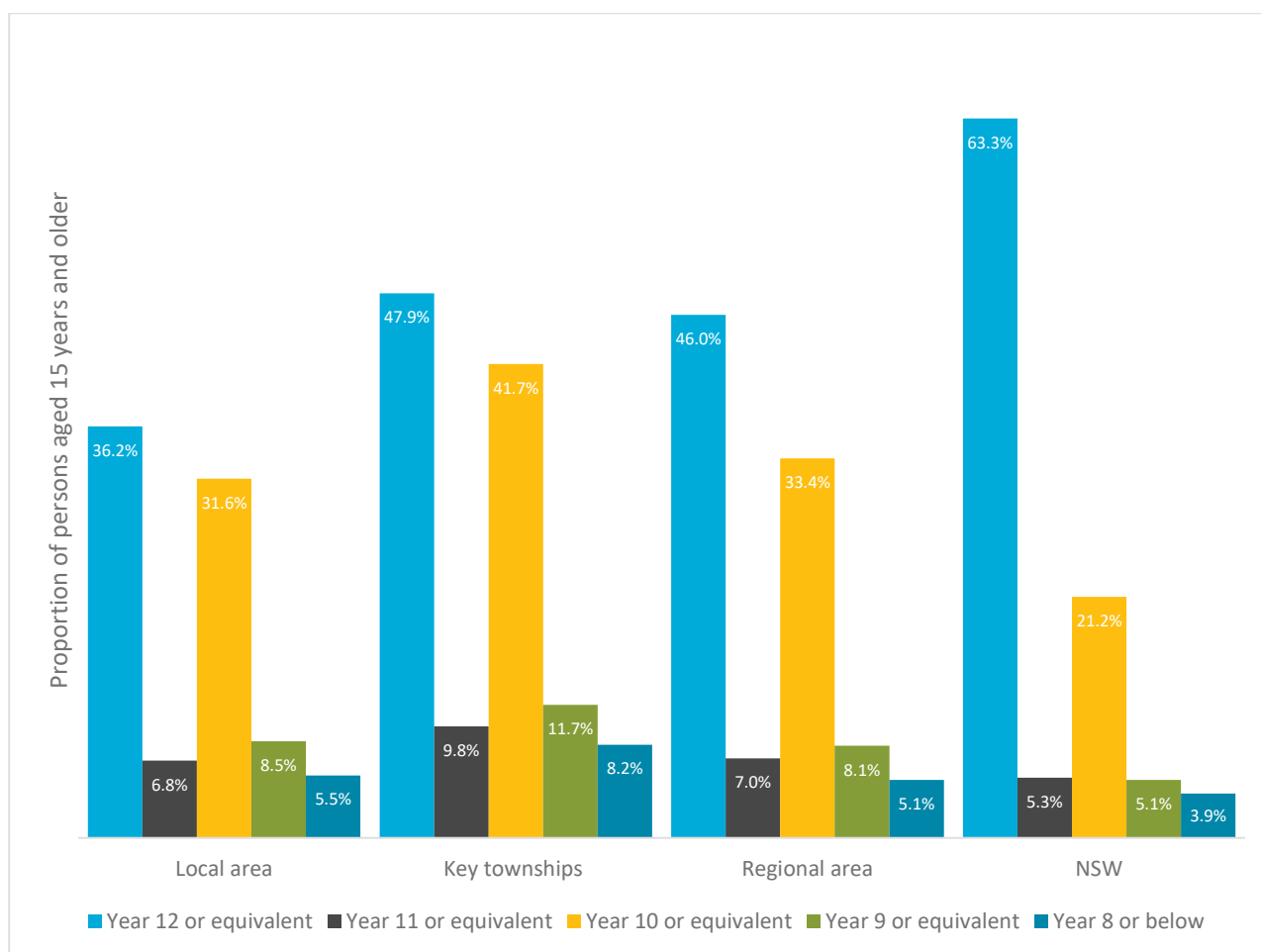
Source: ACARA 2022

The local area has a significantly smaller proportion of persons who have completed Year 12 or equivalent (36.2%) compared to the Key townships (47.9%), regional area (46.0%) and NSW (63.3%). Within the local area, Bland LGA and West Wyalong has a particularly low proportion of persons who have completed Year 12 or equivalent at 38.0% and 35.2% respectively.

In the local area and key townships, persons over 15 years of age with Years 11, 10 and 9 as the highest levels of schooling were all above the state average. The proportion of the population which has completed Year 12 or equivalent was substantially lower in the local area (36.2%) and key townships (47.9%) compared to that of NSW (63.1%). This indicates a relatively high proportion of the population within the local area and key townships have not completed secondary level schooling. A higher proportion of people within Bland LGA had completed schooling up to Year 10 or equivalent (38.1%) compared to the rest of the local area. This may reflect local employment options, particularly within the agriculture industry (see Section E.8). The highest level of schooling completed within the study area is presented in Table E.11 and Figure E.10.

Table E.11 **Highest level of schooling completed for persons 15 years and over, 2021**

	Year 12 or equivalent	Year 11 or equivalent	Year 10 or equivalent	Year 9 or equivalent	Year 8 or equivalent
Bland LGA	38.0%	7.9%	38.1%	9.9%	5.9%
Forbes LGA	41.8%	7.9%	34.5%	9.1%	6.3%
Lachlan LGA	41.4%	7.2%	34.7%	9.9%	6.2%
Local area	36.2%	6.8%	31.6%	8.5%	5.5%
West Wyalong UCL	35.2%	7.6%	32.6%	8.8%	5.6%
Forbes UCL	40.5%	8.3%	34.4%	9.4%	6.9%
Condobolin UCL	39.7%	7.5%	33.9%	10.7%	7.2%
Key townships	47.9%	9.8%	41.7%	11.7%	8.2%
Regional area	46.0%	7.0%	33.4%	8.1%	5.1%
NSW	63.3%	5.3%	21.2%	5.1%	3.9%



Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Figure E.10 Highest level of schooling completed for persons 15 years and older, 2021

ii Tertiary

There are four tertiary education campuses available within the local area. There is one TAFE campus in Bland LGA located in West Wyalong, one TAFE campus in Forbes LGA located in Forbes, and two TAFE campuses in Lachlan LGA located in Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo. There are no universities located within in the local area. A summary of the tertiary institutions within the local area is provided in Table E.12

Table E.12 Tertiary institutions in the local area, 2022

Location	Institute	Education and training courses
West Wyalong	TAFE West Wyalong	Focus on welding and metal fabrication, sport and recreation, administration and retail, early childhood education and care, community services and aged care and agriculture.
Forbes	TAFE Forbes	Offers a range of practical courses in vocational access and general education, as well as trade programs, and primary industries and natural resources programs. This campus also specialises in aged care, business, computing, hairdressing, retail and welding programs.
Condobolin	TAFE Condobolin	Courses on offer include agriculture, business, computing, engineering, general education and modules.

Table E.12 Tertiary institutions in the local area, 2022

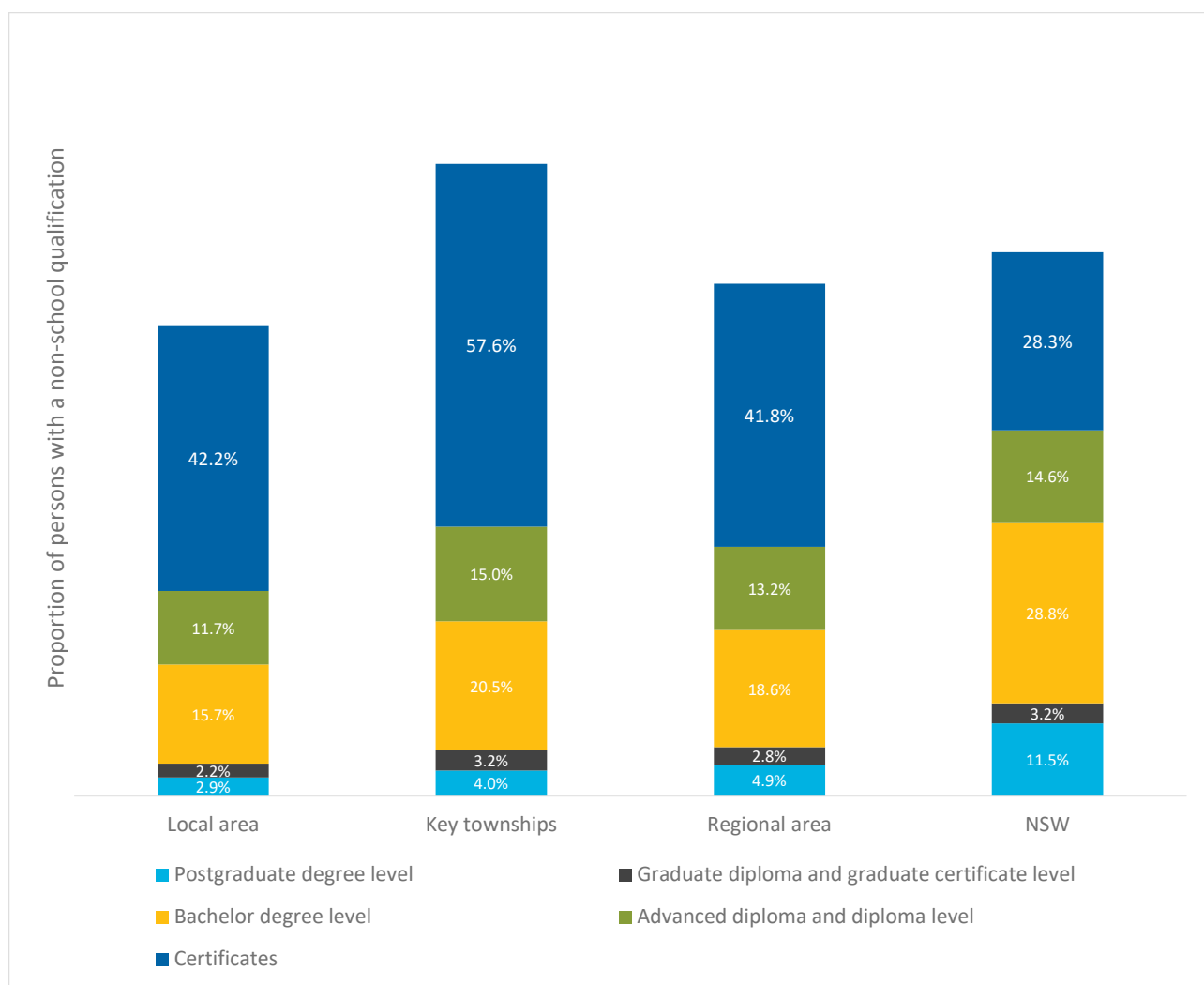
Location	Institute	Education and training courses
Lake Cargelligo	TAFE Lake Cargelligo	Courses are offered based on community demand and vary from semester to semester but may include community services programs, information technology, business, engineering, health, and hospitality.

Source: TAFE 2022

Within the local and regional areas and key townships, all categories of persons with a non-school qualification were below the state averages, with the exception of certificates which comprise the largest proportion of non-school qualifications held by people over 15 years in the local area (42.2%) and regional area (41.8%) compared to 28.3% across NSW. This may be in part due to the low rates of secondary schooling completion (see Section E.5.i), making it difficult to directly enter university programs. However, this may also be a result of the prevalent industries of employment in the local and regional areas, particularly the dominance of agriculture (see Section E.8), which do not require tertiary qualifications (Education 2020). Non-school qualifications in the study area are presented in Table E.13 and Figure E.11.

Table E.13 Proportion of persons over 15 with a non-school qualification, 2021

	Postgraduate degree level	Graduate diploma and graduate certificate level	Bachelor degree level	Advanced diploma and diploma level	Certificates
Bland LGA	1.9%	2.2%	15.1%	12.0%	44.6%
Forbes LGA	3.3%	2.2%	16.7%	11.8%	43.3%
Lachlan LGA	3.2%	2.2%	14.7%	11.3%	37.8%
Local area	2.9%	2.2%	15.7%	11.7%	42.2%
West Wyalong UCL	1.9%	2.7%	16.0%	11.3%	45.0%
Forbes UCL	3.2%	2.2%	15.8%	11.6%	44.0%
Condobolin UCL	3.5%	2.5%	12.4%	9.8%	36.8%
Key townships	4.0%	3.2%	20.5%	15.0%	57.6%
Regional area	4.9%	2.8%	18.6%	13.2%	41.8%
NSW	11.5%	3.2%	28.8%	14.6%	28.3%

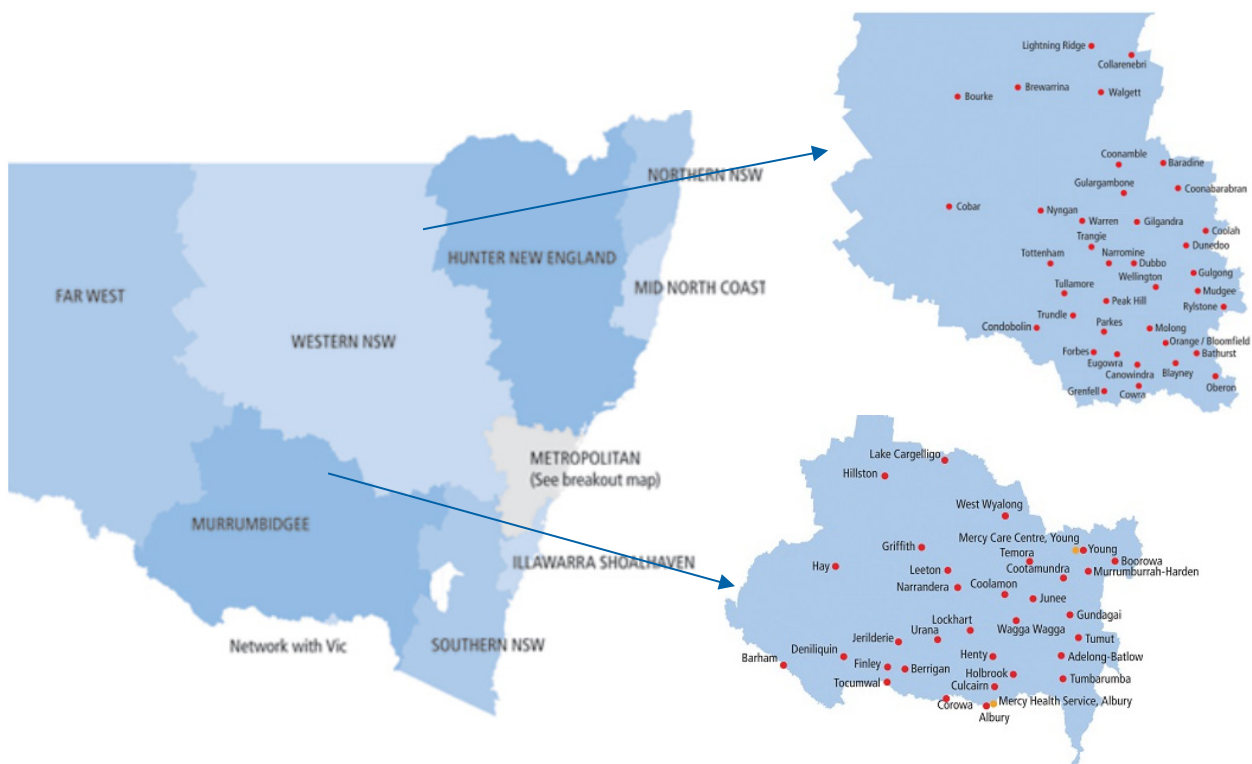


Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Figure E.11 Proportion of persons over 15 with a non-school qualification, 2021

E.5.3 Health services

The local area is located within the Western NSW and Murrumbidgee Local Health Districts (LHD).



Source: NSW Health 2021

Figure E.12 Western NSW and Murrumbidgee LHDs and public hospitals, 2020

The closest public hospital service to the Project area is the West Wyalong Health Service. There are three other public hospitals within the local area, one located in Forbes LGA and two located in Lachlan LGA. Each of the hospitals within the local area are smaller multipurpose services with emergency departments and a range of community and allied health services available to residents. More complex health issues are referred to the regional hospital in Wagga Wagga. The details of the closest hospitals to the local area are presented in Table E.14.

Table E.14 Hospitals, 2022

Hospital	Location	Type	Number of beds
West Wyalong Health Service	West Wyalong	Public	22
Lachlan Health Service – Forbes	Forbes	Public	27 (25 acute care and 2 maternity)
Condobolin Health Service	Condobolin	Public	<50
Lake Cargelligo Multipurpose Service	Lake Cargelligo	Public	22 (6 acute care and 16 residential aged care)

Source: myhospitals.gov.au

As shown in Table E.15, the total number of patients admitted to West Wyalong Hospital has generally increased each financial year from 2011–2017, growing from 633 to 1,004 and then decreased between 2017 to 2021, from 1,004 to 458.

The most common admission categories for hospital stays at West Wyalong Hospital is medical (emergency), and medical (non-emergency) for which there were 424 admissions in 2021. There are no available services for childbirth, surgical (emergency), surgical (non-emergency), other acute (emergency and non-emergency), mental health and rehabilitation.

Table E.15 **Number of admissions to West Wyalong Hospital, 2011–2021**

Admission category	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021
Childbirth	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0
Surgical (emergency)	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surgical (non-emergency)	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	0
Medical (emergency)	348	439	602	654	620	668	315	414	424	318
Medical (non-emergency)	206	129	121	235	204	261	300	237	113	106
Other acute (emergency)	0	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	0
Other acute (non-emergency)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mental health	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rehabilitation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Palliative	29	32	21	16	17	25	17	16	32	18
Other subacute and non-acute	50	42	46	29	38	50	14	20	37	16
Total	633	642	790	934	879	1,004	657	687	606	458

Source: AIHW 2022, Hospitals

Notes: 1. Medical is defined as stays to hospital that do not require surgery.
2. Surgical is defined as stays to hospital that require surgery (ie physical medical intervention).
3. Other acute care is defined as stays that have neither a surgical nor a medical Australian Refined Diagnosis Related Group.
4. Surgical, medical and other acute care stays are further divided into 'emergency' and 'other', based on the recorded urgency of admission, ie whether admission was considered necessary within 24 hours or not.

i Primary health care services

a General practitioner services

General practitioner (GP) services in the local area are offered via both public and private practices. A total of four GP practices were identified in Bland LGA, four in Forbes LGA, and six in Lachlan LGA. Each suburb had services relating to community health, Indigenous health, mental health, maternal, child and family health, aged care and special services. The multipurpose services within each LGA offer the largest diversity of services within the area. GP practices in the local area are summarised in Table E.16.

Table E.16 GP services by location, 2022

Service name	Location	GP services	Community health services	Indigenous health services	Mental health services	Maternal, child, and family health	Aged care services	Other specialist services
Bland LGA								
West Wyalong Health Service	West Wyalong	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tristar Medical Group – West Wyalong	West Wyalong	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
West Wyalong Medical Centre	West Wyalong	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
Bland Medical Centre	West Wyalong	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Forbes LGA								
Lachlan Health Service – Forbes	Forbes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forbes Medicine & Mind	Forbes	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forbes Medical Centre	Forbes	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Yoorana Gunya Family Healing Centre	Forbes	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Lachlan LGA								
Condobolin Health Service	Condobolin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brenshaw Medical Centre	Condobolin	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Condobolin Aboriginal Health Service	Condobolin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Lake Cargelligo Multipurpose Service	Lake Cargelligo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lake Cargelligo Family Practice	Lake Cargelligo	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
Murrin Bridge Aboriginal Health Service	Lake Cargelligo	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓

Source: Healthdirect 2022

E.5.4 Emergency services

Provision of emergency services in the local area are outlined in Table E.17. Most emergency services (excluding rural fire brigades) are located in West Wyalong in Bland LGA, Forbes in Forbes GLA, and Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo in Lachlan LGA, which service the surrounding areas.

Table E.17 **Emergency services in the local area, 2021**

	Police station	Ambulance station	Fire and rescue station	Rural fire service brigades	State Emergency Service
Bland LGA	4	1	1	21	1
Forbes LGA	1	1	1	25	1
Lachlan LGA	3	2	2	38	2

Source: police.nsw.gov.au; ambulance.nsw.gov.au; fire.nsw.gov.au; rfs.nsw.gov.au; ses.nsw.gov.au

E.5.5 Transport infrastructure

i Modes of travel

Based on the 2021 Census the predominant mode of travel to work in the local area, key townships and regional area is by car, either as the driver or as a passenger (67.4%, 73.8% and 70.0% respectively) which is higher than the NSW average (46.3%). Travel using public transport is significantly lower in the local area (1.2%), key townships (1.7%) and regional area (0.6%) compared to NSW (3.8%) due to a lack of services. The highest proportion of persons who travel to work via public transport was recorded in Bland LGA (4.4%). Modes of travel to work in the study area are summarised in Table E.18.

Table E.18 **Modes of travel to work, 2021**

	By car (as driver, as passenger)	By public transport (train, bus, ferry, tram)
Bland LGA	60.3%	4.4%
Forbes LGA	71.4%	0.5%
Lachlan LGA	67.8%	0.7%
Local area	67.4%	1.4%
West Wyalong UCL	66.8%	3.8%
Forbes UCL	76.7%	0.5%
Condobolin UCL	76.0%	1.0%
Key townships	73.8%	1.7%
Regional area	70.0%	0.6%
NSW	46.3%	3.8%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

ii Public transport

Bus services are available in West Wyalong in Bland LGA, with routes from the West Wyalong Coach Stop connecting to Wagga Wagga and Condobolin (TfNSW 2021). There are also buses that service Forbes via the Forbes Coach Stop, which includes routes connecting to Orange, Parkes; Lithgow Cootamundra and Dubbo (TfNSW 2021). There is also a train station in Condobolin which has services from Strathfield to Broken Hill and on to Sydney (TfNSW 2021). There are taxi services operating in West Wyalong, Forbes, and Condobolin.

iii Road network

The Newell Highway, NSW Route A39, runs through Forbes LGA and Bland LGA, connecting to Dubbo and Brisbane to the northeast and Melbourne to the southwest. Henry Parkes Way runs through the local area, connecting Condobolin to Parkes before becoming The Escort Way which provides a connection to the Mitchell Highway (A32) which runs through Orange, Bathurst, and towards Sydney to the east. The Mid Western Highway (B64) also runs through the local area, providing connections to Adelaide and Sydney.

iv Air

There closest regional airports surrounding the local area are the Wagga Wagga Airport, Parkes Airport, Orange Regional Airport, and Dubbo Regional Airport. The closest international airport to the local area is Canberra International Airport.

E.5.6 Community services

Community services in the local area are mainly concentrated in West Wyalong in Bland LGA, Forbes in Forbes LGA and Condobolin in Lachlan LGA. They include aged care and senior services, children's services, youth services, disability and accessibility services, housing and homelessness services, women's services and family services, Aboriginal services, and employment services (Healthdirect 2022; Ask Izzy 2021). A summary of community services in the local area is presented in Table E.19.

Table E.19 Community services in the local area, 2022

	Aboriginal services	Child and family services	Youth services	Housing and homelessness services	Employment services	Disability services	Aged care services	Women's services	Arts and cultural facilities	Recreation services
Bland LGA	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forbes LGA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lachlan LGA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: My Community Directory 2022; Healthdirect 2022; Ask Izzy 2022.

i Aboriginal community services

Aboriginal community services are available through a variety of service providers in the local area. Murrumbidgee Local Health District – Aboriginal Health Unit provides programs and services for Aboriginal peoples and communities. Within the local area, this service is available from the West Wyalong Health Service. Comprehensive Aboriginal health services are also available from the Condobolin Aboriginal Health Service, Lake Cargelligo Multipurpose Service, the Condobolin Health Service, the Yoorana Gunya Family Healing Centre Aboriginal Corporation, and the Lachlan Health Service operating in Forbes. These health services provide both physical and mental health services to various demographics within the Aboriginal community, including children, families, and youth. Within the local area there are three Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) which provide information, referrals, and support to the Aboriginal community: West Wyalong LALC, Murrin Bridge LALC, and Condobolin LALC (NSW Aboriginal Land Council 2022). Additional Aboriginal services are available in Forbes and Condobolin, including employment services, the Aboriginal Men's Program offered through CatholicCare, and the Yawarra Aboriginal Corporation.

ii Child and family services

Child and family services are available through both multi-service providers and individual service providers. In Bland LGA, child and family health support is available through the West Wyalong Community Health Centre, the Wyalong Early Childhood Health Centre, the Ungarie Early Childhood Health Centre, and the Ungarie Community Health Centre. In Forbes LGA, there are a variety of child and family services including the VERTO ParentsNext Program which provides support services for young mothers to prepare for future employment and the Forbes North School as Community Centre organisation which provides community events and activities for families within Forbes. In Condobolin in Lachlan LGA the most comprehensive child and family services are offered through DCJ Community Services, which includes adoption and permanent care services, early intervention programs, protection and intervention, case management, and out of home care. Other child and family services include CatholicCare, the Central West Family Support Group, Condobolin Schools as Community Centres, and Marathon Health. Additional childcare services across the local area are offered by the Family and Child Services department of Bland Shire Council, Forbes Shire Council, and Lachlan Shire Council. These services include childcare, kindergarten, parenting education and support, and health services.

iii Youth community services

There are a limited range of youth services operating in the local area. Youth services are primarily provided by Bland Shire Council, Forbes Shire Council and Lachlan Shire Council, which includes information, assistance and referral to appropriate services for children and young people.

iv Housing and homelessness services

Within the local area there is one homelessness service operating within Forbes LGA (located in Forbes) and two operating within Lachlan LGA (one located in Condobolin and one in Lake Cargelligo). All of these services are provided by the organisation CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes. They offer long term accommodation, transitional accommodation, and support services. The services in Forbes and Condobolin also provide shelter for women and children escaping domestic violence, these are provided not located in West Wyalong directly. However, Linking Communities Network, a specialist homelessness service, provides outreach services to West Wyalong (LCN nd). The West Wyalong Aboriginal Land Council also provides social housing services for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons.

v Employment services

A few services operating within West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin in the local area provide Jobactive – a service which provides employment placement and training for unemployed young people and adults, individually tailored job plans, assistance looking for work, resume writing, interview preparation, case management and wage subsidies. These services also provide career transition programs, skills checkpoint programs, and apprenticeship services. Employment service providers include APM and VERTO (located in West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin) and Sureway Employment and Training (located in West Wyalong, Forbes, Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo). Aboriginal employment services are also offered in Forbes and Condobolin.

vi Disability services

There are a range of disability services and disability service providers throughout the local area, including seven service providers in West Wyalong, six in Forbes, and five in Condobolin. The services range from disability employment services, day programs for adults with disabilities, coordination and support of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), home support, long term accommodation, advocacy, and liaison with public and private bodies.

vii Aged care services

Within the local area there are two aged care service providers which provide residential care in West Wyalong in Bland LGA. There is also a day program for the elderly and those with dementia offered by Bland Home and Community Care. There is one aged residential care provider in Forbes in Forbes LGA, as well as an education service which provides educational, social and recreational programs for seniors. In Lachlan LGA most aged care residential services (including low- and high-level care, respite care, and independent living units) are provided through RSL LifeCare in Condobolin, however there is a low-level care service in Lake Cargelligo. There is also a Senior Citizens Social Club operating in Condobolin.

viii Women's services

As previously stated, CatholicCare Wilcannia-Forbes in Forbes and Condobolin provides refuge for women and children escaping domestic violence, including intensive support. Other women's services operating within the local area include branches of the Country Women's Association (CWA) located in West Wyalong, Forbes and Condobolin. These services provide support for personal growth and the opportunity to pursue and address key social issues for women within these areas.

E.5.7 Arts and cultural community facilities

There are a range of arts and cultural community facilities in the local area. Within Forbes LGA, the Wiradjuri Dreaming Centre provides the opportunity to learn about Wiradjuri culture and a sacred meeting place (Forbes Shire Council nd). Within Lachlan LGA, the Wiradjuri Study Centre offers a local hub to promote the study and understanding of Wiradjuri culture (Lachlan Shire Council nd). Bland LGA, Forbes LGA, and Lachlan LGA offer the following arts and cultural community facilities: art galleries and installations, museums and heritage sites, library, hall, and conference/meeting rooms. A theatre/cinema is also present in Bland LGA and Forbes LGA. Each of the LGAs within the local area also offer seasonal events.

E.5.8 Recreation services

There are many recreational and outdoor activities throughout the local area. Throughout the local area there are parks, sporting facilities (including ovals, aquatic centres, netball courts, indoor courts, tennis courts, golf courses, bowling greens, skate parks, and racing facilities). There are also a variety of outdoor activities such as fishing, bird watching, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, mountain biking and fossicking.

E.6 Workforce and income

E.6.1 Employment

At the time of the 2021 Census the unemployment rate across the local area (4.0%) was slightly lower than the unemployment rate in the key townships (6.2%), regional area (4.1%) and NSW (4.9%). However, there is some variation in the unemployment rate amongst the LGAs that comprise the local area and key townships. The unemployment rate in Bland LGA (2.9%) is significantly lower compared to the other LGAs within the local area, while the unemployment rate in Lachlan LGA and Condobolin is slightly higher (5.4% and 7.0% respectively). Similar trends are apparent for the youth unemployment rate, with lower rates in Bland LGA (3.8%) and Forbes LGA (5.8%) and a higher rate in Lachlan LGA (12.4%) compared to the key townships (7.3%), regional area (8.3%) and NSW (9.8%). Unemployment and labour force participation rates are presented in Table E.20.

Table E.20 Unemployment and labour force participation rates, 2021

	Unemployment rate	Youth unemployment rate	Labour force participation rate (15 years and older)
Bland LGA	2.9%	3.8%	58.8%
Forbes LGA	3.8%	5.8%	57.7%
Lachlan LGA	5.4%	12.4%	55.5%
Local area	4.0%	6.8%	57.4%
West Wyalong UCL	2.7%	2.4%	59.0%
Forbes UCL	4.5%	4.9%	55.0%
Condobolin UCL	7.0%	11.5%	50.4%
Key townships	6.2%	7.3%	74.0%
Regional area	4.1%	8.3%	58.0%
NSW	4.9%	9.8%	58.7%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

In the local area the top three occupations are managers (23.4%), professionals (13.3%) and technicians and trades workers (13.0%). The significant proportion of managers in the local area, particularly in Bland LGA (24.0), Forbes (19.9%) and Lachlan LGA (28.6%), is indicative of the agricultural sector being the dominant industry of employment (see Section E.8). (National Skills Commission 2020). Within the key townships the top three occupations are technicians and trades workers (21.8%), professionals (20.5%), and community and personal service workers (18.0%). Occupations within the study area are presented in Table E.21.

Table E.21 Occupations, 2021

	Managers	Professionals	Technicians and trades workers	Community and personal service workers	Clerical and administrative workers	Sales workers	Machinery operators and drivers	Labourers
Bland LGA	24.0%	11.7%	14.6%	9.3%	9.5%	6.2%	11.6%	10.8%
Forbes LGA	19.9%	15.1%	13.3%	11.1%	9.7%	8.7%	7.8%	12.7%
Lachlan LGA	28.6%	11.7%	11.0%	11.6%	9.7%	5.2%	9.9%	10.6%
Local area	23.4%	13.3%	13.0%	10.7%	9.7%	7.0%	9.4%	11.6%
West Wyalong UCL	10.6%	13.1%	18.0%	11.4%	11.5%	7.4%	14.0%	11.4%
Forbes UCL	12.1%	16.6%	15.0%	12.9%	10.0%	10.4%	8.4%	12.4%
Condobolin UCL	14.1%	12.1%	14.1%	15.6%	10.8%	7.3%	13.6%	10.5%

Table E.21 Occupations, 2021

	Managers	Professionals	Technicians and trades workers	Community and personal service workers	Clerical and administrative workers	Sales workers	Machinery operators and drivers	Labourers
Key townships	16.8%	20.5%	21.8%	18.0%	14.6%	12.5%	15.1%	16.3%
Regional area	15.1%	17.0%	14.6%	12.5%	11.3%	7.8%	8.8%	11.2%
NSW	14.6%	25.8%	11.9%	10.6%	13.0%	8.0%	6.0%	8.2%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

E.6.2 Income

The individual median weekly income of persons in the LGAs which comprise the local area are lower than the regional area (\$738) and NSW (\$813), except in West Wyalong which recorded the highest individual weekly income (\$751) within the study area. Median weekly household income follows the same trend. Higher median incomes in West Wyalong are likely due to the relatively high wages paid to mine employees, many of which reside in West Wyalong. Lower median weekly household and individual incomes in the local area is reflective of the area's SEIFA scores, which suggest higher levels of disadvantage and lower levels of advantage compared to other LGAs across NSW (see Section E.3.3). Median incomes in the study area are presented in Table E.22.

Table E.22 Median income, 2021

	Individual (median income \$ weekly)	Household (median income \$ weekly)
Bland LGA	730	1,326
Forbes LGA	718	1,259
Lachlan LGA	644	1,218
Local area	--	--
West Wyalong UCL	751	1,374
Forbes UCL	698	1,172
Condobolin UCL	643	1,204
Key townships	--	--
Regional area	738	1,434
NSW	813	1,829

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

E.7 Housing and accommodation

E.7.1 Housing type and structure

The most common housing type and structure within the local area in 2021 was separate houses (91.4%), followed by flat or apartment (3.6%). The proportion of occupied dwellings in the local area (83.4%) is fairly consistent with the key townships (86.7%) and the regional area (86.8%). However, the proportion of occupied dwellings in the local area, key townships and regional area is lower compared to greater NSW (90.1%) and reflects trends of departure from the local area, key townships and the regional area to regional centres and larger cities. Housing type and structure is presented in Table E.23.

Table E.23 Housing type and structure, 2021

	Separate house	Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse	Flat or apartment	Other dwelling	Total private dwellings	Total occupied dwellings
Bland LGA	91.5%	4.2%	2.0%	1.0%	2,151	77.3%
Forbes LGA	89.6%	4.4%	4.5%	1.2%	3,563	88.8%
Lachlan LGA	94.3%	1.9%	2.6%	0.4%	2,191	81.7%
Local area	91.4%	3.6%	3.3%	0.9%	9,476	83.4%
West Wyalong UCL	88.2%	6.5%	3.2%	1.0%	1,520	85.3%
Forbes UCL	86.9%	5.6%	5.9%	1.5%	3,052	90.2%
Condobolin UCL	94.7%	3.9%	1.2%	0.4%	1,194	79.6%
Key townships	88.7%	5.5%	4.3%	1.2%	5,766	86.7%
Regional area	89.2%	6.8%	2.8%	0.8%	90,793	88.2%
NSW	65.6%	11.7%	21.7%	0.7%	2,900,468	90.6%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

In 2021, most households were family households in the local area (66.9%), key townships (85.0%), regional area (67.9), and NSW (71.2%) (ABS 2021). However, the proportion of family households across the local area is smaller compared to NSW, with a higher proportion of lone person households. Household composition in the study area is presented in Table E.24.

Table E.24 Household composition, 2021

Household type	Family households	Group households	Lone person households
Bland LGA	66.8%	1.8%	31.4%
Forbes LGA	66.5%	2.3%	31.3%
Lachlan LGA	67.3%	1.6%	30.8%
Local area	66.9%	2.0%	31.1%
West Wyalong UCL	65.0%	1.6%	33.7%
Forbes UCL	62.5%	2.5%	34.9%

Table E.24 Household composition, 2021

Household type	Family households	Group households	Lone person households
Condobolin UCL	63.5%	1.8%	34.4%
Key townships	85.0%	2.9%	46.4%
Regional area	67.9%	2.7%	29.4%
NSW	71.2%	3.8%	25.0%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

E.7.2 Tenure

At the time of the 2021 Census most dwellings in the local area were owned outright (41.5%). This is consistent with the key townships (51.2%) and regional area (32.1%). The proportion of homes owned with a mortgage (27.2%) and rented (24.6%) within the local area is significantly smaller compared to NSW (31.5% and 32.6% respectively). The higher proportion of homes owned outright may reflect the older population of the local area and regional area compared to NSW, as well as an undersupply of available rental housing (see Section E.7.4iii). Tenure within the study area is presented in Table E.25.

Table E.25 Tenure (based on total private dwellings), 2021

	Owned outright	Owned with a mortgage	Rented	Other tenure
Bland LGA	47.1%	26.7%	18.0%	5.7%
Forbes LGA	37.9%	29.7%	26.9%	3.4%
Lachlan LGA	42.0%	23.5%	27.4%	5.2%
Local area	41.5%	27.2%	24.6%	4.5%
West Wyalong UCL	43.2%	28.9%	22.9%	2.5%
Forbes UCL	36.0%	29.2%	30.6%	1.7%
Condobolin UCL	36.4%	25.8%	32.5%	2.4%
Key townships	51.2%	38.4%	39.1%	2.7%
Regional area	37.8%	31.5%	26.6%	2.4%
NSW	31.5%	32.5%	32.6%	1.9%

Source: ABS 2021 Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

E.7.3 Mortgage repayment and rent

Rent and mortgage repayments constitute a significant proportion of household costs. Mortgage repayments and rent within the local area is significantly lower compared to the regional area and NSW. The lower mortgage and rent payments could be indicative of greater levels of disadvantage within the local area (see Section E.3). Mortgage and rent repayments are presented in Table E.26.

Table E.26 Mortgage repayment and rent, 2021

	Mortgage repayments (median mortgage repayments \$ monthly)	Rent payments (median rent \$ weekly)
Bland LGA	1,083	200
Forbes LGA	1,283	230
Lachlan LGA	878	180
Local area	--	--
West Wyalong UCL	1,086	228
Forbes UCL	1,200	230
Condobolin UCL	867	200
Key townships	--	--
Regional area	1,517	290
NSW	2,167	420

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

Housing stress is considered to occur when households in the lower 40% of income distribution spend more than 30% of their income in housing costs (rents or mortgage repayments) (AHURI 2019). This can mean that local people who are not employed in high-paying jobs may be unable to afford local rents which can be pushed up by higher salaries. Housing affordability in the study area is demonstrated in Table E.27.

In the local area and key townships in 2021, a smaller proportion of persons had rent payments greater than or equal to 30% of household income than in the regional area (29.2%) and NSW (36.0%) (ABS 2021). This is likely reflective of the lower proportion of rental tenures in the local area (see Section E.7.2) and lower rent costs (see Section E.7.3).

Mortgage affordability was also higher in the key townships compared to the local area and regional area and NSW, with only 5.8% of households in West Wyalong, 6.1% of households in Condobolin, and 6.8% of households in Forbes with mortgage repayments greater than or equal to 30% of household. This is indicative of the very high levels of homes owned outright in local area (see E.7.2), as well as the low mortgage costs compared to greater NSW (see Section E.7.3). Housing affordability in the study area is demonstrated in Table E.27.

Table E.27 Housing affordability, 2021

	Households where rent payments are greater than or equal to 30% of household income (%)	Households where mortgage payments are greater than or equal to 30% of household income (%)
Bland LGA	15.2%	9.2%
Forbes LGA	26.4%	9.4%
Lachlan LGA	17.6%	9.1%
Local area	--	--
West Wyalong UCL	14.3%	5.8%
Forbes UCL	29.1%	6.8%

Table E.27 Housing affordability, 2021

	Households where rent payments are greater than or equal to 30% of household income (%)	Households where mortgage payments are greater than or equal to 30% of household income (%)
Condobolin UCL	23.0%	6.1%
Key townships	--	--
Regional area	29.2%	10.7%
NSW	36.0%	11.7%

Source: ABS 2021, *Quickstats*

E.7.4 Housing and rental market trends

i Mortgage repayment and rent trends

Mortgage repayment and rent growth rates vary throughout the local area, key townships and regional area. From 2011–2021 there were significant differences in mortgage growth rates between Bland LGA (-6.5%), Forbes LGA (1.9%) and Lachlan LGA (13.8%). However, mortgage repayments increased significantly across the local area from 2016–2021 compared to 2011–2016.

Although the increase from between 2011–2016 and 2016–2021 is consistent with the increase across NSW, the growth trends vary, with Forbes LGA experiencing the highest increase in mortgage repayment growth from 2016–2021 (11.8%) and Lachlan LGA experiencing a decrease of 2.4%.

Between 2011–2016, rent payment growth trends within the local area remained lower compared to trends across NSW, with all LGAs experiencing increases in median rent payments Except for in Lachlan LGA (34.6%) and Condobolin (30.6%). However, from 2016–2021 rent payments increased by a higher rate in Bland LGA (3.3%) and West Wyalong (39.1%) compared to the rest of the local area, key township and the regional area and greater NSW. Mortgage and rent repayment growth rates in the study area are presented in Table E.28.

Table E.28 Mortgage repayment and rent growth rates, 2011 – 2021

	Mortgage repayments		Rent payments	
	2011–2016	2016–2021	2011–2016	2016–2021
Bland LGA	-6.5%	8.3%	15.4%	33.3%
Forbes LGA	1.9%	11.8%	20.0%	27.8%
Lachlan LGA	3.8%	-2.4%	36.4%	20.0%
Local area¹	--	--	--	--
West Wyalong UCL	-13.9%	14.9%	16.7%	39.1%
Forbes UCL	0.8%	7.7%	22.6%	21.1%
Condobolin UCL	6.7%	-6.3%	34.6%	14.3%
Key townships	--	--	--	--
Regional area²	2.7%	1.1%	30.6%	23.4%

Table E.28 Mortgage repayment and rent growth rates, 2011 – 2021

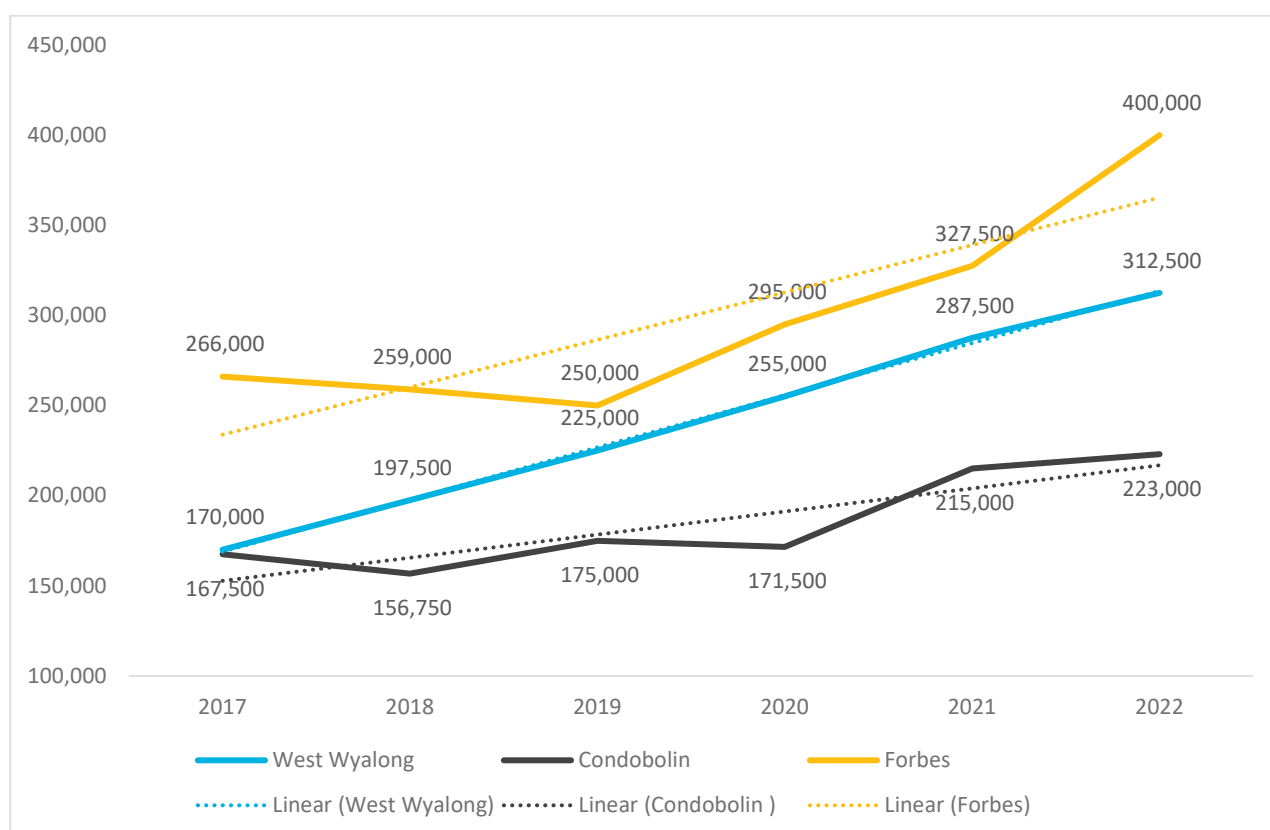
	Mortgage repayments		Rent payments	
	2011–2016	2016–2021	2011–2016	2016–2021
NSW	-0.4%	9.1%	26.7%	10.5%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles.

Notes: 1. Data for the total local area and key townships median mortgage repayments and rent payments was not available.

ii Median property price trends

Housing price data is only available for selected suburbs within the local area. Based on the housing price trends across the three suburbs, West Wyalong, Forbes, and Condobolin, have generally been experiencing an increase from 2017–2022. The highest housing prices have consistently been within the town of Forbes. This is likely due to its role as a regional centre. Median housing price trends for the local area are demonstrated in Figure E.13.



Source: realestate.com.au/neighbourhoods

Figure E.13 Median house price, 2017–2022

iii Residential vacancy rates

On 28 November 2022, there were 156 properties for sale and 14 properties for rent in the local area (realestate.com.au 2022). Within the local area, most properties for sale are located in Forbes, Condobolin, and Wyalong. There are minimal properties for rent, which is reflected in the low vacancy rates for the area (see below). Properties for sale in selected suburbs within the local area are presented in Table E.29

Table E.29 Properties for sale and rent in the local area, 28 November 2022

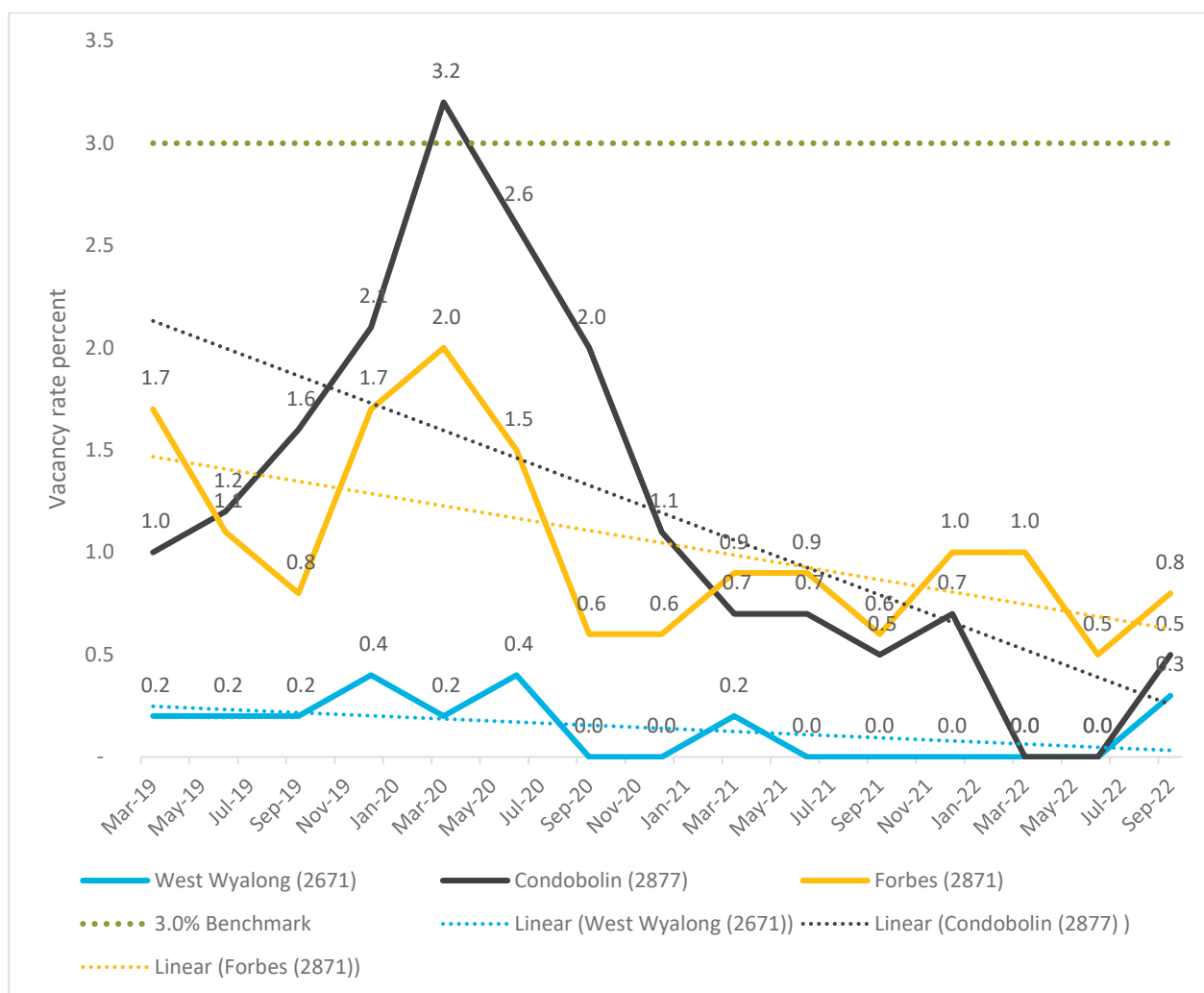
Suburb	Number of properties for sale	Number of properties for rent
Bland LGA		
West Wyalong	2	0
Wyalong	17	0
Alleena	0	0
Barmedman	3	0
Tallimba	2	0
Mirrool	3	0
Ungarie	3	0
Forbes LGA		
Forbes	94	10
Eugowra	5	0
Warroo	2	0
Bedgerabong	0	0
Lachlan LGA		
Condobolin	18	4
Tullibigeal	2	0
Lake Cargello	8	0

Source: REA Group 2022

According to REINSW, rental vacancy rates are traditional market indicators that “measure the proportion of residential properties vacant and available for rent at any point in time” (REINSW 2019). A higher vacancy rate indicates that there are a higher proportion of vacant (dwellings occupied) units, based on the total number of units in an area. Vacancy rates under 3% are low and indicate a tight rental market with an undersupply rental options while vacancy rates above 3% indicate an oversupply of rental options. A rental market with a vacancy rate of 3% is considered at equilibrium (Brewsters Property Group nd).

From March 2019 – September 2022 the residential vacancy rate has been quite variable for each LGA that comprises the local area and consistently significantly below the equilibrium level of 3.0%, particularly for the West-Wyalong and Condobolin postcode. This indicates that there has been a substantial undersupply of rental housing in the local area, with vacancy rates continuing to generally decrease. The decreasing residential vacancy rates aligns with the tight rental market. This type of market suggests a high rental competition, where rents are more likely to be increased and landlords can have their pick of tenants, making it a landlord’s market.

The residential vacancy rate trends for the local area in selected postcodes are available in Figure E.14.



Source: SQM Research 2022, Residential Vacancy Rates, Postcode 2671, 2877 and 2871.

Figure E.14 Residential vacancy rate trends, 2019 – 2022

E.7.5 New housing and rental supply

Housing forecasts for the local area predict an increase of 1,675 required dwellings from 2021–2041 in response to population growth and shifting patterns in household structure and number (DPE 2022). Household requirements and population growth forecasts in the local are presented in Table E.30.

Table E.30 Household requirement and population growth forecasts for the local area, 2021 – 2041

	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Bland LGA					
Total households	2,540	2,612	2,673	2,706	2,715
Average household size	2.33	2.27	2.22	2.19	2.17
Required dwellings	3,058	3,146	3,222	3,261	3,278

Table E.30 Household requirement and population growth forecasts for the local area, 2021 – 2041

	2021	2026	2031	2036	2041
Total dwelling change (required new dwellings)		88	76	39	17
Forbes LGA					
Total households	4,063	4,352	4,769	5,203	5,624
Average household size	2.38	2.35	2.33	2.29	2.27
Required dwellings	4,640	4,976	5,460	5,966	6,459
Total dwelling change (required new dwellings)		336	484	506	493
Lachlan LGA					
Total households	2,448	2,400	2,356	2,283	2,137
Average household size	2.42	2.36	2.29	2.21	2.17
Required dwellings	2,981	2,926	2,877	2,768	2,617
Total dwelling change (required new dwellings)		-55	-49	-109	-151
Local area					
Total households	9,051	9,364	9,798	10,192	10,476
Average household size	--	--	--	--	--
Required dwellings	10,679	11,048	11,559	11,995	12,354
Total dwelling change (required new dwellings)		369	511	436	359

Source: DPIE 2022, NSW 2022 Population projections

Notes: 1. The projected population has been determined by using the ABS ERP population count which takes Census counts of people where they usually live (accounting for interstate visitors and removing overseas visitors), adjusts for Census undercount and overcount using the Census Post Enumeration Survey (PES), adds in Australians who are temporarily overseas, and applies further demographic adjustments.
2. Average household size is taken from NSW DPIE 2020 but there is a mathematical discrepancy – average household size is not equal to the total population divided by the total number of households.

Recent growth in housing supply can be estimated from residential building approval figures for the local area. In 2020–2021 fiscal year-to-date (FYTD), there was a total of 35 new residential building approvals for the year in the local area, including 17 approvals in Bland LGA, 11 in Forbes LGA, and 7 in Lachlan LGA. This represents a total increase of 3 approvals from the previous year. Total residential building approvals in the local area are presented in see Table E.31.

Table E.31 Total residential building approvals in the local area, 2012 – 2022

	2012– 2013	2013– 2014	2014– 2015	2015– 2016	2016– 2017	2017– 2018	2018– 2019	2019– 2020	2020– 2021	2021– 2022 FYTD
Bland LGA										
New Houses	7	11	9	4	9	10	19	14	19	7
New Other Residential	5	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	3
Total	12	11	9	4	11	10	24	14	17	10
Forbes LGA										
New Houses	12	13	12	19	17	12	16	13	12	3
New Other Residential	2	0	0	0	5	20	14	0	2	0
Total	14	13	12	19	22	32	30	13	11	6
Lachlan LGA										
New Houses	8	5	6	8	4	12	7	6	9	6
New Other Residential	3	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11	5	8	8	6	12	7	6	7	6
Local area										
New Houses	27	29	27	31	30	34	42	33	40	16
New Other Residential	10	0	2	0	9	20	18	0	2	3
Total	37	29	29	31	39	54	61	33	35	22

Source: ABS 2021, 8731.0 – Building Approvals, Australia

To determine if residential building approvals in the local area will adequately support expected demand for new dwellings, the median of the total residential building approvals in the local area from 2012–2022, equalling 34 approvals per year, is used to create a reasonable estimation of residential building approvals into the future. The median of the total number of residential approvals from 2012–2022 provides a conservative estimate of the expected trends for building approvals in the local area into the future, as it takes into account the fluctuations present in the previous approval rates. Although it is possible that actual residential approval totals could be higher or lower, without complete certainty in the factors that are driving approval decisions year on year, the median provides a reasonable degree of confidence in these estimations. The projected residential building approvals from 2021–2041 are demonstrated in Table E.32 .

Table E.32 Estimates of future building approvals in the local area, 2021–2041

	2016–2021 ¹	2021–2026 ²	2026–2031	2031–2036	2036–2041
Projected required new dwellings	258	251	4	-70	-160
Estimated residential building approvals	222	175	175	175	175

Notes: 1. 2016–2021 includes number of actual approvals from 2016– 2021.
2. Projections from 2021–2041 are based on an estimate of 35 residential approvals per year.

Based on the above calculations, estimated future residential building approvals in the local area are largely anticipated to accommodate estimated required new dwellings in the local area. However, based on the projections and estimates, additional building approvals may be required from 2021–2026 to accommodate project required new dwellings.

E.7.6 Tourist accommodation

Within the local area, most tourist accommodation is available in the suburbs of West Wyalong in Bland LGA, Forbes in Forbes LGA, and Condobolin in Lachlan LGA. There is a total of 56 accommodation options within the local area these include hotels/motels, caravan parks, bed and breakfasts, apartments, and homestays. The most abundant form of tourist accommodation is hotel/motel. Tourist accommodation in the local area is summarised in Table E.33.

Table E.33 Tourist accommodation, 2022

Suburb	Hotel/Motel	Caravan Park	Bed & Breakfast & Cottages	Apartment	Homestay
Bland LGA					
West Wyalong	15	2	3	1	0
Weethalle	1	0	0	0	0
Barmedman	0	0	0	0	2
Ungarie	2	0	0	0	1
Mirrool	1	0	0	0	0

Table E.33 Tourist accommodation, 2022

Suburb	Hotel/Motel	Caravan Park	Bed & Breakfast & Cottages	Apartment	Homestay
Forbes LGA					
Forbes	13	4	2	0	1
Ootha	0	0	0	0	1
Lachlan LGA					
Condobolin	5	1	0	0	1

Source: Google Travel 2022, Booking.com 2020

E.8 Local business and industry

Across the local area, the top industries of employment are agriculture, forestry and fishing (22.5%), healthcare and social assistance (10.6), and retail trade (10.5%). The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry is the largest industry of employment in each of the LGAs that comprise the local area (25.0 in Bland LGA, 17.6 in Forbes LGA, and 28.1% in Lachlan LGA). Within Forbes LGA and Lachlan LGA, healthcare and social assistance and education and training in the second largest industry of employment, employing 12.5% and 10.5% of employed persons, respectively. However, mining is the second largest industry of employment in Bland LGA, employing 11.4 of employed persons.

In the key townships, the top healthcare and social assistance (18.1%), education and training (14.9 %) and retail trade (14.4%). Within Forbes UCL and Condobolin UCL, healthcare and social assistance is the largest industry of employment employing 14.6% and 13.6% people within the townships respectively. While mining is the largest industry of employment in West Wyalong UCL, employing 16.9% people. The industries of employment within the study area are available in Table E.34.

Table E.34 Industry of employment, 2021

Industry	Bland LGA	Forbes LGA	Lachlan LGA	Local area	West Wyalong UCL	Forbes UCL	Condobolin UCL	Key townships	Regional area	NSW
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	25.0%	17.6%	28.1%	22.5%	8.8%	7.1%	6.9%	10.5%	8.6%	2.0%
Mining	11.4%	3.5%	3.0%	5.6%	16.9%	4.1%	4.6%	10.8%	6.0%	1.0%
Manufacturing	2.4%	4.0%	6.6%	4.3%	3.1%	4.5%	8.3%	6.6%	5.7%	5.5%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	0.9%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%	0.6%	1.1%	0.8%	1.3%	1.2%	1.0%
Construction	6.2%	7.1%	4.1%	6.0%	7.2%	7.6%	5.3%	9.8%	7.8%	8.6%
Wholesale Trade	2.0%	3.2%	1.5%	2.4%	1.9%	3.4%	2.1%	3.8%	2.0%	2.8%
Retail Trade	7.4%	9.4%	6.0%	7.9%	9.2%	11.4%	9.1%	14.4%	8.9%	9.0%

Table E.34 Industry of employment, 2021

Industry	Bland LGA	Forbes LGA	Lachlan LGA	Local area	West Wyalong UCL	Forbes UCL	Condoblin UCL	Key townships	Regional area	NSW
Accommodation and Food Services	5.7%	5.4%	4.0%	5.1%	7.8%	7.0%	5.2%	9.5%	6.7%	6.2%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	3.3%	4.0%	3.1%	3.6%	3.2%	4.4%	4.4%	5.6%	3.6%	4.6%
Information Media and Telecommunications	0.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%	0.9%	0.4%	0.6%	0.9%	0.7%	1.8%
Financial and Insurance Services	0.6%	1.1%	0.6%	0.8%	0.3%	1.1%	0.3%	1.1%	1.3%	5.3%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	0.6%	0.7%	0.2%	0.6%	0.8%	0.8%	0.4%	1.0%	1.1%	1.7%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	2.1%	3.1%	1.7%	2.5%	2.7%	2.9%	1.5%	3.6%	3.6%	8.9%
Administrative and Support Services	2.0%	1.7%	1.7%	1.8%	2.1%	2.1%	2.2%	2.9%	2.7%	3.2%
Public Administration and Safety	5.0%	5.1%	5.8%	5.3%	7.0%	5.8%	9.9%	9.6%	7.3%	6.1%
Education and Training	8.2%	10.8%	12.1%	10.5%	8.7%	11.7%	11.2%	14.9%	9.3%	8.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	7.8%	12.2%	10.5%	10.6%	9.8%	14.6%	13.6%	18.1%	14.9%	14.4%
Arts and Recreation Services	0.3%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.7%	1.2%	1.0%	8.6%	1.4%
Other Services	4.0%	4.2%	3.5%	4.0%	4.2%	4.9%	4.7%	6.4%	6.0%	3.4%

Source: ABS 2021, Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles

In 2020, there were 2,920 registered businesses across the local area, none of which employed more than 200 employees. Of these registered businesses, 36.6% were classed as small businesses employing fewer than 20 people, with an additional 62.4% classed as sole operators/non-employing. Additionally, 5.3% of businesses turned over \$2 million or more, with the greatest proportion of businesses operating within the \$200k to \$2m range. Registered businesses by employment size and turnover range are provided in Table E.35 and Table E.36.

Table E.35 Registered businesses by employment size, 2020

Area	Non-employing	1–19 employees	20–199 employees	200+ employees	Total
Bland LGA	52.9%	46.8%	0.6%	0.0%	788
Forbes LGA	59.0%	39.4%	1.0%	0.3%	1,158
Lachlan LGA	59.7%	39.8%	0.4%	0.0%	974
Local area	57.6%	41.5%	0.7%	0.1%	2,920

Source: ABS 2021, 8165.0—Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, June 2017 to June 2021

Table E.36 Registered businesses by turnover range, 2020

Area	\$0 to less than \$50k	\$50k to less than 200k	\$200k to less than \$2m	\$2m or more	Total number
Bland LGA	17.6%	27.0%	48.9%	6.9%	788
Forbes LGA	25.6%	27.9%	39.6%	6.9%	1,158
Lachlan LGA	19.7%	32.8%	39.8%	7.8%	974
Local area	21.5%	29.3%	42.2%	7.2%	2,920

Source: ABS 2021, 8165.0—Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, June 2017 to June 2021

Of the 2,920 registered businesses in the local area, 49.0% were in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry. The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry is the most predominant industry across each LGA that comprises the local area, with upwards of 40% of registered businesses in each LGA operating within this industry. The industries with the next highest proportion of registered businesses across the local area was construction (8.6%), and rental, hiring and real estate services (7.1%). Mining represents 0.3% of registered businesses across the local area, including 0.3% in Forbes LGA and Lachlan LGA and 0.4% in Bland LGA. Registered businesses by industry in the local area are presented in Table E.37.

Table E.37 Registered businesses by industry, 2021

Industry	Bland LGA	Forbes LGA	Lachlan LGA	Local area
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	49.6%	42.1%	56.7%	49.0%
Mining	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Manufacturing	2.8%	3.5%	3.9%	3.4%
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	0.8%	0.6%	0.4%	0.6%
Construction	7.9%	11.7%	5.5%	8.6%
Wholesale trade	1.9%	3.9%	2.7%	2.9%
Retail trade	4.9%	4.6%	4.0%	4.5%
Accommodation and food services	4.9%	3.7%	3.9%	4.1%

Table E.37 Registered businesses by industry, 2021

Industry	Bland LGA	Forbes LGA	Lachlan LGA	Local area
Transport, postal and warehousing	7.5%	5.3%	4.1%	5.5%
Information media and telecommunications	0.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Financial and insurance services	1.1%	1.5%	1.1%	1.3%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	4.8%	9.0%	6.8%	7.1%
Professional, scientific and technical services	3.2%	4.0%	3.2%	3.5%
Administrative and support services	1.1%	1.6%	0.7%	1.2%
Public administration and safety	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%
Education and training	0.0%	0.3%	1.1%	0.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2.5%	1.7%	0.6%	1.6%
Arts and recreation services	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Other services	5.6%	6.0%	2.9%	4.8%
Total number	788	1,158	974	2,920

Source: ABS 2021, 8165.0—Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, June 2017 to June 2021

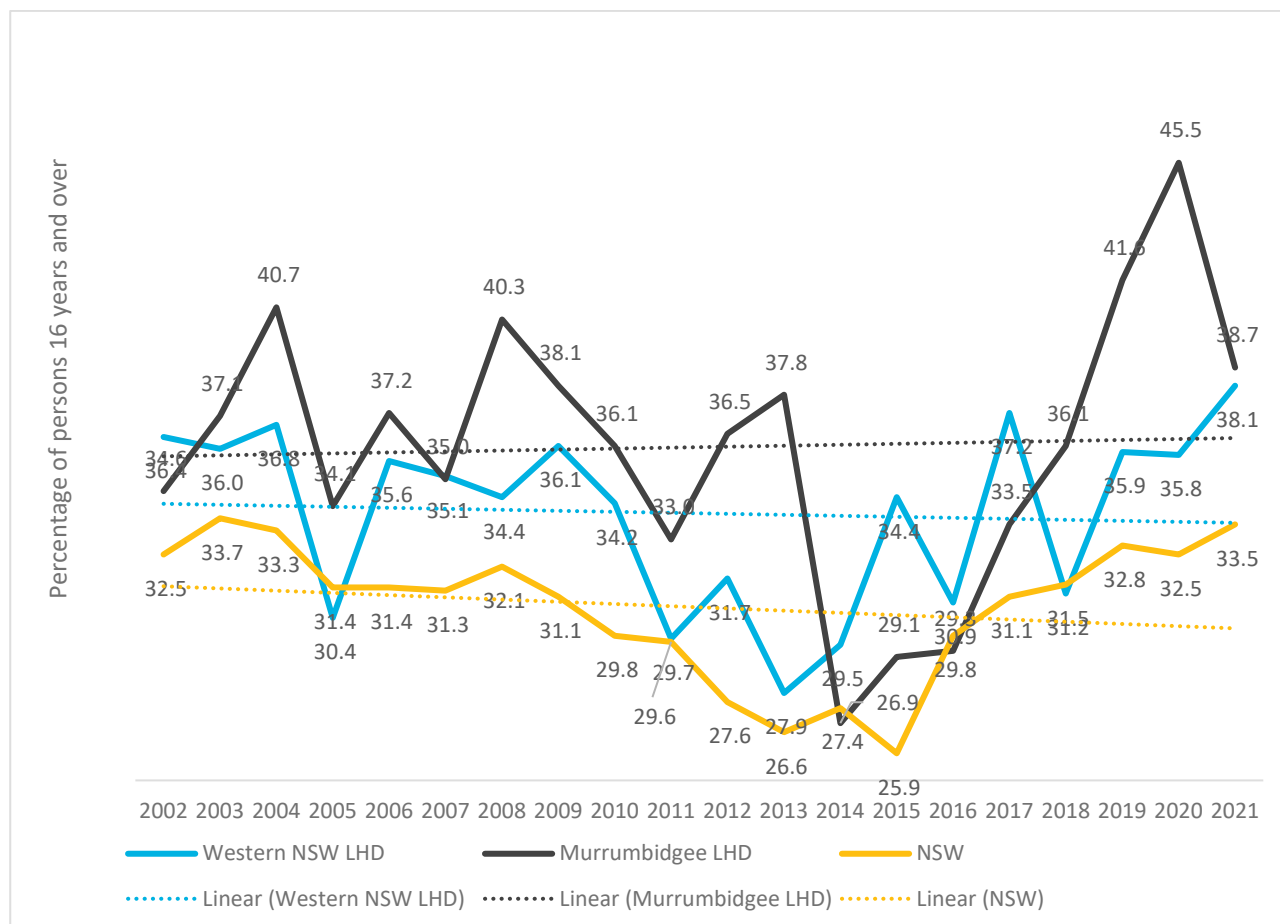
Notes: Excludes businesses with industry 'not stated'.

E.9 Health and community well-being

E.9.1 Community health

Social determinants of health, described as “the circumstances in which people grow, live, work, age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness...which are shaped by political, social, and economic forces” (AIHW 2020), indicate the health of a population. These include factors such as conditions of employment, provision of social services and support, and socioeconomic position. Although the local area and regional area have a substantially lower level of unemployment compared to NSW, there are relatively more households with low income and fewer people in high-skill occupations compared to the rest of NSW, suggesting higher rates of socio-economic disadvantage. Furthermore, the provision of social infrastructure and social services is anticipated to be less comprehensive compared to more urban regions of NSW, which may require travel outside of the local area to access specialist health and community services.

Three major health risk factors can also be used as an indicator of population health: alcohol consumption, smoking, and obesity. Western NSW and Murrumbidgee LHDs, which encompasses the local area, has consistently had a higher proportion of the population who consumed alcohol at levels considered to be a high risk to health¹ compared to NSW from 2002–2021 (NSW Health 2020). Within both Western NSW LHD and Murrumbidgee LHD trends of alcohol consumption have varied significantly. However, there has been a substantial increase in alcohol consumption at levels posing a long-term health risk in Murrumbidgee LHD from 2014–2021 (see Figure E.15).

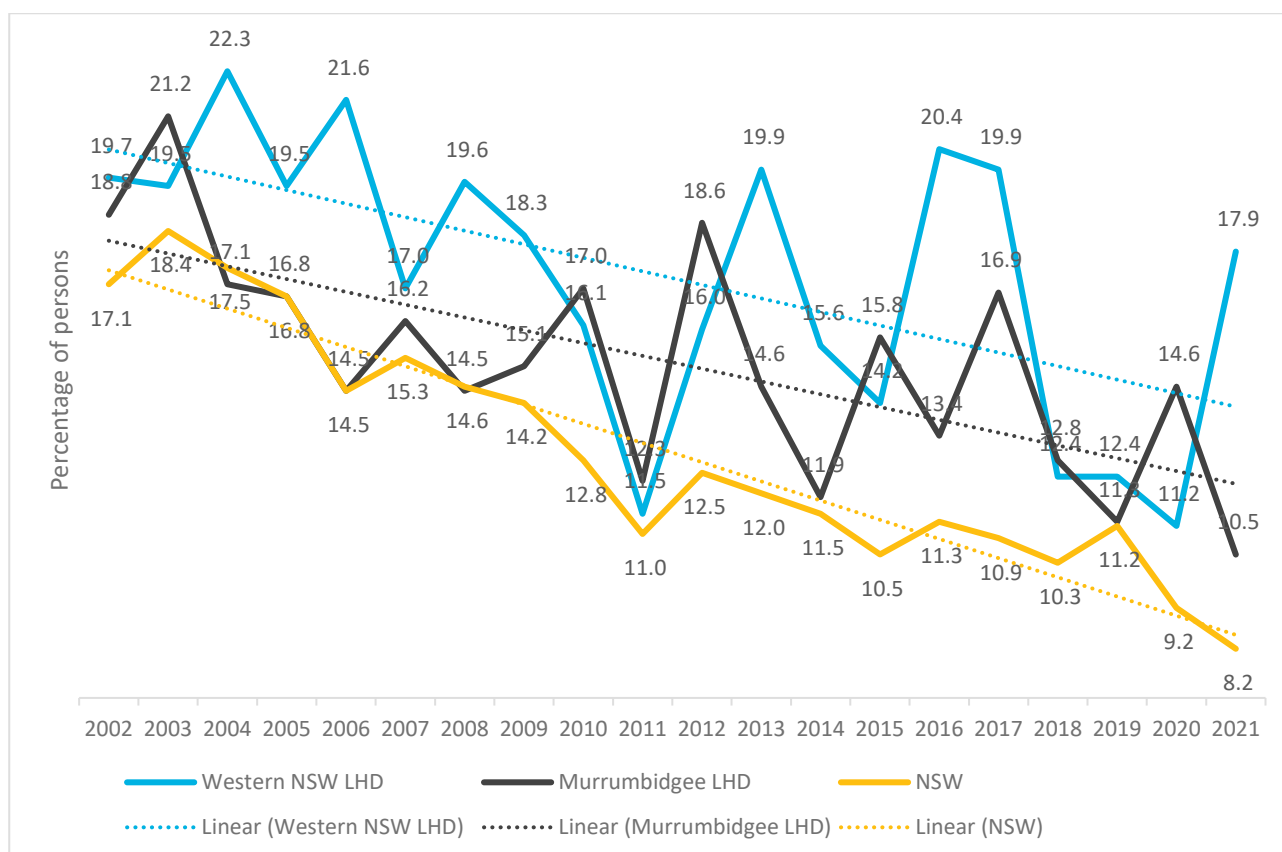


Source: NSW Health 2022, *Health Statistics NSW*.

Figure E.15 Alcohol consumption at levels posing a long-term health risk (proportion of persons aged 16 years and older), 2002–2021

The proportion of persons who smoke in Western NSW LHD and Murrumbidgee LHD were also generally above the state average from 2002–2021. There has been considerable fluctuation in the proportion of smokers in both LHDs over this time, with significant increases in 2012 in Murrumbidgee LHD and in 2013 and 2016 in Western NSW LHD, as well as decreases in 2011, 2014–2015, and 2018 in both LHDs (NSW Health 2022) (Figure E.16).

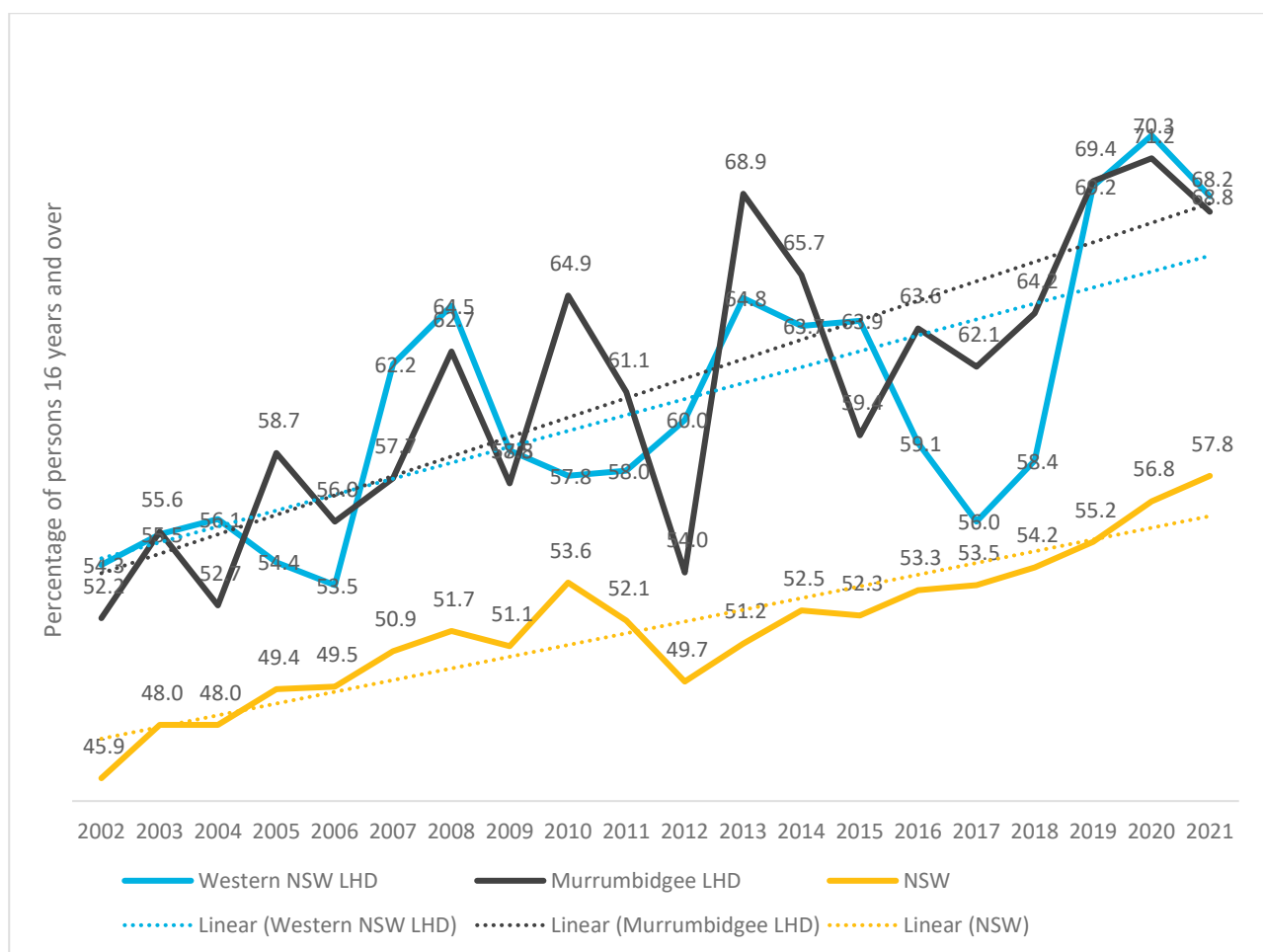
¹ High risk drinking is defined as the consumption of more than 2 standard drinks per day.



Source: NSW Health 2022, *Health Statistics NSW*.

Figure E.16 Daily smoking in adults (proportion of persons), 2002–2021

Physical inactivity, obesity and being overweight are significant public health problems in NSW which have been generally increasing since 2002–2021. The instances of overweight and obese persons have also been increasing in Western NSW LHD and Murrumbidgee LHD, with a higher proportion of overweight and obese persons on average compared to the rest of NSW (NSW Health 2022) (see Figure E.17).

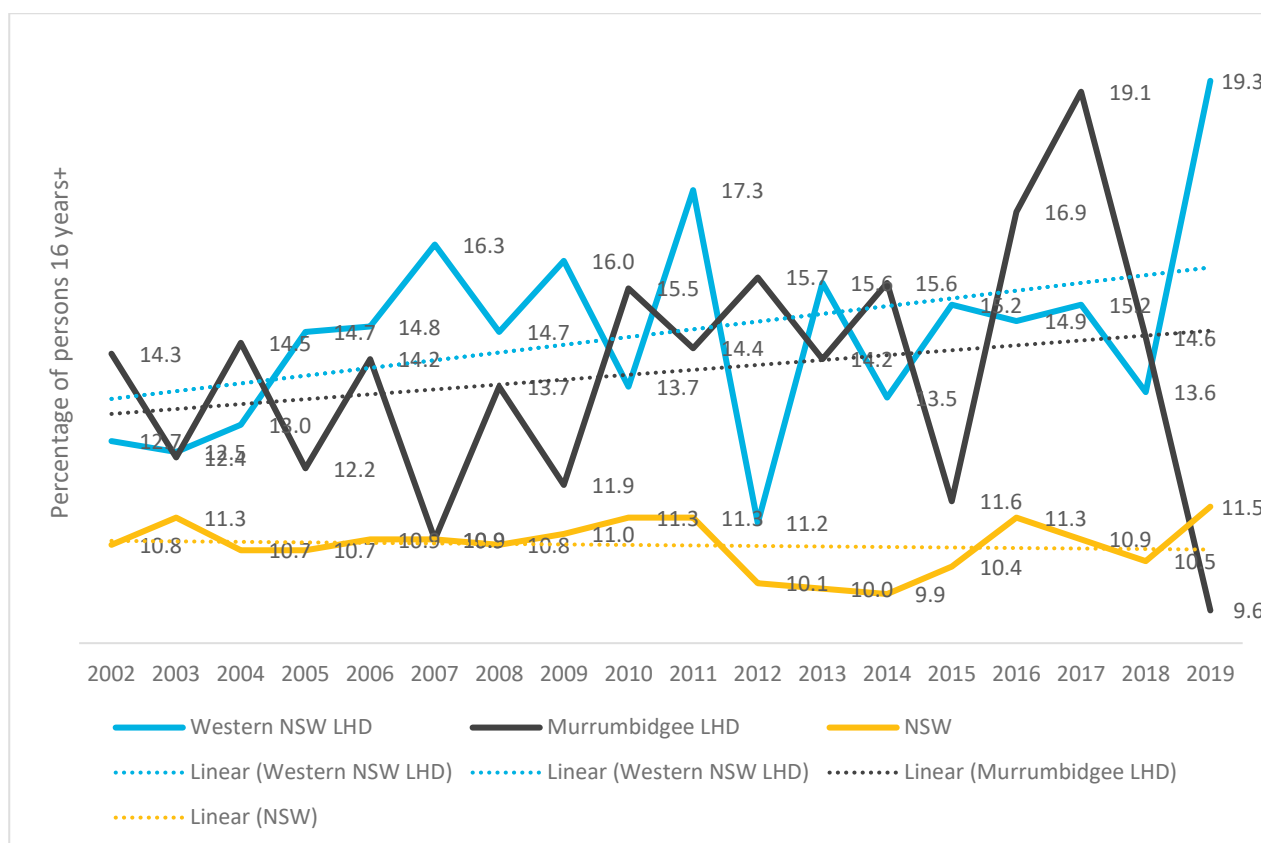


Source: NSW Health 2022, *Health Statistics NSW*

Figure E.17 Overweight or obese adults (proportion of persons aged 16 years and older), 2002–2019

ii Asthma

Prevalence of asthma has varied significantly year on year in both Western NSW LHD and Murrumbidgee LHD from 2002–2019, with a greater prevalence of asthma in both of these LHDs compared to NSW. In Western NSW LHD there was a significant increase in prevalence of asthma from 2018–2019. However, Murrumbidgee LHD experienced a significant decrease from 2017–2019. Data for asthma in persons aged 16 years and over is presented in Figure E.18.

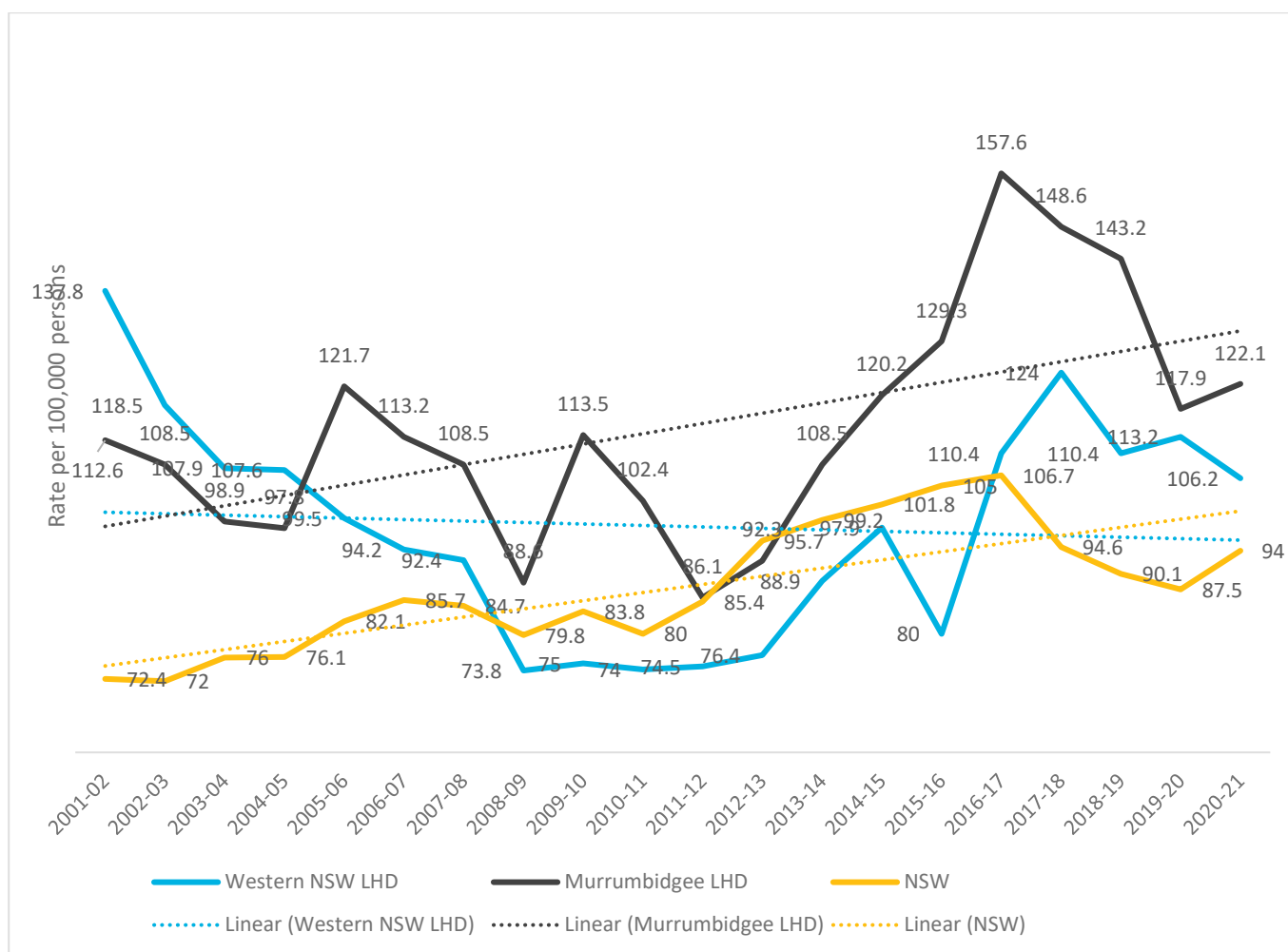


Source: NSW Health 2020, *Health Statistics NSW*.

Figure E.18 Prevalence of asthma in persons aged 16 years and older, 2002–2019

iii Mental health

Data relating to the number of people that have been hospitalised as a result of self-harm is indicative of very poor and/or poorly managed mental health. Intentional self-harm hospitalisations trends in Western NSW LHD have generally been increasing from 2001–2021, with a significant increase from 2011–2017. Trends in Western NSW LHD have generally been decreasing from 2001–2021, however there was a significant increase from 2015–2018. Data for intentional self-harm hospitalisations is presented in Figure E.19.



Source: NSW Health 2022, *Health Statistics NSW*.

Figure E.19 Intentional self-harm hospitalisations (rate per 100,000 persons of all ages), 2001–2002 to 2020–2021

iv Access to mental health services

Information concerning access to mental health services within the local and regional area is available within the Primary Health Network (PHN) levels. The local and regional area fall within the Western NSW and Murrumbidgee PHN, with data concerning patients of mental health services collected by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The following data represents from the PHN demonstrates the number of patients residing within the Western NSW and Murrumbidgee PHN who have claimed non-hospital Medicare-subsidised services, specifically mental health related Allied Health services, GP mental health and specialist mental health services (AIHW 2021). The following indicators were used to capture the access to mental health care services in the area:

- Level 3 GP Mental health – all persons;
- Level 2 Allied Health subtotal – mental health care – all persons; and
- Level 3 Psychiatry – all persons.

When comparing the number of patients accessing mental health services within the Western NSW and Murrumbidgee PHN, more residents access GP mental health services in comparison to Allied Health or specialist mental health services. This may reflect a lack of allied health and specialist services within the Local and Regional area.

When comparing the national percentage of patients with residents in the Western NSW and Murrumbidgee PHN, the proportion of patients within Western NSW and Murrumbidgee PHN accessing GP mental health services is sitting just under the national proportion of patients accessing GP mental health (see Figure E.20).

The proportion of patients within Western NSW and Murrumbidgee PHN accessing specialist mental health services is lower compared the national proportion of patients. However, the proportion of patients within the Western NSW and Murrumbidgee PHN, accessing specialised mental health services is consistent with the national proportion.

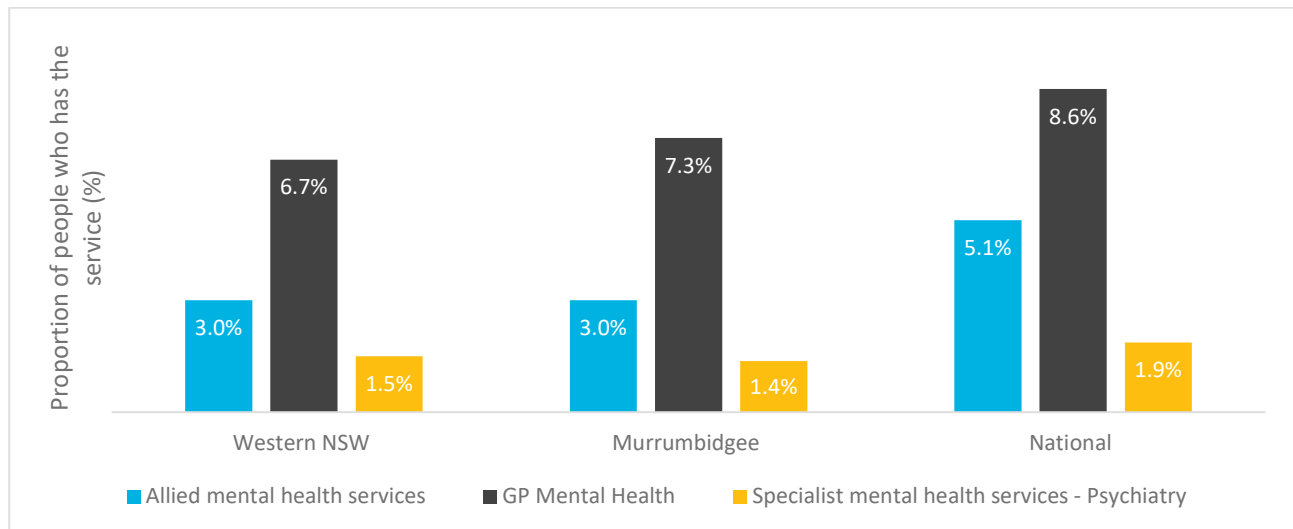
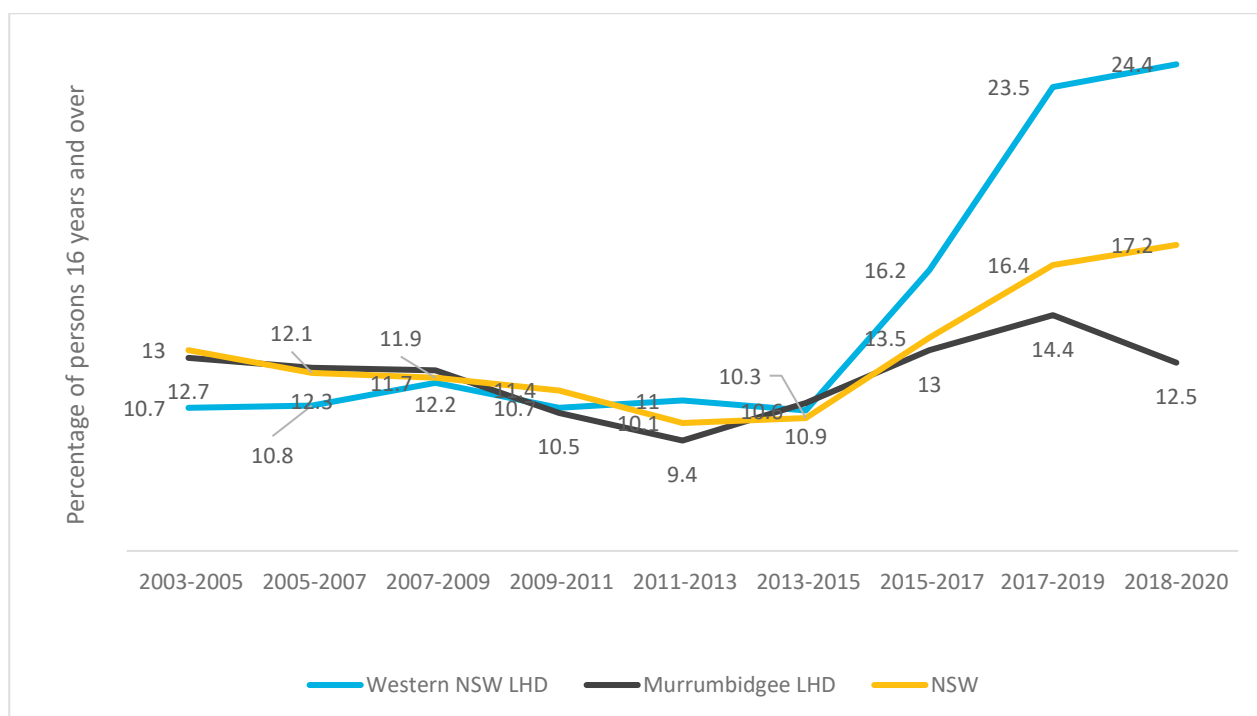


Figure E.20 Proportion of people who have claimed non-hospital Medicare-subsidised mental health services, 2020–2021

Data is also collected by NSW Health regarding the level of psychological distress using the Kessler 10 (K10) approach. This approach uses a 10 item questionnaire that measures anxiety, depression, agitation, and psychological fatigue in the most recent 4 week period and has been adopted by NSW Health as an indicator of mental health. The trend data is only available at the LHD level and indicates that trends of psychological distress rated between high and very high in Western NSW LHD have remained very consistent with trends across greater NSW. From 2003–2015 trends in Murrumbidgee LHD were also similar to those across NSW. However, there has been a significant increase in high and very high levels of psychological distress in Murrumbidgee LHD since 2013–2015 (see Figure E.21 for more detail).



Source: NSW Health 2022, *Health Statistics NSW*.

Figure E.21 High and very high levels of psychological distress based on Kessler 10 scale (proportion of persons aged 16 years and older), 2003–2020

E.9.2 Voluntary work

Volunteering rates can give an indication of social cohesion in a community, and the willingness of people to help each other. Rates of volunteering in 2021 were significantly higher in the study area compared to NSW, with 21.5% of persons in the local area, 24.2% in the key townships and 16.8% in the regional having done voluntary work in the last 12 months compared to 13.0% in NSW (ABS 2021). The proportion of persons who had volunteered through an organisation or group was particularly significant in Bland LGA at 24.1%. The proportion of persons who volunteered in the study area is presented in Table E.38.

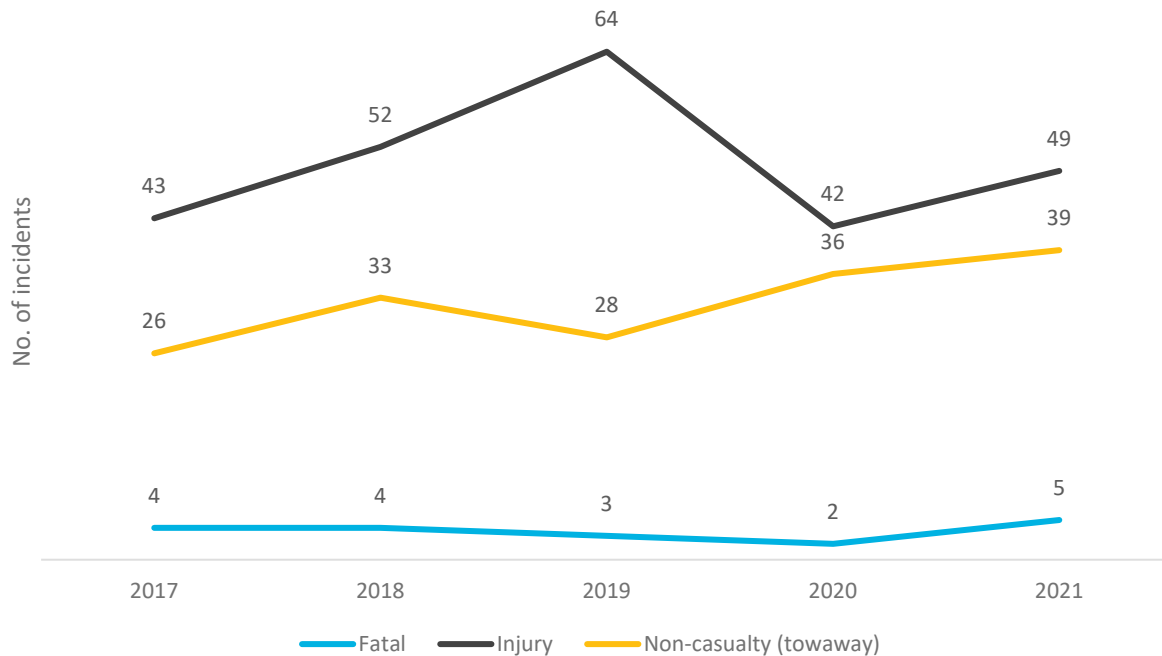
Table E.38 Volunteering rates, 2021

Did voluntary work through an organisation or group (last 12 months)	
Bland LGA	24.1%
Forbes LGA	18.5%
Lachlan LGA	23.8%
Local area	21.5%
West Wyalong UCL	21.3%
Forbes UCL	21.3%
Condobolin UCL	21.3%
Key townships	24.2%
Regional area	16.8%
NSW	13.0%

Source: ABS 2021, *Census of Population and Housing: General Community Profiles*

E.9.3 Road incidents

Crash trends in the local area are presented as a combined total of the trends in Bland LGA, Forbes LGA, and Lachlan LGA. Incidents resulting in injury have generally been increasing across the local area with a peak of incidents in 2021. Non-casualty incidents have generally been increasing and fatal incidents have remained relatively stable. Crash trends for the local area are presented in Figure E.22.



Source: TfNSW 2022, *Interactive Crash Statistics*

Figure E.22 Crash trends in the local area, 2015–2021

Acronyms

Table E.39 **Acronyms**

Acronym	
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
AHMAC	Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
BOCSAR	Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
CGO	Cowal Gold Operations
CWA	Country women's association
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment
DCJ	Department of Community Justice
FYTD	Fiscal year-to-date
GP	General practitioner
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
IEO	Index of Education and Occupation
IER	Index of Economic Resources
IRSAD	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage
IRSD	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage
K10	Kessler 10
LALC	Local Aboriginal Lands Council
LGA	Local Government Area
LHD	Local Health District
NSW	New South Wales
OSHC	Outside of school hours care
PES	Post Enumeration Survey
PHIDU	Public Health Information Development Unit
REINSW	Real Estate Institute of New South Wales
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SES	State Emergency Service
SIA	Social impact assessment

Table E.39 Acronyms

Acronym	
SIA Guideline	Social impact assessment guideline 2021
SSC	State suburb
TfNSW	Transport for New South Wales
The OPX Project	Cowal Gold Operations (CGO) Open Pit Expansion (OPX) Project
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Appendix F

Community stakeholder engagement

Memorandum

Subject: CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Stakeholder Engagement

1.1 Landholder discussions

Table 1 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
Landholder No. 1	- A key concern is the potential for it to exacerbate flood risks. At the time of the interview the property was experiencing moderate to severe flooding. There is a concern that the expanded bund wall will displace water with the effect of increased flooding of their property- “..the bund is likely to push more water over our property”. - During 2016 flood events, there was a period of 9 weeks when were unable to access the homestead- had to leave the car out on the road and use tractor/ 4wd vehicles to ferry to and from the gate to the homestead. - Prior to the mine and the existing bund wall, flooding was not as severe- in the 1990/ 1992 floods did not lose access to the homestead. - Construction of the (new) Newell Highway has certainly exacerbated the flooding issue. The elevated Highway holds the water in and prevents it from flowing out. - Better management of the release of water from Wyangala Dam would substantially improve the flood situation downstream. Water should be released in smaller quantities so that it is able to flow through the Cowal system and not bank up. - The property has been in the family for generations- they run sheep and cattle as well as cropping of cereal crops (oats, wheat and barley) and fodder as the Lake dries off. Currently have a herd of around 700 head of cattle and about 5,000 – 6,000 sheep. It takes about 3 summers for the Lake to dry out. - Need somewhere to put the stock when the water rises – there is very little land which remains dry. Have arrangements with surrounding property owners to take stock to when flooded. Also use the stock routes. - The stock routes have not been well managed and maintained. There has been very little maintenance and so the fences are in state of disrepair, and they are choked with weeds etc. - We pay around \$20,000 per year to the Council in rates, don’t get much out of it- they don’t provide any services to us and don’t manage the stock routes. - The mine has been very good for West Wyalong and the region generally. The creation of jobs and the wealth which the mine injects into local economies is very important. Wyalong would be a ghost town if it wasn’t for the mine. - The mine has also led to diversification of businesses in the region- for example there are engineering and fabrication businesses which have started up. These offer additional employment opportunities which would not exist if it were not for the mine. - If the mine was going to offer something for us, it would be greatly appreciated if the access from the road to the homestead could be built up 3 feet! Would be good if some of the waste rock from the mine could be used for such a purpose, although understand that all mining by-products need to be carefully managed and therefore unlikely to happen.

Table 1 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	- The homestead was flooded in 1956 floods. A levee bank was constructed following this event and the house has been flood free ever since- it's just the access which gets cut off. - The use of groundwater for the mine should be avoided as groundwater is a finite resource which should only be drawn on in times of drought. The mine should be able to utilize surface flows when they are available/ plentiful. It doesn't make sense to draw on groundwater when there is no need to do so. - In terms of amenity impacts of the mine, the lights are visible from the property, but it is not so prevalent to cause an issue. - There is some noise which travels across from the mine- primarily the beep beep of reversing trucks. It is only when there are overcast conditions that the noise is audible. - There are sometimes tremors from blasting, but you get used to them and not too much of an issue. There was a recent earthquake which came as a surprise. It was at around 9am/ 10am which is not when the mine is allowed to blast, so we knew it was an earthquake. - Overall the relationship with the mine is good- Evolution have been a lot better to deal with than Barrick (previous operator of the mine). - Pest and weed management are an issue. For the last couple of years pigs have been a problem. The land owned by the mine is not managed and subsequently there are issues with pigs. Weeds get spread down the river system and so not attributed to the mine. - When the water recedes, the fence with the mine needs to be repaired. The mine pays for the fencing materials. - With all the vegetation which will grow following the wet weather currently being experienced, fire is going to be a major risk next summer. The last fire started somewhere on Bogeys Island and then just absolutely ripped through. It was a scary prospect as there's no time to prepare and move stock. The fire services (SES) out of Forbes are good.
Landholder No 1. X 2	- the new bund wall will push water out further with a consequential effect on water dynamics over their property. As currently evident, a small increase in water displacement could have a significant effect on land inundation and potential access to the homestead. - It was commented that since the existing bund wall was constructed, the inundation experienced during flood events had got worse- in the 2026 event Landowner had to leave her car at the gate for 9 consecutive weeks. Construction of the new (raised) Highway was thought to have made a significant contribution to problematic flooding issues. The water is trapped by the Highway and banks up. - The homestead was built in early 1900's and has been in the family for generations. The house was flooded in 1956. Following this the bank was constructed and the house has been flood free ever since. Would be great if the access was also flood free- needs installation of a three foot high driveway of about 350m in length! - It was nominated that the river inflows to Lake Cowal could be better managed. Water could be let out in smaller quantities so that it able to drain away and not bank up as occurs when large amounts of water are released. - We run large herds of both cattle (approximately 700 head) and sheep approximately 5,000 – 6,000 head). When flood waters rise, they need higher land for stock. They do have arrangements in place with surrounding landholders for these occurrences. - During times of drought, they have had to rely on stock routes to keep stock condition. Overall maintenance of the stock routes by state and local councils was considered very poor. It was commented that they pay over \$20,000/ year in rates and don't seem to get much in return. - We also grow crops of oats, barley and wheat- up to two thousand acres when conditions are favourable. - We have a good relationship with CGO ('much better than Barrick'). They appreciate being kept informed about CGO operations. The turn-over of staff within CGO and the lack of a long term contact point with the mine was raised as an issue (associated with departure of Simon Coates, with whom they had a good relationship) - The mine has been good for the region- particularly West Wyalong which would be a ghost town if it were not for the mine. - There are numerous businesses such as CB and Pilon Engineering in West Wyalong which are only there because of the mine. There is no doubt that the mine has opened up employment opportunities and makes a valuable contribution to the local economy.

Table 1 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• They do sometimes experience noise effects from mine operations- mostly the ‘beep beep’ of reversing trucks It is only audible in overcast conditions and did not consider it to be much of a nuisance. • They do experience lighting effects from the mine, however it was considered overly intrusive. • There are occasional vibrations felt from blasting. There was a recent earthquake event, which threw everyone out because they are used to slight vibrations from blasting but this was different. • The issue of mine related use of groundwater was mentioned. It was considered that the mine should be able to utilise surface flows when they are available. Groundwater should only be drawn upon when required. • An additional issue is the lack of land management of CGO owned lands. There are ongoing problems with feral pigs, particularly in the last few years. The risk of fire was also mentioned. This would occur next summer/ the one after. The last fire was ignited on Bogey’s Island and ran through very quickly. This was following the rains of 2016. The same conditions would occur after these good seasons, so there will certainly be a risk to manage. • We appreciated CGO taking the time to keep them informed as to mine development and operation. They look forward to ongoing engagement.
Landholders No. 2	• The homestead of the Laurel Park property is approximately 2km direct line from the mine site. There is also a cottage which provides worker accommodation which is only approximately 1.5km from the current mine site; however the proposed location of the topsoil stockpile would be approximately 1km from the cottage. • The family have been farming in the area since the 1890’s. It may be that we are the last generation on the property as our children have married and are living elsewhere. Historically ran sheep on the property (merino stud) along with cattle and mixed cropping. • We are the closest neighbour to the mine. It is felt that over time the mine has continued to encroach upon their property. With each modification or expansion the waste dumps and stockpiles get larger and larger- to the point where they have become a dominant feature of the surrounding landscape. • Concerns regarding the open pit continuation project centre on two issues- the location of the proposed topsoil stockpile and the effect of noise and lighting on the amenity of the workers accommodation cottage. • The issue with the proposed location of the top soil stockpile is that it will impact upon the flow of water into a large dam which is the principal water source for the paddock which borders the Lake. This is the most productive area of the property and if were to lose surface water run-off into the dam it would affect overall economic viability of the property. If this issue cannot be avoided or addressed, then they have no option but to lodge an objection to the project. • We are reliant upon farmhands to assist operate the property. The only worker accommodation they have is the cottage and it is a concern that with the encroachment of the mine, workers will not want to live in the cottage due to noise, dust and lighting effects. It is already difficult finding farmhands as competition for labour is high, which is also contributed to by the mine. • Noise from mine activities is a constant impact experienced on the property. It was notable that noise effects increased due to modifications made to the tailings facility. There is a continuous hum of trucks with reversing ‘beeps’ echoing across the landscape. It was certainly a lot quieter before the mine started up. • Holds some concerns as to the effect the larger bund wall at the mine will have upon flood dynamics. Specifically wonders whether the bund might result in Lake Cowal filling quicker and draining into Nerang Cowal- this could potentially impact on cropping of areas around Nerang Cowal. • Evolution is generally good to deal with, however there is a pretty continuous turnover of key staff contact points for landholders. Would appreciate more liaison with decision makers of the mine
Landholder No 3.	• Foxman Downs property which is situated to the west of the mine site. It is not a large agricultural enterprise like other adjoining landholders. • During the initial gold rush days there was a thriving community around Lake Cowal. There were over 2,000 people living at Billy Lookout which is on property. They still occasionally find small nuggets of gold around the property.

Table 1 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• Prior to the good rush, there was a large Aboriginal community residing around Lake Cowal. It is said that Billabong Station was the site of a major massacre of Aboriginal people. • Whilst the mine at Lake Cowal created jobs and economic opportunity, it also led to changes to the community dynamics and 'feel' of West Wyalong. The dynamics of the town changed, and it did create a bit of an 'us and them' mentality as new people came to town. The community has come to accept the mine and most people seem to wish for the economic benefits it provides to continue. • The stock routes provide an important means of access to the Lake and surrounding areas. They are particularly important during dry years and would not like to see changes to the stock routes- they are part of the heritage of the community. There seems to always be a tendency to abandon heritage to facilitate economic progress. • In terms of direct impacts of the mine, can hear mine operations when the wind if coming from the right direction. It doesn't cause any great concern. • From the property can only view the mine directly from Billy Lookout. There are occasionally flashing lights which cause annoyance. Usually after reporting to CGO the lights are stopped/ moved. • The community needs improved access to all forms of health care and assistance. There are quite a lot of people who are doing it tough and there are very limited support services. Resources are scarce and landholder continues to work on a part time basis at the Wyalong Health Service. • Passionate about horses and teaching kids how to ride. Would like to run a program to teach Aboriginal kids how to ride as it would provide them with a range of benefits including potential employment. They need to be managed better, however they • There has been a problem with pest management due to CGO not managing their land. This includes invasive species such pigs and also emu's which cause havoc with fences etc. It would be good if CGO could engage more with surrounding landholders on issues such as pest management. • Would like to see CGO provide contribution to a wider array of community clubs and events- otherwise it contributes to dividing the community. All too often the local football club gets sponsorship money, whilst things like archery and performing arts are ignored. • There is a lack of activities for kids in town. Teaching kids how to swim would be a great initiative for CGO to support. There are kids living in relative poverty in town who never get the opportunity to learn how to swim. Would be good to see establishment of a lifesaving club in West Wyalong. • Overall not opposed to the Project and continuation of the mine as it does provide some benefits to the community, however there is also room for improvement through greater communication and transparency and an inclusive approach to community contributions and legacy commitments.
Landholder No. 4	• Taroona station is a large agricultural operation supporting sheep and cattle production along with the cropping of wheat and other cereal crops. Some of the property is used as a biodiversity offset for the mine. • The key issue of concern is the effect the new bund wall will have upon displacement of water on to lands which are part of Taroona Station. • When the initial bund was constructed, there was no compensation for water displacement paid to landholders surrounding the Lake (by Barrick). Landholders who have been in the area for a long time know that the bund has had an impact on flood characteristics; however there is a lack of data which proves that this has been the case. In the 2016 floods, there were areas on Taroona Station which were flooded that had never been flooded previously. • It needs to be understood that a very small increase in water displacement can have a substantial effect on land surrounding the Lake as the terrain is so flat. It is recognized that CGO have stated that the new bund would only have a maximum of 15mm increase to flood levels; however this sounds a little like just a convenient number. What we need to know is the actual effect which 15mm (or whatever it ends up being) will have on the operation of surrounding landholders. • Crops are very sensitive to soil moisture. A small increase in inundation levels due to water displacement could result in substantial areas of land being too wet to crop- or even to graze. Winds play a big role in the pattern of water. When the winds are in a certain direction, it pushes the water that way and make a big difference to the areas inundated or cut off. Has particular concerns that a portion of land right on the Lake which was purchased for cropping and livestock will potentially be impacted. Would like to know whether the rate of water discharge may be affected and subsequently the duration of flood events.

Table 1 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• We would like to see more detailed modelling undertaken which shows specifically what effect the bund wall will have on his property. Would like to see Evolution invest in the lidar or bathymetric surveys (utilizing the best technologies available) which would definitively model what effect water displaced due to the bund would have. • It was indicated that if the investment in lidar or bathymetric surveys and flood modelling was not undertaken and there was subsequently a lack of certainty over the effects of the bund, then they may lodge a formal objection to the Project. It was felt that the issue was not properly addressed when the first bund was constructed, and therefore want it fully addressed this time. • It was noted that there are no gauging stations on the Lake, so there is a lack of reliable data on flooding characteristics. Flood modelling needs to also take into account the broader catchment. It is the Bland and the Lachlan systems working together- the regional characteristics have a major influence on flood behavior in and around Lake Cowal. There is a need for holistic modelling so that true effects are able to be predicted and understood. • If the technology is available to more accurately predict the impact of water displacement; then this should be used regardless of the cost- which are small when considering the major profits realized through operation of the mine. Such transparency is what is considered a true 'social license to operate'. • Queried whether Water NSW was doing anything to build a better understanding of the flooding dynamics of the Lake. They should be doing more, particularly to better understand what impact construction of the Highway has created. It is a major bund which holds the water in- this needs to be recognized in future modelling. • Groundwater is relied upon to maintain agricultural operations in dry times. The mine should not draw upon groundwater (Bland Paleo Channel) unless absolutely necessary. They should prioritise surface water to meet all requirements when it is available. The Bland Paleo needs to be preserved as this is vital to agricultural operations during dry times. There needs to be a re-alignment of the water allocations so that surface water is prioritized, followed by saline bores and then followed by Bland Paleo only if there is no alternative source. • There is an acceptance of the mine in West Wyalong. Overall, it has been good for the economic vitality of the town/ region and opened up opportunities for local businesses. There have also been some negative effects such as increased competition for labour (have been directly impacted by this), along with pressures on housing. Overall, it is important that all impacts are properly recognized so that it can be determined whether on balance the mine is having a positive or negative impact. • Would like to see a positive long term legacy left by the mine. This is both the infrastructure left behind along with the skills and prosperity of the population. A shared understanding of legacy needs to be fostered through engagement. • There is a need to improve public access to the Lake so that it can benefit more people. There are business opportunities (tourism etc.) which would benefit from improved access. • Will need to carefully consider whether to lodge an objection to the OPC Project. There is no such thing as 'anonymous' in these communities. People can be ostracized from the community if it is felt that economic opportunities are going to be lost due to objecting to the Project.
Landholder No 5.	• We have owned their property on Lake Cowal for over 70 years. They farm crops including sorghum, wheat and canola as well as sheep for both meat and wool. • A major feature of the property is the superior grazing and crop production it provides in dry times as the lake gradually dries off and retains soil moisture. • Farming hasn't done a world of good to the environment as it resulted in the clearing of land and disruption to the natural environment. The grazing of cattle and sheep doesn't do much harm across the Lake where cane grass grows prodigiously. • When the proposal to develop the gold mine was first announced people were very much opposed to it on environmental grounds. Approval of the mine went to an NSW Commission of Inquiry. The mine was eventually approved in 1998. • In retrospect, the mine should have resumed all lands across the Lake. They would then have sole responsibility for ensuring that the environmental values of the Lake were protected. The situation now is that the mine has responsibility for some of the lands under the Lake and private farmers have responsibility for other areas. The two parties have different objectives which causes difficulties.

Table 1 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• The weather patterns (and flooding) currently being experienced are very similar to previous weather systems. Property becomes inundated- which is why they invested in a house in Forbes. Once the water goes over the Lake Road, their property is inundated and not able to be accessed. • If you got a bit of history on the Lake, you get a true appreciation of the flood dynamics. Once the water comes over Lake Road, it all runs downhill and inundates the property- we need to just wait until it manages to run out. • When the Lake is full it tends to run out through Manna Creek, which has been running for about a year now. A previous owner constructed a levee bank near Manna Creek which served to trap the water. When the property was sold, they were forced to take the levee out which has made a big difference. • There are long periods when doesn't flood on the eastern side of road. It has not only been the mine and construction of the bund wall which has made a difference to flood dynamics- the Highway has a major effect as it is one great long bund which traps the water and doesn't allow it to flow out through the system. • It will be interesting to see if the proposed new mine bund wall displaces water over the Newell Highway as it runs rights along the periphery of the Lake. The NSW Government has been promising to upgrade the Highway – has not yet happened. • In terms of mine water requirements, groundwater should be the last resort only. Surface water should be prioritised when available, including use of Jemalong Irrigation channels. • Regarding amenity effects, Barrick originally stated that we would not be able to see the lighting. This was incorrect and the Project is certainly visible from the Landholders property. The lighting effects are such that it looks like a town over there. Occasionally there are strong lighting effects, but they are always quick to fix the positioning of the lighting when we report that it is a nuisance. Coming through Pioneer Range there are clear views to the mine and the lighting is quite prominent. • Operations at the mine are audible including the clack, clack, clack of machinery and the beep, beep of reversing trucks. You more or less get used to it. The noise metres seem to only measure the noise when it's quiet- have suggested they should take them away. • Blasting can be heard and felt. Now and then there is a blast which is over the limit. The floors in the wool shed were cracked by one of these events. We took photos and had a structural engineer have a look at it but we had left it too late to be compensated. The same thing happened to another landowners house. This was back in the days Barrick were operating the mine. • The major issue is that the mine is just growing bigger all the time- with each Amendment or new Project which comes along. • Since Evolution has come in engagement has improved a lot – they listen more than they used to. It was often difficult to get much sense out of Barrick. • It would be great if public access to the Lake was substantially improved. It is a public resource and should be better utilised. People want to visit the Lake; however the poor standard of access makes it very difficult.
Landholders No 6.	• The family has a long association with the area. Landholders great grandfather came to the area in the late 1800's. • All children have moved away now to various parts of Australia; however they do regularly come and visit with their families. They were in the process of planning to host a large family gathering which included 17 grandchildren. • The homestead of 'Lakeview station' is approximately 4 km direct line from the mine site. • Historically ran sheep on the property with numbers exceeding 5,000 head. No longer in sheep from a commercial perspective business- keep just a few for personal use. • The primary use of the property is for large scale contract farming. There was some 3,000 ha currently supporting canola crops. Other crops grown have included wheat, oats, barley and silage (which was exported to Japan). • They also run cattle- predominantly on lands to the immediate north and south of the existing mine footprint, which they lease off CGO. They were interested in further information on the proposed location of topsoil stockpiles as they may impact on this arrangement. • Landholders enjoy a good relationship with CGO- a relationship which has evolved over time. Whilst sometimes experience noise effects from mine operations, they did not seem to hold any major

Table 1 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	concerns. It was mentioned they avoided driving on Blow Clear Road/ West Lane during times of shift change overs due to the traffic. Landholders appreciate CGO taking the time to keep them informed as to mine development and operation. They look forward to ongoing engagement and happy to contribute to the Social Impact Assessment.
Landholder No 6. X 2	- The homestead of Lake View Station is located approximately 4km (direct line) from the Project footprint. The Landholders have owned the property for over 60 years- historically ran sheep on the property with numbers exceeding 5,000 head. No longer a commercial sheep operation. They do continue to run a herd of approximately 200 head of cattle (Santa Gertrudis). - The primary use of the property is for large scale contract farming There was some 3,000 ha currently supporting canola crops. Other crops grown had included wheat, oats, barley and silage. - They also run cattle- predominantly on lands to the immediate north and south of the existing mine footprint, which they lease off CGO. They were interested in further information on the proposed location of topsoil stockpiles as they may impact on this arrangement. - Lighting from the mine does affect the Landholders homestead- this was particularly invasive during the construction of the wall for the expanded tailings facility. - They do experience noise effects from mine operations; however did not consider it to be much of a nuisance. This is mostly vehicle reversing (beep beep) sound and they have been advised that they would be eligible for treatments such as double glazing. They were provided reverse cycle air conditioning so that they are able to have windows closed to reduce noise effects. - There have been occasional blasting events which have been highly impactful. They recounted an event which occurred at 3am on Easter morning. It was so loud that it woke up all the children. - When there are large blasts there is an accompanying large plume of dust; however it was not considered that the mine does not cause any ongoing dust issues. It was recognised that - Noted that when the mine first was initiated, it was promised that it would only be a certain height but over time the waste rock stockpiles have become higher and higher and the mine encroaches closer and closer. - The mine has created high levels of competition for labour. Whilst the landholders are no longer are actively involved in major agricultural activities which require labour, they have lost their cleaner and noted that it was now very difficult to get station hands and other staff. It was considered impossible to compete with the mines in terms of wages. - The risk of fire was mentioned- recent good seasons have resulted in large build up of vegetation matter which will present a fire risk when dries out in subsequent summers. This risk was exacerbated by the CGO managed land which was not grazed off/ utilised for agriculture/ managed. If a fire starts it is very difficult to manage as there are steel posts etc. throughout the lake area which prevents access for fire trucks etc. In two seasons time there will be a major fire risk and the very hot fire which would occur will cause an ecological disaster. - It was mentioned they avoided driving in and out of West Wyalong during times of shift change overs (5pm – 7pm) due to the traffic- particularly the (too) bright LED lights of new utes etc. as makes it difficult to see. - There are some people in the broader community who feel as though Evolution do not put enough back into the local community. Council have been trying to beautify West Wyalong, but they lack the funding. Evolution could do more to assist. - Suggested that a good legacy item would be the provision of all weather access to the reserve area on the Lake- at the site of the proposed education/ glamping facility. There could be bbq's and amenity facilities put in which would serve both tourists and the local community. It was thought that CGO could readily provide the road base for the access road, however it was pointed out that they are required to keep all materials within the mine site. - Overall landholders enjoy a good relationship with CGO. An issue was the constant turn over of staff and change of key contact points with the mine- the latest being the departure of CGO employee (which was a relationship they highly appreciated). They would like to have a consistent person they can liaise with. - The visit of Mine Manager was very much appreciated and showed a commitment to maintaining good relationships with surrounding landholders.

Table 1 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	Landholders appreciate CGO taking the time to keep them informed as to mine development and operation. They look forward to ongoing engagement

1.2 Local Council engagement discussions

Table 2 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
Bland Shire Council	- Overview of SIA, including determination of social area of influence (in consultation with DPE) and key themes raised in Scoping phase SIA consultation. - Council is currently preparing a Housing Strategy which should be completed in November/ December 2022. This would inform subsequent update of the Local Environment Plan - An issue restricting the supply of housing is that owners of land zoned for residential development are sitting on land. A potential reason for this is that landholders lack sufficient access to land development expertise (land use planners, etc.). - A further consideration is that the type of land which is in greatest demand does not align with that which is available- for example, potential buyers are seeking large lot rural/ residential blocks whilst that currently banked for residential supply is not of that type. - The current housing and accommodation shortages are primarily driven by cumulative demand. There are two solar farms currently under construction (Wyalong and West Wyalong solar projects) which along with Newell Highway construction and CGO Underground development have resulted in substantial pressure being placed on availability of accommodation as supply is limited. - CGO shut down periods place further pressures on availability of accommodation in West Wyalong. The most recent shut down required over 200 contractors which required accommodation. - Construction of the solar farms is expected to be completed by early mid 2023, which will reduce current pressures on rental housing and short term accommodation availability in West Wyalong. - GM spoke of experience in Blayney where a gold mining proponent (Newcrest) employed an accommodation coordinator as part of an incentive called Orange 360 to work with local accommodation providers to ensure that impacts on accommodation availability was managed at peak times such as shut downs etc. It was acknowledged that CGO also employs a housing coordinator who is responsible for managing approximately 150 rental properties occupied by CGO staff. - With regard to availability of accommodation for tourism, it was noted that West Wyalong was primarily a stop over locality rather than a specific tourism destination. Traditionally it was a half way point for people travelling between Victoria and Queensland. There is a fairly constant flow of 'grey nomads' passing through. - Engagement with the local Aboriginal community was discussed and the difference between consultation carried out with these groups are part of the SIA compared to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment. CGO noted the WCC's long involvement in CGO since Barrick operated the site. - It was recognised that Business West Wyalong had been recently experienced some challenges, however they remain a key stakeholder to be engaged. Council confirmed that in kind support is provided to Business West Wyalong (ie venues to hold events). - Regarding elected representatives, it was appreciated that Councillors were provided a project update and would like to see this continue. - The issue of Planning Agreements was briefly addressed with CGO making it clear that this was being handled separate to the EIS/ SIA. Council noted they had engaged to facilitate the VPA. - Council asked if exploration is ongoing for Evolution. CGO confirmed there are ongoing exploration activities. - Council would appreciate being briefed on the key findings of SIA engagement following completion of the process.

Table 2 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
Bland Shire Council 2nd engagement	- Council was provided an overview of the updates which have been made to the OPC Project description subsequent to that presented during the scoping phase of the EIS. Employment/ Housing and Accommodation - It was recognised by Council that the continuation of the operational workforce was a major benefit delivered through the Project. It is estimated that 65% of the current open pit mining workforce reside in West Wyalong/ Bland Shire. This provides a major contribution to economic vitality. - In addition to direct employment, the Project also supports a number of businesses which would otherwise not be present in the region such as SGS lab testing and CB engineering. These businesses support local jobs and can play a role in retaining young people in the region through providing local career paths. Other businesses such as hotels and motels and food and beverage providers also benefit from continuation of local jobs as a result of the Project. - Further indirect benefits include the continuation of training courses such as those offered through TAFE- (fitting and turning, apprenticeships etc.). It was also noted that the economic diversification which the Project provides becomes particularly important in times of drought or agricultural commodity downturns. - The ongoing pressures on local housing and accommodation was discussed. With regard to rental housing and short-term accommodation, it was noted by Council that the current construction of solar farms had made a major contribution to shortages of supply and escalating costs. Once these projects are constructed, it is anticipated there will be some alleviation of issues. - Council is looking to open up additional supply of permanent housing, A constraint has been that some land earmarked for sub-division has not been brought to market by landowners (predominantly local residents) due to a lack of ability to access capital and professional services and advice. - A draft Housing Strategy has been completed; however there are some additional changes which need to be made to the Local Environment Plan to enable further residential land to be brought forward. The Strategy proposes some areas supporting higher density housing options along with the release of standard residential and rural residential allotments. - There are a range of infrastructure constraints to residential growth- particularly stormwater and water supply infrastructure. Council had received support through NSW Royalties to the Region funding to address water pressure issues in West Wyalong - Housing and accommodation shortages have an impact on the ability to attract skilled staff to the region. It has become difficult for key service providers to find staff without also offering an accommodation solution. The NSW Department of Education provides housing for teachers. The Council leases a house to NSW Police. There are reports that the hospital and aged care facility also provide accommodation to staff. - The Project would serve to provide additional confidence in the local housing market which could assist in additional residential development being brought to market. - There is a general shortage of skills in the region, and it does become difficult for employers to compete with mining organisations and other industries which can pay higher wages. The higher cost of living is an additional factor. Health Services - West Wyalong is fortunate to have retained a General Practitioner service and Hospital (including X ray capability); but overall levels of service are basic. - There was recognition by CGO that health facilities at the mine site were also basic. Traffic - It was recognised that traffic is an issue in terms of both construction traffic and ongoing operations traffic. It is fortunate that a majority of residential areas are not exposed to heavy vehicle movements. Other construction related traffic should be able to be managed. It was also noted that current operational traffic was reduced through the use of buses from West Wyalong to the mine site. It was noted that impacts on roads would be negotiated through the Planning Agreement process. Legacy - Bland Council would like to further explore legacy opportunities in partnership with CGO. They would like to see investment in initiatives which provide long term benefit- not some facility (such as a swimming pool) which would only then become an additional financial burden on Council. Some options mentioned

Table 2 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	were investment in skills development (including apprenticeships) for young people, facilities which encourage tourism at Lake Cowal and enhancement of the main street in West Wyalong to create a more appealing environment for tourists and potential residents. • Council looks forward to continuing to work with CGO to identify and define suitable legacy projects
Forbes Shire Council	Employment & Housing/accommodation • Housing, accommodation and employment go hand in hand; can't attract trained professionals if there is nowhere for them to live. • Ongoing costs of recruitment and re-recruitment is unsustainable. • Council provides 9 rentals (units/houses) with 3 more currently being built - an additional investment of \$1.5mill. • Council released a 221 lot subdivision 12 months ago; 50 lots sold with houses currently being built; owners are long term residents so it is expected their original properties will be sold on or enter the rental market pool. • Professional staff take up jobs in the region, and leave their families in the city until they have secured property but this often does not happen and they are forced to leave; however Council is adapting and adopting WFH practices now COVID has proven that working from home can be achieved without a loss of worker productivity; Forbes Council Rates Officer lives in Brisbane and a Design Engineer + 1 other also work remotely. • Young professionals are poached by other government organisations or private industry; Council is unable to match wages. • CGO helps to keep the population stable with 60 CGO employees living in Forbes and 54 living in North Parkes. • Other major projects for the region that will draw on the local labour market and on local accommodation include: – Inland Rail (long term development with delays and obstacles), – Wyangala Dam wall raising (in development), – Moxie Dairies – 9000 head of dairy, IVF services, methane generator, breeding program, geneticists/biologists (existing), – Jemalong solar, and – Pumped-hydro projects. • Competes with accommodation for Tourism eg. Sculpture Trail (recently completed and supported by CGO), Art Gallery upgrade (in progress), Visitor Information Centre upgrade (in progress), Grazing Down the Lachlan event (750+ attendees). Health services • Health under pressure – not unique to Forbes. • Recently lost Doctor (moved to the Snowy); issue attracting and retaining GP's and allied health professionals; often linked to accommodation/housing or wage offerings. Traffic • Not an issue Water from Lake Cowal • Not an issue Legacy • No discussions have taken place as yet. • The CGO Melbourne Cup event made locals feel proud they were a part of this iconic national tradition; a shared benefit for all surrounding communities. • Benefits of having an operating gold mine in the region is - it's cleaner than coal; when the country is in drought or flood, mining is the only business that continues to operate at full capacity in the region. • VPA for further discussion with JP.

Table 2 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
Lachlan Shire Council	Employment 15-20 mine workers reside in Condobolin; daily commute bus provided by EVN; workers restricted by safe travel distance to and from the mine. - Council/local business compete with the mine for workers/salaries, but difficult to match mine salaries. - Trained professionals are switching to driving a mining truck as it pays better; less skilled but higher paying roles at the mine; Council has lost 3 mechanics over the past year and had to let an apprentice go recently as there is no senior mechanic to provide on the job training and mentoring. - Council has some big projects in the pipeline which will require the services of local contractors e.g. Visitor Information Centre upgrade, Works Depot upgrade, WTP/STP upgrade, Condobolin pipeline project. Housing/accommodation - Housing/accommodation shortage; currently 15 properties for sale and 4 for rent; also houses for rent on the black market due so owners can pick and choose tenants. - Census says population of Condobolin will decline by 500 per year but school enrolments are strong and it's difficult to get an appointment in town; census data needs to be fact checked by engaging in local conversations. - Council has a number of development proposals in place for additional accommodation including 4 x 2 bed villas, 4 x 3 bed townhouses and 1 x motel. Difficult to attract investors to the region so Council needs to step up and make it happen; banks have increased lending restrictions; investors nervous. - Council is about to release a 22 lot subdivision and is confident it will sell out. Health services - Hard to attract and retain GP's; no allied health services/mental health services in Condobolin except for Aboriginal Health Service which is supported by a different government funding program. - Council working closely with Western NSW Local Health District (WNLHD); the model seems to be broken; no incentives for doctors to work in country areas; country doctor services in demand and experience long working days when they are the only resource available. - Currently 3-4.5K/day for local doctor to be in town. Legacy - Missed out last time on developing a Volunteer Planning Agreement (VPA) with the mine; would like to identify projects that EVN could contribute to and put their name to e.g. infrastructure upgrades or infrastructure replacement; a discussion about this has not yet taken place; legacy thematic will only be considered. - High security water licence required to support ongoing future recreational activities on Gum Bend Lake; up to 20 campers stationed at the Gum Bend Lake Campground in holiday periods and 15-20 recreational boats every weekend; want to protect this resource during future drought for the enjoyment of the community and visitors to the area but Council is unable to purchase additional water allocation, to protect this water resource, due to prohibitive cost of the water licence.

1.3 State Government discussions

Table 3 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
MP Phil Donato Member for Orange	- No complaints from my constituents about the mine - What are some of EVN's supporting programs that are linked to Forbes? - Bus service for employees (50-60 reside in Forbes), a relationship EVN will continue to foster. - Support for local Councils in regards to the maintenance of local and regional road infrastructure

Table 3 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	– Sponsorship of the Sculpture Trail, Grazing down the Lachlan – Support for community groups and local youth/high schools through apprenticeship and scholarship programs – Support for the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) with the funding for 10 trainees in an agricultural business – Sponsorship of the first camp for 'Boys in the Bush' initiative • What year will the new pits come into operation? • Suggestions to raise the profile of the business and the good work that is being done: – Support state run initiatives that are delivered locally – provides a broader reach in the media/greater visibility. – Sponsoring health initiatives/hospitals e.g. buying a house for a doctor to live in • Long term plans for the site? Alternatives currently being considered including: – Backfill pits. – At Mt Rawdon site EVN are undertaking a pumped hydro study to assist the grid in QLD, consideration that this could also be achieved at Cowal. – Active land rehabilitation planning is now required as part of the project approval process

1.4 Community groups discussions

Table 4 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
CEMCC members	• The CEMCC was one of the first community consultative committees established in NSW. • It includes members from: – Independent Chair – Lisa Andrews – 4 community representatives including a representative from the Lake Cowal Land Owners Group – Representatives from 3 Councils – Bland, Forbes, and Condobolin – Independent scientist – Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation • Members had (that morning) been provided a tour of the mine site and were appreciative of the opportunity to witness the mine in operation. • Members were provided a presentation on the Social Impact Assessment. This included an overview of the key themes which had emerged from the engagement which was undertaken as part of the SIA Scoping phase. • There was general agreement that the identified themes were the key issues – the benefit of continued employment, pressures on housing and accommodation in West Wyalong, potential water displacement around periphery of the Lake, pressures on health services, traffic and the legacy which the mine will leave in the community. • It was noted that the mine has continued to encroach more and more over the years with each modification/expansion. • Traffic through Wyalong can be an issue – particularly if large number of heavy vehicles required for construction. The railway stopped operating about 15 years ago. • Legacy is a key issue – would like to see the mine leave behind a lasting positive legacy. This has been an ongoing topic of discussion between members of the CEMCC and representatives from CGO.

Table 4 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	At this stage there has not been any specific legacy projects agreed upon. It was raised that a major benefit for future generations is skills development and work experience which provides sustained employment opportunities. It was recognized that identification of legacy provisions should be informed by ongoing community and stakeholder engagement processes.
Lake Cowal Foundation – March 2022	• Topsoil stockpile locations (north and south) should move. There are alternatives that would minimise impact on the lake. • Map 4 Waste Rock Emplacement – prefer to see it moved. • Temporary Soil Stockpiles too close to lake. If move to west (?) of waste rock emplacement would hide from lake with no change to distance from pits • Satellite pits backfill arrangements should be improved. • Mine operates within regulation but mine is there now and always will be. Has changed the landscape forever. Should mitigate as much as possible. • Cost gold increase which favours the company and should be relative investment in rehabilitation. • Northern pushing up against main breeding area for lake how. Operation is impacting where birds nest. Noise and light within parameters is over time driving birds nesting and feeding patterns. • Bird numbers are stable. • Eastern side inundation and flooding linked also to highway and new highway is a concern to farmers. • Surface water and ground water geologically fortunate not concerned and controls are in place. • Aboriginal Cultural Heritage – will have work to do with ovens in bottom section. • Social: – Would like to see contributions relative to profits. Contributions provide general support to community but not of lasting significant legacy. – Accommodation availability for travellers – Providing accommodation to miners is good for motels. – As part of the Riverina Murray there are tourist opportunities that are being missed due to occupancy rates. Average occupancy 48% regionally but 78% in West Wyalong due to mining – If build more accommodation it just fills up – Cumulative impacts on roads with solar farms, wind farms and road upgrades – Housing impacts – cost of housing but more about availability of housing. – Most communities resist workers camps, but West Wyalong may be an exception given the housing and accommodation issues. – Town appreciates importance of the mine and what it does for the town. – Legacy requires more focus. How does it become reality? – Traffic route to Forbes along western side of lake means that 25 properties and 3 shires are affected. If was to change route only 4 properties and 1 Shire would be affected. This would also improve fatigue management and quality of the road, as well as maintenance. • Lake specific: – Keep doing what doing (crop and grazing) as it is above and beyond. Opportunity for CGO to demonstrate credentials and good practice. – Development of Homestead to the south as a glamping site. Some increase in noise but most noise leads to west and south west. Not overly concerned. DA was submitted mid-February with construction due to commence in June 2022. – over 8 ha – 15 tents (7 eco-tourism & 8 schools and groups) – Glamping site will help overcome the tyranny of distance. Accommodation will allow people to come and get value as it takes 3 hours or more to get to the Lake. – Value to Lake Cowal Foundation by providing financial sustainability. As well as increase demand and raise awareness of Lake Cowal and physical experience. • West Wyalong is an example that Agriculture, Mining and Conservation are co-existing.

Table 4 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
Lake Cowal Foundation – September 2022	• Lake Cowal Foundation and mine are associated with each other and it is in both interests to continue working together. • An overview of the history and objectives of the Foundation was provided. Stakeholder advised that essentially it was established to advocate for, maintain and protect the environmental values of Lake Cowal. This includes monitoring of potential environmental effects associated with the mine. • The Foundation operate the Lake Cowal Conservation Centre which is a community education facility where school students and community members can learn about and experience a variety of issues associated with natural resource management. • Over the years the Foundation has initiated and implemented a range of projects in collaboration with landholders, local community groups including Landcare, local First Nations people and local and State government organisations. • They are in the final stages of establishing an eco-glamping accommodation facility on the shores of the Lake. Construction of the facility due to start in the coming months. • Drone footage was viewed of recent flood water movement. It was not clear precisely where this was, however, Stakeholder indicated that with recent rains, areas had been flooded which were rarely seen. • Stakeholder indicated that he was keen to be engaged as part of the SIA. • How we structure individual as opposed to engagement with the LCF Board as a whole is a matter for further discussion with CGO.
Lake Cowal Foundation – February 2023	• The purpose of the meeting was to provide the Lake Cowal Foundation an update on key issues relating to positioning of the northern and south-eastern top soil stockpiles and the potential impact on breeding birds from noise during construction of the bund wall. It also provided an opportunity to discuss some matters relevant to the Social Impact Assessment (SIA). • An overview of the Project design changes relevant to the northern top soil stockpile and the and south-eastern stockpile was provided. This was well received by the stakeholder with the initial impression being “.. this looks a lot better then what was originally proposed.” • It was explained that studies on potential impacts on bird nesting sites was ongoing. A key consideration is that the impacts associated with the bund wall are limited to the construction period only. Once constructed, the bund wall would have a negligible impact on bird nesting. The natural mitigation for construction related impacts is therefore avoidance of times of peak bird nesting activity. • It was recognised that management of potential impacts on birds requires an adaptive approach, whereby the situation at the time of impact (i.e., construction) is monitored and appropriate actions implemented as required. It was mentioned that construction of the existing bund had been fortunate in that it coincided with a prolonged dry period. If weather patterns are to be observed, it would seem likely that a dry period will follow current high rainfall conditions and therefore may align with bund wall construction. • The matter of potential light related impacts on bird habitat and behaviours was raised. Lighting effects were being further investigated as part of the EIS. It was noted that CGO will be using directional lighting that minimises light spill and that lighting impacts were commonly caused by user error. Sensitive areas can be avoided, and it was recognised that CGO were usually quick to respond if there is an issue raised regarding obtrusive lighting. • It was inquired when the results of hydrological modelling might be available. Detailed hydrological modelling has been completed as part of the EIS. To build an understanding of the results of the modelling, engagement with landholders and key stakeholders such as the LCF is to occur in late March. This will provide an opportunity for the principal hydrological modeller for EIS studies to connect with landholders and explain the nature of potential effects of the new bund wall on water displacement around Lake Cowal. • It was identified that a key consideration is the effect of the Newall Highway on flood dynamics. It was recognised that the Highway effectively acts as a low dam wall which pushes water to the north and restricts drainage and flow through the system. The future plans of RMS for the Highway and the potential to reduce contribution to flooding are not clear and therefore have not been considered in the hydrological modelling completed to inform the OPC EIS. • The proposal to raise Wyangala Dam has not been factored into modelling results as there is too much ambiguity as to when and whether this will eventuate.

Table 4 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	- LCF is progressing the glamping and educational facility to be located on the banks of Lake Cowal- construction is imminent. It is to be a combined tourism and educational facility with overall development to involve 15 high quality tents, eight of which would contain double bunks. - Supported by CGO, the LCF is advancing a commendable environmental education and awareness program. The LCF provides one of the 25 accredited Environmental and Zoo Education Centres in NSW. It is the only accredited Centre which is privately funded- all others are supported by the NSW State Government. - The LCF has a fully accredited teacher (Sally Russell) who delivers environmental education and awareness lessons in the local schools- all the way through from Kindy to Year 12. This is a recognised part of the NSW educational curriculum. - Development of the camping/ glamping facility will provide an opportunity for students to stay overnight out at the Lake and engage in environmental education and monitoring activities. Having a place to engage in practical activities will improve motivation and education outcomes of students. - The access road to the camping/ glamping facility remains an issue. Recent flood conditions have further deteriorated the road and it requires an upgrade to improve access to the proposed tourism (glamping) and educational facility.
West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)	About the LALC - Linton shared information about the LALC – purpose, responsibility and current activities. - The West Wyalong LALC covers three local government areas including Bland LGA - Responsibility for the custodianship and care of lands returned to Aboriginal people; however lands cannot be developed. Responsibilities and activities include: – Social housing – Cultural awareness education programs at EVN (sub-contract to WCC for delivery at EVN) – Protection of cultural heritage – Participating in as many cultural surveys and excavations as possible – Partnership with leasing land to EVN – Driving training service at EVN – Distributing masks, hand sanitiser and RAT tests to communities during COVID Employment The community at West Wyalong is slightly exceptional in that there is: • High employment levels at the mine • Flow on effects of mine employment and activity to other parts of the business community and general community • Therefore a large pool of employment exists in the area. Housing • Limited access to rental housing for the Aboriginal community; currently have 4 community housing properties and 6 Aboriginal owned houses in West Wyalong • There is a demand for social housing; not a transient population, so when people commence social housing, they do not move on; people stay in the same area for many years. • LALC plan to sell two houses to tenants and buy more houses for their housing pool. • Strong connection to the Lachlan Valley region Health services • No dedicated Aboriginal health services in the local area • Need to travel to Griffith, Wagga Wagga or Condobolin to access Aboriginal Health Services; a long way to go for specialist care including paediatrics and dentist care; only one dentist in town with no Aboriginal allocation. Environment

Table 4 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• There is a deep awareness of what happens out on Lake Cowal and impacts on the natural environment; Lake displacement potentially influencing flood behaviour but managed quite well by EVN. Infrastructure • We have cultural water allocations/cultural water licence; when mine closes the infrastructure already in place can help to manage water in the Lake. Aboriginal Agricultural Company (recently launched) • This venture is a partnership and agreement between the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) and Evolution Mining; mainly meat and wool (sheep); however have not used any cultural land management practices – mostly western style agriculture only. • Employment/training initiatives; individuals can apply but this needs to go through WCC due to the agreement in place; individuals must be aware of the agreement in place. • There is no employment program with WW Aboriginal community; this is seen as a barrier for formal negotiations. • Aboriginal employment through post-mining land rehabilitation not considered as they are a small community; the LALC have undertaken cultural burns in areas that have cultural value [to stimulate native plant regeneration and reduce weed growth] but not possible at a mine site when the surface of the land has been so disturbed. Traffic • Recent wet weather impacting roads. • Maintenance regime in place however increased traffic flow will require more frequent maintenance. Legacy • Mine does a great job maintaining relationship with the community. • Legacy to nature and the natural areas of Lake Cowal are the most important thing for Aboriginal people. • Linton has always felt respected, and the GM of Evolution Mining has always come to speak to him well before any plans are put in place; GM spoke to Linton back in 2021 about the OPC. Benefits • Intangibles around the area and cultural sites remain deeply important but these will be captured in test excavations. • Not a lot of oral history has been recorded; a lot of artefacts have been found and held in storage container (for 10-15yrs) • Many artefacts also [these days] handed in to the LALC by farmers or farmers kids; other artefacts handed back from WW Museum following closure; Linton not sure of some of the museum items origin. • These artefacts found on Lake Cowal need to be housed more appropriately; early plan to re-bury artefacts but Aboriginal community would like to see them preserved; scared tree returned to the LALC, re-located in the 1930's(?) • WCC + Lake Cowal Foundation + LALC have discussed using the Lake Cowal Conservation Centre (LCCC) as a shared facility for community education; the relationship between these organisations is slowly improving. • WCC built the LCCC in partnership with Barrick Gold (previous owners of the Cowal Gold Operations mine site) • If EVN continue to grow and develop as they, have they will continue to do things better; over the years Linton has seen improved engagement and social benefits that he hope continues
Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation	• The Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) has worked constructively with mining operations at Cowal for over 19 years. The primary issue of concern is whether the Open Pit Continuation Project could jeopardise the outcomes which are being achieved for Aboriginal people through this partnership. • An extension of the mining lease area beyond that originally negotiated with the then proponent (Barrick Gold) would potentially provide an opportunity for additional Aboriginal parties to claim Native Title rights. There are parties which will use this opportunity to advance respective agendas and could have a negative effect on community relationships.

Table 4 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	- A key feature of the partnership arrangement negotiated with Barrick was that it was not driven by an attempt to maximise royalty payments. It was considered that a focus on monetary payments often results in the fracture of communities. - The intent of WCC has always been to derive genuine improvements to the lives of Aboriginal people through investments in both local skills and material wealth. - Stakeholder has worked in Indigenous affairs since 1974. Has witnessed the evolution of the concept of Native Title and the associated definition of 'Traditional Owners'. There have been many arguments and fights which have occurred as a result of the process of being recognised as a Traditional Owner or 'Registered Aboriginal Party'. - WCC has engaged with a broad array of corporate entities and advised/ developed many Indigenous engagement strategies. An understanding needs to be fostered on how agencies can effectively engage and negotiate with Aboriginal people. - WCC negotiated with Barrick how the mine would support the interests of Aboriginal people. - A major issue is the process for engaging parties to complete heritage surveys. Money is offered at rates far higher than what people could otherwise get paid- \$300 - \$600 a day. There is an incentive to take advantage of this opportunity which leads to some inappropriate practices. People want to be identified as a 'RAP' and get work on heritage surveys even if they sometimes are not qualified to deliver such work. There is a tendency to hand over these work opportunities to family members even if they do not have the knowledge or experience to deliver such work- example of an elderly lady sending out her grandson when wasn't able to deliver the survey herself. This has led to instances where men are speaking to women's only areas and visa-versa. - It is very difficult for proponents or even members of the Aboriginal community to challenge whether someone holds the knowledge or has the experience to be undertaking heritage survey and other forms of paid cultural heritage work. It further needs to be recognised that in Aboriginal culture elders are to be respected and not challenged- even if they may not be the most appropriate person for the work. - WCC has a very good working relationship with West Wyalong Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC). Linton from LALC has a very good understanding of cultural traditions and provides very good cultural awareness training sessions. - The position WCC took with regard to native title rights and interests translating to royalty payments from the mine was very much criticised at the time and there is still some lingering resentment from some parties. However the results which have been achieved through establishing a constructive partnership with Barrick and subsequently Evolution are delivering far better outcomes for Aboriginal people in the region. - Evolution and the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation have come together to form the Galari Agricultural Company (GAC) which has a meaning of connections to the Lachlan River. The employment and training initiative and horticultural and livestock enterprise will focus on the production of beef cattle, lamb, and wool on 1,600 acres of Evolution land. The project will start with training in shearing and animal husbandry for eight trainees. Longer-term goals are to establish GAC as a Registered Training Organisation to support 80 youths annually to build careers in agriculture, livestock, mining, commercial cleaning, catering, and land management. - This collaboration will enhance the employability and skill development of Indigenous youth in the region and establish an ongoing work readiness pathway program

1.5 Key service providers

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
Social community housing	Parkes Forbes Community Housing are in the process of transition with Amelie Housing. Amelie housing is a larger organisation serving across NSW.

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• Amelie housing will have more resources to deliver social housing support to the people in the area • Overall positive impact on the local economy which does alleviate some of the pressures of vulnerable people. The pressure is not relieved through the direct jobs rather through the indirect jobs. • There is a need for the better social housing across the board. • West Wyalong does not come as a key township requiring support due to the higher incomes however they believe this could be skewed because of the mine but we recognise there is a need for vulnerable people in West Wyalong
Employment services	• APM offer employment and disability job services throughout West Wyalong, Forbes, Parkes and Condoblin and the broader region. • Essentially APM's role is to connect employers with those seeking employment. People seeking employment, register with APM who pull together a profile which highlights skills and experience and types of employment sought. Re-skilling and re-training opportunities are also identified. • General demand for skilled labor is high throughout the region. Construction skills are in particularly in short supply, with ongoing high levels of demand. • The availability of housing is a key issue affecting the ability to attract new people to the region to take up employment opportunities. People will not move if they can not access housing which meets their needs. Employers and local councils are needing to offer incentives to persuade people to move to the region to take up employment. • Lack of transportation is a major impediment to people accessing employment in the region. Lack of a motor vehicle or lack of a drivers license restricts people from accessing employment opportunities. Provision of bus services from Wyalong, Forbes and Condoblin is a great initiative by Evolution which serves to overcome this impediment. • Motivation is a key impediment for young people to access employment. There are many young people who just don't see the need to work- they don't see the need to acquire and build skills through training and employment and are not prepared to do the hard work needed to advance. • There is a lot of work in the disability sector. There is also a severe shortage of childcare skills. The qualifications required for childcare/ early learning has created a vacuum of skilled and qualified labour. • APM would be more than happy to work with Evolution to locate local skills and labour requirements. Evolution have a good name in the industry as an employers of choice.
Bland Creek Paleo	• The primary purpose of the Bland Creek Paleo group is to provide ongoing monitoring and management of the regional groundwater system- referred to as the Bland Creek Paleochannel borefield • The members of Bland Creek Paleo appreciated receiving an update on the Continued Operations Project and the approvals pathway and timing. It was inquired whether as part of the EIS modelling was to be undertaken to understand the potential effect of the bund wall on water displacement. • When the mine first began operation in 2002 the groundwater depth plummeted which was an issue of great concern for landholders as they rely heavily on groundwater to maintain agricultural production during drier years. • The issue of groundwater drawdown was initially not acknowledged by the mine operator (Barrick); however eventually it was recognized and the impact of the mine on groundwater levels has since reduced. • The agreed maximum level of drawdown is 30m for agricultural producers; however the mine is permitted to continue to use groundwater to a maximum drawdown of 40m. This is viewed by some landholders as unequitable and a cause of concern. • It is considered that use of groundwater by the mine should only occur when other water sources (such as surface water and recycled water) are unavailable. It is inferred that there is a lack of flexibility in designated water entitlements which does not enable this to occur. • It was recognized that CGO are looking to identify additional saline bores which can be drawn upon rather than draw on the high-quality water from the Bland Paleochannel. There has been extensive exploration work undertaken to identify and develop additional saline bores. The wet weather has substantially inhibited the development of replacement saline bores.

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• Whilst Evolution have been better to work with than previous operator (Barrick), there has been a lot of staff changes and a subsequent lack of consistent contact personnel. This affects the quality of the relationship as it is not known who to reach out to. • Members of the Bland Paleo group would appreciate improved ongoing communication with CGO so that they know how things are developing. Engagements are a little haphazard and dependent upon who is in a particular position at a particular time. As a neighbor, it's best when there is regular communication and support. Good communication provides the foundation for good relations. • It was noted by one member of the group that pests (particularly wild pigs) were an ongoing issue, contributed to by a lack of use/ management of CGO owned lands. An offer to eradicate pigs had not been taken up by CGO.
Business West Wyalong	• The mine has substantially benefited the town of West Wyalong. Not only has it generated direct employment with 60- 70% of the workforce living in Wyalong; there is also a multiplier effect with additional jobs being created through the injection of cash into local economy and local businesses. • In terms of a potential legacy project, it would be great if the mine could assist with getting the industrial estate off the ground. Bland Council have gazette the area; however the prices placed on blocks are too expensive and subsequently have not been taken up. If this was addressed, the estate would allow smaller businesses into the community and generate more employment opportunities. • Bland Council has not been pro-active in generating additional economic activity which leverages off what the mine provides to the economy. There was an economic development officer who was very good; however he ended up leaving as perhaps he was a little too motivated for Council. • Economic development is now one of the responsibilities of the General Manager- it will be interesting to see how the new General Manager performs. Forbes, Temora and Lachlan Councils have always been more dynamic than Bland in generating additional economic growth and vitality. • In terms of local procurement, the mine could potentially do better. Some local businesses have reported that they had difficulty contacting CGO regarding tender opportunities (recent catering tender). There could be better publication of opportunities • Many businesses would be interested in becoming a supplier to CGO if they were better informed on how to register interest and what they needed to do to demonstrate capacity to deliver goods and services. • A potential Legacy Project for the mine is the development of a Business Support Centre in West Wyalong which assists businesses to access opportunities. It could provide both a central location for local businesses to find out about opportunities and capacity building initiatives which serve to enable businesses to secure such opportunities. • The lack of housing in West Wyalong is a factor constraining business and economic growth. There is a need for new housing which meets what people are seeking (such as rural residential blocks). This is what's required to encourage new residents to come to town. Whilst Council have recently prepared a Housing Strategy, they need to be more pro-active in getting the right mix of new housing development. • The lack of child care services is also a factor inhibiting business growth in West Wyalong. The lack of services restricts employment opportunities for women. A new child care centre/ additional places at existing services would make a real difference. • CGO could build more awareness in the community of employment and procurement opportunities. There was some criticism from Councilors and community on the Underground Project that there were not enough opportunities for local residents and businesses. • There are currently approximately 400 members of Business West Wyalong. CGO could send notifications of opportunities through Business West Wyalong to disseminate information to local businesses. • Social media is also an important medium for dissemination of procurement opportunities with CGO- through Facebook pages etc. • Enhanced public access to Lake Cowell would be good way to expand the tourism offering. There is one gazette public access point to the Lake. Upgrading of this road was costed at under \$100k and would make a substantial improvement- particularly if bbq's and other facilities were also provided. This should be integrated into the eco- glamping initiative being advanced by the Lake Cowal Foundation. • The Hearts of Gold Festival (March 17 - 19, 2023) is a great initiative being supported by CGO.

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• It would be good to track the proportion of the CGO workforce which live locally- it is so important to maximize the proportion of workforce which live locally as otherwise this economic input is lost to the community. • There is an issue associated with the capability of local businesses. There was recently a CGO workforce clothing contract which went to a business in Leeton rather than locally.
Jemalong Irrigation	• Wyangala Dam was constructed in 1932 (expanded in 1969) and Jemalong Weir in 1934. • Jemalong Irrigation holds an irrigation licence on the Lachlan River of approximately 100,000 ML • Jemalong Irrigation Limited is an unlisted public company controlled by a board of directors. The company diverts on average, more than 40,000 megalitres of water from the Lachlan River each year to 119 shareholders supporting a wide range of cropping and livestock enterprises. • Jemalong has a network of 325km of supply channels. About to embark on a major clean out of the supply channels. • Demand is steady- they have never gone close to distributing the full 100,000 ML of water allocations. • Evolution is a customer of Jemalong Irrigation. There is additional water which Evolution could purchase from Jemalong Irrigation to support expansion of operations. • If Evolution was to purchase additional water, Jemalong Irrigation would appreciate this being confirmed as soon as possible as they would then be able to incorporate this requirement into channel upgrades. • It is recognized that groundwater continues to be a source of water for mine operations. In times of drought it is likely that there will be negative community sentiment towards the mine if they are drawing down groundwater sources. It is understood that Evolution are in the process of finding and developing saline bores to meet some water requirements; however progress has stalled due to the flooded conditions. • Jemalong Irrigation appreciates the relationship with Evolution and looks forward to negotiating additional water allocations should it be required.
Miller and Jones Real Estate	• Overall impression is that the mine has been very good for the town and the continuation of operations through the 'Open Pit Continuation Project' is supported and welcomed. • The housing and accommodation market in West Wyalong has been very tight. The rental market is particularly problematic. • The major contributor is the solar farm workers. They have taken up all available stock and willing to pay whatever it takes to get the property. • In terms of scarcity of rental accommodation, it isn't necessarily that there is none, it is often that what does become available isn't what people are after – For instance, there has been some rentals recently available which are premises upstairs from shops on main street etc. These are not suitable for families/elderly people • The pressure point in the purchase market is 3–4-bedroom houses with 2 bathrooms. Those with families specifically want this product. Families with both parents working want relatively new, low maintenance 2-bathroom homes. There is a scarcity of these houses in West Wyalong, and this scarcity is driving up prices. • Investment in housing is primarily driven by local/regional investors. There has been some interest from external investors, but limited. • The primary solution to alleviating pressure of housing market is that the Council allow release of additional residential land on to the market. Council has not been as proactive as it could be in enabling further land being made available for developments. • Overall, the approval and development of the OPC Project is welcomed as it will provide ongoing economic vitality and stability to the town. Acknowledged that there may be some environmental impact on the Lake, however the reality is that very few locals visit/enjoy the Lake anyway
Accommodation and Housing in West Wyalong	• The housing and accommodation market has tightened over the couple years following the emergence out of COVID lock downs which coincided with a number of major projects requiring construction workforce accommodation. • Key service providers such as police and schools are now required to invest in housing for staff as otherwise they struggle to attract/ retain staff.

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• NSW Police are currently seeking to invest in 4 houses in West Wyalong. Young constables on relatively low wages particularly struggle to meet the raising costs of accommodation. • NSW Education owns approximately 25 houses in the local area. These are required as part of the package to attract teachers to the region. • The role of CGO is recognised- whilst the need for camp accommodation to house the underground workforce is appreciated, there is a need to balance with continued utilisation of local accommodation providers as this is a vital economic input to the town. • Hotel/ publican businesses in West Wyalong required to provide accommodation in order to attract staff needed for business continuity. It has been very difficult to find staff in the current market- this has been contributed to absence of backpackers due to COVID pandemic, however this situation is now improving. • The rental housing market is particularly tight in West Wyalong, with long waiting lists of people seeking this form of accommodation. • The two solar farms (Wyalong and West Wyalong) currently under construction is the primary reason why there is a lack of availability and an associated escalation in costs. These projects are behind schedule due to COVID and weather delays. Contractors are subsequently under pressure to deliver and prepared to pay whatever it costs to accommodation required workforces. There are reports of construction workers associated with the solar farms paying over \$1,000/ week for three/ four bedroom houses. The way in which the solar farms have ultimately handled accommodation of the construction workforces has ultimately led to driving up rental costs which potentially has led to some people being forced out of the market. • The Newell Highway upgrade is also contributing- these works have also been delayed due to weather and now needing to accommodate workers to accelerate completion. • Harvest time occurs generally November/ December and results in additional demand for short term accommodation. • Whilst there have been escalating prices for rental houses, the price of short term accommodation was reported to have only marginally increased (approximately \$5 - \$10 per night per room over last couple years). • It was thought that the Bland Shire Council was not being sufficiently proactive in releasing additional suitable land to encourage further housing development. However, it was recognised that a lack of availability of construction skills/ contractors would curtail development in the current environment. • It was reported that whilst the CGO underground workforce was not making a substantial contribution to demand for short term accommodation, shut down events were placing pressure on accommodation availability. Accommodation providers are used to the shut down accommodation requirements and plan accordingly. Additional notification from CGO would assist ensure the availability of accommodation- ideally there would be 3 -4 months lead time. The situation of the basketball tournament was recognised- the event had to be cancelled due to lack of accommodation. However there was no excuse for this occurring two years in a row- they should have learned from the first instance and made adequate preparations for the subsequent tournament. • In the current environment, tourists need to be organised and plan in advance if they are to access accommodation. Most tourism demand is from people passing through such as 'grey nomads'- there is a lot of north/ south movement of tourists. They cannot expect availability if only contacting providers at the last minute. It was noted that there is a major trend of people travelling from Victoria to Queensland due to permanent relocation as a result of COVID- people purchasing property in Queensland 'sight unseen' and relocating. • Hotels in town commonly run at least 70% occupancy on a two week lead time- any event such as additional construction/ shut down workforces result in 100% occupancy. • Local residents are developing an appreciation they need to plan well in advance for events such as weddings etc. if they are needing accommodation. There have been instances where a lack of preparation has led to some events needing to be re-scheduled or accessing alternative forms of accommodation. • It was considered that the permanent population of West Wyalong was growing- a positive outcome as the town was in a state of decline throughout 1980s, 1990's/ early 2000's. Development of the Cowal Gold mine was instrumental in turning this trend around and more recently contributed to by COVID and the associated urban- rural drift which occurred.

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• Most of the housing stock in West Wyalong is owned by local people- there has not been a great deal of investment in housing from outside of the region. • Home owners and real estate agents are averse for West Wyalong to be known as a 'mining town' as this would have a negative effect on housing investment as mining communities are renowned for having 'boom and bust' housing markets. • There are reports of some investors purchasing sub-standard houses in West Wyalong and renovating them specifically to target the rental market. • In spite of the lack of availability of rental accommodation and rising costs, it was considered that homelessness was not yet a major issue; however there were reports of people needing to pitch tents at the showgrounds. The prevalence and drivers of homelessness is an issue which may require further investigation/ confirmation. • Whilst the return of backpackers provides a source of employment for hotels/ pubs, the lack of accommodation remains an issue as rooms at these establishment can be let out for \$140/ night and there is no alternate rental housing available. • A suggestion for CGO consideration is supporting housing and accommodation provision in small surrounding communities such as Ungarie. This would generate a positive impact in such townships which are struggling to sustain themselves. An injection of population would sustain local businesses and sport and recreation clubs such as football teams. Small towns such as Ungarie also offer a great place to bring up kids and ultimately may encourage more families to move to the region. • It was reported that unless something was done to improve housing and accommodation options in West Wyalong and small surrounding townships, the opportunity to attract residents to the region would be lost to Forbes and Temora. • It was thought that local businesses in West Wyalong often lacked the capacity/ vision to take full advantage of the opportunities generated through the mine. • It was reported that there was a perceived difference between the way in which Bland Council and other Councils such as Temora work with developers to generate positive outcomes for communities. Bland Council perceived as too orientated towards putting obstacles in the way of development rather than facilitating development and that this was leading to lost opportunity. A potential reason was that Council lacked capacity and resources- something CGO could potentially contribute to. • There were positive perceptions of Temora Council, with specific mention made of the work Council officer Craig Sinclair was doing in attracting population and encouraging business development in Temora. • The clear message was that major impacts on the availability and affordability of accommodation can be managed through clear and consistent communication between CGO and accommodation providers and associated businesses. The lesson learned from the construction of nearby solar farms was the importance of planning and local engagement. Overview of feedback received from accommodation providers. • 3 establishments have standing bookings, has 74 rooms at 100% with Barmingo (unground contractor) for the next 2 years, 10 rooms blocked out for the mine with another provider and 8 rooms booked for Evolution. – they pay for them if they stay here or not, they are blocked out for Evolution. • 100% occupancy during shutdowns, the odd room here and there. • There is no accommodation for workers within a 100km radius during shutdowns. • Average 80 to 95% occupancy outside of shutdowns. • West Wyalong is the major thoroughfare for persons travelling between QLD and VIC (halfway point), which means such travellers are commonly looking for accommodation. • During the weekdays (Sunday afternoon to Friday afternoon) tend to be the busiest with miners and other workers coming and going- it's a continuous stream of people. • Tourists/workers have to book well in advance if they would like accommodation. • Travellers do not book ahead of time; they just stop in looking for accommodation. • Travellers find it hard to find accommodation during shutdowns.

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• One provider mentioned if she had time, she would do a ring around and try and find them accommodation especially during the shutdowns. – I feel sorry for travellers who are not aware there are no rooms. – I felt bad as people are weary after they have been travelling so far. – We get lots of calls (up to 5 times per day) with people asking for accommodation and I have to say we have no room so if I have time I try and find them accommodation for the night. • Ace Caravan Park are in the in process of building new cabins in next 3 months. Adding another 3 new cabins around 9 beds • Ace Caravan Park has extra land and if the mine wants to put 'donga' type accommodation on this land they are open to engaging with Evolution to explore this arrangement. • Travellers Rest Motel Weethalle would like to put more cabins on their site if they knew Evolution would want to rent them. – We have been thinking about it and did not to rush into this. But if we were confident on the level of demand, we would put them in to accommodate CGO – We would put in 4 cabins (2 or 3 bed on initially) and later on if that went well another 2 cabins. • Almost all of the accommodation providers have bookings until the end of 2023. • The pool of rooms in the local area has diminished with all the work that is happening – Solar Farms, Road Projects, Telecommunications. • Solar farm and Evolution Accommodation Village would be completed in another 6 months – end of June 2023 • Workers do not share a room, especially since COVID19 – Evolution will only put 1 person in the room and so will most companies. RMS even if they want 10 rooms and we only have 5 spare rooms they would put 10 people in the 5 rooms. – Most companies go 1 person per room and smaller companies might put 2 or 3 in the room and that is the cost factor. Bigger companies place 1 person per room • One hotel discussed if the company did book 1 room for 2 people this was because one person works the day shift, and one person works the night shift and they pass each other on the bus to and from work but never share the same space in the room at the same time. – This has happened with the solar farms too if their roster was 1 person on day shift and 1 person on night shift. • We try and reserve family rooms for families- not multiple workers. • Generally it is one person per room, but this depends on the company. • In general people would like more communication and notification of shutdowns. – One provider mentioned when they find out there is a shut down they close their online booking systems because they need to know who is staying in their hotel. They do not like night shift workers as they sleep all day and this affects the cleaning roster – They didn't turn up and they didn't let us know so the communication could be better - we supply all their meals so the impact for us is the time cooking meals and food wastage – They say it doesn't matter we are still paying us but it does matter to me – Last week we had to turn away people away we could have booked out 9 rooms but they were booked and no one turned up – Communication could be better • In general people said they are here to help just let us know what you need and we can accommodate your needs. Work with us and communicate your needs. – It was good because there was communication. They let us know what they need, and we have an idea of what they need and then we can let them know how many rooms we have supply. • Forbes had flooding last year and it was mentioned that some of the hotels must have been impacted and will take a while to repair. E.g. if they had to replace carpet or walls it might take a while. • It was noted that you cannot rent a house in West Wyalong – any houses are snapped up for ridiculous prices straight away.

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	– Workers prefer to be in West Wyalong, rather than stay outside in the outlying communities. – Accommodation providers prefer Evolution workers over solar farm workers. – They have no respect the solar farm workers. Solar farm works are not accountable- there is nobody to talk to about their bad behaviour. I don't want them to stay in my rooms. making a mess and being disrespectful – Evolution miners are accountable- there is someone to speak to. We told them they can't come to the bar dirty... so they go and shower and come in clean. • One motel keeps their 5 rooms available for travellers because people can't get any rooms anywhere. <i>So we keep them for travellers.</i> • One hotel has a one room booked out for a person who is homeless and has a 12months to 12 months agreement with this person
TAFE	• Enjoy a very good relationship with Evolution and the mine has created a variety of career pathways for local people. First and second year apprentices in courses such as welding and metal fabrication are able to be employed locally. This is great in terms of keeping young people in the local community. • Many of the courses offered now are provided remotely- COVID had a big impact in that way. West Wyalong has a new TAFE NSW Connected Learning Centre, giving greater choice and access to world-class learning opportunities. Supported by mobile training units and simulations, the Connected Learning Centres offers a range of certificates, diplomas and short courses. • The movement to online and flexible learning modules has meant that there are less teachers and courses offered on campus- there are currently only two teachers operating out of facility at West Wyalong. Whilst this presents a challenge for some courses, it is good for those who are not based in a center such as Wyalong- able to cover a far greater area. • Evolution regularly hires office space from the TAFE for workshops and meetings in town. It is always a positive interaction with people from the mine- Renee and Carmen from the CGO Engagement team are key contacts. • The biggest challenge in terms of getting young people engaged in career pathways is motivation. There are a cohort of young people who just aren't motivated to gain skills and open up careers. There are certainly some students attending TAFE courses as it is a requirement in order to access Centrelink payments. • Some of the key courses on offer include nursing, aged care, childcare, business skills, animal husbandry and agriculture, warehousing (including forklift driving) and metal fabrication. These are offered through a mixture of on line and in person modules across different campuses with the primary campus being Wagga Wagga. • There is a severe shortage of TAFE teachers- a lot of people left the sector due to frustrations with the constant changes which occur. • Overall, the mine is good for the town of West Wyalong and the surrounding area. It generates direct and indirect employment and career pathways for local people. Continuation of open pit mining would keep those jobs and wages in the town. It has a highly positive effect on retention of young people in the area
West Wyalong Health Service	• The West Wyalong Health Service includes a 22-bed hospital facility along with an Accident and Emergency Department – 3 beds • There are 3 doctors on call at all hours • There are 3 medical practices in West Wyalong and a total of 7 doctors who all live in town • The Health Service provides a 24/7 radiology service along with a (fee paying) Medical Consult service • Community health services include Aboriginal Health, Nutrition and Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Mental Health Services, Palliative Care and Physiotherapy • There are no maternity services in West Wyalong – the closest one in Temora and Forbes • All critical/ high need or complex health issues are referred to Wagga Wagga • Overall staffing is currently ok, however they are down about 4 positions. The highest need is for an additional 2 registered nurses. • The biggest issue is housing – there is a lack of housing options in West Wyalong

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	• They currently rent 3 houses. The nursing residence is very old and in a state of disrepair. Only 1 person is currently accommodated at the nursing residence. The Intent is to decommission and sell the land. • The Health Service is putting in 4x 'pods' – these are very similar to mining 'donga's' – 1 bedroom self contained 'pods'. Funding has almost been secured for constructing the 4 'pods' in early 2023. • Current lack of nearby accommodation means that nursing staff also require a car as too far/not safe to walk to and from work. • Demand for health services is high. The number of emergency presentations over the last two years has doubled. This reflects more people and activity in the area. • Workers from Cowal Gold are welcomed – they are polite and respectful. • Workers associated with construction of the two solar farms are no good – rude, push their way in. It would seem that these are the ones causing trouble in local pubs etc. – getting into fights and into trouble. • Highly appreciative of the support provided by Evolution/Cowal Gold. They are always willing to provide sponsorship and donations – most recently defib machine/ cardiac arrest. • If looking to provide more support, would greatly appreciate funding of scholarships to enable more young people to enter health related professions. It would be great to keep young people in the community through scholarships in nursing or other health professions. • The Health Service has a very good relationship with the high school – currently support one/ two scholarships in nursing through the school. • Of staff at West Wyalong Health Service, 8 have husbands/partners who work for Cowal Gold – it's great when someone joins the mine who has a partner with skills in health or education. • A key focus is to keep staff happy and avoid burn-out. • Overall, very supportive of the mine and continued operations would be good for the community
West Wyalong Police	• Greatly enjoying being based in West Wyalong- a welcomed change of pace from being in a big city. Really enjoying being part of a rural community. • Overall, rates of crime across the region are very low. There is a bit of drug related activity and occasional theft of property, but on the whole it is a law abiding community which looks out for each other. • Enjoys a good relationship with the mine. Workers at Cowal Gold seem to be very well managed and do not cause any problems in the community. They seem to be respectful and understand that if they get up to mischief then they will lose their job. • The workforce associated with construction of the solar farms have been a major cause of trouble in West Wyalong. They way in which some members of these workforces behave can only be described as 'a circus'. There are a handful who are just absolute ratbags and should not be employed. They instigate conflict and fights in the pubs and have brought drugs into the community. The police have gone and briefed the solar farm projects on expected behavior, however a lot of these people just don't know any better and will always find trouble. Very much looking forward to construction being finalized and the dispersal of these workforces out of the region. • Does not expect that the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project would have much of an impact on policing services. Overall it would be a positive as would keep existing jobs in the town and the income which that injects into the local economy. As long as the construction workforce behave in the same way that other (existing) CGO staff and contractors, then there is unlikely to be any negative issues for the town. • In terms of potential traffic impacts associated with construction, these should be able to be managed easily enough. The roads through to the mine site are in reasonable condition in spite of the battering they have taken due to the floods. If police escorts are required for extra wide loads etc., this resourcing requirement for police would come from where the heavy vehicle comes from (such as Newcastle Port) rather than where it is going, so there would be no drain on local police resources. • Housing and accommodation is an ongoing issue. Like everyone else, the police have had a hard time finding housing for officers. Fortunately, they have an agreement with Bland Council for the lease of one house. Found it difficult when came to West Wyalong about six months ago as there was no suitable rental accommodation, so wife and kids couldn't move (from Newcastle) for a few months. • With regard to accommodation for CGO staff and contractors, the new worker accommodation village seems to make sense to alleviate some of the pressure on the local market. It would be good if there was

Table 5 CGO Open Cut Expansion Project SIA Community Engagement and SIA findings

Stakeholder group	Issues raised
	no consumption of alcohol allowed in the camp as this would ensure that local pubs and clubs benefit from the workforce being in town. • Overall impression is the mine has been very good for the town of West Wyalong. And the 'Open Pit Continuation' project is welcomed as the longer the mine stays open, the better it is for the town.

Cowal Gold Operations Open Pit Continuation Project Survey 2

Introduction

Evolution Mining Limited (Evolution) is in the early planning stages of developing a proposed continuation of the Cowal Gold Operations (CGO), known as the Open Pit Continuation (OPC) Project.

What is the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project?

The existing CGO open-cut gold mine at Lake Cowal is located 38 kilometres northeast of West Wyalong, in central western NSW. The mine includes associated surface infrastructure, comprising an ore processing plant, waste rock emplacements and an integrated waste landform, for tailings disposal.

The OPC will extend open-cut mining by approximately 10 years to 2036 and the total mine life by approximately two years to 2042. The project will enable the retention of the open-cut mining workforce, allowing CGO to continue to contribute to the local and national economies, through local employment, community advancement and environmental protection.

The key components of the OPC include:

- **new open-cut mining pits;**
- **lake protection bund;**
- **integrated waste landform;**
- **waste rock emplacements;**
- **temporary soil stockpiles; and**
- **water storage upgrades.**

Planning and assessment process

The OPC is classified as state significant development and will require approval under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. This means an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared, and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces or the Independent Planning Commission will determine the development application.

The OPC has commenced preparation of the specialist environmental, social and economic studies to be undertaken, including a SIA, as part of preparing an EIS. The EIS will be prepared and submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment for public exhibition, in accordance with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the project.

For more information about the proposed OPC Project please contact the project team:

Phone: 1800 161 205 (free call)
Email: cgo_opc@emconsulting.com.au
Website: emm.mysocialpinpoint/cgo_opc

Survey Purpose

EMM Consulting Pty Ltd (EMM Consulting) has been engaged by CGO to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the OPC Project, including a Social Impact Assessment.

As part of the Social Impact Assessment, EMM Consulting have designed a survey to get community input into the identification of potential social impacts and benefits related to the OPC Project for further investigation during the Environmental Impact Statement delivery phase. The results of this survey will be presented in the Scoping Report.

Please complete the survey by **20 December 2022**. If you have any further questions about the project please contact the project team using the details above.

Please note your responses to this survey are voluntary and the confidentiality of the information you provide will be safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act.

1. Have you had any previous communications with Cowal Gold Operations (CGO)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. If yes, what was the topic of discussion?

3. How would you rate your awareness of the proposed Open Pit Continuation Project?

Very good

Good

Fair

Poor

Very poor

☐☐☐☐☐

4. How do you feel about the proposed Open Pit Continuation Project?

Strongly supportive

Supportive

Neutral

Opposed

Strongly opposed

☐☐☐☐☐

Why do you feel this way?

5. How supportive are you of continued mining in the Lake Cowal area?

Strongly supportive	Supportive	Neutral	Opposed	Strongly opposed
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Why do you feel this way?

6. Listed below are potential social benefits derived through the Project. For those you feel relevant, please indicate the positive contribution which might be made by the Open Pit Continuation Project:

	Slightly positive	Moderately positive	Very positive
Employment - continuation of the open pit operations workforce	☐	☐	☐
Employment - creation of construction employment opportunities	☐	☐	☐
Local businesses - opportunities for local businesses to supply goods and services to the Project	☐	☐	☐
Community support - CGO contributions to community programs, services and events	☐	☐	☐
Economic growth-support continued economic vitality and population stability of local communities	☐	☐	☐
Legacy- time to plan and deliver a positive legacy from the Project	☐	☐	☐

What other benefits might be delivered through the Open Pit Continuation Project? (please list):

7. Listed below are potential social impacts which may be experienced due to the Project. For those you feel relevant, please indicate the negative contribution which might be made by the Open Pit Continuation Project:

	Slightly negative	Moderately negative	Very negative
Housing and accommodation- pressure on local housing and short-term accommodation	☐	☐	☐
Traffic- additional traffic resulting in reduced safety on roads	☐	☐	☐
Services- workforces place additional demands on local health services	☐	☐	☐
Agriculture - encroachment on agricultural land and potential competition for water resources	☐	☐	☐
Cohesion- presence of (short-term) construction workforce in local area	☐	☐	☐
Culture- potential disturbance to Aboriginal cultural heritage	☐	☐	☐
Water displacement- potential for bund wall to influence flood behavior	☐	☐	☐

What other social impacts may occur as a result of the Open Pit Continuation Project? (please list):

8. Which of the above impacts or benefits is most important to you, and why?

9. Do you have any other comments?

10. What is your **suburb**?

11. What is your **postcode**?

12. Which of the following **age brackets** do you fall into? (optional)

☐ 14 and under	☐ 45 - 54
☐ 15 - 24	☐ 55 - 64
☐ 25 - 34	☐ 65+
☐ 35 - 44	

13. Which of the following do you **identify** as? (optional)

Please select all that apply to you.

☐ Male	☐ Torres Strait Islander
☐ Female	☐ I speak a language other than English at home
☐ Non-binary	☐ I have a disability and/or special need
☐ Aboriginal	

14. Which of the following best describes you?

Please select all that apply to you

☐ Business owner	☐ Local resident
☐ Landholder	☐ Service provider
☐ CGO Employee/Contractor	
☐ Other (please specify)	

15. Would you like to provide further input on the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project?

- ☐ Yes (please contact the Project team via email: **cgo_opc@emmconsulting.com.au** or phone: **1800 161 205**)
- ☐ No

F.3 Summary of SIA field study findings

Participants identified values, strengths and vulnerabilities which offer an understanding of the community surrounding the project site, these are shown in Table F.1. The key issues or potential impacts, and opportunities or potential benefits identified by the community are organised in categories of social impact theme in Table F.2.

F.3.1 Community identified values, strengths and vulnerabilities

A summary of existing community values strengths and vulnerabilities identified by participants in the SIA field study are provided in Table F.1.

Table-F.1 Community identified values, strengths and vulnerabilities

Values	Strengths	Vulnerabilities
Lake Cowal Conservation Centre (LCCC) is a community educational facility and provides environmental learning opportunities around the Lake.	West Wyalong retained a General Practitioner service and Hospital (including X-ray capability). They have 3 doctors on call at all hours, 3 medical practices in West Wyalong and a total of 7 doctors who all live in town.	Agricultural industry vulnerable to the climate and climate disasters such as floods/droughts.
Lake Cowal and Wilbertroy-Cowal Wetlands and the diversity and number of species that inhabit the lake	Lake Cowal Foundation in the final stages of establishing an eco-glamping accommodation facility on the shores of the Lake.	All critical/high need or complex health issues people need to travel to Wagga Wagga or Griffiths. There are no maternity services in West Wyalong – the closest one in Temora and Forbes.
Generational farming	West Wyalong is an example that Agriculture, Mining and Conservation are co-existing.	Landholders are vulnerable to floods due to the mine bund wall and Newell Highway works. Floods impact upon their farming practices.
The community values the employment opportunities provided at Evolution. It generates direct and indirect employment and career pathways for local people.	Harvest time occurs generally November/ December	Housing and accommodation shortage – limited rental accommodation available for local people. The major contributor is the solar farm workers. They have taken up all available stock and willing to pay whatever it takes to get the property.
Evolution provides economic vitality, especially during times of floods and droughts, the mine keeps the community going	Hotels in town commonly run at a 70% to 100% occupancy rate.	Key service providers such as police and schools are now required to invest in housing for staff as otherwise, they struggle to attract/ retain staff. Hotel/ publican businesses in West Wyalong required to provide accommodation in order to attract staff needed for business continuity.
Evolution supports the community and local businesses	Stable population for the local area – related to Evolution mine	Multiple construction projects occurring placing strain on housing and health services
Aboriginal people value and have a deep cultural awareness about Lake Cowal	Population growth – school enrolments	Shortage of skills in the region impacting on local businesses ability to hire staff/ retain staff – also linked to housing shortage

Table-F.1 Community identified values, strengths and vulnerabilities

Values	Strengths	Vulnerabilities
The recently launched Aboriginal Agricultural Company. This venture is a partnership and agreement between the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) and Evolution.	Recreational activities / boating / bird watching	Higher cost of living is an additional factor impacting on vulnerable people
Flow on effects of mine employment and activity to other parts of the business community and general community	Co-existence of agriculture, mining and conservation industries	Local businesses unable to compete with mining and other industries which can pay higher wages
Community values Evolution management of environmental and sustainable processes	There is a lot of work in the disability sector	Limited Aboriginal services (people have to travel to larger towns or to Condobolin to access Aboriginal Health Services)
Overall the community is very supportive of the mine and continued operations would be good for the community	TAFE courses offered now are provided remotely- COVID had a big impact in that way. West Wyalong has a new TAFE NSW Connected Learning Centre, giving greater choice and access to a variety of certificates diplomas and short courses.	Health under pressure - demand for health services is high. Eg. The number of emergency presentations over the last two years has doubled. This reflects more people and activity in the area
Flow on effects of mine employment and activity to other parts of the business community and general community	TAFE courses offered now are provided remotely- COVID had a big impact in that way. West Wyalong has a new TAFE NSW Connected Learning Centre, giving greater choice and access to a variety of certificates diplomas and short courses.	A lack of availability of construction skills
Evolution employs a large number of local people	Jemalong irrigation holds an irrigation licence on the Lachlan River of approximately 100,000 ML and has a network of 325km of supply channels	Difficult to attract investors to the region
Most tourism demand is from people passing through such as 'grey nomads'- there is a lot of north/ south movement of tourists.	Overall, rates of crime across the region are very low. The community looks out for each other	Young professionals are poached by other government organisations or private industry; Council is unable to match wages`
Landholders' property on Lake Cowal. It offers superior grazing and crop production it provides in dry times as the lake gradually dries off and retains soil moisture.	workers at Cowal Gold seem to be very well managed and do not cause any problems in the community. They seem to be respectful and understand that if they get up to mischief then they will lose their job.	Lack of transportation is a major impediment to people accessing employment in the region. Lack of a motor vehicle or lack of a driver's license restricts people from accessing employment opportunities.
Overall positive impact on the local economy which does alleviate some of the pressures of vulnerable people. The pressure is not relieved through the direct jobs rather through the indirect jobs.	Taroona station is a large agricultural operation supporting sheep and cattle production along with the cropping of wheat and other cereal crops. Some of the property is used as a biodiversity offset for the mine.	Motivation is a key impediment for young people to access employment - there are a cohort of young people who just aren't motivated to gain skills and open up careers

Table-F.1 Community identified values, strengths and vulnerabilities

Values	Strengths	Vulnerabilities
	Crops are very sensitive to soil moisture. A small increase in inundation levels due to water displacement could result in substantial areas of land being too wet to crop- or even to graze.	There is also a severe shortage of childcare skills. The lack of child care services is also a factor inhibiting business growth in West Wyalong. The lack of services restricts employment opportunities for women. A new child care center/ additional places at existing services would make a real difference.
	Parkes Forbes Community Housing are in the process of transition with Amelie Housing. Amelie housing is a larger organisation serving across NSW - Amelie housing will have more resources to deliver social housing support to the people in the area	The Mine is mined within the Lake. The situation now is that the mine has responsibility for some of the lands under the Lake and private farmers have responsibility for other areas. The two parties have different objectives which causes difficulties.
	Accommodation providers have a high occupancy rate with constant flow of people in the area	Mine operates within regulation but mine is there now and always will be. Has changed the landscape forever. Should mitigate as much as possible.
		The Health Service is putting in 4x 'pods' – these are very similar to mining 'donga's' – 1 bedroom self contained 'pods'. Funding has almost been secured for constructing the 4 'pods' in early 2023
		West Wyalong does not come as a key township requiring support due to the higher incomes however this could be skewed because of the mine and it is recognised there is a need for vulnerable people in West Wyalong
		Current lack of nearby accommodation means that nursing staff also require a car as too far/not safe to walk to and from work
		Shut downs place extra pressure on passing by travelers in West Wyalong finding accommodation

F.3.2 Community identified impacts, benefits and opportunities

A summary of the potential issues and opportunities arising as a consequence of the Project, as identified by participants during the SIA field study are provided in Table F.2

Table F.2 Community identified impacts, benefits and opportunities

Key themes	Impacts	Benefits	Opportunities
Decision making / Legacy	- It was reported community members had a good relationship with CGO - Build the skills of local people It was reported the continuation could have further improvement of highly valued biodiversity outcomes.	- Support culture and community through continued investment in Lake Cowell Foundation - Appreciation for the contribution made by CGO to the community and the desire for the mine to leave a positive legacy	- Legacy - They would like to see investment in initiatives which provide long term benefit- not some facility (such as a swimming pool) which would only then become an additional financial burden on Council. - Some options mentioned were investment in skills development (including apprenticeships) for young people, facilities which encourage tourism at Lake Cowal and enhancement of the main street in West Wyalong to create a more appealing environment for tourists and potential residents. - A potential Legacy Project for the mine is the development of a Business Support Centre in West Wyalong which assists businesses to access opportunities. - Would like to see a positive long term legacy left by the mine. This is both the infrastructure left behind along with the skills and prosperity of the population. A shared understanding of legacy needs to be fostered through engagement. - There is a need to improve public access to the Lake so that it can benefit more people. There are business opportunities (tourism etc.) which would benefit from improved access.
Housing and accommodation	- Housing constraints - the biggest issue is housing – there is a lack of short stay accommodation during shut down periods and rental housing options in West Wyalong - The rental housing market is particularly tight in West Wyalong, with long waiting lists of people seeking this form of accommodation. - Contractors are willing to pay premium costs for rentals. - Short term accommodation shortages for travellers and people coming to the across for	- Supports ongoing regional economic vitality- significant contributor to the regional economy. - Continuous stream of people coming into the area, accommodation providers benefit from this flow of people. - Accommodation providers have standing bookings.	- It was reported the Bland Shire Council has not been as proactive as it could be in enabling further land being made available for developments - One solution raised to alleviate pressure of housing market is for the Council to allow release of additional residential land on to the market. - An opportunity to create a housing and accommodation strategy to reduce the impact on rental and short stay housing market

Table F.2 Community identified impacts, benefits and opportunities

Key themes	Impacts	Benefits	Opportunities
	events – people have to book well in advance. - Constrained access to housing for key service workers - Key service providers such as police and schools are now required to invest in housing for staff as otherwise, they struggle to attract/ retain staff. Hotel/ publican businesses in West Wyalong required to provide accommodation in order to attract staff needed for business continuity. - The pressure point in the housing market is family homes, 3-4 bedroom homes		Accommodation providers identified they are reacting to the market and are in the process of building new accommodation or would like to discuss with Evolution mining their needs – presents an opportunities to engage with local providers to explore future accommodation needs.
Economy	- Possible impacts on tourism industry due to lack of accommodation - Employers and local councils are needing to offer incentives to persuade people to move to the region to take up employment. - Aboriginal employment through post-mining land rehabilitation not considered as they are a small community; the LALC have undertaken cultural burns in areas that have cultural value [to stimulate native plant regeneration and reduce weed growth] but not possible at a mine site when the surface of the land has been so disturbed. - There is no employment program with WW Aboriginal community; this is seen as a barrier. - Construction skills are in particularly in short supply, with ongoing high levels of demand. - Overall, the mine is good for the town of West Wyalong and the surrounding area. Continuation of open pit mining would keep those jobs and wages in the tow	- Retention of direct jobs and additional jobs supported by the mine. - Continued income stream for local suppliers. - continuation of the mine would provide ongoing job security and local economic vitality. - The continuation project supports ongoing regional economic vitality, it is a significant contributor to the regional economy. - Positive mental health benefits from ongoing employment due to job security and economic resilience - Ongoing business relationships with Evolution. Eg. Jemalong Irrigation appreciates the relationship with Evolution and looks forward to negotiating additional water allocations should it be required. - TAFE enjoy a very good relationship with Evolution and the mine has created a variety of career pathways for local people. First and second year apprentices in courses such as welding and metal fabrication are able to be employed locally. This is great in terms of keeping young people in the local community.	- The Health Service has a very good relationship with the high school – currently support one/ two scholarships in nursing through the school. - New construction workers bring in new skill people to the area - it was reported it is great when someone joins the mine who has a partner with skills in health or education Eg. Of the current staff at West Wyalong Health Service, 8 of them have husbands/partners who work for Cowal Gold. - Future opportunities for new businesses to provide direct goods and services for Evolution. - New partnerships through TAFE and high schools to provide targeted courses for young people and people looking for new careers. - In terms of local procurement, the mine could potentially do better. Some local businesses have reported that they had difficulty contacting CGO regarding tender opportunities (recent catering tender). There could be better publication of opportunities. - CGO helps to keep the population stable with 60 CGO employees living in Forbes and 54 living in North Parkes.

Table F.2 Community identified impacts, benefits and opportunities

Key themes	Impacts	Benefits	Opportunities
		- Retention of direct jobs and additional jobs supported by the mine. - Overall it would be a positive as would keep existing jobs in the town and the income which that injects into the local economy. Many businesses would be interested in becoming a supplier to CGO if they were better informed on how to register interest and what they needed to do to demonstrate capacity to deliver goods and services - Continued income stream for local suppliers. - Continuation of the mine would provide ongoing job security and local economic vitality - Aboriginal employment through post-mining land rehabilitation not considered as they are a small community; the LALC have undertaken cultural burns in areas that have cultural value [to stimulate native plant regeneration and reduce weed growth] but not possible at a mine site when the surface of the land has been so disturbed	- It was reported there is an opportunity to improve public access to the Lake so that it can benefit more people. There are business opportunities (tourism etc.) which would benefit from improved access. - Future and ongoing partnerships for WCC and WLAC – with p[ossible benefits of future employment/training initiatives - APM reported there is an opportunity to partner with Evolution to locate local skills and labour requirements.
Health services and transport	- Further pressure on struggling health and emergency services - Fears that may exacerbate flood effects - difficulty in attracting and retaining health professionals and services (contributed to by housing constraints) - potential for deterioration of safety due to increased traffic throughout construction - Could add further pressure on the already struggling health and emergency services - Difficulty in attracting and retaining health professionals and services (also is contributed to by housing constraints) - Demand for health services is high. The number of emergency presentations over the last two years has doubled. This reflects	- Positive mental health benefits due to job security and economic resilience - Contributions CGO makes to health and community services - Ongoing contributions by Evolution provides to health and community services - Local service providers are highly appreciative of the support provided by Evolution. They are always willing to provide sponsorship and donations – most recently defib machine/ cardiac arrest. - West Wyalong Police does not expect that the CGO Open Pit Continuation Project would have much of an impact on policing services - The continued partnerships and new venture and agreement	- Suggested by health services as they have a very good relationship with the high schools – Evolution could fund multiple scholarships to enable more young people to enter health related professions. It would be great to keep young people in the community through scholarships in nursing or other health professions. - Currently they health services support one/ two scholarships in nursing through the school - Police recommended that it would be good if there was no consumption of alcohol allowed in the camp as this would ensure that local pubs and clubs benefit from the workforce being in town.

Table F.2 Community identified impacts, benefits and opportunities

Key themes	Impacts	Benefits	Opportunities
	more people and activity in the area	between the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) and Evolution Mining; mainly meat and wool (sheep)	
Transport	• Potential for deterioration of safety due to increased traffic throughout construction • In terms of potential traffic impacts associated with construction, these should be able to be managed easily enough • Traffic route to Forbes along western side of lake means that 25 properties and 3 shires are affected. If was to change route only 4 properties and 1 Shire would be affected. This would also improve fatigue management and quality of the road, as well and maintenance. • Impact to the travelling stock route (TSR) impacting farmers access	• Continued provision of bus services from Wyalong, Forbes and Condoblin is a great initiative by Evolution which serves to overcome the lack of transportation in the region.	• Possible improvement to the TSR it was suggested Evolution should engage Bland Shire Council and other relevant authorities such as the LLS to confirm the appropriateness of management and maintenance of the TSR.
Surroundings	• Loss of connection to landscape due to encroachment of the mine. • Concerns about potential loss of biodiversity • Mine has changed the landscape forever. Should mitigate as much as possible. • The possible impacts to the breeding areas. It was reported the operation is impacting where birds nest. Noise and light within parameters are over time driving birds nesting and feeding patters. • Amenity impacts such as the generation of noise and vibration such as the clack, clack, clack of machinery and the beep, beep of reversing trucks and blasting can be heard and felt. • Blasting can be heard and felt - The floors in the wool shed were cracked once by one of these events. • Visual amenity effects (such as nuisance night lighting)	• More time to plan mine rehabilitation and potential beneficial uses. • Aboriginal employment through post-mining land rehabilitation not considered as they are a small community; the LALC have undertaken cultural burns in areas that have cultural value [to stimulate native plant regeneration and reduce weed growth] but not possible at a mine site when the surface of the land has been so disturbed. • Ongoing support for Lake Cowal conservation centre through continued investment in Lake Cowell Foundation • The community has an desire for the mine to leave a positive legacy for the community • Mine operates within regulations and seen as very positive within community. • When the mine closes the infrastructure already in place and it was suggested this could	• This venture is a partnership and agreement between the Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) and Evolution Mining; mainly meat and wool (sheep); however have not used any cultural land management practices – mostly western style agriculture only • Opportunities for Evolution to engage with landholders on management of mine-owned land to control pests and bushfire risks. E.g CGO could provide materials and landholders could provide the labour to repair fences.

Table F.2 Community identified impacts, benefits and opportunities

Key themes	Impacts	Benefits	Opportunities
	- General dust, noise and vibration - Project encroachment - the major issue is that the mine is just growing bigger all the time with each Amendment. - Concerns relating to friction between adjoining agricultural uses including feral pigs as pests and fire risk. - The Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation (WCC) has worked constructively with mining operations at Cowal for over 19 years - primary issue is whether the Open Pit Continuation Project could jeopardise the outcomes which are being achieved for Aboriginal people through this partnership.	- help to manage water in the Lake. - It was reported there is an opportunity for Lake Cowal Foundation and Evolution to continue the working relationship as it in both interests to continue working together.	
Water	- Fears the new bund wall may exacerbate flood effect and influence flood behaviour. - The Highway has contributed to the flood behaviour / effect. There is one great long bund which traps the water and does not allow the water to flow out through the system and farmers are concerned. - In terms of mine water requirements, groundwater should be the last resort only. Surface water should be prioritised when available, including use of Jemalong Irrigation channels. - It is recognized that groundwater continues to be a source of water for mine operations. However in times of drought it is likely that there will be negative community sentiment towards the mine if they are drawing down groundwater sources. - Landholders properties becoming inundated - Once the water goes over the Lake Road, some properties are inundated and not able to be accessed. - The key issue of concern is the effect the new bund wall will have upon displacement of	Bland Shire council and relevant councils and government agencies to work together to understand flood conditions and impacts at Lake Cowal. It was reported it could have a major influence on flood behavior in and around Lake Cowal	- It was reported Jemalong irrigation have capacity to additional water -Evolution is a current customer and Evolution could purchase from Jemalong Irrigation to support expansion of operations. - Opportunities for future water sources - It is understood that Evolution is in the process of finding and developing saline bores to meet some water requirements. - Suggested for some more detailed surface water/ground water modelling to be undertaken. Landholders would like to see Evolution invest and utilize in the better technology available. It was reported there is a need for holistic modelling so that true effects are able to be predicted and understood. - When the initial bund was constructed, there was no compensation for water displacement paid to landholders surrounding the Lake (by Barrick). Landholders who have been in the area for a long time know that the bund has had an impact on flood characteristics; however there is a lack of data which proves that this has been the case. In the

Table F.2 Community identified impacts, benefits and opportunities

Key themes	Impacts	Benefits	Opportunities
	water on to lands which are part of Taroona Station. • It needs to be understood that a very small increase in water displacement can have a substantial effect on land surrounding the Lake as the terrain is so flat. It is recognized that CGO have stated that the new bund would only have a maximum of 15mm increase to flood levels; however this sounds a little like just a convenient number. What we need to know is the actual effect which 15mm (or whatever it ends up being) will have on the operation of surrounding landholders • Has particular concerns that a portion of land right on the Lake which was purchased for cropping and livestock will potentially be impacted. • It was noted that there are no gauging stations on the Lake, so there is a lack of reliable data on flooding characteristics. Flood modelling needs to also take into account the broader catchment • Groundwater is relied upon to maintain agricultural operations in dry times. The mine should not draw upon groundwater (Bland Paleo Channel) unless absolutely necessary. The Bland Paleo needs to be preserved as this is vital to agricultural operations during dry times. There needs to be a re-alignment of the water allocations so that surface water is prioritized, followed by saline bores and then followed by Bland Paleo only if there is no alternative source.		2016 floods, there were areas on Taroona Station which were flooded that had never been flooded previously. • Suggested the Mine should prioritise surface water to meet all requirements when it is available.