

Appendix G

Addendum

Socio-economic impact assessment

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EnergyConnect (NSW – Western Section) Supplementary Social Impact Assessment

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document presents the Addendum Social Impact Assessment Report for EnergyConnect – Western Section (‘the proposal’) works. This report is an addition and makes reference to the Social Impact Assessment (‘Technical paper 5’) completed by WSP for the proposal in September 2020 to support the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposal.

TransGrid proposes to make a series of amendments to the proposal which have been developed since the public exhibition of the EIS, including a series of clarifications and refinements as a result of ongoing design of the proposal and comments received during exhibition of the EIS which have been described in the Amendment Report. This addendum social impact assessment report presents the findings of the impacts of these amendments compared to the findings of Technical paper 5.

Unless otherwise stated, all assumptions are consistent with Technical paper 5.

1.1 OVERVIEW OF AMENDMENTS

Details of the proposed amendments are included in the Amendment Report, however the amendments to the proposal requiring further consideration for the purpose of this report include the following:

- additional earthwork activities at the Buronga substation upgrade and expansion
- confirmation of the Wentworth construction compound and accommodation camp location on northern side of Renmark Road
- revised approach to access track strategy
- overall increase in number of FTE construction workforce required at the construction peak, and redistribution of workers from across three camps to two camp sites – specifically:
 - increase to the number of FTE construction workers to be accommodated at the Wentworth accommodation camp from 100 FTE to 200 FTE
 - an increase in the number of construction workers proposed to be accommodated at the Buronga accommodation camp site from 200 FTE to 400 FTE
 - removal of the Anabranck South site as workforce accommodation from the proposal.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

This report referred to the potential social impacts of the proposed amendments as outlined in the Amendment Report and sought to assess whether such amendments caused a material change to the level of significance of each social impact identified in Technical paper 5. This assessment also determined whether the impacts associated with noise and vibration, landscape and visual impact of the proposed amendments had any bearing on the social impacts. Finally, the applicability of the management and mitigation responses of social impacts were assessed in relation to the proposed amendments.

This assessment has not included any supplementary SIA-specific community or stakeholder engagement, updates to the data gathered on the existing environment or cumulative assessment. These are unchanged from Technical paper 5. Engagement with affected property owners, government agencies and business and industry stakeholders has occurred during development of the proposal amendments. No specific concerns were raised by property owners in relation to the proposed amendments. Wentworth Shire Council also raised no specific concerns in relation to the impact of the proposed amendments on the local community.

The Fort Courage Caravan Park (Wentworth Angling Club Committee) was also consulted in relation to the proposed construction compound and accommodation camp on Renmark Road at Wentworth. Feedback was positive overall, however some concern was raised in relation to the potential for dust and air quality issues at Fort Courage. Proposed mitigation measures were provided and feedback invited.

Only identified social impacts where the impact rating differs from the previous assessment have been discussed in this report. Changes to the social impact associated with the proposed amendments to workforce accommodation location are detailed in the following tables and shaded blue.

2 ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL IMPACTS

2.1 OVERVIEW

The potential social impacts of the proposal amendments detailed in Section 1.1 on the area of socio-economic influence were analysed according to the following social factors: way of life, community, access to and use of infrastructure, services and facilities, health and wellbeing, surroundings, and cumulative impacts.

2.2 WAY OF LIFE

Wentworth main construction compound and accommodation camp – identified site and increase in construction workforce

The amended location of the Wentworth main construction compound and accommodation camp is on the northern side of Renmark Road on the western side of the Great Darling Anabranch River and 17 kilometres west of Wentworth (see Figure 2.1). The previous location of the camp was the corner of Pomona Road and Silver City Highway, approximately six kilometres from Wentworth. The amended location is further away from the townships of Pomona, Wentworth (now 13 kilometres), and the regional centre of Mildura. The new location is not expected to change the identified social impacts associated with the townships. The amended location would affect one new landowner not previously included in the assessment. The location of the site has been determined in negotiation with the landowner and would be temporarily leased.

Wentworth accommodation camp would house approximately 200 FTE workers, inclusive of 50 office staff. This is an increase from the 100 FTE presented in the exhibited proposal. The implication on social impact assessment relates to the movement of workers around the camp and the ability of workers to access facilities both inside and outside the camp. Doubling the number of workers to be accommodated at the Wentworth accommodation camp may result in a more significant impact on the communities in and around Wentworth, noting however that the additional 100 FTE workers were going to reside at the Anabranch South camp, which was also located in close proximity to the township of Wentworth. Pomona is now unlikely to experience the positive and negative impacts associated with construction workers travelling to /from an accommodation site as it is no longer on the way to either the airport or the proposal site.

Table 2.1 details impacts relating to the socio-economic effect of the construction workforce ceasing activities in the area of socio-economic influence. Given the substantial increase in construction workforce the proportion of locally sourced workers has also increased. There may therefore be a proportionally higher level of pressure on social services to address the resulting unemployment.

Buronga accommodation capacity increase

The Buronga accommodation camp would still be located on Arumpo Road next to the existing Buronga Substation owned and operated by TransGrid. The overall area of the Buronga construction compound and accommodation camp site would not change from the exhibited proposal. Rather, there will be a slight increase to the housing-specific area to allow for additional housing facilities.

An increase in the overall number of construction workers (from 400 to 600 FTE) results in a higher proportion of workers to be accommodated at the Buronga accommodation camp. Up to 80 per cent of the construction workforce (600 FTEs) would reside in the accommodation camps located at Buronga and Wentworth (approximately 315 and 165 FTEs respectively). The expansion of housing capacity at the Buronga camp would mean that no additional impact over and above what was presented in the exhibited EIS should be felt by the private housing and short-term accommodation market in Mildura as a result of the increased number of workers. The Mildura LGA is at capacity in the private housing and short-term accommodation markets due to workforces associated with other major development projects in LGA.

It remains the case that the additional demand for housing would be met by increasing the capacity of Buronga accommodation camp. Despite TransGrid’s intention to encourage international and interstate workers to reside in the local area while off-shift, this is not expected to be a significant portion of the construction workforce (and is subject to freedom on international travel post-COVID-19).

This may exacerbate previously assessed social impacts. The workers residing at Buronga will be primarily servicing construction activities for the eastern end of proposal. This poses a greater impact, both positively and negatively on the townships of Buronga (14 kilometres south west) and Gol Gol (16 kilometres south west) and Mildura (25 kilometres south west/23 minute drive).

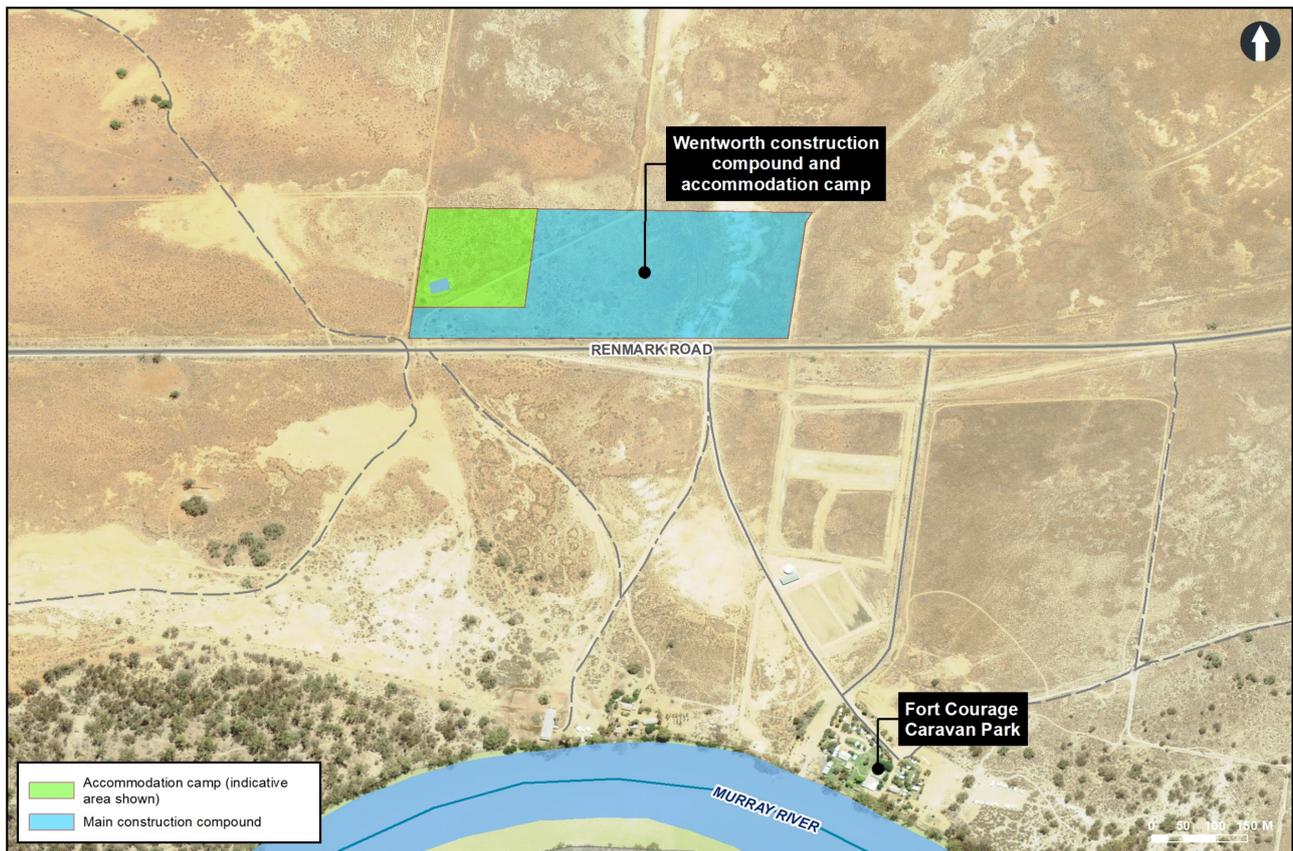


Figure 2.1 Location of Wentworth accommodation camp on Renmark Road, as per Amendment Report

Table 2.1 Way of life social impacts

SOCIAL IMPACT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT RATING IN PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT (POST-MITIGATION)	REVISED IMPACT RATING OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS (POST-MITIGATION)
Way of life	The completion of construction would see the conclusion of certain casual, full-time and contracted employment positions, which may cause a spike in localised unemployment, placing potential strain on social services and decrease in community social and economic capital.	Low	Low

SOCIAL IMPACT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT RATING IN PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT (POST-MITIGATION)	REVISED IMPACT RATING OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS (POST-MITIGATION)
Way of life	Increased demand for goods and services may result in certain products or services becoming difficult to access for some residents due to increased costs, while reduction in demand (and cost) following construction may have a commercial impact to local businesses and service providers.	Low	Low
Way of life	An increase in competition for temporary accommodation or rental housing may result in unavailability of accommodation for certain user groups.	Low	Low

2.3 COMMUNITY

Technical paper 5 noted a range of potential impacts relating specifically to the incoming construction workforce population. The increase in construction workers either residing in local towns or visiting while off-shift may exacerbate these potential social impacts. For example, pressure on Mildura airport would increase through more workers requiring flights home. These impacts would be addressed by implementing the proposed mitigation and management approaches presented in Chapter 5 of Technical paper 5 and discussed further in section 3.

It is anticipated that the proposed amendments should not result in a worse off impact rating that was assigned to the identified social impacts in the exhibited EIS. While the impact rating may not change, there remains the need to address the population increase in the region and implementation of the mitigation and enhancement measures to account for scale.

Table 2.2 Community social impacts

SOCIAL IMPACT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT RATING IN PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT (POST-MITIGATION)	REVISED IMPACT RATING OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS (POST-MITIGATION)
Community	The sudden increase to the residential population would change the composition of the community and has the potential to change the character of the community.	Low	Low
Community	The change in resident population would diversify existing community composition, bringing new and skilled people of working age into the town which can improve social and human capital within the community.	High (positive)	High (positive)

2.4 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The effects of the amendments on the health and wellbeing impacts are detailed in Table 2.3. The increase in workforce population may increase the sense of public safety being compromised on account of the increase in construction workers in the local towns. This is addressed through SE4 Workforce Management Plan which would include a Code of Conduct developed sufficiently to address the increased number of workers. This is considered possible and minor resulting in a low – moderate impact rating.

An additional impact relates to the ability for workers to experience extended periods of isolation in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak either at the proposal site or at their home location. If interstate or international borders closed in response to an outbreak, workers would not be able to travel home at the end of their on-shift period. This would cause high levels of uncertainty leading to stress and anxiety. This impact is considered unlikely and major (High) pre-mitigation however, with the mitigation measure implemented, a residual rating of moderate is expected. The significance of this impact should reduce over time as vaccination availability increases.

Table 2.3 Health and wellbeing social impacts

SOCIAL IMPACT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT RATING IN PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT (POST-MITIGATION)	REVISED IMPACT RATING OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS (POST-MITIGATION)
Health and wellbeing	Decrease in sense of public safety due to anti-social behaviour in townships near accommodation camps.	Low	Low – moderate
Health and wellbeing	Restricted travel across state and national borders in event of COVID-19 outbreak in in worker home location	N/A	Moderate

2.5 SURROUNDINGS

The following social impacts are related to other technical assessments but can still lead to social effects. The key new impacts expected to occur as a result of the proposed amendments would likely result to changes in the nature of the identified amenity-based impacts as well as the overall impact rating.

The visual impact associated with the presence of the Wentworth main construction compound and accommodation camp from Fort Courage Caravan Park is considered to be likely but minimal (moderate) post-mitigation. The change to landscape character at Lake Victoria due to the Wentworth main construction compound and accommodation camp is considered to be likely and minor (Moderate) during the construction phase and becoming short-term, unlikely and minimal (Low) during operation when construction infrastructure is removed. The noise and vibration impacts of the Wentworth main construction compound and accommodation camp may affect sensitive receivers to a higher degree during certain stages and activities (such as site establishment) (likely and minor = Moderate) and would require implementation of additional noise management controls to minimise impact on amenity.

The increase in construction workforce FTEs and refinements to construction traffic generation, would lead to an increase in road noise due to traffic movements on the route between the Wentworth accommodation camp on Renmark Road and the townships of Wentworth, Mildura and the airport, and the route between the Buronga accommodation and Mildura town centre and the airport. There would be additional impacts to sensitive receivers, but in most instances, the difference in noise disturbance is considered negligible. For certain roads (being Renmark Road, Arumpo Road and sections of the Silver City Highway), there would be additional increases in road traffic noise that would be noticeable, but would vary across the day and over the construction program, according to the trip generation from construction compounds.

This impact is considered to be likely and minor pre-mitigation rating, leading to a Moderate rating.

Post-implementation of the proposed mitigation measures outlined in section 3, the post-mitigation significant rating is Low. There are associated safety risks with an increase in road traffic which would be addressed through mitigation measures and the Workforce Management Plan.

Additional dust-generating activities at the Buronga site (the earthwork material sites and associated activities) has the potential to impact nearby sensitive receivers. However, air quality in the area is driven by existing high background levels of particulates, and the contributions at the nearest receiver would be low and short term.

Collectively, the impact rating remains Low as a result of the proposed amendments. The proposed mitigation measures for noise, vibration and traffic impacts will extend to apply to the Wentworth main construction and accommodation camp. The air quality mitigation measures have also proposed in relation to the additional earthwork activities at the Buronga main construction compound and accommodation camp.

Table 2.4 Surroundings-related social impacts

SOCIAL IMPACT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT RATING IN PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT (POST-MITIGATION)	REVISED IMPACT RATING OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS (POST-MITIGATION)
Surroundings	Amenity impacts including noise, vibration, light spill, dust generation and reduced air quality may cause irritation or result in changes in day-to-day activities.	Low	Low

2.6 ACCESS TO AND USE OF INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The increased construction workforce's presence in local townships would affect the level of pressure on local services and facilities. This additional pressure would be addressed through implementation of the mitigation measures presented in Section 3. Therefore, the revised impact rating remains unchanged from the exhibited EIS.

2.7 PERSONAL AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

The confirmed location of the Wentworth main construction compound accommodation camp location on Renmark Road would affect one additional landholder. Consultation with this landholder has indicated they have raised no specific concern in relation to the location of the Wentworth construction compound and camp on their land.

The access track strategy detailed in the EIS assumed that access tracks would be contained within the centreline clearing area and would prioritise the use of existing tracks, where possible. The access track strategy has been further refined which still prioritises the use of existing farm tracks and roads, and proposes to use alternative property access points and similar existing infrastructure to minimise additional disturbance to the transmission line easement. It would also create track access points on Renmark Road and on a number of private landholdings where existing accesses are not available.

The revised access track strategy would reduce to overall amount of clearing required to effectively access transmission line structure sites. When combined with the opportunity to minimise disturbance to areas between structures to avoid sub-surface impacts, it is considered that the revised access track strategy would result in an overall improved environmental outcome and greater construction efficiency for the proposal. Landholders were consulted on the revised access track strategy and raised no concerns.

Therefore, the revised impact rating remains unchanged from the exhibited EIS.

2.8 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The cumulative impacts associated with the increase in construction worker numbers on both the short-stay accommodation and private rental markets is considered low post-implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. The impacts detailed in Table 2.5 will need to be monitored throughout the construction period.

Table 2.5 Cumulative social impacts

SOCIAL IMPACT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT RATING IN PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT (POST-MITIGATION)	REVISED IMPACT RATING OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS (POST-MITIGATION)
Cumulative	An increase in incoming workforces caused by multiple concurrent developments placing additional pressures on short-stay accommodation providers and the private rental market which could marginalise renters or disadvantaged communities from the market of could affect housing affordability.	Low	Low
Cumulative	An increase in employment opportunities may see a rise in the demand for the local labour workforce leading to shortages and may lead to increase in the cost for labour available in local industries.	Low	Low

3 IMPACT MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION

Technical paper 5 presents mitigation and enhancement measures to address the identified positive and negative social impacts of the project. The proposed amendments do not present a material change to the proposed measures.

The identified impacts associated with the proposed amendments will be addressed through SE1-4 Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan, the Local Business and Employment Strategy, the Community Benefit Plan and the Workforce Management Plan.

Impact associated with confirmation of the Wentworth accommodation camp on Renmark Road and the increased capacity of the Buronga camp would be addressed by SE4 Workforce Management Plan to ensure aspects of health and wellbeing and adequate support services are available to the construction workforce. It is suggested that a separate Plan is developed for each of the two camp sites to ensure any differences are accounted for, or any different actions are clearly delineated. It may also be possible to rotate workers across the two camps, so the impacts and benefits of each camp are shared amongst the workforce.

It is highly recommended that a provision be made in the Workforce Management Plan that addresses the possibility of COVID-19-related border closures. If interstate or international border crossings are restricted, there are significant implications for the construction schedule and ability for workers to travel to the accommodation camp and return home again. There are mental health implications of prolonged isolation from friends and family as a result of FIFO work which may be exacerbated by restricted travel. The increased rollout of vaccinations will partially ameliorate this occurrence, however it should not be relied upon in the short-term.

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