

Spicers Creek Wind Farm

Summary

This Summary provides a non-technical overview of the Project, submissions received and responses. This Summary should be read in conjunction with the Spicers Creek Wind Farm Submissions Report and other technical documents, as relevant.

What is the Project?

Spicers Creek Wind Farm (the Project) is a wind generation project which will provide a reliable and affordable source of electricity and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy generation. It will also provide significant economic benefits to the Central West Orana region.

The Project is located approximately 25km north-west of Gulgong and 35km north-east of Wellington in NSW, within the Dubbo Regional and Warrumbungle Shire Council areas (refer to **Figure S1**). The Project is also located within the Central- West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWO REZ), one of five areas identified by the NSW Government to target for development of new renewable energy generation, transmission and storage projects. The NSW Government has indicated REZs will play a vital role in delivering affordable energy generation following the retirement of coal power stations over the coming decades.

The Project will have a capacity of 700 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy, and will be able to power around 397,000 homes.

The Project includes the installation, operation and decommissioning of the wind farm.



Expected
capacity

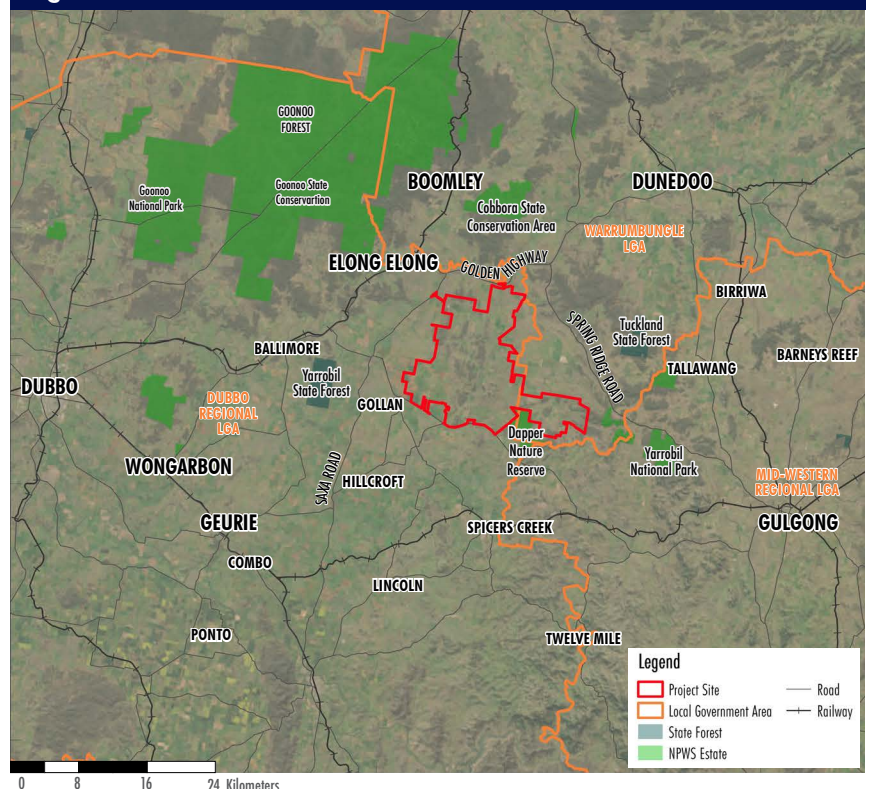


Expected
homes powered



North-east of
Wellington

Figure S1





In summary, the Project includes:



Up to 117 wind turbines



Battery storage



Roads and tracks



Local road network upgrades



Temporary construction facilities, including on-site concrete batching plants during the construction phase



Buildings used to operate the wind farm



Electrical infrastructure to connect the Project to the electricity grid, including underground cables and overhead powerlines, substations and transmission lines

Why is the Project needed?

Both the Commonwealth and NSW Governments have made commitments to increase renewable energy generation and reduce carbon emissions. The Spicers Creek Wind Farm will help provide cleaner, cheaper and reliable electricity while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the impacts of climate change.

As a renewable energy project within the CWO REZ, the Project is located in an area which will be coordinated with other projects and connections to the transmission network. This coordinated approach will contribute significant capital investment and generate jobs during the construction and operational phases, and provide indirect benefits to local businesses throughout the life of the wind farm. The long-term, strategic benefits of the Project to NSW include:



Providing regional investment in the NSW renewable energy sector



Making a positive contribution towards achieving the target of at least 3 GW of renewable energy generation from the CWO REZ

How many submissions were received?

As part of the approval process, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared for the Project to outline the proposed development, its environmental, social and economic impacts and opportunities, and how these impacts are proposed to be mitigated, managed and offset. The EIS was placed on public exhibition by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) from 28 July 2023 to 24 August 2023.

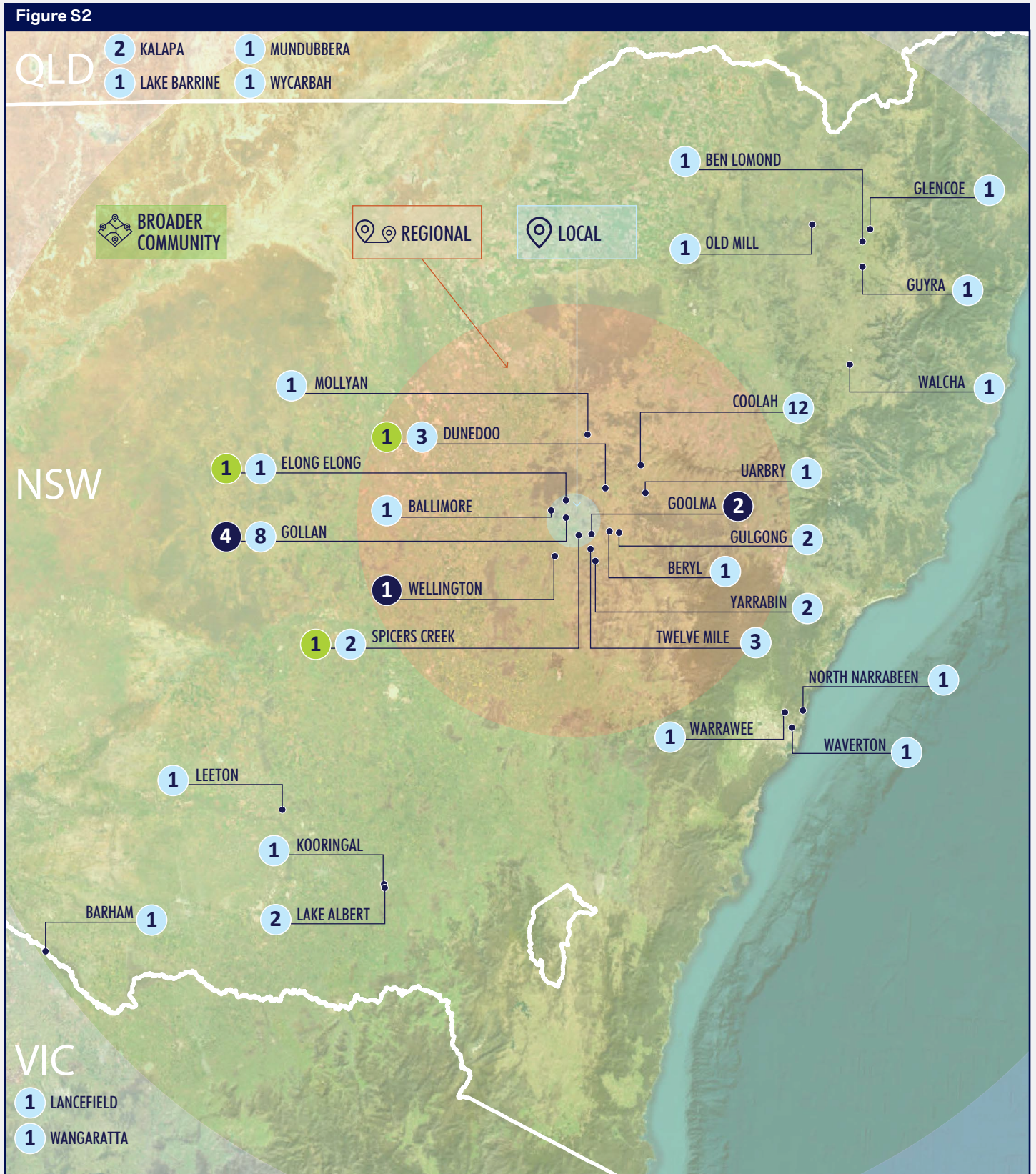
During the public exhibition period 87 submissions were made on the Project, including:

- 20 government submissions
- 67 community submissions

Of the 67 submissions received from the community (including individuals and organisations), 7 (10%) were in support of the Project, 3 (5%) were comments and 57 (85%) were objections.



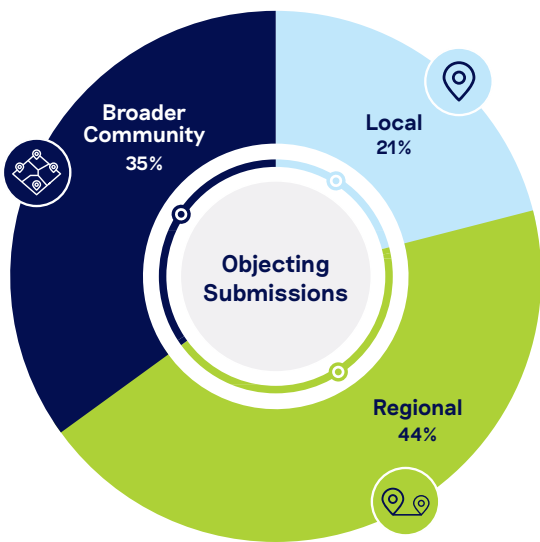
Submissions were received from the local area as well as from a broader area (refer to **Figure S2**).



- Support
- Comment
- Object

How submissions are characterised

	Local area within approximately 10km of the Project Site
	Regional area between approximately 10km and 100km of the Project Site
	Broader community greater than approximately 100km from the Project Site



Of the 57 objections, 12 (21%) objections were received from the local area, 25 (44%) from the regional area and 20 (35%) from the broader community.



Of the 7 supporting submissions, 6 were received from the local area and 1 was from the regional area.



A total of 3 submissions received from community members were comments (not characterised as either supporting or objecting the Project), 2 from the local area and 1 from the regional area.

What issues were raised?

Issues are characterised into 5 groups:



The Project (e.g. the Project Site, the physical layout and design, key uses and activities, timing)



The economic, environmental and social impacts of the Project (e.g. amenity, biodiversity, heritage, impacts on the community)



Issues that are beyond the scope of the Project (e.g. broader policy issues) or not relevant to the Project

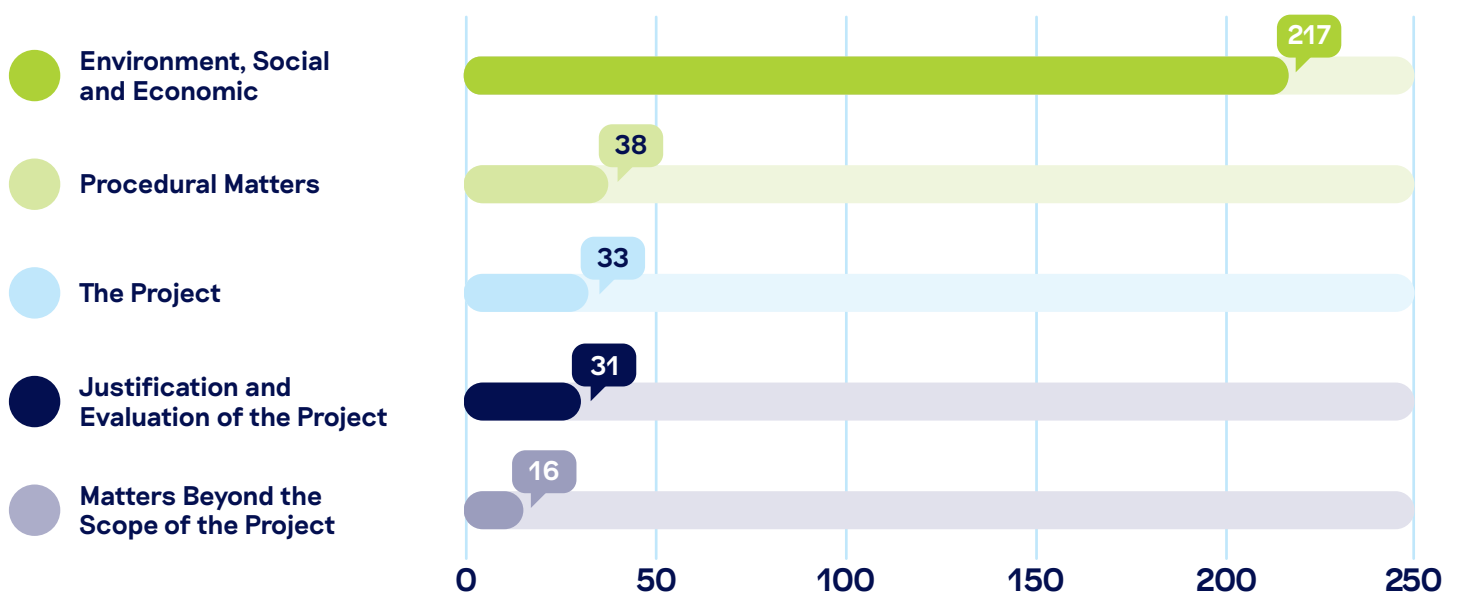


Procedural matters (e.g. level or quality of engagement, compliance with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs), identification of relevant statutory requirements)

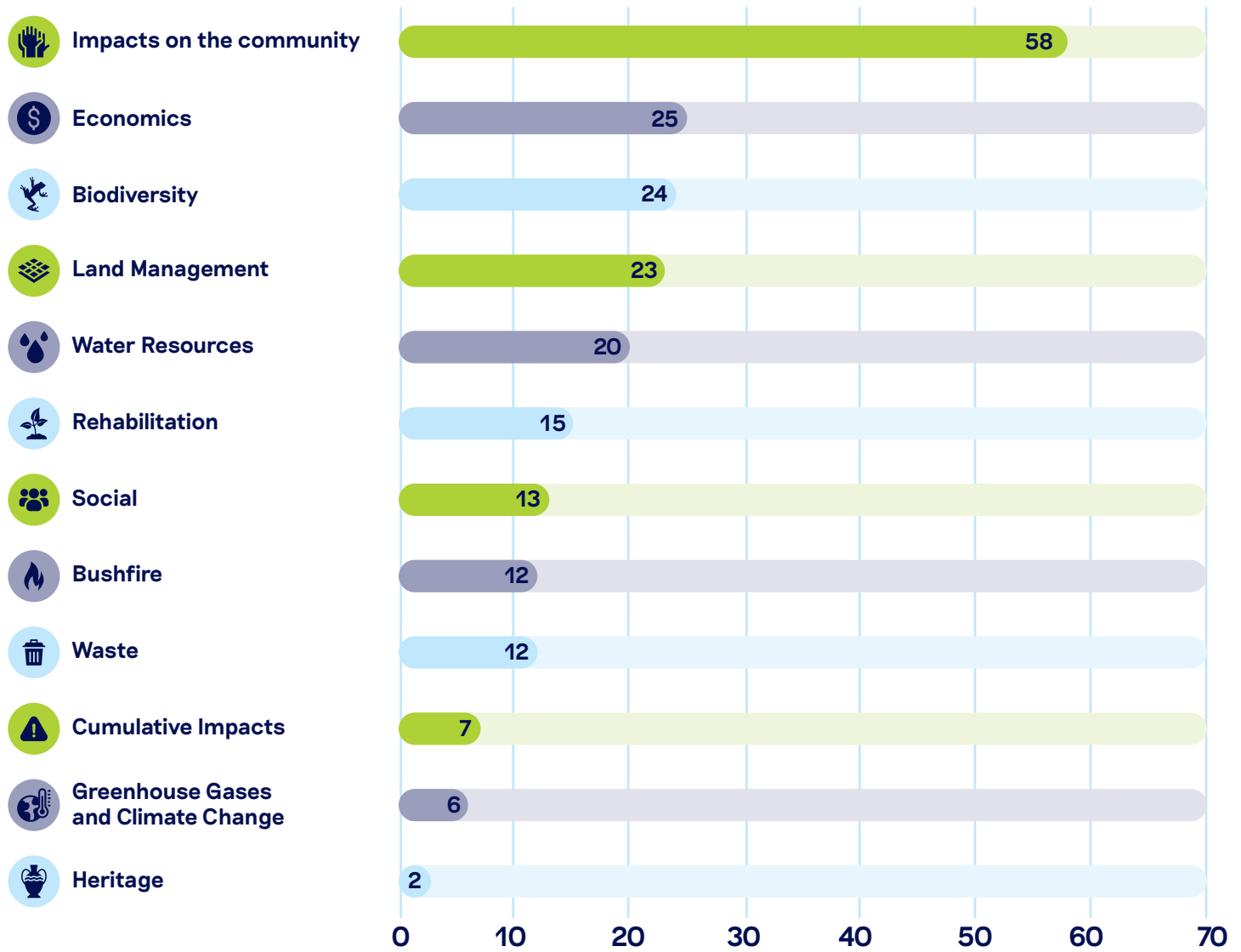


The justification and evaluation of the Project as a whole (e.g. consistency with Government plans, policies or guidelines)

The key issues raised by the people who objected to the Project were environmental, social and economic impacts.



The most frequently raised theme was impacts on the community, including visual, traffic/transport, public health and safety, noise and air quality.



The key reasons people support the Project were:



Positive economic benefits, including employment



Justification of the Project, including alignment with NSW renewable energy policy

The Submissions Report was prepared to address the issues raised in the submissions, to ensure the community receives feedback on any concerns and to help the consent authority to evaluate the merits of the Project.

What Project changes have been made?

SQE has made some amendments to the Project based on agency and community feedback. The changes include:



Refinement of the Project Site, Development Footprint and Development Corridor to further avoid biodiversity impacts (i.e. a reduction in these areas)



Additional commitments in relation to construction worker accommodation and employment



Additional mitigation measures

The Project has gone through a comprehensive design process that considered community and stakeholder feedback, as well as the findings of environmental and social studies. This process aimed to maximise positive social, economic and environmental outcomes while minimising any negative impacts. This process has continued with further refinements made to the Project in response to feedback from the community and government agencies.

The updated Project layout is shown in **Figure S3**.

The Development Footprint of the Project, where the work will take place, is about 1,471 ha – a reduction of around 49 ha from that identified in the EIS. This sits within a broader Project Site of around 17,645 ha – a reduction of around 86 ha. The Development Footprint is the area in which the Project will be constructed and includes areas which will only be used temporarily during construction. The design of the Development Footprint considers environmental, social and engineering constraints, including feedback from landowners and the surrounding community.

A buffer area of around 100 m has also been included around the Development Footprint. This is called the Development Corridor (as shown in **Figure S3**). The Development Corridor provides flexibility for locating wind turbines and site infrastructure during the detailed design and construction process and has been reduced by around 714 ha.

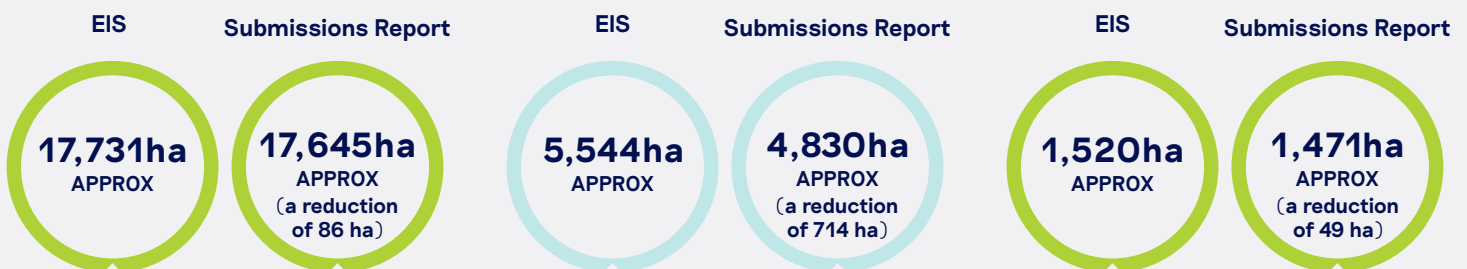
The reduction to disturbance from the Project will reduce impacts on biodiversity and avoidance of additional Aboriginal cultural heritage sites.

Project Site

Development Corridor

Development Footprint

(subset of the Development Corridor)



Throughout the Project planning phase SQE revised and updated the Project Site and layout to address feedback received. Where a landowner chose not to be involved in the Project, SQE removed these areas from the Project Site and applied a buffer area. To address potential impacts, SQE has followed an avoid-minimise-mitigate-offset approach. Firstly, all efforts have been made to avoid potential environmental, cultural and social impacts and environmental offsets were only considered after efforts to avoid, minimise and mitigate impacts.

Construction phase worker accommodation was raised as a key issue in several submissions. To further address this issue beyond the commitments made in the EIS, SQE has prepared an Accommodation and Employment Strategy for the Project in consultation with key stakeholders. The key options included in the strategy are:



Temporary workers accommodation in proximity to Dubbo



Adaptive reuse of a former aged care facility in Wellington into workers accommodation



Rural property accommodation – private lease with landowners offering accommodation for the Project

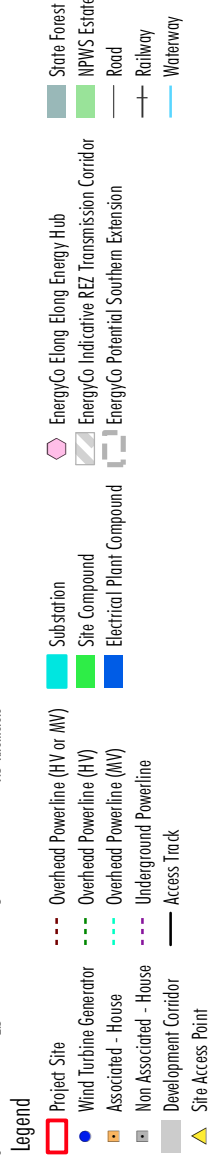
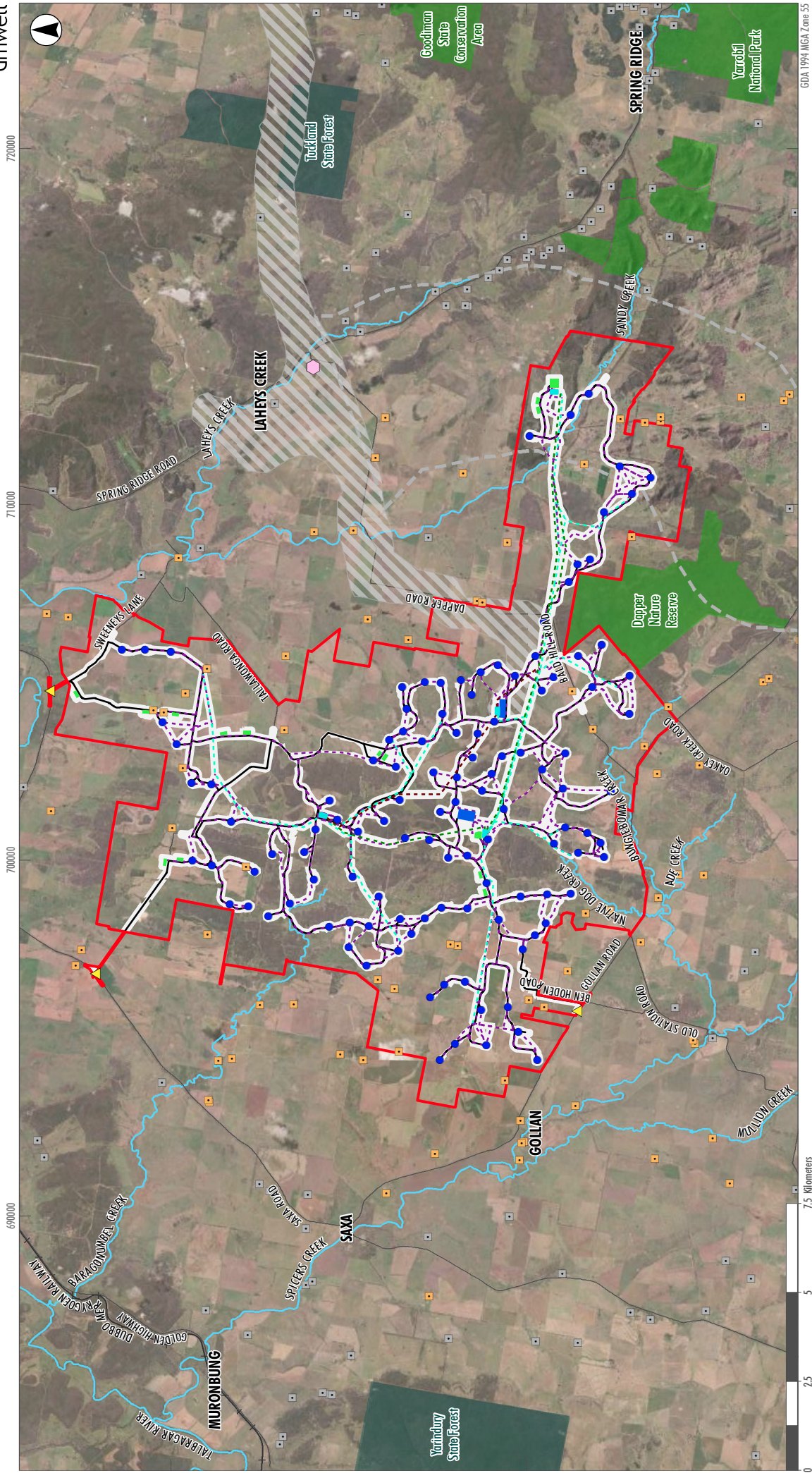


Figure S3
Spicers Creek Wind Farm
Revised Project Layout

Image Source: ESRI Basemap Data source: NSW DPST (2021), CWP Renewables (2022)

Construction worker accommodation will not be located in Warrumbungle Shire or Mid-Western Regional Council areas.

SQE has made further commitments for construction worker movements, being:



Prioritisation of worker accommodation in the Dubbo Regional LGA - it is now estimated that 80% of the construction workforce will be based in temporary worker accommodation in proximity to Dubbo



Bussing workers to and from the Project Site from the planned temporary worker accommodation which will be the key housing location for the construction workforce



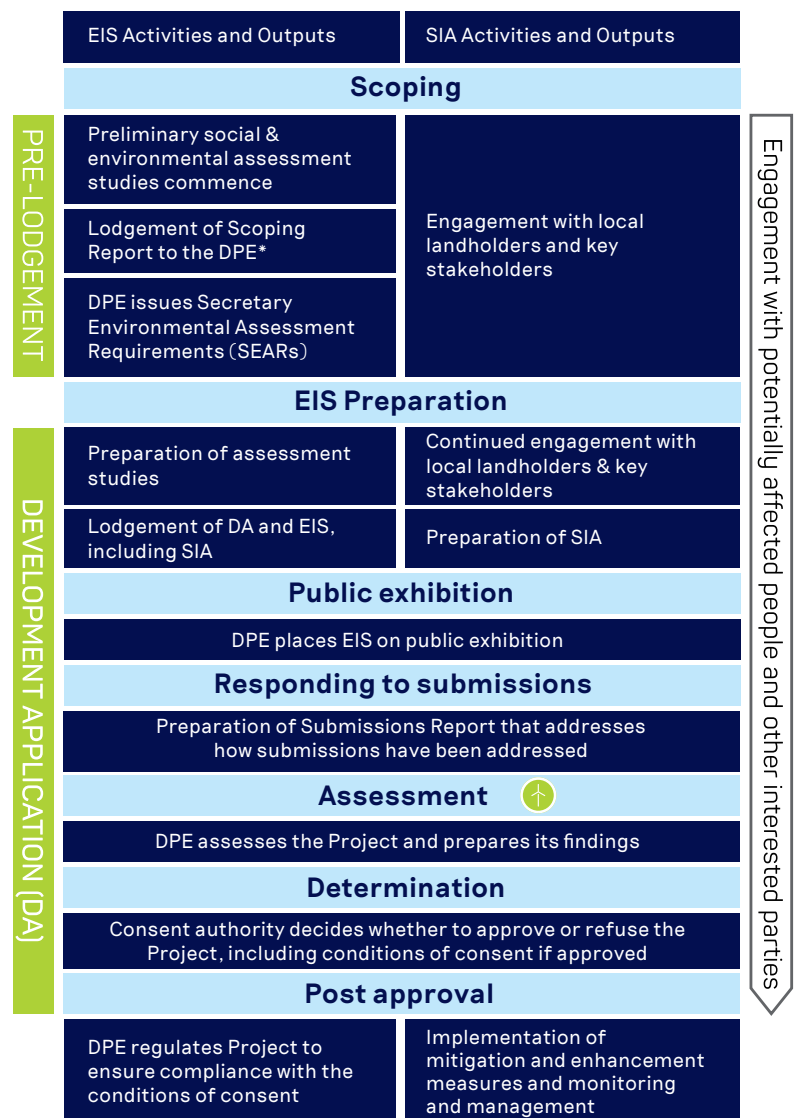
What is the planning and approval process?

Spicers Creek Wind Farm requires approval under both NSW and Commonwealth environmental and planning legislation.

Under NSW planning legislation, the Project is a State Significant Development (SSD) and it requires approval under Part 4 of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). The Project also requires assessment and approval under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) due to potential impacts on Commonwealth listed threatened species and communities and Commonwealth listed migratory species.

The Submissions Report provides for some further amendments to the Project, addresses agency and community feedback and provides additional mitigation and management measures. As the Project received greater than 50 objections and a local Council objected (Warrumbungle Shire Council), the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) will decide if the Project gets approval to proceed. The Department of Planning and Environment will now assess the Project and prepare its findings which it documents in an Assessment Report and provides this with a recommendation to the IPC. The IPC will then consider the Project and decide whether to approve or refuse the Project.

Environmental and social impact assessment process:



We are here

*DPE - Department of Planning and Environment

How has SQE engaged with stakeholders?

SQE has been consulting with local stakeholders since 2019, building a presence in the region through meetings with local landowners, neighbouring property owners, councils, local service providers and relevant Government agencies. The outcomes of this community engagement during the early planning phases informed the Project design and the EIS.

In recognition of the impacts of the Project, and as a key part of the mitigation strategy, SQE has negotiated agreements with many of the landowners in the vicinity of the Project. The agreements provide annual payments to landowners hosting wind turbines and other infrastructure, and neighbouring landowners likely to be impacted by the Project.

The submissions phase is an important component of the development assessment process in NSW. SQE has carefully reviewed and identified the issues raised in the submissions and provided a detailed response including revisions to the Project, additional commitments and provision of additional information.

SQE has also continued to consult with stakeholders since the EIS was exhibited. Consultation has included discussions with local community, local Councils and a number of agencies in relation to their submissions.





Project Justification

The detailed Submissions Report has been prepared to provide an analysis of the issues raised in agency and community submissions, outline SQEs response to these submissions and to add further clarification on details of the Project where necessary. Following consideration of the submissions received on the Project, additional consultation with government agencies has been undertaken, changes have been made to the Project layout (a reduction) to further avoid impacts and additional commitments have been made by SQE to measures to address the issues raised.

An updated assessment of the justification of the Project has also been completed as part of the Submissions Report, taking into consideration the associated environmental and social impacts and the suitability of the site, to assist DPE and the IPC to determine whether or not the Project is in the public interest.

The Project will:



Contribute significant capital investment within the CWO region



Generate jobs during the construction and operational phases



Provide benefits to local services throughout the life of the Project



Deliver additional income to host and other associated landowners



Provide benefits to the local community through the implementation of the proposed Community Benefit Sharing Program and planning agreements with local Councils



Include payment of network infrastructure access fees to EnergyCo for the CWO REZ which will include a component to fund community benefit and employment programs

While there will be environmental and social impacts associated with the Project, the extent of impact has been minimised through the design process including some further refinements in response to the submissions made on the EIS. Where impacts are predicted, SQE has committed to management, mitigation and offset measures to address these impacts. SQE has made further commitments as part of the Submissions Report (refer above).

Through the implementation of best practice management, the potential environmental and social impacts associated with the Project can be appropriately managed, which will also address the community concerns and associated social impacts identified during the stakeholder engagement process. Given the net benefit and commitment from SQE to appropriately manage the potential environmental impacts associated with the Project, the Submissions Report concluded that the Spicers Creek Wind Farm would result in a net benefit to the region and broader NSW community.