



CHAPTER

21 Social



21

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21 Social

This chapter provides an overview of the potential social impacts associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project. This chapter is based on **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**.

The social impact assessment considers potential social effects, which are objective and verifiable changes to the social profile of a community or the resources it relies on, and potential social impacts, which are the experiences of a social effect by individuals or groups (social receptors). Social impact assessment includes consideration of multiple interconnected factors associated with workforce context, social profile, land use and amenity.

The Project traverses six Local Government Areas with varying physical and socio-economic characteristics. The social context of the Project moves from areas in the west where the social, economic and land use context is rooted in agricultural production, to the east where it is increasingly influenced by Metropolitan Melbourne.

21.1 Evaluation objective

The scoping requirements identify the following evaluation objective relevant to the social impact assessment:

Evaluation objective

Avoid, or minimise where avoidance is not possible, adverse effects on land use, social fabric of the community, businesses including farming and tourism, local and state infrastructure, aviation safety and to affected and neighbouring landowners during construction and operation of the project.

In response to this evaluation objective, the potential social impacts of the Project have been assessed, and measures to avoid, minimise or manage potential impacts have been identified. These measures are discussed throughout this chapter and have informed the development of Environmental Performance Requirements (EPRs). The EPRs set out the social outcomes to be achieved through the implementation of mitigation measures during construction, operation and decommissioning to avoid, minimise and manage identified impacts. Cumulative impacts associated with potential developments have also been assessed.

Further information on how the Project has been designed to avoid and minimise potential impacts on social receptors is provided in **Chapter 5: Project development** and **Chapter 6: Project description**.

Other aspects covered in the Environment Effects Statement (EES) evaluation objective and relevant to social impacts are addressed in the following EES chapters:

- **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**
- **Chapter 12: Land use and planning**
- **Chapter 13: Bushfire**
- **Chapter 14: Economic**
- **Chapter 15: Agriculture and forestry**
- **Chapter 16: Aviation**
- **Chapter 17: EMI and EMF**
- **Chapter 18: Air quality**
- **Chapter 19: Noise and vibration**
- **Chapter 20: Transport.**

21.2 Method

This section summarises the method adopted in **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**, which was informed by **Chapter 4: EES assessment framework and approach**. The key steps in assessing social impacts included:

- Defining a study area for the assessment, which reflects the spatial area over which the Project's effects may be perceptible, as presented in Figure 21.1. Definition of the study area was informed by **Technical Report D: Landscape and Visual**, which demonstrates that the Project would be potentially visible from locations within 9.2km of the Project. **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment** therefore adopted a study area of 9.2km from the Project and focused on areas within 2km of the Project, where the Project would usually be visually dominant (see **Technical Report D: Landscape and Visual**). To assist in the description of existing conditions and assessment of potential social impacts, the study area was broken into four sections, with distinctive social characteristics. These are described in Section 21.3.
- Reviewing applicable Commonwealth and Victorian government legislation, and relevant local, state and national standards, guidelines and policies.
- Conducting a desktop review to determine the existing social conditions and receptors across the study area, including population trends and settlement patterns, demography, landscape qualities, community facilities and tourism businesses and focal points. This was informed by Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data and other secondary data sources, including spatial data provided by AusNet showing the extent of directly affected landholdings, current land uses, and landholder sentiment with respect to the Project; survey data collected via an online survey administered by AusNet; Social Pinpoint dataset (data collected via an interactive online mapping tool, where participants were able to drop a pin on a location to comment or post a photo, to obtain feedback about what is important to people in their local community); and data generated through the stakeholder and community engagement conducted by AusNet as part of the preparation of the EES, as outlined in **Attachment IV: Stakeholder and community engagement consultation report**.
- Attending a site visit of the townships and recreational facilities along the Proposed Route.
- Stakeholder and community consultation and engagement activities, including:
 - Attending community engagement pop-up sessions
 - Interviewing one neighbouring landholder at their property, to explore their views regarding the Project's impacts on their property and lifestyle
 - Attending a community meeting with Coimadaai War Memorial committee and Council at the War Memorial facility, to discuss the Project's potential impacts and how these may be mitigated
 - Conducting a workshop and follow-up meetings with Council Advisory Group (CAG) members to establish the character and amenity of locations within the study area and potential impacts for existing communities
 - Interviewing members of the Community Consultation Group (CCG) to discuss potential impacts of the Project within their local communities.
- Identifying potential social impacts of the Project during construction, operation and decommissioning for investigation within the technical report.
- Identifying and assessing the potential significance of social impacts, considering the magnitude of effects likely to generate impacts (taking account of the intensity, scale and duration of the change) and the sensitivity of social receptors to these effects. These were evaluated according to the following ratings in relation to the extent, magnitude and duration of the impacts, which are described in more detail in Figure 3-2 of **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**:
 - **Negligible**: impact is not material

- **Minor:** impact is of minor importance
 - **Moderate:** impact is material but can be tolerated / forgone
 - **Major:** impact is significant
 - **Severe:** impact is intolerable / essential.
- Identifying other relevant future projects that could lead to cumulative impacts when considered together with the Project (refer to **Chapter 4: EES assessment framework and approach** for the full cumulative impact assessment method).
 - Developing EPRs in response to the impact assessment to set the required social outcomes for the Project and the process for implementing appropriate mitigation measures during construction, operation and decommissioning. Measures to reduce potential impacts have been recommended in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimise, manage, rehabilitate and offset) and have informed the development of EPRs. Alternative mitigation measures could be implemented to comply with the EPRs based on the specific site conditions, available resources, and the Principal Contractor's expertise.
 - Following application of mitigation measures that would comply with the EPRs, determining residual impacts associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project, evaluating their significance and the approach to monitoring and managing them.

21.3 Existing conditions

This section summarises the existing social conditions in the study area according to the following key themes:

- Population and settlement: local towns and urban centres, key sources of employment and local services
- Demography: providing the local demographic data including age, income, and family information
- Landscape qualities: considering the social values of the landscape character identified in **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**
- Community facilities and social focal points
- Tourism.

21.3.1 Population and settlement

Section 1

Section 1 of the study area (see Figure 21.1 and Figure 21.2) traverses the Northern Grampians Shire, Pyrenees Shire and the Rural City of Ararat with a total population of 1,610 people (ABS, 2021), predominantly comprising smaller towns and larger farming properties. The largest settlements include Elmhurst, Amphitheatre, Lexton and Waubra, whose populations range from 57 to 183 and have declined by up to half since the early to mid-1900s. These towns incorporate basic facilities and services including locally oriented sporting facilities, hotels, post offices and general stores.

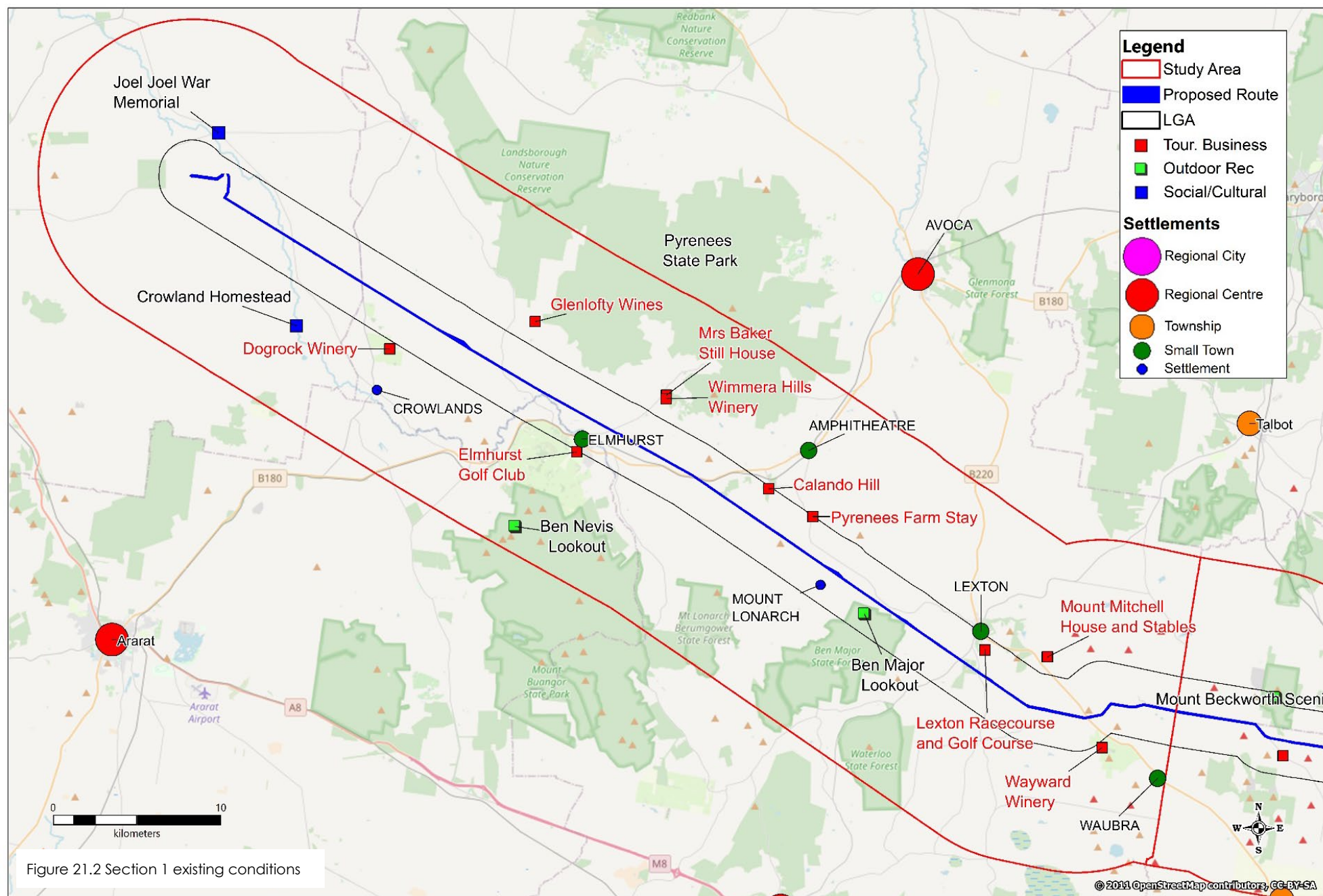
The area around Lexton was identified as a suitable location for a temporary laydown area and workforce accommodation facility to support construction of the western half of the Project (see **Chapter 5: Project development**). Available accommodation capacity at Lexton was investigated using Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 and 2021 Census data, active bond data, and search results from Airbnb.com, realestate.com and bookings.com. This investigation identified one available property with two bedrooms at Lexton. This supported the need for a dedicated workforce accommodation facility at this location, as Lexton itself had insufficient available accommodation to cater for the peak construction workforce.

Rural parts of Section 1 are sparsely populated, reflecting the prevailing land use pattern which is dominated by relatively large farming properties focussed on grazing and cereal cropping.

Section 2

Section 2 of the study area (see Figure 21.1 and Figure 21.3) covers land in the City of Ballarat, Hepburn Shire and Moorabool Shire, with a total population of 8,839 people (ABS, 2021). The two larger urban centres of Clunes and Creswick in Section 2 incorporate a range of facilities and services including kindergartens, childcare centres and primary schools, open space and sporting facilities, supermarket shopping and local medical services. The smaller settlements in Section 2 include Allendale, Broomfield, Kingston, Newland North and Smeaton, which function as social focal points for the surrounding farming communities, and each of which has its own unique character and identity. Section 2 also contains several named localities such as Coghill's Creek, Dean, Mollonghip and Blampied, which have small clusters of dwellings and facilities such as churches, community halls and Country Fire Authority (CFA) infrastructure. Each has a rich history and plays a role in the social and economic life of the district.

Rural allotments in Section 2 are considerably smaller and rural population density is higher than in rural parts of Section 1.



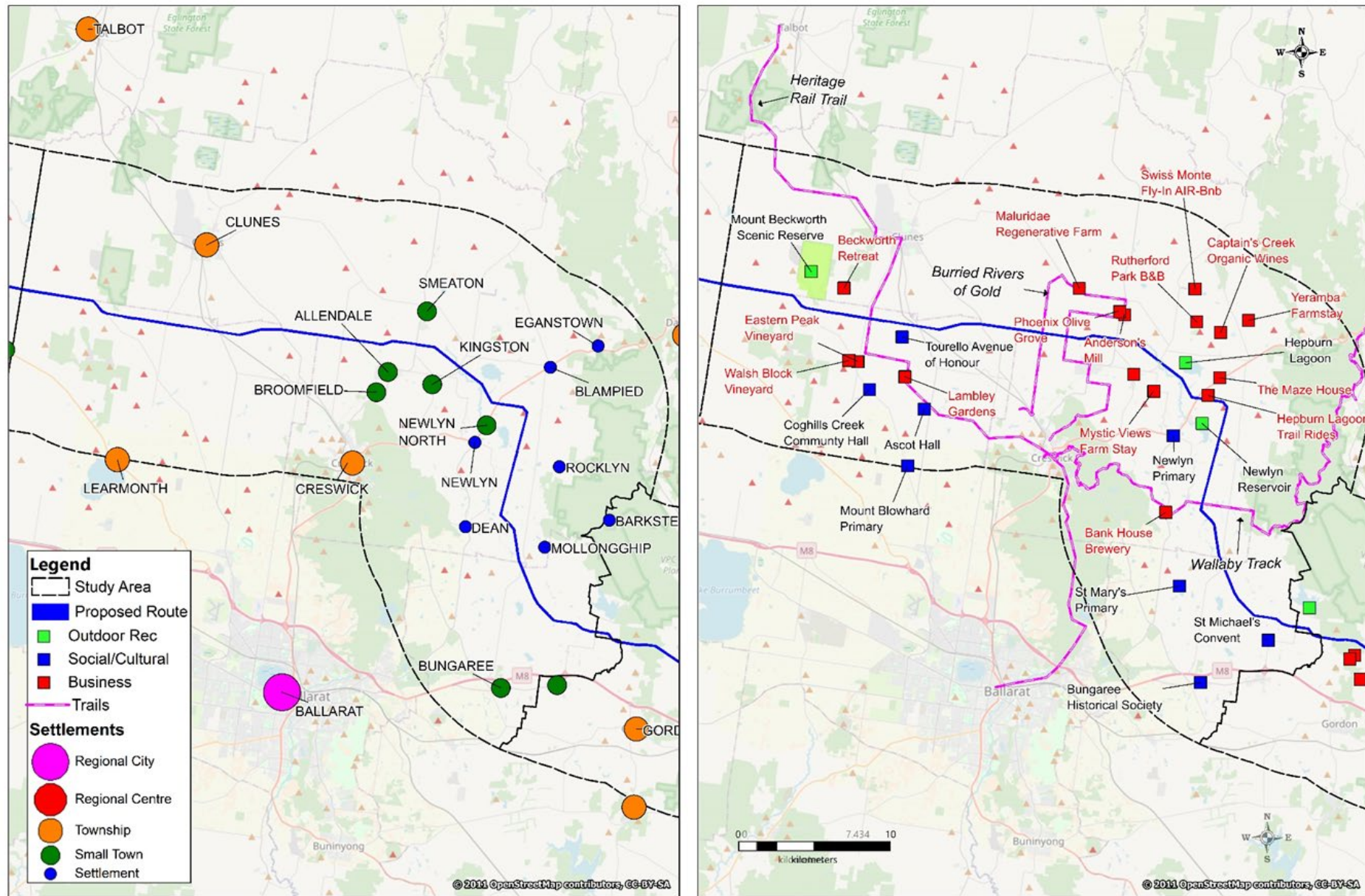


Figure 21.3 Section 2 existing conditions: distribution of settlements (left) and community facilities, open spaces and tourism-based businesses (right)

Section 3

Section 3 (see Figure 21.1 and Figure 21.4) is located within Moorabool Shire, with a population of 7,801 people in (ABS, 2021), and contains four notable urban settlements: Ballan, Gordon, Myrniong, and Wallace. Ballan is the major service centre for the surrounding district and is connected to Ballarat and Melbourne via rail. Ballan accommodates Moorabool Shire Office, local medical services, a primary school and sporting facilities. Myrniong accommodates the Plough Hotel, a primary school, recreation reserve, community hall, and fire station. There are several named localities within Section 3, including Greendale and Korobeit, which have small clusters of dwellings and facilities such as churches, hotels, community halls, CFA infrastructure and convenience stores.

As for Lexton in the western half, the area around Ballan was identified as a suitable location for a temporary laydown area and workforce accommodation facility to support construction of the eastern half of the Project (see **Chapter 5: Project development**). Available accommodation capacity at Ballan was investigated using Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 and 2021 Census data, active bond data, and search results from Airbnb.com, realestate.com and bookings.com. This investigation identified three available properties with nine total bedrooms at Ballan. This supported the need for a dedicated workforce accommodation facility at this location, as Ballan itself had insufficient available accommodation to cater for the peak construction workforce.

Rural properties in Section 3 are smaller than in other parts of the study area, with grazing being the most common land use, although rural living and equine properties are also common land uses in this Section. In some cases, properties hold great sentimental value, and some have been passed down through families for generations.

Section 4

Section 4 (see Figure 21.1 and Figure 21.5) primarily covers land in Moorabool Shire and the City of Melton, with some areas located in Macedon Ranges Shire and the Cities of Hume and Brimbank. Section 4 has a population of 299,836 people (ABS, 2021) and includes the well-established urban areas of Bacchus Marsh, Darley, Maddingley, Melton, Sunbury and the western edge of Metropolitan Melbourne.

The non-urban parts of Section 4 comprise a mix of grazing, extractive industry, equine and lifestyle properties, an airfield, religious, cultural and sporting facilities, and infrastructure including major roads and substations, along with the rural settlement of Toolern Vale.

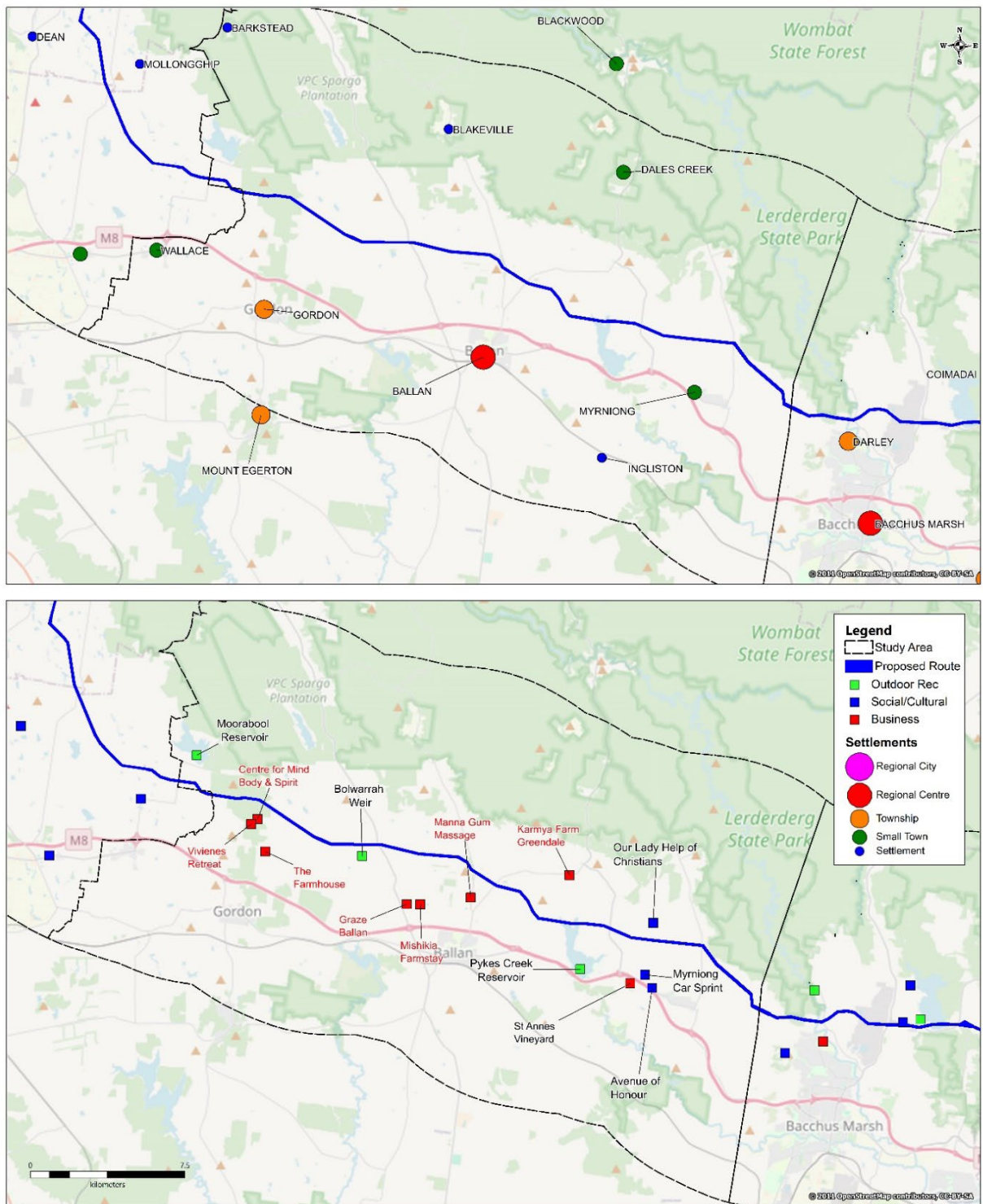


Figure 21.4 Section 3 existing conditions: distribution of settlements (top) and community facilities, open spaces and tourism-based businesses (bottom)

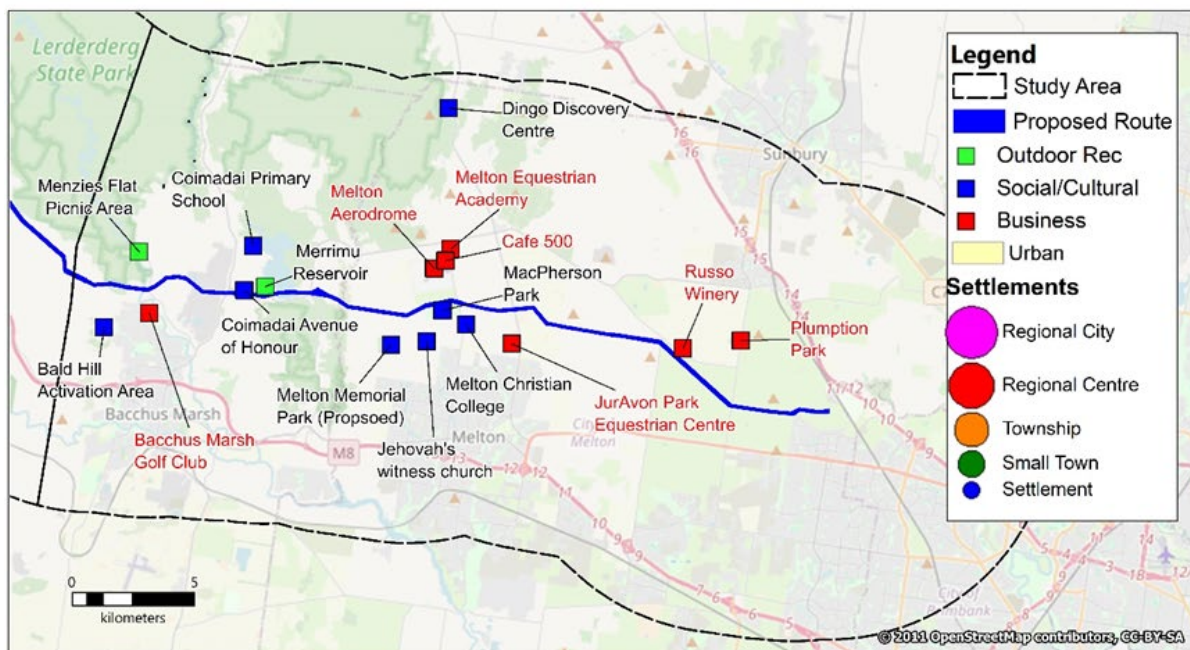
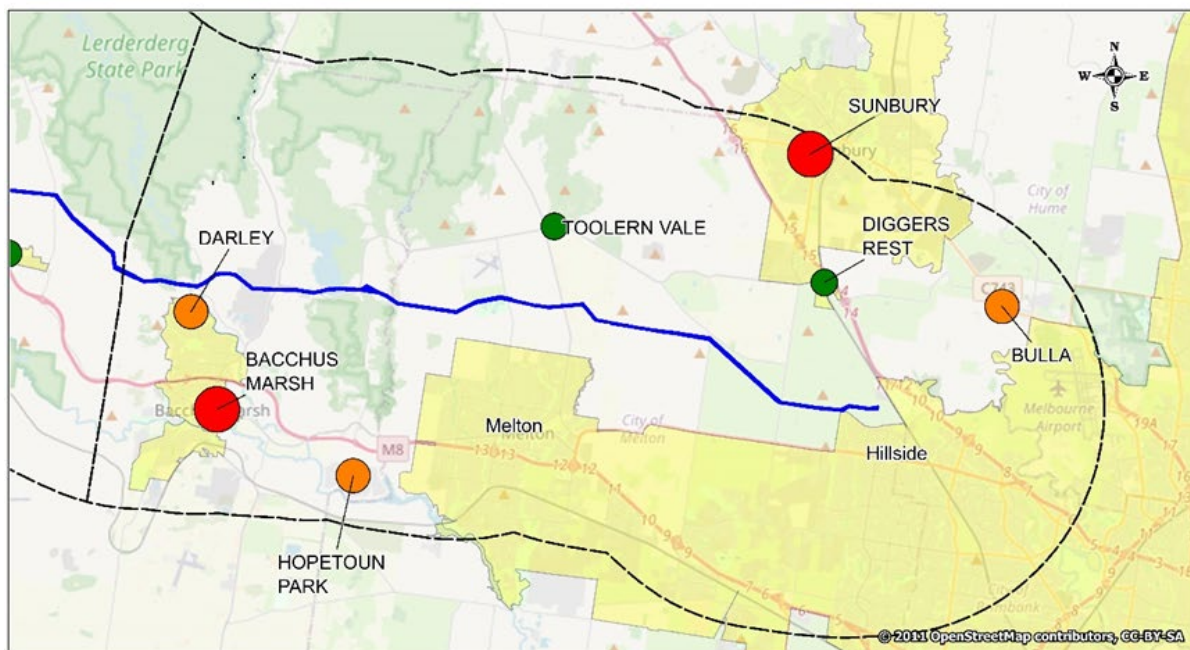


Figure 21.5 Section 4 existing conditions: distribution of settlements (top) and community facilities, open spaces and tourism-based businesses (bottom)

21.3.2 Demography

Section 1

Census data for Section 1 are consistent with the presence of a rural community which is ageing in place. Families with dependent children comprise a relatively small proportion of all households, consistent with the presence of a large contingent of empty nesters.

Section 1 is beyond commuting distance from Melbourne CBD and 30 to 100km from Ballarat, which limits access to professional employment. Relatedly, the population of Section 1 tends to be less affluent than other parts of the study area and Victoria as a whole.

Agriculture is a large source of employment and driver of economic activity in Section 1.

Section 2

The rural population of Section 2 is younger than in Section 1 and households comprise a higher proportion of families with children. The population is older and less affluent in the two larger urban centres of Clunes and Creswick.

A large proportion of residents in rural parts of Section 2 work in agriculture. Horticultural enterprises relying on irrigation, such as potato farming businesses, are common in Section 2.

Section 3

Almost a quarter of residents in Section 3 travel to Melbourne for work. This is reflected in household incomes in Section 3 which are notably higher than in Sections 1 and 2. The population of Section 3 is generally younger than both Sections 1 and 2, and families with children are the predominant household type.

In rural areas of Section 3, agriculture is an important source of employment, although less so than in Sections 1 and 2. In urban areas, the proportion of people working in agriculture is similar to that observed for Victoria as a whole.

Section 4

The population of Melton and Hillside is generally younger and more ethnically diverse than elsewhere in the study area. These areas are popular among migrant families seeking affordable accommodation.

The majority of workers residing in Section 4 find employment in nearby urban centres and within Melbourne. Agriculture is a relatively important source of employment for rural residents of Section 4.

21.3.3 Landscape qualities

Section 1

The landscape in Section 1 is broadly categorised as 'Vegetated Hills and Farming' (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). It comprises cleared flat farming land and cleared hilly farmland with a backdrop of native vegetation, and includes an existing 220kV transmission line and several wind farms. Each township offers a visual connection to the surrounding rural landscape (including the Pyrenees Ranges), which is valued by residents and visitors, and contributes to the community's sense of identity and wellbeing.

Section 2

The landscape in Section 2 consists of areas defined as 'Plains and Volcanic Cones' (to the north and west of Newlyn) and 'Rolling Farmland and Water Bodies' (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). An existing 220kV transmission line traverses Section 2 from north to south. The Plains and Volcanic Cones areas provide long range views across cleared grassy plains, punctuated by volcanic cones. Views of the volcanic cones to and from Mount Beckworth and Mount Bolton, and from roads linking Clunes and Creswick with Daylesford, were commonly identified by residents of Section 2 as being of particular importance and highly valued.

Section 3

The landscape in Section 3 is similar to the eastern part of Section 2, comprising areas defined as 'Rolling Farmland and Waterbodies' (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). The area's rural landscapes are valued by the local community and are considered by them to contribute to the creation of a beautiful, clean and peaceful setting in which to live. Landscape views are typically limited to the near or middle ground, with longer views available from elevated areas. Publicly accessible water bodies, including Moorabool Reservoir and Pykes Creek Reservoir, provide scenic locations for social and recreational activity. Moorabool Reservoir is well used and valued within the local community.

Section 4

The landscape in Section 4 is broadly categorised as 'Peri-urban and Townships' (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**) and comprises open farming areas, vegetated hills of the Lerderderg State Park, and in the eastern parts highly-modified urban and peri-urban areas containing buildings, telecommunications infrastructure, sports fields, transmission lines, the Sydenham Terminal Station, electrified rail, and the Calder Park Raceway. Areas in the south of Section 4, including Darley, provide views of the Lerderderg State Park to the north. The Bacchus Marsh Quarry also influences the aesthetic quality of the landscape in the Darley area.

Landscape features nominated by residents of Section 4 as being of value and contributing to a sense of identity and well-being include Lerderderg State Park, Long Forest Reserve, Lerderderg River and Gorge, the Bald Hill Activation Area, Pentlands Hills to the west of Darley, and Mount Kororoit near Leakes Road in Melton.

21.3.4 Community facilities

Section 1

The majority of community facilities and social focal points in Section 1 are located within settlements. Key sites of social and cultural importance in rural areas include Joel Joel War Memorial, Joel Joel Public Hall, and Crowlands Homestead.

Outdoor recreation areas include several large State Forests and Parks, including Pyrenees State Forest, Ben Major State Park (including Ben Major Lookout), and Mount Cole State Forest (including Ben Nevis Lookout). These areas include camping areas and trails for walking, mountain bike riding and four-wheel driving, which include elevated sections offering expansive views.

Section 2

The majority of community facilities and social focal points in Section 2 are located within settlements. This includes Kingston Show Grounds, which hosts events including the Annual Kingston Agricultural Show and the Kingston Food and Wine Festival. The Annual Kingston Agricultural Show has been running for over 150 years, and is a source of identity and pride for local community members. Key sites of social and cultural importance in rural areas include primary schools, churches, community halls, and Avenues of Honour at Newlyn, Turello, and south of Kingston.

Outdoor recreation areas include Mount Beckworth Scenic Reserve (used by bird watchers, walkers and hikers, offers expansive views of the surrounding area, and is valued within the local community and by visitors as a habitat for flora and fauna and as a location to undertake moderately challenging walks and hikes in a beautiful location), Hepburn Lagoon (popular for fishing and use by kayaks and non-powered vessels, and valued within the local community for its beauty and peaceful ambience), and Newlyn Reservoir (valued by members of the local community for social and recreational activity in a peaceful and tranquil setting, and popular for fishing, barbeques, picnics and social gatherings).

Section 3

The majority of community facilities and social focal points in Section 3 are located within settlements. This includes the Myrniong Recreation Reserve, which has a cricket pitch, outdoor gym and tennis courts, and hosts sporting matches and music-based events.

Key sites of social and cultural importance in rural areas include the outdoor recreation areas at Moorabool Reservoir (which is overlooked by a publicly accessible park and ornamental garden that provides views of the reservoir and is valued within the local community), Pykes Creek Reservoir (which is open to the public and is used for boating, kayaking, fishing, swimming and picnicking), and Bolwarrah Weir (which is used for fishing, walking, picnicking and bird watching).

Section 4

The majority of community facilities and social focal points in Section 4 are located within settlements and urban areas, and include social and recreational areas in Darley, Bacchus Marsh Golf Course and Walking Trail, Lerderderg Walking Track, and Bald Hill Activation Area. Moorabool Shire has developed a Concept Plan for Bald Hill Activation Area to facilitate development of the site as a 'Destination Regional Park', incorporating a mountain bike park, all-abilities walking trail, event space, commercial food and beverage facilities, conferencing facilities, fitness loop, and a destination walking trail (the '1001 steps'). Stages 1 and 2 of the Concept Plan have been constructed, including the 1001 steps destination walking trail, and an all-abilities sculpture trail.

Key sites of social and cultural importance in rural parts of Section 4 include MacPherson Park and a small number of community facilities south of the park, including The Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Melton West Memorial Park, and Melton Christian College.

MacPherson Park is the City of Melton's principal recreational facility, and offers an extensive range of playing fields and courts, practice facilities, and pavilions. The Park services clubs and teams from the local area and broader region, with sporting groups currently in residence at the facility including Australian Football League and Australian Football League umpiring, netball, cricket, greyhound racing, horse and pony riding, rugby league, pigeon racing, soccer, gridiron, and baseball. Some tenants have been residents of the park since its early beginnings in the 1970s. Melton Equestrian Park is within the western end of MacPherson Park, is home to three equestrian groups and is used each weekend for rider training, rallies, events and horse trials, with major rally days held at the facility in January and July. Members of the equestrian groups highly value the activities supported by the facility and have a high level of sentimental attachment to the site. A Master Plan for MacPherson Park was endorsed by Melton City Council in 2017 and includes moving the main park entrance to the south west corner of the site and downgrading the existing entrance to a secondary entrance.

Outdoor recreation areas in Section 4 include:

- Lerderderg State Park, which is a valued and well-used community resource which attracts people from the local area and beyond for hiking, horse riding, four-wheel driving, bike and trail bike riding, swimming, fishing, picnicking, and camping. Popular facilities within the park include:
 - Mackenzies Flat Picnic Area, which includes barbeques, picnic tables, open lawned areas and access to the Lerderderg River
 - Grahams Dam, which provides a swimming hole on Lerderderg River
 - Lerderderg Gorge Walk, which connects Mackenzies Flat Picnic Area to Grahams Dam, and extends beyond Grahams Dam to link to other walking trails
 - Picnic facilities and camping areas located in the northern part of the park, including O'Briens Crossing Picnic Area, Lerderderg Campground, Ambler Lane Campground, and Shaws Lake Picnic Area.
- Merrimu Reservoir and the Merrimu Picnic Area, the latter of which comprises two shelters with seating, a barbeque, playground, car park and public toilet, and offers views across the reservoir. Community members consider the reservoir a visually beautiful location to socialise and relax.

- Coimadai Memorial Park and Avenue of Honor. The Memorial Park is adjacent to the Merrimu Picnic Area, and includes a memorial garden and small pavilion used to host ANZAC Day services. The Avenue of Honour is located along Diggers Rest-Coimadai Road at the entrance to the Memorial Park. The Memorial Park and the Avenue of Honour commemorate men and women from Coimadai who served in World War I.
- Long Forest, which is valued by the local community for its ecological diversity and as a beautiful location to connect with nature. The protected woodland reserve includes a picnic area at the Happy Valley Trailhead, and several walking tracks.

21.3.5 Tourism

Section 1

The nature-based parks in Section 1, including Pyrenees State Forest, Ben Major State Park, and Mount Cole State Forest are popular with locals and visitors, and are a source of tourist visitation to the area. The Pyrenees is also recognised as an official wine region of Australia. Several wine and food-based businesses operate near the Project, including the Dog Rock, Glenlofty and Wimmera Hills wineries and Mrs Baker's Still House. These venues accept visitors for tastings and take part in events including 'Pyrenees Unearthed Food and Wine Festival' and 'Rotundone Road Wine and Music Festival'. Mount Mitchell Estate (near Lexton) offers high end accommodation and a wedding reception service. Section 1 also includes bed and breakfast and farm-stay accommodation.

Section 2

Creswick and Clunes are former gold-mining towns, which are popular among tourists for their historic sites, food and wine offerings, and rural setting. The settlements in Section 2 include heritage structures, pubs, restaurants and accommodation, while the surrounding rural landscape includes historic mining sites, trail ride businesses, bed and breakfasts and wineries.

Areas near Smeaton and Hepburn Lagoon are used for hot air ballooning, while areas near Mount Beckworth are used for paragliding. There are also several driving and cycling routes in Section 2 which have been formalised and are promoted to tourists, including the Buried Rivers of Gold self-guided driving tour route, the Ballarat to Maryborough Heritage Rail Trail and the Wallaby Track section of the Great Dividing Trail Network.

Section 3

Tourism in Section 3 is focused on day trips to the area's natural features. There are a small number of health and wellbeing focused businesses and accommodation providers in rural parts of Section 3. The area hosts the annual Mymiong Historic Car Sprint, which is popular with classic car enthusiasts.

Section 4

Natural reserves such as Lerderderg State Park, Long Forest and Mount Kororoit, and elevated views from nearby locations, are notable drivers of tourist visitation to Section 4. Bed and breakfast and farm-stay style accommodation providers are situated to capitalise on the area's scenic qualities. The Bald Hill Activation Area (see Section 21.3.4) is expected to become a key driver of tourist visitation, once fully developed.

Other tourist attractions in Section 4 include the Dingo Discovery Sanctuary and Research Centre, which includes an interpretative and education centre, and Melton Aerodrome, which provides flight training, aircraft maintenance, refuelling, aircraft parking and hangarage services, charter flights, scenic tours and pleasure flights.

21.4 Construction and operation impacts – Project workforce

This section outlines the potential social impacts associated with the presence of the Project workforce in the study area. This includes consideration of the Project's potential effect on housing, community facilities and services, and potential impacts on social cohesion.

21.4.1 Construction impacts

During construction, the Project would have a total peak workforce of approximately 700 personnel. While AusNet's intention is to recruit as many of the required employees from within the local community as possible, the size of the local labour force and the specialised nature of some of the work, means that a large majority of the construction personnel would live beyond commuting distance from the worksites. The presence of workers in the study area has the potential to increase demand for housing and community services in the study area, and reduce social cohesion.

Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment identified this impact pathway as having the potential to result in social impacts, including:

- Imported workers could increase demand for housing and community facilities and services within established communities, leading to housing stress and limiting service accessibility (assessed as a severe potential impact)
- Minor uplift in employment opportunities and the spending of imported workers could contribute to economic and social sustainability (moderate to minor positive potential impact)
- The presence of workers in existing settlements could be unsettling and potentially intimidating for existing community members, leading to reduced social cohesion and negatively affecting perceptions of comfort and safety (major potential impact).

To avoid the potential negative impacts described above, the Project will provide two workforce accommodation facilities for the construction workforce, one at Sunraysia Highway near Lexton (Section 1 of the study area) and one at Ingliston Road near Ballan (Section 3 of the study area).

The proposed workforce accommodation facilities would be largely self-contained and include recreational facilities and dedicated Project medical services to respond to the primary health care needs of the construction workforce. This would limit the dependence of workers on these facilities located in nearby settlements and would not influence the accessibility of these services for existing communities. This is particularly important for medical services, given there is a shortage of medical professionals in towns near the proposed workforce accommodation facilities. During the construction of the Project, local services may be relied upon in emergencies. Any uplift in demand from the Project for emergency services such as ambulance and hospital services would likely be met by existing services in Ballarat, and would be small in the context of these services, which are designed to meet the needs of a large regional centre and surrounding areas.

The recreational and social needs of workers would be provided for within the proposed workforce accommodation facilities, including gym facilities. This would limit the need for workers to visit nearby settlements. The population of settlements near the proposed workforce accommodation facilities are small and in the case of some settlements, substantially smaller than the projected peak workforce proposed to be accommodated in the proposed accommodation facilities. A protocol for managing worker access to settlements in proximity to the accommodation facilities is proposed, which may limit visits to essential trips.

The proposed workforce accommodation facilities would avoid generating additional demand for housing by the construction workforce, limit the dependence of workers on nearby community and recreational facilities, and manage the potential impacts of the Project workforce on social cohesion. In doing so, the facilities would ameliorate potential impacts resulting from the Project's effect on demand for housing and community services and would limit the influence of the construction workforce on social dynamics within existing communities.

A relatively small workforce (peaking at up to 80 workers across the two sites) over six months, would be needed to construct the proposed workforce accommodation facilities (pre-construction stage). The nature of this work (general construction work) is such that a large proportion of workers would be expected to be sourced from nearby communities, including centres such as Ballarat (within a 45-minute commute of each of sites for the proposed workforce accommodation facilities) and Ballan. While some non-local workers may be involved in the construction of the workforce accommodation facilities, the numbers would likely be small. During construction of the workforce accommodation facilities, there would be a small uplift in demand for short-stay accommodation in nearby towns, within an approximately 45-minute commute of the facilities. Workers who do not live locally would find accommodation in existing available accommodation such as hotels and motels, for example in Ballarat. In doing so, the Project will make a minor contribution to the ongoing viability of the short-stay accommodation sector in the region.

The Project will develop and implement initiatives to maximise employment opportunities for local communities, First Nations people and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (EPR SC3) to enable local access to employment opportunities created by the Project and maximise potential local and social benefits of the Project. However, construction personnel for the connection to the Sydenham Terminal Station at the eastern end of the Project are likely to currently live or take up residence within Metropolitan Melbourne or nearby urban areas such as Bacchus Marsh.

Summary

The Project would generate local employment opportunities and in doing so has the potential to make a positive contribution to the economic and social sustainability of local communities.

The proposal to accommodate construction personnel in purpose-built, fully-equipped workforce accommodation facilities would reduce interactions between the existing communities of the study area and the construction workforce. The proposed Operational Management Plan for workforce accommodation facilities aims to avoid material social effects on housing markets and demand for community facilities and services, associated with the migration of workers to the study area to construct the Project.

Visitation to nearby settlements by construction workforce personnel has the potential to generate both positive and negative effects. For example, workers may spend money at local businesses and in doing so make a positive contribution to the local economy. However, the construction workforce has the potential to be highly visible within existing communities, and exert a dominant influence on social dynamics within public locations, such as pubs, restaurants and commercial centres. Large groups of workers visiting surrounding settlements may be unsettling and potentially intimidating for existing community members.

Residual workforce and social profile impacts of Project construction would be minor to negligible (positive) as outlined in Table 7-3 of **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**, with the application of the following:

- EPR SC1: Avoid and minimise potential negative social impacts of the Project construction workforce
- EPR SC2: Develop and implement a Code of Conduct to avoid and minimise potential social impacts of the construction workforce
- EPR SC3: Develop and implement initiatives to maximise employment opportunities for local communities, First Nations people and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

21.4.2 Operation impacts

During operation, limited personnel would be required as the transmission system (including the terminal stations) would be operated remotely. AusNet staff would conduct tasks such as routine station inspections and visit the stations and the transmission line to respond to faults and complaints. The number of staff conducting this work would be small and these workers would not necessarily live in the study area. Consequently, the potential effect of Project operation on demand for housing, demand for community facilities and services, and community cohesion in the study area would be negligible.

21.5 Construction and operation impacts – Land use and amenity

This section summarises the assessment of potential social impacts of the Project that could arise from changes in the way land is used and changes to the amenity and aesthetic quality of locations near the Project, during construction and operation. The assessment considered potential impacts on:

- Directly affected landholders, who may be affected by the presence of the Project on their property
- Surrounding landholders, who are adjacent to directly affected landholders and may be affected by the nearby presence of the Project
- The broader community, who may be affected by the presence of the Project within their local area, including at locations they visit for socialisation and recreation
- Tourism business operators, who may be affected by the nearby presence of the Project.

The groups are not mutually exclusive, and some community members may fall into multiple groups.

Potential social effects on land use and amenity during the construction and operation stages of the Project include:

- Land use changes for directly affected private properties due to the creation of an easement and installation of transmission towers, establishment of temporary laydown areas and workforce accommodation facilities, and construction of the proposed new terminal station near Bulgana. During construction, existing land uses would be excluded from the easement (several weeks), laydown areas and workforce accommodation facility sites (approximately two years) and the site for the new terminal station near Bulgana (for the life of the Project). The construction stage may result in lower productivity and financial losses for landholders. During operation, the Project may require alterations to land management and farming practices, such as modifications to irrigation practices and paddock layouts, and in isolated cases changes to the enterprise mix to maximise profitability of land.
- The generation of noise, dust and traffic from construction activities has the potential to affect the amenity of locations near the Project, including rural homes and recreational focal points.
- The presence of Project infrastructure has the potential to alter the character and amenity of locations within the study area. Project infrastructure may be visible across a wide area and visually dominant in locations closer to the Project. The industrial character and scale of the proposed towers, audibility of hissing or cracking sounds, and perceived health risks from electric and magnetic fields may also affect the attractiveness of the locality.
- The construction and operation of the proposed workforce accommodation facilities on private land near Lexton and Ballan has the potential to generate construction noise in otherwise quiet rural settings, visibility of the facilities within rural landscapes, and light glow at night, and generation of traffic and noise from operation of the facilities.
- Changes to bushfire risk, including potential need for firefighting tactics to be adapted locally in some parts of the study area, which may diminish the effectiveness of firefighting responses in some settings, and possible changes to access and egress routes.

Directly affected landholders would receive financial compensation by AusNet either through a voluntary agreement or in accordance with the provisions of the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 (Vic)*. As required by the Act, compensation considers lost economic productivity of land, reasonable costs of any adaptations to enable continued use of the land, and reductions in the market value of affected properties. That is, the Act provides for provision of compensation that returns the affected landholder to the same financial position 'but for' the Project.

21.5.1 Impacts on directly affected landholders

The Project would traverse 222 private properties, of which 220 are rural holdings typically owned and/or occupied by individuals and families who live on the land and/or operate agricultural businesses. The remaining two properties are owned by a corporate entity, which conducts quarrying and extractive activities on the land. It is expected that this business would have the capability to engage with the Project team and adapt to the Project's presence on their land, without material business or social impacts arising.

All directly affected landholders would be affected by the Project to some degree. At a minimum, directly affected landholders would be required to engage with the Project throughout construction to negotiate access arrangements and other matters, which may affect the personal time and energy of landholders. Where the Project necessitates long-term changes to the way properties are used (e.g., current cropping or horticultural enterprises), the impact is expected to be more burdensome. While assistance would be provided to allow directly affected landholders to adapt to the Project, the change process may be a source of stress and emotional strain, particularly for individuals who have long standing connections to their property, or whose sense of purpose and identity is tied to their ability to manage their land or business.

Approximately half of affected land holdings accommodate a dwelling, and many landholders are owner occupiers, some of whom live on the land primarily for lifestyle reasons. These landholders may consider the Project to be an unwanted and unreasonable intrusion which threatens intangible connections to their property and a valued rural lifestyle. Some individuals may become more comfortable with the presence of the Project over time, although their concerns may not fully resolve.

Section 1

The Project will directly affect 74 properties in Section 1. The level of disruption to the prevailing land uses in Section 1 would be limited by the larger size (on average) of the affected land holdings, the predominance of grazing, and to a degree a history of co-existence with transmission infrastructure in the area. While the Project may cause an inconvenience for directly affected landholders and may be an unwanted intervention for some landholders, substantial alterations to farming operations are less likely to occur or have serious implications for business continuity in Section 1. Approximately 40 per cent of properties in Section 1 accommodate a dwelling, of which 12 dwellings are within 300m of the proposed easement. This includes one dwelling located within the proposed easement, which would need to be relocated to an area outside the easement in consultation with the land title holder. AusNet understands that this building is used occasionally for accommodation, but is not a permanent place of residence. The attractiveness and amenity of these properties and dwellings may be compromised for the owners or occupiers, while flow on impacts may include emotional strain, breaking of intangible connections to the affected dwelling, property, and/or desire to relocate. Following the application of measures to comply with EPRs, the residual impact of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for directly affected landholders in Section 1 would be moderate during the construction and operation stages of the Project (as outlined in Table 8-6 in **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**).

Section 2

In Section 2, the Project will directly affect 58 properties. Affected land holdings are smaller on average than in Section 1, and many accommodate horticultural land uses. The Project would be more likely to necessitate long-term changes to the way farming occurs in Section 2, with a greater proportion of affected landholders potentially required to adapt to the Project. Approximately 50 per cent of properties in Section 2 accommodate a dwelling, of which 12 are within 300m of the proposed easement. The Project may challenge the current sense of connection felt by many landholders in this section to their property and rural district, which may lead to an enduring sense of loss, with potential implications for the quality of life and wellbeing of affected individuals. The residual impact of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for directly affected landholders in Section 2 would be moderate during construction and major during operation (as outlined in Table 8-6 in **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**).

Section 3

The Project will directly affect 55 properties in Section 3, of which approximately 60 per cent accommodate a dwelling. Lifestyle properties and homes are the prevailing land use in Section 3, which are valued for offering an opportunity to live in a beautiful rural landscape setting. There are 20 dwellings within 300m of the proposed easement. The proximity of these dwellings to the Project may compromise the attractiveness and amenity of these properties for owners or occupiers, and impact on the lifestyle and connection to properties valued by landholders in this section. This is likely to lead to ongoing feelings of frustration and resentment about the Project for landholders who currently oppose the Project, with potential for flow-on implications on quality of life, well-being and capacity or willingness to contribute to the social and cultural life of the district for some individuals. The potential residual impact of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for directly affected landholders in Section 3 would be moderate during construction and major during operation (as outlined in Table 8-6 in **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**).

Section 4

In Section 4, the Project will directly affect 35 properties. Smaller lifestyle and equine properties make up a relatively large proportion of affected land holdings in this section, including north of Darley near Lerderderg Gorge Road and Camerons Road. Approximately 60 per cent of affected land holdings accommodate dwellings. There are 70 dwellings within 300m of the proposed easement. Landholders of lifestyle and equine properties have a high level of sensitivity to the Project, with some properties offering expansive views of surrounding areas, and the presence of the Project is likely to affect the attractiveness or lifestyle aspirations of these properties for landholders.

Towards the eastern end of this section, land holdings are held by land speculators. While the Project would cause inconvenience for these landholders, where the Project affects the development potential of these landholdings, financial compensation would be more likely to be effective in addressing landholders' concerns. The potential residual impact of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for directly affected landholders in Section 4 would be moderate during construction. During operation, residual impacts on directly affected landholders north of Darley would be major to moderate, while towards the eastern end of this section, residual impacts would be moderate (as outlined in Table 8-6 in **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**).

Summary

Construction activity including noise would affect the amenity of various locations, including dwellings and focal points for recreation for a relatively short period, and may be a source of irritation for landholders. The Project may cause inconvenience for landholders and some landholders may face an onerous process to adapt to the Project (e.g., horticulturalists). The Project may challenge landholders' sense of connection and stewardship toward their properties and farming community, and may diminish an aspirational lifestyle, or disrupt intergenerational connections to particular properties.

The Project may reduce the attractiveness of smaller equine properties and lifestyle properties in Darley and surrounds (Section 4 of the study area) due to visual impacts and fears relating to bushfire safety. In some areas, the Project may challenge a shared sense of identity among landholders built on appreciation of the area's scenic qualities and peaceful rural lifestyle. The Project may affect the aesthetic quality of landholders' residences and challenge landholders' sense of connection and stewardship toward their property and community. Impacts for some landholders would be felt by individuals and families who form part of an integrated rural community and may result in some changes to the composition, capacity and cohesiveness of the community, as individual landholders adjust to altered conditions.

Residual social impacts from land use and amenity changes due to Project construction and operation would be major to moderate, as outlined in Table 8-6 of **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**. The following EPRs were recommended in other technical reports or have been proposed by AusNet to manage or mitigate these impacts:

- EPRs LV1 and LV2 (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**):
 - EPR LV1: Minimise visual impacts – Public domain, which will develop and implement a process to consult with relevant landholders and/or land managers to determine appropriate measures to mitigate visual impacts to Merrimu Reservoir and War Memorial, Bald Hill Activation Area and Bolwarrah Weir
 - EPR LV2: Minimise visual impacts – Private domain landscape screening program, which will develop and implement a program to provide offers to fund landscape screening for eligible dwellings to minimise visual impacts of the Project.
- EPR AF1 (see **Chapter 15: Agriculture and Forestry**):
 - EPR AF1: Develop and implement an Agriculture and Forestry Business Mitigation and Support Strategy, which will develop and implement a strategy to avoid, minimise and mitigate impacts to agriculture and forestry (such as direct disruptions and disruption to farm and forestry businesses) from the Project.
- EPRs NV1 (Develop and implement a Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan), NV2 (Minimise construction outside of Normal Working Hours), NV3 (Minimise construction vibration impacts on amenity) and NV4 (Design operational noise sources to minimise noise so far as reasonably practicable) (see **Chapter 19: Noise and Vibration**). These EPRs collectively aim to avoid and minimise, so far as reasonably practicable, noise and vibration impacts at sensitive receivers.
- EPRs EM3 (Develop and implement a Property Access and Management Plan), EM4 (Maintain a record of Specific Property Access Requirements (SPAR) and implement during construction and operation), EM7 (Develop and implement a Complaints Management System), EM8 (Develop and implement a Biosecurity Management Plan) and EM10 (Develop and implement a Residential Mitigation and Support Strategy) (See **Chapter 29: Environmental Management Framework**). These EPRs respectively aim to minimise impacts to landholders due to land access and occupation required for construction of the Project, so far as reasonably practicable; to avoid and minimise impacts to each property and its operations; to record, manage and resolve complaints received from affected stakeholders; to avoid and minimise impacts on biodiversity values, land use (including agriculture and forestry) and landholders; and to mitigate and manage impacts to directly affected residents (such as direct disturbance and amenity impacts, including visual impacts) from the Project to the extent reasonably practicable.

21.5.2 Impacts on surrounding landholders

There are 7,250 dwellings located within 2km of the Project, the majority of which (approximately 98 per cent) are located on properties which are not traversed by the proposed easement. Surrounding landholders would not necessarily be entitled to financial compensation to address the effects of the Project under the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 (Vic)*.

The Project will result in changes to the visual setting of many (but not all) nearby dwellings (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). These changes would typically be viewed as detracting from the amenity of affected dwellings, and potentially diminish the enjoyment of homes and valued lifestyles.

Section 1

In Section 1 of the study area, there are 218 dwellings within 2km of the Project, including 173 dwellings on properties not directly affected. Almost half of these dwellings are located within the settlements of Elmhurst and Lexton, with the remainder being distributed throughout rural areas.

Views toward the Project from most dwellings in Elmhurst and Lexton are heavily screened by existing vegetation and buildings, although filtered views of the Project may be possible from some dwellings, particularly on the northern boundary of Elmhurst and southern boundary of Lexton. The attractiveness of a small number of dwellings in these townships may be reduced, although screen plantings could eliminate views of the Project in most, if not all, cases. Surrounding landholders in this section of the study area will view the Project as part of their daily lives as they move within the towns and through the rural landscape. Direct views of the Project will be more common from rural dwellings. Screening views of the Project using vegetation may be possible, although loss of long-range views, particularly towards the Pyrenees Ranges, may not be a satisfactory outcome for some. The attractiveness of affected dwellings and properties as a place to live and conduct a business may be reduced, and changes to the visual setting of dwellings and properties may not be readily accepted and have the potential to result in frustration and emotional strain.

The proposed laydown area and workforce accommodation facility near Lexton would alter the prevailing rural amenity of the location, and may represent an unwanted irritation and blight on the landscape for nearby residents. However, a buffer of 1.4km to 2km exists between the proposed site and nearby dwellings, and no dwellings or other noise-sensitive receivers are located on the proposed access route to the site. An adequate level of acoustic amenity would be preserved at nearby dwellings, in the context of a short construction period. Construction noise may be audible at times at nearby dwellings, although would typically be less than 45 decibels (dB) LAeq (LAeq indicates the average noise volume of the existing environment over a set period), and limited to daytime working hours. Noise associated with use of the facility is not expected to be audible at neighbouring dwellings (see **Chapter 19: Noise and vibration**). The facility may be visible to the local rural community from local roads and nearby dwellings, including at night due to light glow, and may reduce the aesthetic quality of the area. The presence of the facility, inclusive of its worker population, may be unsettling for nearby residents who are accustomed to living in a sparsely populated rural setting, and this may add to concerns and frustrations neighbours have regarding the Project.

The residual impacts of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for surrounding landholders in Section 1 would be moderate to minor during construction and moderate during operation.

Section 2

There are 479 dwellings in Section 2 of the study area within 2km of the Project, of which 436 dwellings are on properties not directly affected. Approximately 45 per cent of these are located within the settlements of Allendale (44), Kingston (46), Newlyn North (86) and Smeaton (35), with the remainder being in rural areas. For many dwellings within these settlements, views of the Project from dwellings are unlikely due to the layout of the townships and existing screening vegetation and topography. However, the Project would affect views from rural dwellings throughout Section 2 of the study area, including highly valued views of Mount Beckworth and Mount Bolton from dwellings west of Allendale, views of volcanic cones from dwellings east of Newlyn North, and views of mountain ranges from dwellings in Bullarook, Claretown and Springbank. Changes to the visual setting of rural dwellings and properties have the potential to result in frustration and emotional strain for surrounding landholders, and in some cases, an enduring sense of loss. The residual impacts of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for surrounding landholders in Section 2 would be minor during construction and major to moderate during operation.

Section 3

In Section 3 of the study area, there are 292 dwellings within 2km of the Project, 255 of which are on properties not directly affected. A substantial proportion of these dwellings are clustered in four rural living areas, comprising a forested area around Callaghan's Lane north of Gordon, on the eastern side of the Ballan Daylesford Road north west of Ballan, near Blakeville Road north of Ballan, and the southern portion of Greendale. The Project may be visible from some dwellings in these areas, particularly for those on the northern boundary of the rural living area at Blakeville Road, where clear and filtered views of the Project would be common from residences. Residents in these areas are likely to be sensitive to the Project's effect on the aesthetic quality of their dwellings, property and local area, and the Project may disrupt an aspirational lifestyle and result in a sense of loss of some surrounding landholders.

The proposed laydown area and workforce accommodation facility near Ballan is generally situated away from surrounding dwellings, with the closest dwellings located between 700m and 1km from the site. While noise generated during construction of the workforce accommodation facility may be audible at times for occupants of these dwellings, construction noise would typically be less than 45 dB LAeq, and limited to daytime working hours, and an adequate level of acoustic amenity would be preserved. Noise associated with use of the facility is not expected to be audible at neighbouring dwellings (see **Chapter 19: Noise and vibration**). There are some dwellings located close to Ingliston Road which will provide access to the facility, and additional traffic and associated noise along this access route may be considered an annoyance by residents in these dwellings. The accommodation facility at Ballan may be visible to the local rural communities from local roads and nearby dwellings, including at night due to light glow, and may reduce the aesthetic quality of the area. The presence of the facility, inclusive of its worker population, may be unsettling for nearby residents, which may add to concerns and frustrations neighbours have regarding the Project.

The residual impacts of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for surrounding landholders in Section 3 would be moderate to minor during construction and major to moderate during operation.

Section 4

In Section 4, there are 6,261 dwellings within 2km of the Project, including 6,223 dwellings on properties not directly affected. Approximately two thirds of these are located within the urban area of Hillside, with the remainder mainly located in the northern parts of Melton and Darley. Dwellings in Hillside and Melton are in conventional residential subdivisions, and existing transmission infrastructure is located immediately north of Hillside. The visual impact of the Project on these areas would be minimal.

Many of the surrounding landholders' dwellings in Darley have been designed to take advantage of expansive views to the north toward the Lerderderg State Park. Community feedback on the Project indicates that these views contribute to the amenity of dwellings and the suburb in general and views of the Project from these dwellings would be common, including from indoor living areas, and outdoor entertaining areas. Feedback from Darley community members indicates that many residents view the Project as a threat to their amenity, which is a defining feature of their lifestyle and identity. The Project may disrupt aspirational lifestyles for a large proportion of the Darley community. Adaptation through relocation would be impractical for many affected residents, and they may harbour ongoing frustration and resentment toward the Project.

Other areas in Section 4 of the study area are:

- Two rural living areas south of Merrimu Reservoir, including a small subdivision near Bences Road that provides expansive northward views of Mount Sugarloaf. The Project will affect the aesthetic quality of the homes in this area and may disrupt an aspirational lifestyle. Elsewhere in this location, the dwellings are embedded in thick bushland and would not have direct views of the Project.
- Rural properties on Swans Road, along a dead-end road north of the Project. Perceived bushfire risk by residents in this area may detract from the attractiveness of their homes and local area as a place to live. **Technical Report K: Bushfire Impact Assessment** concluded that the risk of structural failure of the proposed transmission towers due to extreme weather conditions impeding egress from these homes in the event of a bushfire can be eliminated under all reasonably foreseeable extreme wind conditions.
- Rural properties, including equine properties, along Lerderderg Gorge Road and Camerons Road, where the potential for 'high' and 'moderate' visual impacts exists (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). Further east there are lifestyle properties that provide views of Merrimu Reservoir, Mount Sugarloaf, or Mount Kororoit. Occupants of these properties have expressed opposition to the Project due to its potential visual impact.
- Rural dwellings east of Melton are located in a highly dynamic land use context, which includes developing suburban areas, major roads and transmission infrastructure.

The residual impacts of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for surrounding landholders in Section 4 of the study area would be minor during construction and moderate during operation for residents east of Darley, and major during operation for residents in Darley and surrounds.

Summary

The attractiveness of some dwellings and properties as a place to live or conduct a business may be reduced, potentially leading to frustration and emotional strain, and disruption to aspirational lifestyles. The Project may challenge a shared sense of identity among rural residents built on appreciation of the area's scenic qualities and peaceful rural lifestyle. Some affected residents may experience a desire to relocate, and impacts may diminish the capacity and cohesiveness of the community, as landholders and residents adjust to altered conditions. The proposed workforce accommodation facilities near Lexton and Ballan would detract from rural amenity for a small number of nearby residents, although for a limited time (approximately two years). The facilities are required to avoid potential severe social impacts resulting from the Project's effect on demand for housing and community services and to limit the influence of the construction workforce on social dynamics within existing communities.

Residual social impacts from land use and amenity changes due to Project construction and operation would be moderate to minor during construction and major to moderate during operation, as outlined in Table 8-6 of **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**. The following EPRs were recommended in other technical reports or have been proposed by AusNet to manage or mitigate these impacts:

- EPRs LV1 and LV2 (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**):
 - EPR LV1: Minimise visual impacts – Public domain, which will develop and implement a process to consult with relevant landholders and/or land managers to determine appropriate measures to mitigate visual impacts to Merrimu Reservoir and War Memorial, Bald Hill Activation Area and Bolwarrah Weir
 - EPR LV2: Minimise visual impacts – Private domain landscape screening program, which will develop and implement a program to provide offers to fund landscape screening for eligible dwellings to minimise visual impacts of the Project.
- EPRs NV1 (Develop and implement a Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan), NV2 (Minimise construction outside of Normal Working Hours), NV3 (Minimise construction vibration impacts on amenity) and NV4 (Design operational noise sources to minimise noise so far as reasonably practicable) (see **Chapter 19: Noise and Vibration**). These EPRs collectively aim to avoid and minimise, so far as reasonably practicable, noise and vibration impacts at sensitive receivers.
- EPRs EM7 (Develop and implement a Complaints Management System) and EM10 (Develop and implement a Residential Mitigation and Support Strategy) (See **Chapter 29: Environmental Management Framework**). These EPRs aim to record, manage and resolve complaints received from affected stakeholders, and mitigate and manage impacts to directly affected residents (such as direct disturbance and amenity impacts, including visual impacts) from the Project to the extent reasonably practicable.

21.5.3 Impacts on the broader community

The broader community's direct experience of the Project would be limited to visual encounters as community members travel through the rural landscape or their township/urban area, and/or when they visit particular locations to engage in recreation. These individuals may also experience the Project indirectly as part of their interactions with members of their community who are more directly affected. Potential impacts are discussed in this section according to affected locations within the study area, namely along local roads, within settlements, and at community facilities and areas of open space. The overall potential impact of the Project's effects on land use and amenity for the broader community is assessed as being minor to negligible during construction and moderate to minor during operation, except near Darley and surrounds, where potential impacts during operation would be major to moderate.

Local roads

The Project will be visible from roads throughout the study area. The visual impact of the Project from local roads was typically assessed as 'low' or 'negligible' (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**), although some local residents would view the Project frequently from local roads (e.g., on a daily basis), including directly affected landholders and surrounding landholders. Views of the Project from local roads may add to and exacerbate social impacts for directly affected landholders and surrounding landholders, and may detract from the enjoyment of the study area's rural character and lifestyle among members of the broader community. While social impacts from the Project's effects on land use and amenity for the broader community are expected to be less significant than for other affected stakeholders and are likely to resolve over time, there is potential for impacts on community capacity and cohesion in the short to medium term, particularly where impacts on directly affected landholders and surrounding landholders are more common.

Settlements

The character and amenity of settlements within the study area is valued by residents. In most cases there would be little to no visibility of the Project from social focal points within these settlements, such as commercial centres, schools, and recreational facilities, and use of these facilities within settlements would typically not expose residents and visitors to views of the Project. The Project may be visible at the outskirts or entry to some townships (including Elmhurst, Allendale, Kingston, and Newlyn) and from some locations within townships (such as Myrniong). Residents in these areas may experience visual impacts from the Project.

Notable areas within settlements that may be affected by the Project include:

- Kingston Show Grounds: Northward views from within the show grounds are screened by vegetation, although visitors to the show grounds would view the Project when approaching the venue
- Myrniong Recreation Reserve: Transmission towers will be visible as a background element. Potential visual impacts are more likely to affect passive recreation users of the reserve for whom views may be more important
- Myrniong Primary School: Transmission towers would be visible as a background element in some views. This would not impede school functions, although the pleasant setting of the school is likely to contribute to the enjoyment of the facility by the community
- Focal points for recreation in Darley, including Bald Hill Activation Area, Bacchus Marsh Golf Club, and walking tracks. While the level of change would not compromise the useability of these locations, changes to the visual setting of these locations would compound social impacts experienced by members of the Darley community:
 - Bald Hill Activation Area: The Project's effect on the attractiveness of the facility may influence the appeal of this facility for some users (discussed in greater detail below under 'Community Facilities and Open Spaces')
 - Bacchus Marsh Golf Club / Golf Club Walking Trail: The Project may have a minor impact on some users' enjoyment of the golf course. Views of the Project would be available from several locations within the course, with visual impacts ranging from high to moderate (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). Most potential views of the Project from the walking trail are screened or filtered by existing vegetation, although sections of the trail north of the golf course would be more exposed. These views of the Project may reduce the attractiveness of the walking trail.

Community facilities and open spaces

Access to and use of locations of social and cultural importance in the study area will not be directly impeded by the Project. In some cases, the Project will alter the aesthetic quality of the locations, which may lessen the benefit obtained through visitation.

Section 1

Potential impacts at locations of social and cultural importance in Section 1 of the study area include:

- Pyrenees State Forest, Ben Major State Park (including Ben Major Lookout), and Mount Cole State Forest (including Ben Neis Lookout): These areas support outdoor recreation among locals and visitors, and there are several businesses offering guided tours in these areas. Walking tracks and camping areas within the parks and forests would provide little to no visibility of the Project. The Ben Major Lookout and Ben Neis Lookout would allow visitors to see the Project from a distance, along with a wide variety of other land uses and structures, including wind farms and the existing 220kV Horsham to Waubra transmission line. The visibility of the Project from the lookouts would not detract from the visitor experience sufficiently to materially affect visitation, as the lookouts' main 'drawcard' (elevated vantage points offering long range views) would be unaffected.
- Joel Joel War Memorial, Joel Joel Hall and Crowlands Homestead: Use and enjoyment of these locations will be unaffected, with intervening vegetation and distance preventing views of the Project from these sites.

Section 2

Potential impacts at locations of social and cultural importance in Section 2 of the study area include:

- Newlyn Reservoir: The Project is located 1.4km from Newlyn Reservoir and would not directly impede its use. Construction noise may detract from amenity of the reservoir for short periods, and the Project would be visible during operation. The Project will have a moderate visual impact from this location (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). While Newlyn Reservoir would retain many of the qualities that attract users to the location, and the social and recreational activity supported by the reservoir would be expected to continue, there may be a sense of disappointment among local community members who use and enjoy the site, and there is the potential that particular individuals may choose to socialise and recreate elsewhere.
- Hepburn Lagoon: The Project is set back 450m from Hepburn Lagoon and would not directly impede its use. Construction noise may detract from amenity for a short period, and the Project would be visible during operation. The Project may alter the prevailing character and amenity of the site (peaceful, difficult to access, but worth the effort), in a way which has a greater influence on its attractiveness.
- Mount Beckworth Scenic Reserve: Views from the most frequented or accessible locations within the reserve are oriented away from the Project and screened by topography and vegetation. Views of the Project would be limited primarily to locations west of the summit and other areas that are not readily accessible. Following the implementation of measures to comply with EPRs, the visual impact of the Project will be moderate from some locations beyond the summit within the reserve's western edge (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). The Project would not necessarily detract from the visitor experience sufficiently to materially affect visitation to the reserve generally, or to the summit in particular. Some members of the broader community who are uncomfortable with the Project may choose to avoid or only infrequently visit affected locations, such as the summit.
- Kingston Avenue of Honour: There would be little to no visibility of the Project from this location.
- Turello Avenue of Honour: Clear views of the Project would likely form part of the visitor experience, although visitors would typically look down the avenue and away from the Project. Some visitors may consider the Project detracts from what is otherwise an aesthetically pleasing rural setting.
- Halls, churches and schools: There is little to no visibility of the Project from these locations. The Project may be visible from the front of St Micheal Convent/Church in Springbank, although this is essentially an indoor facility, and such users would encounter the Project only when entering and exiting the facility.

Section 3

Potential impacts at locations of social and cultural importance in Section 3 of the study area include:

- Moorabool Reservoir: The Project would be visible from the carpark exit of the reservoir, but not from functional areas within the reservoir. Views of the reservoir would be unaffected.
- Pykes Creek Reservoir: Views of the Project from the reservoir's playground and picnic facility would be partially screened by topography and vegetation. The Project would not diminish the attractiveness of the location. The effect of the Project on the reservoir's character and appeal may be more pronounced from the water, where clearer views of the Project are possible as visitors move northward. Because participants' enjoyment of water-based activities is not highly contingent on the water body's scenic quality, the Project would not materially influence usage of and satisfaction with the reservoir for most users.
- Bolwarrah Weir: The useability of the site during construction of the Project would be affected by construction activity and noise for a limited period. In operation, the visual impact of the Project was assessed as high (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**), which would affect the appeal of the location. Existing users may choose to avoid the location and may resent the Project's effect on the quality of the site.
- Myrniong Avenue of Honour: The Project would not be visible due to screening by topography and vegetation.
- Our Lady Help of Christians church: The Project would not be visible due to screening by topography and vegetation.

Section 4

Potential impacts at locations of social and cultural importance in Section 4 of the study area include:

- Bald Hill Activation Area: Visibility of the Project from within the Bald Hill Activation Area will vary. The visual impact from northern sections of the sculptural trail and all abilities sculptural trail (Telford Park) would be high, and the Project would be visible from the entrance to the facility, while views of the Project would be screened from other locations, such as eastern and southern sections of the sculptural trail (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). Some local residents of Darley may avoid the facility, particularly those who are highly sensitive to the Project's presence in their local area.
- Merrimu Reservoir: The useability of the picnic area during construction would be affected by construction activity and noise for a limited period. During operation, the Project would be visible in views over the reservoir from the picnic area (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). Establishment of landscape screening to filter views towards the Project when facing east from the existing barbeque and picnic facilities, and development of new public amenities to replace or replicate existing assets in a suitable location within Merrimu Reservoir which are oriented away from the Project are proposed to manage potential visual impacts for users of the picnic area (EPR LV1; see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). This would largely retain the appeal of the facility, although views of the Project would inevitably form part of the visitor experience, and may dissuade use of this facility for some people.
- Lerderderg State Park: The Project would not be visible from most locations within the park or would be a background element where visible. Visitors would travel under the proposed transmission line to access the park from Lerderderg Gorge Road, which passes through a picturesque valley. While the drive to the park through this setting may contribute to the user experience in a minor way for some users, the principal driver for visitation is the park itself, and the Project would not detract materially from the park's appeal.
- Coimadai Memorial Park and Avenue of Honour: The Project would have a limited impact on the user experience of the Avenue of Honour, but would potentially prevent the future expansion of the avenue to the east, as desired by the Coimadai Avenue of Honor Restoration Association. The Project would be located close to the Memorial Park and would be highly visible at this location. Existing members of the Coimadai Avenue of Honor Restoration Association have expressed concerns regarding the Project's effect on the amenity of the facility, and a strong desire to protect

the facility's integrity and attractiveness. The visual impact of the Project on the Memorial Park was assessed as high to moderate (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). Consultation has commenced with the Coimadai Avenue of Honour Restoration Association to determine appropriate measures developed in accordance with EPRs, to mitigate visual impacts. Possible suggestions include reconfiguration and/or redesign of the Merrimu Reservoir War Memorial so that views are oriented away from the Project when the parade ground and ceremonial areas are in use (EPR LV1; see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). While this would help to reduce visual impacts of the Project, the Project may still detract from the appeal of the facility for some users and may have a noticeable effect on the amenity of the facility. This may compound existing frustrations relating to previous disturbances to the facility associated with the development of Merrimu Reservoir.

- MacPherson Park: Construction activity and noise has the potential to interfere with use of the facility (equestrian activities being particularly sensitive) for a short period. During operation, the Project would be visible from the facility and would affect views to the north. Community members have raised concerns about the proximity of the proposed transmission infrastructure in the context of perceived Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF)-related health effects (assessed as negligible, see **Chapter 17: EMI and EMF**) and the effect of the Project on the aesthetic quality of the location. The primary purpose of MacPherson Park and its principal source of community benefit (i.e., active recreation) is not highly sensitive to the presence of the proposed infrastructure, and the Project will not impede the core function of MacPherson Park. The pleasant surrounds of MacPherson Park may add to the enjoyment for players and spectators when engaging in or watching sporting competitions at the facility, and community members (including passive users) may consider that the appeal of Macpherson Park is negatively affected by the Project. The proposed change under the Master Plan endorsed by Melton City Council to move the main park entrance to the south west corner of the site and downgrade the existing entrance to a secondary entrance would facilitate a more harmonious co-existence of the facility and the Project. Over time, the initial negative impact of the Project on users of the facility is expected to change and reduce the Project's influence on the attractiveness of the facility.

Summary

Construction activity including noise would affect the amenity of various locations for a short period, including focal points for recreation. Views of the Project from local roads, the periphery of settlements and some community facilities and open spaces may detract from local residents' enjoyment of a valued rural lifestyle, their appreciation of the area's landscape qualities and the enjoyment of particular recreational facilities, and from their sense of place. In some instances, changes to the scenic quality of these locations would be substantial and may not be readily accepted. These impacts may further diminish the capacity and cohesiveness of the broader community.

Residual social impacts from the Project's effects on land use and amenity changes would be minor to negligible during construction, and moderate to minor for most locations in the study area during operation, increasing to major to moderate in Darley and surrounds during operation, as outlined in Table 8-6 of **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment**. The following EPRs were recommended in other technical reports or have been proposed by AusNet to manage or mitigate these impacts:

- EPRs LV1 and LV2 (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**):
 - EPR LV1: Minimise visual impacts – Public domain, which will develop and implement a process to consult with relevant landholders and/or land managers to determine appropriate measures to mitigate visual impacts to Merrimu Reservoir and War Memorial, Bald Hill Activation Area and Bolwarrah Weir
 - EPR LV2: Minimise visual impacts – Private domain landscape screening program, which will develop and implement a program to provide offers to fund landscape screening for eligible dwellings to minimise visual impacts of the Project.
- EPRs NV1 (Develop and implement a Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan), NV2 (Minimise construction outside of Normal Working Hours), NV3 (Minimise construction vibration impacts on amenity) and NV4 (Design operational noise sources to minimise noise so far as reasonably practicable) (see **Chapter 19: Noise and Vibration**). These EPRs collectively aim to avoid and minimise, so far as reasonably practicable, noise and vibration impacts at sensitive receivers.

- EPRs EM7 (Develop and implement a Complaints Management System) and EM10 (Develop and implement a Residential Mitigation and Support Strategy) (See **Chapter 29: Environmental Management Framework**). These EPRs aim to record, manage and resolve complaints received from affected stakeholders, and mitigate and manage impacts to directly affected residents (such as direct disturbance and amenity impacts, including visual impacts) from the Project to the extent reasonably practicable.

21.5.4 Impacts on tourism business operators and tourist attractions

Noise, dust and traffic impacts during Project construction, and visual amenity impacts during Project construction and operation, may lead to reduced visitation to some businesses and tourist attractions near the Project.

Tourism businesses

The Project may affect businesses in the 'Accommodation and Food Services' and 'Arts and Recreation Services' industries such as golf clubs, equestrian academies, cellar doors and bed and breakfast accommodation providers (see **Chapter 14: Economic**). Businesses that rely on the amenity of the natural landscape to attract visitation may experience modest negative economic effects during Project operation due to reduced visual amenity. This may result in social effects such as loss of employment, which in turn may lead to extended commuting times, financial strain, or the need to relocate, or reductions in access to goods and services, which could lead to lower living standards. Business in rural areas may be relied on heavily by the local community as a source of employment or particular goods and services, and may function as important recreational focal points.

There are 27 businesses classified as 'Accommodation and Food Services' and 'Arts and Recreation Services' in the study area that have been identified as potentially susceptible to potential effects on amenity, as they are dependent to some extent on the existing aesthetic quality of their surrounds to attract visitors. Of these 27 businesses, 16 are within 2km and the remaining 11 are located from 2km to 9.2km of the Project.

The Project will develop and implement a Business Mitigation and Support Strategy for directly affected businesses to avoid and minimise impacts as a result of the transmission line easement being placed on land associated with the business, to the extent reasonably practicable (EPR EC1; see **Chapter 14: Economic**). The Project will also develop and implement a Business Mitigation and Support Strategy for eligible businesses within 2km to avoid and minimise to the extent reasonably practicable impacts from the Project to existing businesses that would not be supported under EPR EC1 but which are within 2km of the Project and rely on the existing character of the natural landscape to attract customers (EPR EC3; see **Chapter 14: Economic**).

The potential impact of the Project on Melton Aerodrome, which provides flight training, aircraft maintenance, refuelling, aircraft parking and hangarage services, charter flights, scenic tours and pleasure flights, is discussed in **Chapter 16: Aviation**. Following construction of the Project, operations at the aerodrome would continue as normal, with some adjustments to descent and departure angles/profiles to ensure clearance is maintained over the transmission line. Existing charter flights and scenic tours operated out of Melton Aerodrome could continue without interruption.

Tourist attractions

There were no tourism attractions identified as likely to be affected by the Project in Section 1 of the study area.

Section 2

Potential effects on tourism attractions in Section 2 of the study area include:

- Buried Rivers of Gold: This is a 31km self-guided driving tour route. While the Project will not impede views of relevant heritage fabric, nor diminish the prominence or legibility of this fabric (see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**), views of the Project will form part of the visitor experience, and a substantial proportion of the trail is located within 2km of the Project. The Project would not diminish the principal purpose of the trail, but may influence user satisfaction and discourage some users.

- **Ballarat to Maryborough Heritage Rail Trail:** This is a cycle touring route connecting the major townships of Maryborough and Ballarat via smaller settlements and other points of interest along the route. The Project will only minimally affect the attractiveness of the cycle route, due to the relatively fleeting view of the Project from the perspective of cyclists using the cycling route, and the overall length of the trail (91km).
- **Wallaby Track section of the Great Dividing Trail Network:** The Great Dividing Trail Network is a pathway for walkers, mountain bikers and trail runners. The 52km section traversing the study area (Wallaby Track) links Daylesford and Creswick. Given the length of the track (52km) and the track crossing the Project at the intersection of an existing 220kV transmission line, the effect of the Project on the attractiveness and use of the track would be negligible.

Section 3

In Section 3 of the study area, the Myrniong Car Sprint occurs in a pleasant rural setting on a local road, which likely enhances the experience of participants and spectators. Construction activity including noise has some potential to interfere with the event, although noise impacts could be avoided through construction sequencing (consideration of community events that are more sensitive at specific times of year is required to be included in the Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan under EPR NV1; see **Chapter 19: Noise and vibration**). Views of the Project would likely form part of the user experience for participants and spectators. The Project may reduce the attractiveness of the event for some spectators.

Section 4

Potential effects on tourism attractions in Section 4 of the study area include:

- **Bald Hill Activation Area:** The visual impact of the Project from parts of the Bald Hill Activation Area would be high, although in other locations, views of the Project would be screened by topography. Views of the Project would typically be considered an undesirable element by users of the facility. While a reduction in the appeal of the facility has the potential to reduce visitation, visitation by non-locals would still be substantial, given the multifaceted nature of the facility and variation in the visibility of the Project from within the facility.
- **Lerderderg State Park:** The effect of the Project on the amenity and character of the Lerderderg State Park would be limited to the drive into the park along Lerderderg Gorge Road. This is unlikely to reduce visitation by individuals who live outside the local area.

Summary

The Project may interfere with the operation of tourism-based businesses, which would add to the overall strain of the Project on the local community. EPR EC1 requires the development and implementation of a Business Mitigation and Support Strategy for directly affected businesses to avoid and minimise impacts on directly affected businesses, and EPR EC3 requires the development of a Business Mitigation and Support Strategy for eligible businesses within 2km to avoid and minimise impacts on other businesses within 2km of the Project that rely on the existing character of the natural landscape to attract customers (see **Chapter 14: Economic**). These EPRs will define the process and requirements for consulting with business owners to discuss their business and the specific impacts that their business may experience, and to identify, offer and implement any practicable mitigation measures that could be applied to lessen the impacts of the Project on the business, or that may otherwise support the business. With application of EPRs, there are potential negative residual economic impacts during construction on businesses in the 'Accommodation and Food Services' and 'Arts and Recreation Services' industries within 2km of the Project, and potential negative economic impacts during Project operation on individual businesses in these industries, while at an industry level, residual economic impacts are considered to be neutral (see **Chapter 14: Economic**).

With regard to tourist attractions in the region:

- The Project would not diminish the principal purpose of the Buried Rivers of Gold, but may influence user satisfaction and discourage some users

- The Project will only minimally affect the attractiveness of the Ballarat to Maryborough Heritage Rail Trail
- The effect of the Project on the attractiveness and use of the Wallaby Track section of the Great Dividing Trail Network would be negligible
- The Project may reduce the attractiveness of the Myrniong Car Sprint for some spectators
- The Project may reduce the appeal the Bald Hill Activation Area, which may reduce visitation, although visitation by non-locals would still be substantial. The Project will develop and implement a process to consult with the relevant landholder and/or land manager to determine appropriate measures to mitigate visual impacts to the Bald Hill Activation Area (EPR LV1; see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). This will include consideration of landscape screening to filter views towards the Project from the six sculpture locations along the proposed sculpture trail and at the entrance from Swans Road, and selective screen planting to partially screen individual towers.
- The Project on is unlikely to reduce visitation to Lerderderg State Park by individuals who live outside the local area.

Potential impacts on tourist attractions have been considered in the assessment of residual impacts on the broader community.

21.6 Decommissioning impacts

Decommissioning of the Project would have short-term effects on land use and amenity similar to Project construction. As decommissioning would relieve landholders of restrictions on land use imposed by the Project, this would likely be perceived to have a positive effect on the amenity and character of the study area, with positive social impacts.

21.7 Cumulative impacts

Cumulative impacts have been assessed by identifying relevant future projects that could contribute to cumulative impacts on social values, considering their spatial and temporal relationships to the Western Renewables Link Project. The projects considered as potentially relevant to the assessment of cumulative social impacts include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project | • Melbourne Renewable Energy Hub |
| • Navarre Green Power Hub | • Outer Metropolitan Ring Road/E6 |
| • Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) | • Sunbury Line Level Crossing Removals |
| • Beaufort Bypass | • Sydenham Terminal Station Rebuild |
| • Brewster Wind Farm | • Toolern Vale Solar Farm |
| • Nyaninyuk Wind Farm | • Powercor Mt Cottrell Zone Substation |
| • Elaine Solar Farm | • West Gate Tunnel |
| • Elaine (Akaysha) BESS | • Western Irrigation Network Scheme. |

The construction stage of some of the identified projects may coincide with the construction stage of the Western Renewables Link Project. For projects in Sections 1 to 3 of the study area, this could attract construction workers to the area, potentially placing a cumulative strain on existing accommodation and community facilities and services. The proposed workforce accommodation facilities would ameliorate any potential contribution the Project may make to cumulative effects on demand for housing and community facilities and services.

Three projects in Section 1 (Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project, VNI West and Navarre Green Power Hub) involve the construction of transmission lines that terminate at the existing Bulgana Terminal Station or the new 500kV terminal station near Bulgana proposed as part of the Project (approaching from the west and north). The Watta Wella Renewable Energy Project would involve the construction of wind turbines immediately to the west of the Bulgana Terminal Station. This may result in cumulative visual impacts in the immediate surrounds of the Bulgana Terminal Station, which collectively would alter the character of the local landscape and may reduce the appeal of the area as a place to live among local rural residents. Some landholders in the area may also be asked to engage with representatives of multiple projects simultaneously to discuss issues such as land access and creation of easements. The affected area is sparsely populated, limiting exposure to potential cumulative impacts. Some of the affected landholders may support or benefit financially from the projects, which may offset concerns they may have.

The Nyaninyuk Wind Farm would be located to the west of Mount Beckworth and would cover an area which bridges the proposed easement for the Project. The area where the two projects overlap is valued for its scenic beauty, with views toward and from Mount Beckworth being of particular value. While local community members may consider that the cumulative effect of the two projects reduces the appeal of the area as a place to live, a large proportion of affected and nearby landholders would have wind turbines placed on their land, indicative of a level of comfort with this project's potential effects among those landholders.

In Section 4, the Melbourne Renewable Energy Hub, Toolern Vale Solar Farm and Outer Metropolitan Ring Road/E6 would be placed within the green wedge zone to the north of Melbourne's western growth corridor. This area accommodates an eclectic and evolving land use mix, with some parts retaining a distinctly rural character. Residents may consider that the cumulative impacts of multiple projects further erodes the non-urban and in some cases distinctly rural character of the green wedge, potentially reducing the appeal of parts of the green wedge as a place to live.

21.8 Environmental Performance Requirements

Potential impacts identified through **Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment** have informed the development of EPRs for the Project. EPRs set out the social outcomes to be achieved through the implementation of mitigation measures during construction, operation and decommissioning. While some EPRs are performance based to allow flexibility in how they will be achieved, others include more prescriptive measures that must be implemented. Compliance with the EPRs will be required as a condition of the Project's approval. Table 21.1 details the proposed EPRs related to the social impact assessment.

Table 21.1 Environmental Performance Requirements

EPR code	Requirement
SC1	<p>Avoid and minimise potential negative social impacts of the Project construction workforce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to 2 below, each Operational Management Plan for workforce accommodation facilities required by the draft Incorporated Document condition 4.13.6 must include the following to avoid and minimise potential negative social impacts of the Project construction workforce on surrounding communities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A commitment that all construction workers working on the Project who cannot commute safely to work from their current residence will be required to reside within the workforce accommodation facilities while on a rostered shift and return to their permanent place of residence on rostered breaks. The management protocol for worker access to settlements in proximity to the workforce accommodation facilities must limit visits to essential trips.

EPR code	Requirement
	<p>2. Despite 1(a) and 1(b) above, alternative arrangements may be agreed with the relevant Local Authorities and reflected in the relevant Operational Management Plan so as to increase potential positive socioeconomic outcomes of the Project construction stage, while avoiding and minimising to the extent practicable potential negative social impacts. This includes but is not limited to measures that seek to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise existing available accommodation in the areas surrounding the Project without resulting in negative effects on housing availability or affordability for local communities, or on the availability of tourist accommodation. Allow non-essential trips to larger towns and urban centres under specific circumstances, while avoiding non-essential trips to smaller townships.
SC2	<p>Develop and implement a Code of Conduct to avoid and minimise potential social impacts of the construction workforce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to construction commencing, develop and implement a Code of Conduct for the Project workforce in consultation with local councils to avoid and minimise the potential for negative social impacts of the construction workforce on local communities. The Code of Conduct must set out AusNet's expectations of staff when interacting with members of the local community. The Code of Conduct must address matters relating to dress standards and alcohol consumption. The Code of Conduct must stipulate the protocols for worker access to settlements as per EPR SC1. Compliance with the Code of Conduct must be required of all staff and non-compliances investigated and responded to in accordance with misconduct and disciplinary action protocols defined in the Code of Conduct.
SC3	<p>Develop and implement initiatives to maximise employment opportunities for local communities, First Nations people and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to construction commencing, develop and implement a plan to maximise potential benefits of the Project with regard to employment opportunities for local communities, First Nations people and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The local employment initiatives must: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to recruit as many as possible of the required employees for the Project from within local communities. Include strategies focused on employment of First Nations people, apprentices, trainees, people with disability and women. Support local workforce growth by hiring regional Victorian workers, particularly those under 25. The plan must include a commitment to deliver training and upskilling, including through apprenticeships, traineeships, and cadetships.

Other EPRs contribute to a reduction in the magnitude, extent and duration of social impacts. Additional EPRs related to social include:

- EPR AF1 – Develop and implement an Agriculture and Forestry Business Mitigation and Support Strategy
- EPR EC1 – Develop and implement a Business Mitigation and Support Strategy for directly affected businesses
- EPR EC3 – Develop and implement a Business Mitigation and Support Strategy for eligible businesses within 2km
- EPR EM3 – Develop and implement a Property Access and Management Plan
- EPR EM4 – Maintain a record of Specific Property Access Requirements (SPAR) and implement during construction and operation
- EPR EM7 – Develop and implement a Complaints Management System
- EPR EM8 – Develop and implement a Biosecurity Management Plan
- EPR EM10 – Develop and implement a Residential Mitigation and Support Strategy
- EPR LV1 – Minimise visual impacts – Public domain

- EPR LV2 – Minimise visual impacts – Private domain landscape screening program
- EPR NV1 – Develop and implement a Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan
- EPR NV2 – Minimise construction outside of Normal Working Hours
- EPR NV3 – Minimise construction vibration impacts on amenity
- EPR NV4 – Design operational noise sources to minimise noise so far as reasonably practicable.

Refer to the relevant technical chapters and **Chapter 29: Environmental Management Framework** for full detail of these EPRs.

21.9 Summary of residual impacts

Residual social impacts in relation to workforce and social profile are considered to be minor to negligible positive during construction and operation with application of the EPRs. There is expected to be little to no effect of the presence of the Project workforce in the study area, including in consideration of the Project's potential effects on housing, community facilities and services, and potential impacts on social cohesion. Any perceivable effect would be limited in duration to the Project's construction stage (approximately two years). In particular, the potential effect of the Project's construction workforce on demand for housing and community services in the study area will be avoided through the provision of two workforce accommodation facilities, one near Lexton and one near Ballan, to accommodate the construction workforce (EPR SC1). To further minimise potential impacts, the Code of Conduct (EPR SC2) will set out AusNet's expectations of staff when interacting with members of the local community and aims to further reduce any potential for negative social impacts of the construction workforce on local communities. Initiatives to maximise employment opportunities for local communities, First Nations people and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups will be developed to maximise potential benefits of the Project with regard to employment opportunities (EPR SC3).

Residual social impacts in relation to the Project's effects on land use and amenity range from moderate to negligible during construction, and major to minor during operation, as follows:

- Residual impacts on directly affected landholders would be moderate during construction. Construction activity including noise would affect the amenity of various locations, including dwellings and focal points for recreation for a relatively short period (from mobilisation to de-mobilisation, construction work at each tower may take about nine to 22 weeks over a two-year period, depending on weather and if tasks are able to immediately follow one another), and may be a source of irritation for landholders. The Project would cause inconvenience for landholders and some landholders may face an onerous process to adapt to the Project (e.g., horticulturalists). The Project may challenge landholders' sense of connection and stewardship toward their properties and farming community, and may diminish an aspirational lifestyle, or disrupt intergenerational connections to particular properties.
- Residual impacts on directly affected landholders during operation will be long-term, given the transmission line will be designed for a service life of 80 years, and are assessed as:
 - Moderate in Section 1 and in parts of Section 4 of the study area east of Darley. The Project would cause inconvenience for landholders and may be viewed as an unwanted intervention, but is unlikely to precipitate broader social effects such as material changes to the composition of the community, or social impacts such as reduced social cohesion

- Major to moderate in Darley and surrounds (Section 4 of the study area), due to the Project's effect on the attractiveness of smaller equine properties and lifestyle properties and fears relating to bushfire safety may contribute to landholder concerns in this area
- Major in Section 2 and Section 3 of the study area. The Project may challenge a shared sense of identity among landholders built on appreciation of the area's scenic qualities and peaceful rural lifestyle. The Project may affect the aesthetic quality of landholders' residences and challenge landholders' sense of connection and stewardship toward their property and community. Impacts for landholders would be felt by individuals and families who form part of an integrated rural community and may result in some changes to the composition, capacity and cohesiveness of the community, as individual landholders adjust to altered conditions.
- Residual impacts on surrounding landholders would be moderate to minor during the two-year construction stage and major to moderate and long-term (given 80-year service life of the transmission line) during operation. The attractiveness of some dwellings and properties as a place to live or conduct a business may be reduced, potentially leading to frustration and emotional strain, and disruption to aspirational lifestyles. The Project may also challenge a shared sense of identity among rural residents built on appreciation of the area's scenic qualities and peaceful rural lifestyle. Some affected residents may experience a desire to relocate, and impacts may diminish the capacity and cohesiveness of the community, as landholders and residents adjust to altered conditions. The proposed workforce accommodation facilities near Lexton and Ballan would detract from rural amenity for a small number of nearby residents, although limited in duration to the two-year construction stage. The facilities are required to avoid potential severe social impacts resulting from the Project's effect on demand for housing and community services and to limit the influence of the construction workforce on social dynamics within existing communities.
- Residual impacts on the broader community would be minor to negligible during the two-year construction stage. Residual impacts during operation would be long-term (given 80-year service life of the transmission line) and moderate to minor for most locations in the study area, and major to moderate in Darley and surrounds (Section 4 of the study area). Construction activity including noise would affect the amenity of various locations for a short period (with construction work at each tower anticipated to take about nine to 22 weeks over a two-year period), including focal points for recreation. Views of the Project from local roads, the periphery of settlements and some community facilities and open spaces may detract from local residents' enjoyment of a valued rural lifestyle, their appreciation of the area's landscape qualities and the enjoyment of particular recreational facilities, and from their sense of place. In some instances, changes to the scenic quality of these locations would be substantial and may not be readily accepted. These impacts may further diminish the capacity and cohesiveness of the broader community. Potential impacts on tourist attractions have been considered in the assessment of residual impacts on the broader community. The Project may affect tourist attractions in the region. In some instances, the Project may affect the appeal of a particular tourist attraction and influence user satisfaction, or discourage some users. In others, the effect of the Project on the appeal, use, or visitation of a particular tourist attraction would be minimal to negligible. For the Bald Hill Activation Area, the Project may reduce the appeal of the attraction to the extent that visitation is reduced, although visitation by non-locals would still be substantial. The Project will develop and implement a process to consult with the relevant landholder and/or land manager to determine appropriate measures to mitigate visual impacts to the Bald Hill Activation Area (EPR LV1; see **Chapter 11: Landscape and visual**). This will include consideration of landscape screening to filter views towards the Project from the six sculpture locations along the proposed sculpture trail and at the entrance from Swans Road, and selective screen planting to partially screen individual towers.

- The Project may affect businesses in the 'Accommodation and Food Services' and 'Arts and Recreation Services' industries such as golf clubs, equestrian academies, cellar doors and bed and breakfast accommodation providers. This would add to the overall strain of the Project on the local community. The Project will develop and implement a Business Mitigation and Support Strategy for directly affected businesses to avoid and minimise impacts as a result of the transmission line easement being placed on land associated with the business, to the extent reasonably practicable (EPR EC1). The Project will also develop and implement a Business Mitigation and Support Strategy for eligible businesses within 2km to avoid and minimise to the extent reasonably practicable impacts from the Project to businesses that would not be supported under EPR EC1 but which are within 2km of the Project and rely on the existing character of the natural landscape to attract customers (EPR EC3). With application of EPRs EC1 and EC3, there are potential negative residual economic impacts during the two-year construction stage on businesses in the 'Accommodation and Food Services' and 'Arts and Recreation Services' industries within 2km of the Project, and potential negative long-term (given 80-year service life of the transmission line) economic impacts during Project operation on individual businesses in these industries, while at an industry level, residual economic impacts are considered to be neutral (see **Chapter 14: Economic**).

With the implementation of measures to comply with EPRs, it is considered that the Project meets the social aspects of the evaluation objective *"Avoid, or minimise where avoidance is not possible, adverse effects on land use, social fabric of the community, businesses including farming and tourism, local and state infrastructure, aviation safety and to affected and neighbouring landowners during construction and operation of the project."*



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