

6.12 Socio-economic

This section summarises the results of the Socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) that was completed for the proposal. The detailed assessment is provided in Appendix D.

6.12.1 Methodology

The SEIA was completed in accordance with the Roads and Maritime *Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note – Socio-economic assessment* (EIA-N05) (Practice Note) (NSW Roads and Maritime Services, 2013).

The Practice Note outlines the requirements for establishing the socio-economic baseline and guides the process for assessing socio-economic impacts of Roads and Maritime activities. In accordance with the Practice Note, the assessment included the following methodology:

- Definition of the study area. Two study areas comprising the Singleton LGA and Singleton Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) were used in the SEIA. Refer to Appendix D for further detail
- Desktop assessment including review of background socio-economic impact assessments
- Identification of the appropriate scope of the SEIA. The appropriate level of socio-economic assessment was identified as ‘comprehensive’
- Identification and consultation with local communities and stakeholders who could be affected by the proposal
- Development of a baseline profile of the existing socio-economic environment based on information available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), relevant local, regional and State policies and plans, as well as the outcomes of consultation carried out for the proposal
- Assessment of the potential construction, operation and cumulative impacts of the proposal on socio-economic matters, including an assessment of the significance of these impacts
- Identification of management measures for managing and monitoring the potential socio-economic impacts of the proposal.

The SEIA is also informed by the outcomes of various other technical reports prepared for the proposal, including the assessment of impacts to air quality, traffic and transport, noise and vibration, urban design, property and land use, landscape character and visual amenity.

Business surveys, stopper surveys (ie people stopping in Singleton who don’t live in the town) and an origin and destination survey were carried out for the proposal. Feedback received during the survey period has been analysed, along with local community plans, to provide insights into community identity, values and goals. The results of the surveys and other feedback have been compiled and are summarised in Appendix D.

The assessment of the significance of socio-economic impacts in accordance with the Practice Note includes consideration of the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of the receivers. The criteria for assessing each impact was established based on:

- Magnitude of impact which was made up of scale and intensity, spatial extent and duration
- Sensitivity of affected stakeholders which was defined by the susceptibility or vulnerability of people, receivers or receiving environments to adverse changes caused by the impact, or the importance placed on the matter being affected.

The assessment matrix provided in Table 6-54 has been used to determine the significance of each social impact as a function of the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of potentially affected stakeholders.

Table 6-54: Significance of socio-economic impacts

Sensitivity	Magnitude			
	High	Moderate	Low	Negligible
High	High impact	High-Moderate	Moderate	Negligible
Moderate	High-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate-Low	Low	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

A summary of the magnitude, sensitivity and significance ratings are included in this chapter. Detail regarding the justification for these ratings is provided in full in Appendix D.

6.12.2 Existing environment

Demographics

Singleton is located in the centre of the Hunter Region of New South Wales. The population of the Singleton LGA in 2016 was 22,987 of which 16,136 lived in the township of Singleton. The wider LGA and Singleton have relatively low cultural diversity with only 5.3 per cent of Singleton SA2 speaking another language at home in 2016 (consistent with 3.11 per cent in the Singleton LGA). Over 60 per cent (60.3) of the population was employed full time in 2016, with an unemployment rate of 6.9 per cent, both of which are consistent with the LGA average (59.5 per cent and 6.11 per cent).

Economy

The economy of Singleton and the LGA is quite diverse. The main economic drivers are the mining, tourism, agriculture and defence industries. Coal mining industries have played a significant role in Singleton's history since the late 1800s and today mining accounts for about one fifth of the resident labour force, directly employing around 2800 workers. Around 20 coal mines operate in the Singleton LGA and produce about 57 million tonnes of coal annually. In total, the mining industry has contributed to 36 per cent of local employment and creates \$5.1 billion in regional output annually.

There are about 112 businesses located along John Street and George Street in Singleton, with an additional 49 businesses located in Singleton Square. The range of businesses indicates that Singleton serves a variety of industries such as the mining, tourism and agriculture and provides administrative, retail, commercial, education and health services for local residents of Singleton and the region.

Social infrastructure

Singleton has a wide range of community facilities and assets ranging from places of worship to sporting grounds, recreation, education and essential facilities and services. Social infrastructure located within 400 metres of the proposal area includes:

- Rose Point Park - contains an array of BBQ facilities, seating and paths. It is located close to the Hunter River and the CBD. The park also provides for baseball, cricket, netball, rugby, soccer and AFL facilities
- Alroy Park - is home to the Junior Singleton Soccer Club and contains play equipment, cricket nets, sport sheds and amenities
- Matilda Park - is a small reserve containing no playground equipment or amenities

- Pritchard Park - is a small reserve containing a rest/park bench with no playground equipment or other amenities
- James White Park - contains play equipment
- Singleton off-leash dog Park
- Singleton Christian College
- Rainbows Early Learning Centre
- Singleton Neighbourhood Centre.

The location of key social infrastructure in proximity to the proposal is shown in Figure 6-38 to Figure 6-42.

Community identity, values

A review of community strategic planning documents relevant to Singleton LGA was carried out to identify values and aspirations specific to the local and regional community. Key community values and aspirations identify Singleton as consisting of:

- A creative, vibrant, inclusive, safe and healthy community
- Resilient informed and connected people
- Well planned, sustainable, vibrant and accessible places
- A sustainable environment
- An innovative, sustainable and diverse economy.

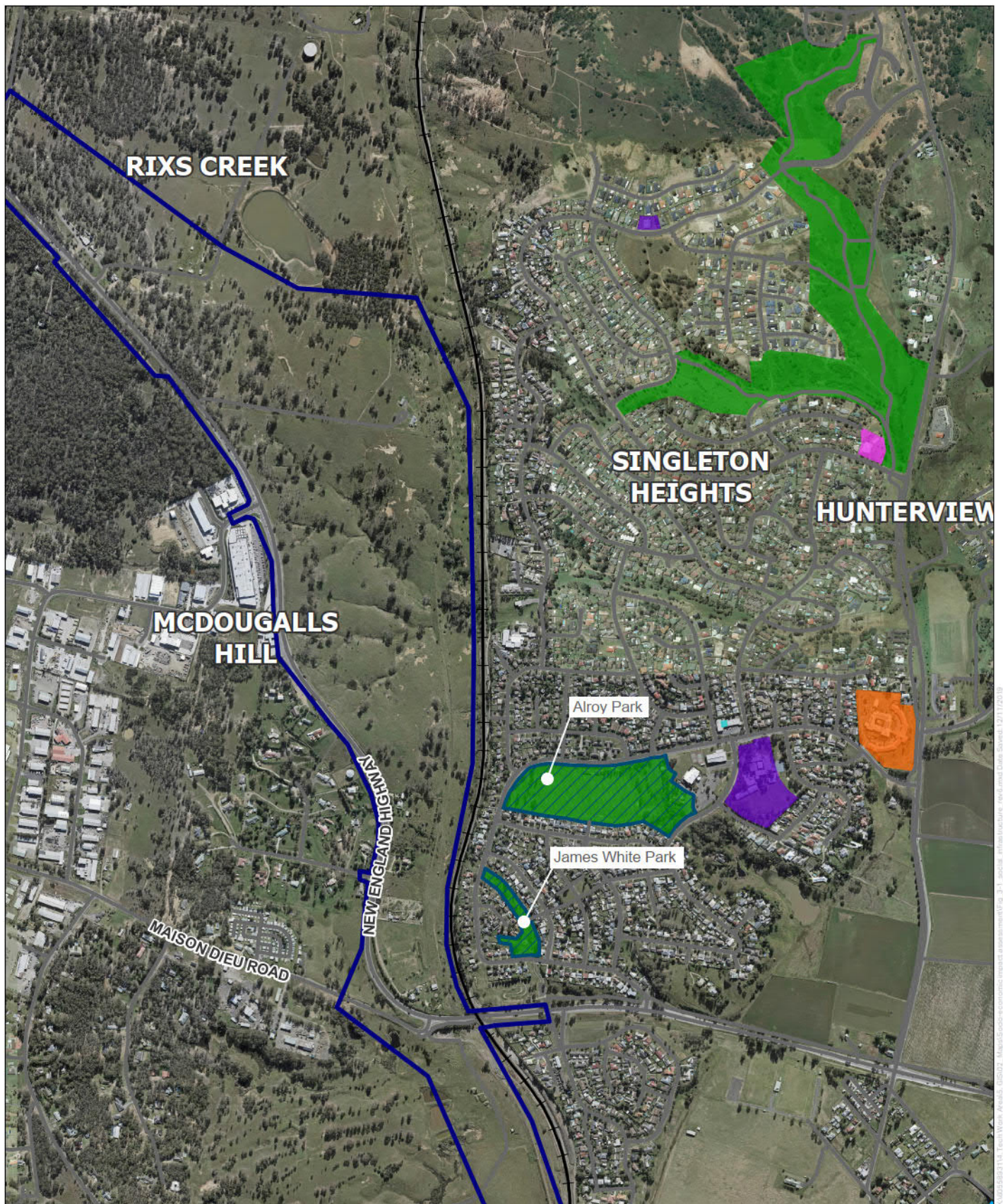


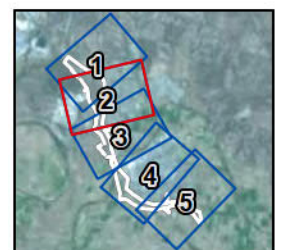
FIG. 6-39 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE SURROUNDING THE PROPOSAL AREA (2 of 5)



Legend

Proposal features	Social infrastructure	Sport and recreation
— Proposal area	— Aged care facility	— Within 400m of the proposal area
Other features	— Community facility	
— Railway line	— Educational facility	
— Roads	— Emergency Services	
— Watercourse	— Medical facility	
	— Places of worship	

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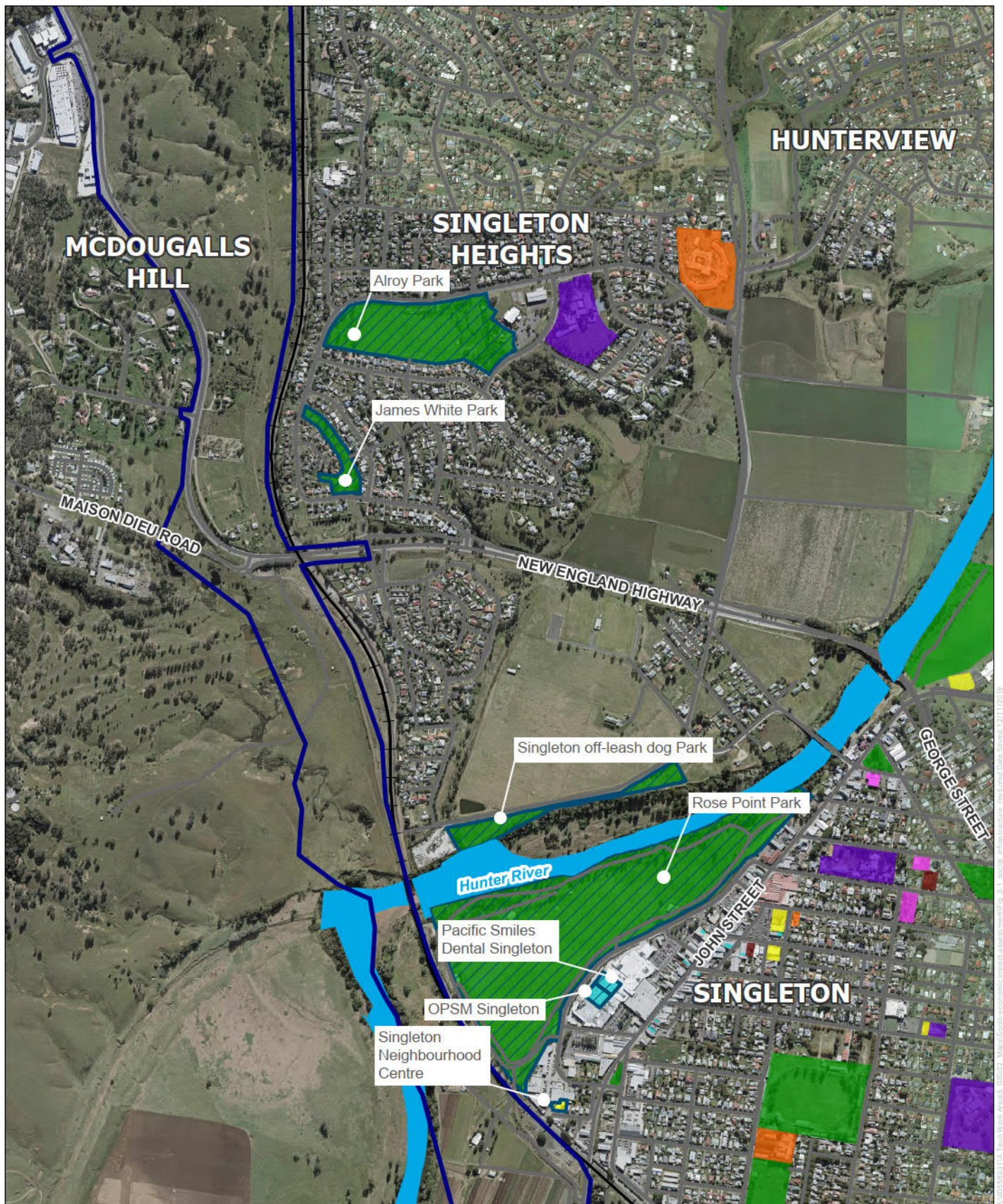


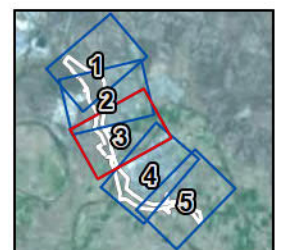
FIG. 6-40 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE SURROUNDING THE PROPOSAL AREA (3 of 5)



Legend

Proposal features	Social infrastructure	Sport and recreation
— Proposal area	— Aged care facility	— Within 400m of the proposal area
Other features	— Community facility	
— Railway line	— Educational facility	
— Roads	— Emergency Services	
— Watercourse	— Medical facility	
	— Places of worship	

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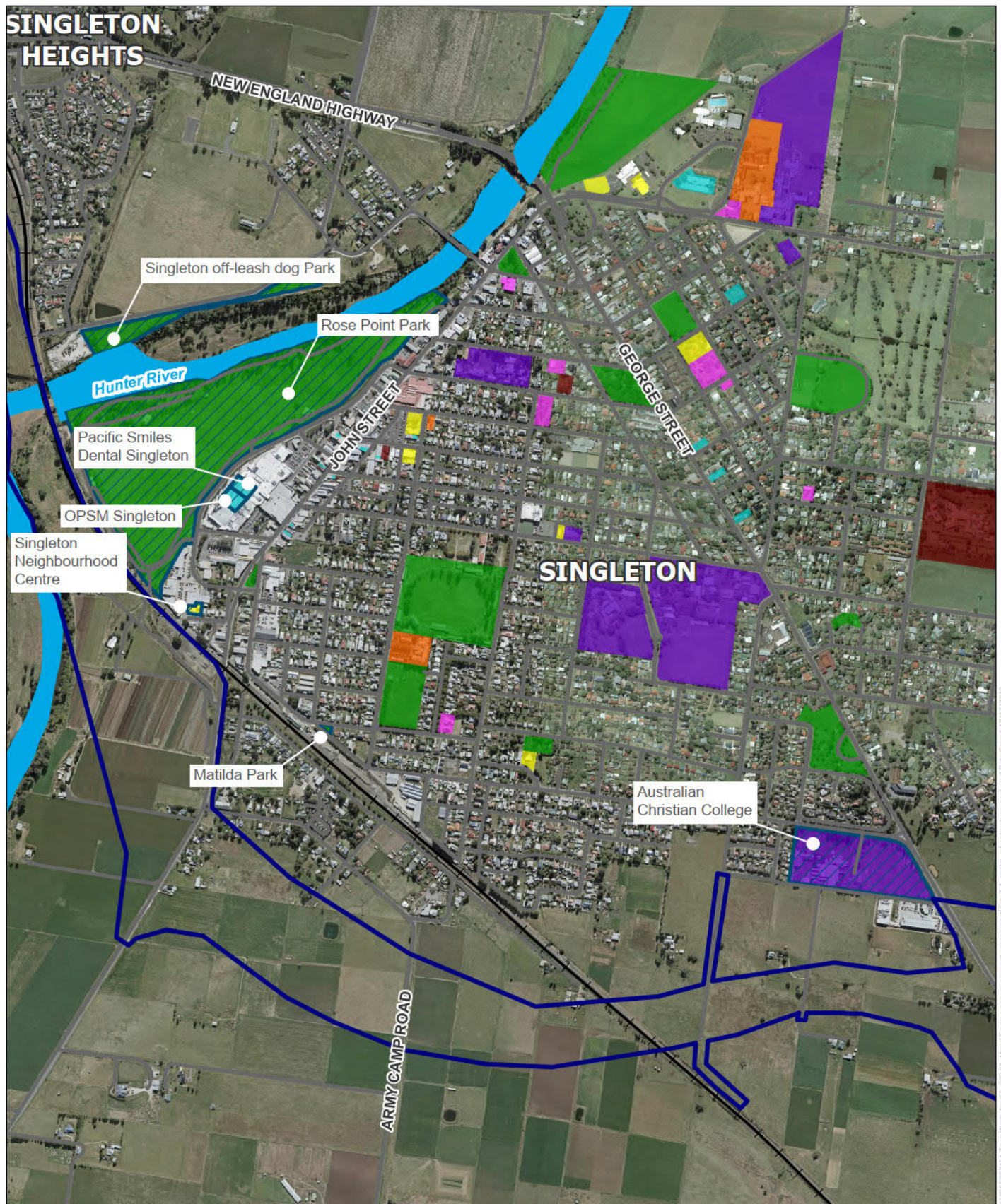


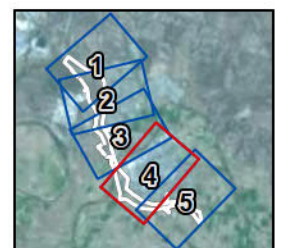
FIG. 6-41 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE SURROUNDING THE PROPOSAL AREA (4 of 5)



Legend

Proposal features	Social infrastructure	
— Proposal area	— Aged care facility	— Sport and recreation
— Other features	— Community facility	— Within 400m of the proposal area
— Railway line	— Educational facility	
— Roads	— Emergency Services	
— Watercourse	— Medical facility	
	— Places of worship	

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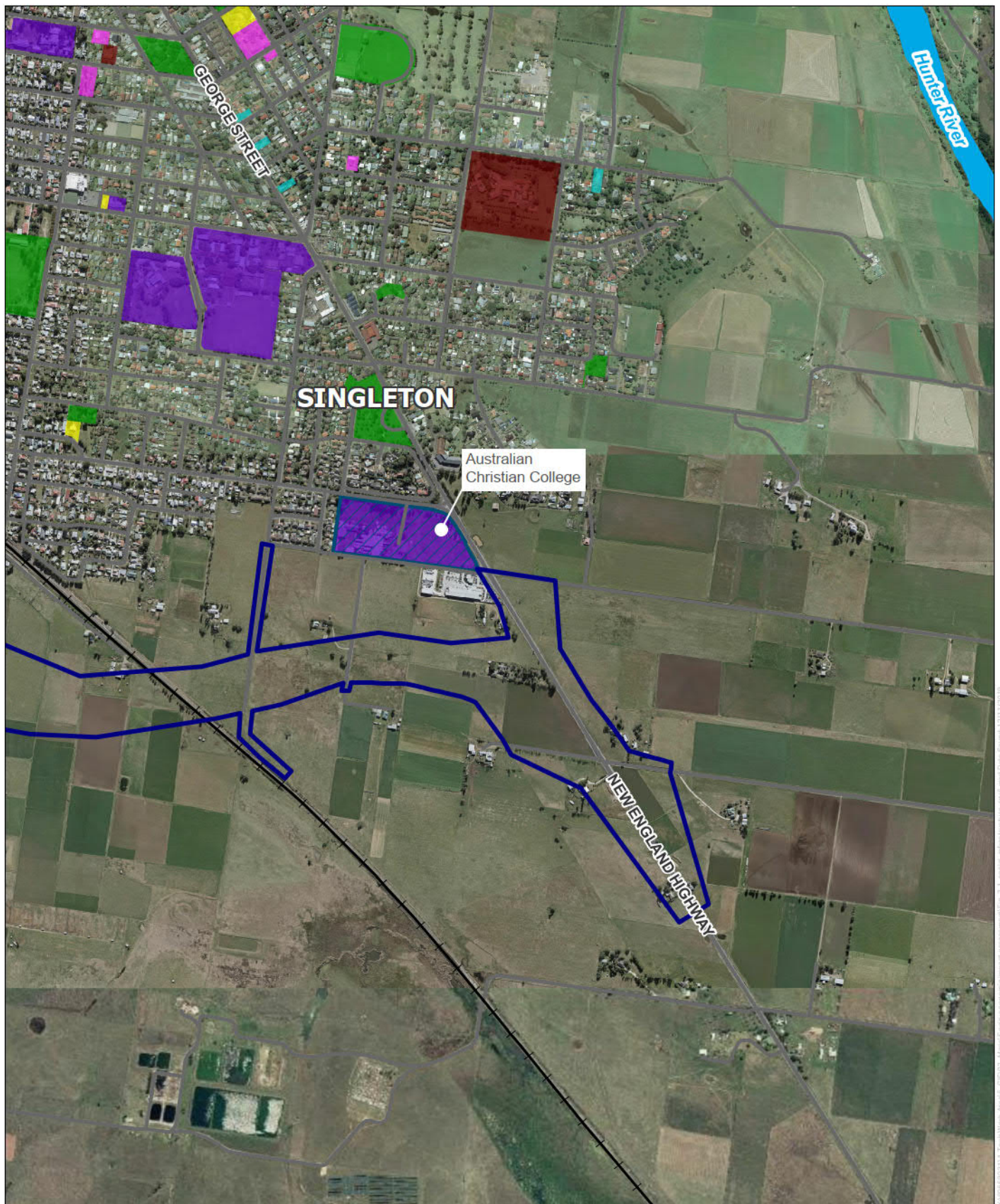


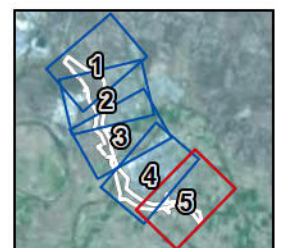
FIG. 6-42 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE SURROUNDING THE PROPOSAL AREA (5 of 5)



Legend

Proposal features	Social infrastructure	
Proposal area	Aged care facility	Sport and recreation
Other features	Community facility	Within 400m of the proposal area
Railway line	Educational facility	
Roads	Emergency Services	
Watercourse	Medical facility	
	Places of worship	

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6.12.3 Potential impacts

Construction

Property impacts, including details of property acquisitions and temporary occupation of land for ancillary facilities are discussed in Section 6.11. This section assesses the socio-economic implications of property impacts. Long term impacts to properties are discussed in the section below as operational impacts.

Amenity

Amenity refers to the quality of a place, its appearance, feel and sound, and the way its community experiences the place. Construction of the proposal may impact the local amenity of the area temporarily. This would primarily relate to increases in noise and air emissions, changed traffic conditions and access arrangements, additional traffic on roads and changes to views. These potential impacts have been addressed in other sections of this REF as follows:

- Traffic and transport (refer to Section 6.5)
- Noise and vibration (refer to Section 6.6)
- Air quality (refer to Section 6.9)
- Landscape character and visual amenity (Refer to Section 6.10).

Amenity impacts would be temporary and managed with measures identified as part of REF sections referenced above.

The significance assessment for these impacts is summarised in Table 6-55

Table 6-55 Summary of significance assessment for amenity impacts during construction

Impact	Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of receivers	Significance
Traffic and transport	Low	Low	Low
Noise and vibration	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Air quality	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Visual amenity	Low	Moderate	Moderate-low

Impacts to community values

A summary of the assessment of impacts to community values during the construction of the proposal is provided in Table 6-56 and a summary of the significance assessment of these impacts is provided in Table 6-57.

Table 6-56 Assessment of impacts to community values

Value	Assessment
A creative, vibrant, inclusive, safe and healthy community	The proposal area is generally located outside of the township of Singleton and so is unlikely to directly impact the ability of the community to be creative, vibrant, inclusive, safe and healthy. Potential impacts would be limited to indirect amenity impacts which may temporarily impact places or events where these values are demonstrated.

Value	Assessment
Resilient, informed, connected and engaged people	An increase in construction activity has the potential to reduce the amenity and accessibility of impacted areas. The construction of the proposal may also test the resilience of Singleton, however these impacts would be temporary and mitigated appropriately.
Well planned, sustainable, vibrant and accessible places	<p>Potential impacts would be limited to indirect amenity impacts which may temporarily impact social infrastructure or other places within proximity of the proposal area.</p> <p>Construction of the proposal is not anticipated to impact public transport during the construction period. Public transport services would continue to be available to the community.</p>
A sustainable environment	Potential impacts to the environment and sustainability are assessed throughout this REF and safeguards and management measures are recommended to manage potential impacts.
An innovative, sustainable and diverse economy.	The proposal would provide economic benefits through infrastructure investment and direct expenditure associated with on-site construction activities within the local study area. However, potential impacts to local businesses as a result of changes in traffic, access, parking and amenity

Table 6-57 Summary of significance assessment for impacts to community values during construction

Impact	Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of receivers	Significance
Community values	Low	High	Moderate

Business impacts

The proposal has the potential to impact local businesses as a result of temporary increases in travel times and impacts to local amenity.

The construction of the proposal would allow existing traffic arrangements to continue. Construction worker expenditure during the construction period would benefit local services, such as cafes and takeaways, service stations, trades and services suppliers and potentially some accommodation providers. Temporary changes to speed limits would be limited to the New England Highway and Putty Road, outside of the town centre. Given the limited changes to speed limits and that existing traffic arrangements would continue, the impacts to access and travel time for deliveries and employees travelling to work is considered to be minor.

Additional construction vehicles on the local road network, construction ancillary facilities and construction activities would affect the amenity of the environment surrounding the local businesses.

Most businesses in the local area are located in the town of Singleton and would only experience minor impacts to amenity. The construction of the proposal has the potential to affect the amenity particularly around construction compounds and other construction locations. Potential impacts to amenity would primarily be associated with businesses located in proximity to the proposal around Waterworks Lane and Putty Road where construction works would be closest to the town centre.

The significance assessment for these impacts is summarised in Table 6-58.

Table 6-58 Summary of significance assessment for business impacts during construction

Impact	Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of receivers	Significance
Access and travel time	Low	Low	Low
Business amenity	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Impacts to agriculture

Where the proposal requires acquisition of agricultural land, it has the potential to affect the economic productivity of agricultural businesses. The proposal would only occupy about 0.006 per cent of land used for agricultural purposes within the Singleton LGA and therefore the impact to the agricultural sector within Singleton would be minor. The impact to agricultural land use as a result of land fragmentation is discussed in the sections below.

The significance assessment for this impact is summarised in Table 6-59.

Table 6-59 Summary of significance assessment for agriculture during construction

Impact	Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of receivers	Significance
To agricultural land	Low	Low	Low

Economic impacts

The economic benefit of construction is multi-dimensional, including:

- Increased expenditure at local and regional businesses through purchases by construction workers
- Direct employment through on-site construction activities
- Direct expenditure associated with on-site construction activities
- Indirect employment and expenditure through the provision of goods and services required for construction.

Construction of the proposal would provide increased local employment opportunities, which would subsequently inject additional revenue into the local economy. This however should be considered in the context of the potential adverse impacts to local business as described above.

Operation

Property acquisition

The proposal would require the acquisition of agricultural land within the proposal area. Acquisition would result in the fragmentation of eight properties, which are primarily agricultural properties. Acquisition and associated land fragmentation has the potential to impact on agricultural operations and ongoing use of the land.

Potential impacts include:

- Reduction in the total agricultural land available to landholders
- The ability of landowners to move livestock or agricultural equipment to fragmented areas of their property that is otherwise not directly impacted by the proposal
- Changes to the lives of those affected by acquisition giving rise to a sense of anxiety or uncertainty, a loss of amenity, financial costs and isolation.

Where possible, impacts to agricultural land have been minimised through the options selection and design of the proposal. Property acquisition required for the proposal is described in Section 6.11.2.

Roads and Maritime would consult with the affected landowners regarding potential impacts associated with land fragmentation, including the need for provision of alternate access where required. All land subject to fragmentation impacts with the exception of one is located in the southern section of the proposal. At this location potential fragmentation impacts could be reduced by providing access under the proposal, which is a bridge.

The full or partial acquisition of land may result in major changes to the lives of those affected giving rise to a sense of anxiety or uncertainty, a loss of amenity, financial costs and isolation. Owners may experience health and emotional effects if required to sell their property and relocate as a result of the proposal. These effects may also be experienced by owners facing reduced viability of their property due to severance. Acquisition has the potential to affect people with a deep connection to their property, which may have been in the family for generations. In some instances, it may be difficult to find another property with equivalent facilities and amenity to that being acquired. Property acquisition may result in the fragmentation of social networks and interaction as people move away from friends and family.

To date eight property owners have applied for hardship acquisition. Six of these applications have been settled. Roads and Maritime are carefully assessing the outstanding two cases on their merits.

The significance assessment for these impacts is summarised in Table 6-60.

Table 6-60 Summary of significance assessment for property acquisition impacts

Impact	Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of receivers	Significance
Property acquisition – land use	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Property acquisition – community wellbeing	Moderate	High	High-moderate

Amenity

Amenity within Singleton would be expected to improve as a result of the proposal. Removing a large proportion of traffic (especially heavy vehicles) from Singleton would improve amenity in the vicinity of John Street and George Street by reducing traffic congestion, noise levels and improving air quality and pedestrian safety. This is supported by case studies of towns identified above that have been bypassed. When heavy vehicles in particular have been removed from a town, the result has been the universal improvement in amenity and lifestyle quality for the town concerned. A review of these case studies is in Table 4-1 of Appendix D.

Operation of the proposal may impact the local amenity of the area. This would primarily relate to amenity impacts from road traffic noise, changed traffic patterns and visual impacts where views of the pastoral and wider landscape may be obstructed by the road infrastructure. These potential impacts have been addressed in this REF as follows:

- Traffic and transport (refer to Section 6.5)
- Noise and vibration (refer to Section 6.6)
- Landscape character and visual amenity (Refer to Section 6.10).

Amenity impacts would be appropriately managed with the relevant safeguards provided in each section above.

The significance assessment for these impacts is summarised in Table 6-61.

Table 6-61 Summary of significance assessment for amenity impacts during operation

Impact	Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of receivers	Significance
Traffic and transport	Low	Low	Low
Noise and vibration	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Visual amenity	High	High	High

Social infrastructure

Road traffic noise would generally have a negligible effect on social infrastructure.

Impacts to air quality would generally be negligible given high existing background air quality levels. Views to the proposal from social infrastructure in Singleton are generally obscured by surrounding properties and so visual impacts would be negligible. There would be no change to parking as a result of the proposal, and access to social infrastructure would either be improved by the proposal or would not be impacted.

Specific amenity impacts to social infrastructure are described in detail in Appendix D.

The significance assessment for these impacts is summarised in Table 6-62.

Table 6-62 Summary of significance assessment for amenity impacts during operation for social infrastructure

Impact	Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of receivers	Significance
Educational, health and community service facilities	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Business impacts

Studies of other highway bypass impacts in NSW identify that the most affected businesses are those directly serving the needs of the motorists. These include motor vehicle services, particularly service stations, food and beverage outlets, and accommodation establishments (to a lesser extent).

The stopper surveys for the proposal identified that around 43 per cent of stoppers visit food/beverage businesses during their stop in Singleton. Around a quarter of stoppers (24 per cent) do not visit any business in town, while 13 per cent buy fuel during the stop in Singleton. Seven per cent visit retail businesses and a further 13 per cent, other services.

Business owners may be considerably uncertain about the extent of impact the proposal would have on through traffic and trade. While the above analysis indicates that some businesses would experience a decrease in turnover and reduced employment at least in the short term, evidence from bypassed towns indicates that some highway dependent businesses have been able to reposition themselves and become sustainable in the longer term. Singleton has a diverse economy with employment and business opportunities in a range of industry sectors such as mining, defence, agriculture, education and health services. These economic activities are likely to continue to draw visitors to town who would create ongoing demand for goods and services provided by businesses in Singleton including those along John Street and George Street.

A general reduction in traffic is anticipated along George Street and John Street which would potentially benefit businesses in these locations through generally improved amenity and improved delivery and dispatch efficiency. Increased accessibility and connectivity has the potential to reduce delivery times,

increase delivery reliability and reduce transport costs for businesses. Access for customers travelling to business premises in the area would also be improved as a result of better links to other areas within the Hunter Valley.

The significance assessment for impacts to passing trade is summarised in Table 6-58. Other impacts to businesses would be positive impacts, as described above.

Table 6-63 Summary of significance assessment for business impacts during operation

Impact	Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of receivers	Significance
Passing trade	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Economic impacts

The NSW Government has committed \$92 million towards the proposal under the Rebuilding NSW Plan and allocated \$2.7 million in 2019-2020 to continue development of the proposal (Roads and Maritime, 2019). The operation of the proposal would generate long term benefits through improved economic connectivity and freight efficiency as described below.

The proposal would improve transport connections, reducing commuting time and lowering vehicle operating costs between employment and tourist destinations. This section of the New England Highway is a major transport artery for freight travelling between the Port of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley and has supported the significant growth in transportation for coal and agricultural industries and employment in NSW.

The freight industry is an important part of the NSW economy as an enabler of economic activity, contributing an estimated \$66 billion to NSW State Gross Product (GSP). The proposal is anticipated to remove up to 1500 vehicles per hour (two-way) from the New England Highway through the Singleton town centre. Improvements in the efficiency and reliability of these transport networks would likely result in increased productivity, reduced costs and broader economic benefits for the freight industry and other workforces.

6.12.4 Safeguards and management measures

Mitigation measures provided in Table 6-13 would be implemented to minimise potential land use and property impacts. Measures to manage potential amenity impacts are described in the relevant sections of this REF.

Table 6-64 Summary of mitigation measures to minimise impacts to land use and property

Impact	Environmental safeguards	Responsibility	Timing
Social and economic	Landowner surveys will be carried out to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather information about the current use and activities carried out on their property Identify how the proposal would affect ongoing land use and activities on their property Inform the development of appropriate mitigation measures. 	Roads and Maritime	Detailed design
Social and economic	A Communication Plan (CP) will be prepared and implemented as part of the CEMP to ensure provision of timely and accurate information to the community during	Roads and Maritime / construction contractor	Detailed design and construction

Impact	Environmental safeguards	Responsibility	Timing
	<p>construction. The CP will include (as a minimum):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms to provide details and timing of proposed activities to affected residents, including changed traffic and access conditions • Contact name and number for complaints • How the project webpage will be maintained for the duration of the proposal. • Minimum consultation activities to be carried out • A complaints handling procedure. 		
Social and economic	<p>Roads and Maritime will develop a signage strategy for the entrances to Singleton, in consultation with Singleton Council to encourage motorists to visit Singleton. This will include signage showing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The travel distances and estimated times for travelling routes via the bypass compared to travelling via the Singleton town centre • Services and facilities available within the Singleton township • Any visitor attractions within the Singleton township 	Roads and Maritime	Detailed design
Social and economic	<p>Roads and Maritime will engage with Singleton Council and local businesses regarding the progress of the proposal to allow businesses time to prepare for changed traffic conditions through the town.</p>	Roads and Maritime	Detailed design and construction