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17 SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

17.1 Introduction

Social impact analysis (SIA) is aimed at assessing the consequences for communities or groups that might be affected by a particular development. The definition of those groups is discussed below.

17.2 Methodology

This SIA was carried out as part of the overall Wandoan Coal Project EIS, however relates specifically to the potential social impact of the Glebe Option.

This SIA commences with a review of the existing socio-economic statistics (including population and employment data) for the old Taroom Shire (now part of the Dalby Region Council and Banana Shire Council areas) region. Following the statistical review, the impacts on local and regional social infrastructure and amenity are assessed and mitigation measures are discussed.

The study area for the Glebe Option SIA is the Taroom-Wandoan district, the townships of Taroom and Wandoan and the Dawson Valley Water Supply Scheme. Landholders and communities within these areas are most likely to be impacted (either beneficially and/or adversely) from the Glebe Option for the following reasons:

- Construction phase issues:
 - disruption to existing patterns of movement (primarily as a result of construction related traffic),
 - the location of the accommodation camps for the construction workforce, and
 - involvement by local businesses in the actual works and supplying the workforce.

- Operation phase issues:
 - Taroom-Wandoan district agriculture will lose approximately 920 ha of good quality agricultural land (an economic analysis is presented in **Chapter 18**),
 - the newly available water will be used exclusively by the Project. **Chapter 8** identifies issues associated with security of water supply in the Dawson Valley Water Supply Scheme and with environmental flows. The social impacts of those results are addressed here, and
 - if existing entitlements are purchased in order to supply the demand of the Project, irrigated production will be reduced on the properties from which the allocations were purchased.

Wandoan is the nearest town to the Project and social impacts at that location are addressed in Volume 1 of this EIS. This chapter therefore complements Volume 1, Chapter 21 by focusing on Taroom however includes an assessment of impacts in Wandoan as they specifically relate to the Glebe Option.

Consideration of the socio-economic environment of Taroom faces the challenge of data adequacy as most statistics are published on a regional basis. In any event, regional statistics are considered to be of limited value for analysing the circumstances applying to a single township or a defined community or the footprint of a construction site. The effect of aggregating statistics belonging to large geographic regions, and presenting the results accordingly, can mask many of the characteristics belonging to individual subsets within the region. For this analysis, the best statistical unit is considered to be Taroom Shire prior to its absorption into the Dalby Region and Banana Shire local government areas, which included Wandoan. Statistics applying before the reform processes took place are used as no data exist with respect to the changed local government areas. The former Taroom Shire is referred to as "Taroom Shire" for the purposes of this chapter.

As highlighted in **Chapter 18** (Economics) of this volume, the viability of the raising of Glebe Weir is directly related to latent demand for high quality/high reliability water. This imperative implies a competitive environment for resources that might require careful management to achieve balanced and equitable outcomes.

17.3 Description of Existing Social Values

17.3.1 Community profile

17.3.1.1 Population, Employment and Income

With 18,645 km², Taroom Shire occupies 1.1% of the State but has only about 0.1% of the population. The population dynamics of the Taroom Shire relative to the State of Queensland from 2002 to 2007 are shown in **Table 17-1**. The figures show a strong contrast between the growth performance of Taroom and the whole of Queensland. They indicate the population of Taroom Shire is currently declining while Queensland's population is growing quite strongly. Over the 5-year period 1996 to 2006, the population of Taroom Shire fell by over 1% with the decline spread evenly from year to year. This is likely to be attributable to a lack of economic opportunities in the Taroom region. The town of Taroom itself has a population of 661 (Taroom office of the Banana Shire Council, 2008), showing that most of the population lives on surrounding properties. As of May 2007, Wandoan had a population of 380 (ABS, 2008).

Table 17-1. Estimated Resident Population.

| | Number of Residents | | | Average Annual Growth Rate (2002-2007) |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| | 2002 | 2006 | 2007 | |
| Taroom Shire | 2,619 | 2,538 | 2,473 | -1.1% |
| Queensland | 3,714,798 | 4,090,908 | 4,181,431 | 2.4% |

Source: Local Government Area Profile, October 2008 compiled by the Queensland Office of Economic and Statistical Research using ABS data (Cat. No. 3218.0)

The former Taroom Shire is primarily an agricultural community. In 2001, more than half the employed persons in Taroom Shire worked in agriculture compared to 5% for Queensland as a whole. The only other significant employment categories in 2001 were construction 5.3% (versus 7.1% for the state) education 5.3% (versus 7.6% for the state) and health and community services 5% (versus 9.6% for the state). The high dependence on agriculture for work may assist in explaining the (negative) gap of \$6,891 between the mean taxable income of taxpayers in the Taroom Shire and for Queensland as a whole. Although the beef industry outlook is sound (where most the agricultural employment would occur) the industry in Central Queensland will remain volatile, extensive and low input with little capacity to expand the region's employment opportunities (Whan et al, 2006).

Relatively few people are employed by the State and Commonwealth governments in Taroom Shire in comparison to the State average. For example the percentage employed in government administration, education and health in 2001 was approximately 13.5% compared to a rate of 22% for Queensland as a whole.

The median household income per week in the Taroom Shire is \$442.00, compared with a higher Queensland medial of \$476.

Comparative workforce participation rates in Taroom Shire are high and unemployment rates are low. At the time of the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, there were only 21 persons unemployed in the Taroom Shire. This corresponded to an unemployment rate of 1.5% compared to 4.7% for Queensland as a whole.

17.3.2 Housing

In 2006, Taroom Shire had about 1,100 houses with 800 of these either owned or being purchased and 300 rented. Over 90% of the houses are classified as separate dwellings with the balance being semi-detached, flats or non-descript.

Taroom township has 298 houses (K. Major *pers comm.* 2008). It was observed that the houses of Taroom township are well kept. First appearances indicate a strong sense of local pride and apparently sufficient wealth to generally maintain the fabric of housing and surrounds.

Housing rental opportunities are very limited in Taroom. There is no real estate agent that handles rentals; they are advertised privately on community billboards or in local newspapers. The caravan park has limited space for permanent or long-term stays. One motel has 15 rooms while the other Hotel/Motel has 14 rooms. Budget accommodation is available in eight cabins managed by one of the fuel outlets (but no meal facilities).

17.3.3 Health Services

Taroom has a hospital, doctor, ambulance and aged care accommodation. However there are no specialist paediatric services available in Taroom. For births and specialist services, patients must travel to Theodore, Miles or Chinchilla. The travel costs on such occasions can be recouped through a Patient Travel Scheme (PTS). In addition, a mobile women's nurse visits Taroom on a monthly basis, with transport provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The Taroom Hospital has 13 beds and offers full time health care (All hospitals in Queensland are defined in terms of a Service Capability Framework that specifies what they can and cannot offer). Patients requiring specialist care are referred to larger regional hospitals according to needs. The hospital operates a clinic with visiting specialist consultations offered by a dietician, speech therapist, occupational therapist and a physiotherapist on a fortnightly basis. At this time there is no dentist operating in Taroom.

17.3.4 Education

The educational facilities in Taroom reflect the size of the township (currently estimated at 661 permanent residents, Taroom office of the Banana Shire Council, 2008) and the region. As such, no state schooling is

offered beyond the secondary level (Grade 10). To complete High School, children must travel to Miles or move into boarding school in Toowoomba or elsewhere. Current student numbers at the two schools are as follows:

| | |
|---|-----|
| St Mary's School (Primary) | 22 |
| Taroom State School (Primary and Secondary) | 133 |
| Total | 155 |

St Mary's School is served by 1 principal and 2 teachers (average teacher age being 25-30) and Taroom State School has 1 principal and 14 teachers (their average age being 30-35). Taroom also has a child care centre (albeit with certain restrictions) but does not have a hostel for boarding older school-age children.

17.3.5 Social, Cultural and Public Safety

Taroom is a small inland town almost totally dependent at this time on extensive agriculture; primarily beef cattle. Accordingly, the community has a strong rural culture. This means most inhabitants empathise with the factors that determine rural prosperity – particularly the weather and commodity prices. The rural orientation of Taroom is borne out by the fact that the town has three livestock agencies but relatively few shop fronts in total. All major churches are present in the region. Taroom has permanent police presence with 2 officers.

17.3.6 Government Services

In relative terms, government services are under-represented in Taroom. Traditionally there was strong local government with the Taroom Shire Council administering both the region and the township. Following the recent council amalgamations, Taroom Shire was split between Dalby (in the south) and Banana (in the north). It is too early to gauge the impact of this change but superficially the consequences would appear negative for Taroom township. There is no NRW or permanent SunWater office in Taroom since most irrigation from the Dawson River is currently downstream at Theodore.

SunWater has however opened a project office in the main street as part of the community consultation process for the proposed Nathan Dam and for the Glebe Option. The office is open three days per week and the manager resides in Taroom. Since the office opened in August 2008, only one enquiry on the Glebe Option has been recorded.

17.3.7 Recreation, Open Space and Pollution

Taroom township has a public pool, community hall and library and annual events include a show, race meeting and rodeo. Camp drafts are held four times per year. Local clubs include:

- Amateur Swimming Club;
- Arts & Crafts Club;
- Bowls Club (licensed);

- Buffalo Lodge;
- Dawson Jockey Club;
- Fishing Club;
- Garden Club;
- Golf Club (licensed);
- Lions Club;
- Pony Club;
- Polo Crosse;
- QCWA Taroom;
- Rodeo Club;
- RSL;
- Senior Citizens;
- Taroom Historical Society;
- Taroom Racecourse Club;
- Taroom Show Society; and
- Tennis Club.

The camping ground and reserve at Glebe Weir is a popular recreational resource for locals and travellers. The boat ramp provides access to the weir pool. The fishing club is active in this area, with signs in place requesting information on fish captured.

17.3.8 Aesthetics, Urban Design and Sense of Place

The country-side surrounding Taroom township has elevated rolling topography, numerous views and retention of trees and native vegetation. The existence of ground water supplies and good roads adds to the sense of purpose, local pride and permanency. These factors would make Taroom a desirable place to live, and serve to attract a larger population, if they were complemented by more abundant economic opportunities.

17.3.9 Access to Taroom

Taroom is strategically located for tourism on the Leichhardt Highway, which is the main north-south travel route through Central Queensland. Access is by road as there is no rail service to Taroom and the local airstrips are restricted to private usage by light planes. With respect to the township itself, the streets are wide and well surfaced. Parking and congestion problems are non-existent. The location of Taroom north of Goondiwindi and Miles and south west of Rockhampton should present opportunities for capturing major traffic flows. Plans for the highway to by-pass Taroom have been in place for many years but there are no signs that the plans are imminent.

17.4 Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures

17.4.1 Construction Phase

17.4.1.1 Population, Employment and Income

The construction phase will entail establishment of two workers' camps with most of those employed coming from outside the district. The camps will most likely be close to Taroom township and Wandoan. The location of the construction camps has been the subject of consultation with both Banana Shire and Dalby Regional Councils. Banana Shire representatives referred to the location in Taroom as logical and prudent, given the access to engineering and social services. They suggested future discussions could elaborate on issues such as amenity, environmental considerations, parking and access, safety and security, amongst other issues. They suggested an area currently zoned industrial would be likely be appropriate. Similarly Dalby Regional Council had no objection to a works camp being established in or near Wandoan. They noted the Wandoan Coal project as well as others that are proposing camps and suggested collaborative use would be worthwhile. SunWater will pursue such potential following advice from Council. The impacts of WJV's workers accommodation strategy is addressed in Volume 1 of the EIS.

Many of the local businesses (Table 17-2) could expect turnover and profits to rise during the construction phase as a result of the expenditure by these workers and by the contractors who require various services (Chapter 18).

Table 17-2. Enterprises established in Taroom (Source: K.Major *pers. comm.* 2008)

| Business Enterprises | | Non-business Enterprises |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Bank | Giftware | Aged care accommodation |
| Beauty therapist | Grocer | Ambulance |
| Bottle shop | Hairdresser | Bowls |
| Builder | Homewares | Catholic school |
| Butcher | Irrigation supplies | Churches |
| Café | Laundromat | Community care services (e.g. – St Vincent de Paul) |
| Caravan park | Livestock agent and produce supplier | Council office |
| Carpenter | Motel | Council works depot |
| Concrete supplier | Newsagent | Golf course and club |
| Doctor | Painter | Hospital |
| Electrician | Pharmacy | Library |
| Earthworks contractor | Hotel | Police station |
| Fashion retailer | Real estate | Post office |
| Financial adviser | Roadhouse | Public swimming pool |
| Florist | Transporters | Qld govt depot (for Parks and Wildlife) |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Fuel distillery | Tyres | Rubbish dump |
| Fuel and service station | Veterinarian | State school |
| Funeral director | Welding and steel fabrication | Town Hall |
| | | Waste dump point |

Similarly those local contractors would obtain work from the development will continue to be part of the community and to spend locally.

Construction work hours are 6:00am to 6:00pm so the only available time to socialise is in the evenings and one day per week (Sunday), other than rostered days off. As the workers will primarily not be locals, it is expected that during longer holiday periods and the wet season shut down they will return home.

The sociological implications of the camp and its likely strongly single male focus need to be acknowledged and planned accordingly. It is SunWater's experience that remote construction sites might expect a 95% male workforce, though the number of females is increasing particularly in the professional fields. Prior to construction, lines of communication will be established between the site manager and key local authorities such as local government representatives, police and ambulance officers and representatives of local business. It will also be important to discuss sporting opportunities with all the local clubs so that workers spare time is spent in enjoyable and safe activities.

17.4.1.2 Housing

It is unlikely that there will be significant impact on the local housing market as firstly, there is very little market. SunWater's liaison officer in Taroom has only noted one house advertised and it remained available for at least the period May to October 2008. This observation also indicates there is very little demand. Secondly, accommodation camps are proposed that will cater for all staff mixes, though noting that it is highly likely that most workers will be single males. Modern long term accommodation camps tend to provide en-suite facilities and are fully cognizant of the needs of the workforce. Closure of the camping area at Glebe Weir during construction is not expected to have any significant impact on short term accommodation as it is apparently used primarily by travelers with caravans or camper trailers in relatively low numbers and for very short stays.

17.4.1.3 Health

A construction workforce and the associated transport of goods and materials to site will increase the risk of accident causing injury. As the local hospital and other services currently cater for a population of approximately 2600, the additional 30 staff in Taroom is not a significant issue however all service providers will be notified of the activity, beyond this EIS, so they can plan appropriately. Emergency situations are addressed in **Chapter 19** Hazard and Risk and **Chapter 21** EMP. As it is not anticipated workers will travel with their families, no impacts on services for woman or children is anticipated. The number of single women employed as part of the workforce is likely to be very low so will have no impact on health services.

17.4.1.4 Education

Workers are anticipated to be largely single males or if married, they will not relocate their families for the Glebe Option given the short duration of works, hence no impact on education services is anticipated.

17.4.1.5 Social, cultural and public safety

Traffic impacts on Nathan Road and Glebe Weir Rd. will require careful management as they have potential to increase safety concerns. This has been acknowledged and appropriate planning has been put in place (**Chapter 9**) including Traffic Management Plans. The traffic and access management arrangements proposed for individual properties along the pipeline route, and the limited time construction will affect any one access, will ensure landowners can maintain their normal movement patterns.

Transport of the workforce from camp to work sites will occur before 6 am and after 6 pm so will not interfere with school schedules. It also means they will have limited opportunity to interact socially or be part of local activities. Wherever possible this should be maximised by making workers aware of opportunities and through the contractor participating in teams events where they available (such as a Golf day, or Bowls sponsorship).

17.4.1.6 Recreation

The camping facilities located adjacent to the weir will be closed during construction due to potential safety and security issues at the work site. Other access points to the river exist but not to a substantial body of water suitable to boating. The several weirs downstream on the Dawson River represent similar opportunities and the Isla-Delusion crossing near Gylanda Weir provides a similar bush camping opportunity, as do several other local sites. The number of users of the Glebe Weir facility is not formally recorded as there is no booking or monitoring system but observations by SunWater staff and sub-consultants suggests that it varies on any night between zero and a few campsites. It is expected that these users can easily be accommodated in the other regional facilities.

Construction workers will very likely participate in recreational opportunities offered through the many existing clubs and will thereby contribute members and funds to those clubs.

17.4.1.7 Aesthetics

Noise, dust and air quality issues at the construction sites are unlikely to be of significant concern due to the isolated locations of the weir and proposed pipeline.

Banana Shire Council has raised the issues of amenity and landscaping of the construction camp and this will be developed through ongoing discussion.

17.4.2 Operational phase

Socio economic issues of relevance to the operational phase include operation of the infrastructure, re-opening of camping and recreation facilities at the Glebe Weir and implications for downstream water users. The scheduled water supply will be pumped from Glebe Weir to the Wandoan Coal Project using electricity and operating at least 20 hours per day. The system will be maintained by SunWater's existing workforce based in its Theodore office.

17.4.2.1 *Recreational Use of the Weir storage*

Following the construction phase, the existing shore-line facilities and attractions at Glebe Weir will be restored including a refurbished boat ramp. These facilities are unmanned and are popular with locals and visitors. In the long term it is likely to remain a primarily local attraction of interest to travellers and locals. The larger water body will be positive if it attracts more tourists for fishing and bird watching; the latter potentially being enhanced by the shallow area near Cockatoo Creek. It is likely to workers at the Wandoan Coal Project will be attracted to the resource during their time off. Again the numbers of users involved is unlikely to strain the facilities.

17.4.2.2 *Landowner impacts*

Glebe Weir Raising

Raising Glebe Weir will inundate an additional 920 ha outside the bed and banks of watercourses. 770 ha are classified as Class A Good Quality Agricultural Land while the remainder is Class C (**Chapter 7**). Most of this area can be used for grazing cattle but almost 20% has been cultivated at some stage for the purpose of growing wheat and sorghum or green feed. The land is held in three separate parcels with all but a portion east of Cockatoo Creek already purchased by the State for the purpose of future water storage. The lessees are fully aware of the intended purpose and they have been individually consulted during planning. There are no houses or substantial improvements on the affected area.

Grazing of the additional area to be inundated area will be possible during the construction phase but fencing of the area is planned prior to its inundation with offstream watering to be provided stock.

Of the two properties adjoining Cockatoo Creek that are impacted by the raising, the greatest impact is to "The Glebe" property (lot 15 on FT2) which will result in the loss of 710 ha of land (20% of the property). However, this loss does not prevent the ongoing operation of the Glebe as a grazing property, and the current lessee has expressed a desire to stay and run the property. On the opposite side of Cockatoo Creek the Balcarris property (lot 14 on FT1) will lose approximately 150 ha of land (approximately 3.5% of the property). Discussions with the owners of Balcarris indicate that they are happy for the Glebe Option to proceed provided they are fairly compensated for the loss of production and interruption to their operations, and that access to their property is properly developed, maintained and managed. Compensation arrangements will be negotiated with both of these parties on an individual basis.

On the Boggomoss Creek side of the Dawson River, the levee to be constructed limits impacts to a relatively small, though productive area. However the mitigation strategies put in place to prevent any potential waterlogging reaching habitat of the Boggomoss Snail include cessation of irrigation at two centre pivot irrigator locations and planting a substantial buffer of riparian trees on this land. While the lessee did not agree that waterlogging was likely to be an issue, they were amenable to relocation of the irrigation infrastructure at SunWater's cost. SunWater has made this commitment.

In summary, while some agricultural productivity will be lost at the weir site, it does not make the properties unviable and the current operators intend staying.

Pipeline

The easement required by the Glebe-Wandoan Pipeline will be 83 km long and 30 m wide. The easement will cross approximately 11 km of private land until it reaches Nathan Road – after which it will traverse public road or private land in some places such as creek crossings where the road alignment does not suit. The area of private land affected is less than 20 ha. The pipeline will need to be placed under at least 21 farm access tracks. Access impacts will be temporary (generally less than a day or two) and suitable temporary access around the work site will be provided.

As the pipeline will be buried, all of the pipeline easement on private lands will still be available for grazing once the pipeline is fully constructed and the site rehabilitated. The balancing storage requires approximately 1ha of hilly land that will be fenced. It is currently classified as non-agricultural land (**Chapter 7**) and the landowner has indicated no objection to purchase of the land. Any valves, scours or vents that protrude above the ground surface will be clearly marked to minimise the risk of accidents.

Once in place the pipeline will have virtually no impacts on property use or access. Overall, the socio-economic impacts of the pipeline on the traditional grazing industry are assessed as minimal and relate primarily to inconvenience associated with access for maintenance purposes and the risk of weed invasion. The latter is addressed by a weed management plan incorporated with the EMP (**Chapter 21**).

17.4.2.3 Water user impacts

Flow-on implications for downstream irrigators will be dependent on the volume of water that the Wandoan Coal Project requires from Glebe Weir (**Chapter 8**). All existing allocations and environmental flows will be maintained in accordance with the ROP. A small proportion of water harvesters in the Dawson will be impacted by the raising, and this impact is limited to a maximum loss of one day of water harvesting availability. With respect to these water harvesters, SunWater will discuss with NRW and the individual entitlement holders concerned what the implications are and options for compensatory arrangements. The current ROP includes provision, with respect to the possible development of Nathan Dam, that water harvesting rights would be converted to medium priority allocations. They could then be treated as any other tradeable water right.

If trading is used to increase the volume obtainable by the Wandoan Coal Project, then this will lead to decreased irrigation production downstream. However, the entitlement will have been purchased from willing sellers so it is assumed such sellers either plan or have already started to use their property for other ventures. The potential volume that would be required to lift the Glebe Option's allocation from the 6,500 ML provided by the Glebe Weir raising to the 8,500 ML required by the Project will vary depending on the location within the Dawson scheme from which the allocation is sourced, but is expected to represent between 5 and 10% of the existing medium priority entitlements.

17.5 Conclusions

This study has investigated the socio-economic impacts of the Glebe Option. Impacts were assessed for construction and operation phases. The possibility of adverse impacts was identified with respect to minor land resumptions (in response to a larger weir) and the transfer of high priority water out of the lower Dawson River.

The main benefits from the Glebe Option are derived from the development of the Wandoan Coal Project (see Volume 1, Chapters 21 and 22). Specific benefits from the Glebe Option relate to the economic benefit to local businesses during the construction phase and potentially more participants in local activities. These will apply mostly in close proximity to Taroom and Wandoan townships.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the social impact assessment of the Glebe Option:

- no population decline will result and no houses or items of social infrastructure will be permanently impacted
- families are not expected to travel with workers given the relatively short project timeframe so no impact on services for woman or children is anticipated
- the closure of the camping area at Glebe Weir during construction will be a temporary loss and will be reinstated once construction is completed
- traffic impacts have the potential for safety concerns and require consideration of the needs of local residents and travellers. The traffic management plan will address these concerns
- access issues along the pipeline route are short term and fully reversible
- no long term impact on property utilisation will occur along the pipeline
- some local businesses will experience an increase in turnover during the construction phase and this may lead to more hours being available to casual staff
- local contract businesses such as machinery operators, workshops and cleaners can expect increased opportunities during the construction phase but not after that time so permanent job creation is limited
- there will be a need for the construction camp supervisor to consult with Council, health service providers, police, club managers and local businesses with respect to the potential needs and impacts of the workforce
- properties impacted by inundation will not become unviable and the current owners and lessees have indicated they intend to stay
- downstream high and medium priority water users are not impacted

- the potential impact on downstream irrigators is limited to a maximum of 1 day of pumping opportunity for a minority of water harvesters. SunWater and NRW will discuss impacts with each individual affected and equitable solutions are envisaged
- if purchase of entitlement by way of trading is required in order to provide the full requirement of the Glebe Option, it is assumed that as the sellers would be willing, that this would not make their property unviable so social impacts would be limited.

Historically, the economic prosperity of Taroom and the region has been highly dependent on extensive agriculture. This has resulted in a small local economy often subject to fluctuations of drought and cattle prices. The result has been narrow employment profile and a declining population. New employment opportunities offered by the mining industry, coal seam water, gas development, railway and other associated developments, will temporarily broaden the economic and employment base and increase the population and bring with it all the needs and benefits of society.

Considering the volume of water created and its downstream value via the Wandoan Coal Project (Volume 1) the Glebe Option is assessed to have relatively few and low level local adverse impacts. In aggregate terms the Glebe Option is expected to generate more social benefits than costs.