

12.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

12.1 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

As discussed in Section 11, the Project site is zoned 'Rural' under the Chinchilla Planning Scheme, and does not have any other planning restrictions as it is not identified as Good Quality Agricultural Land (GQAL) and does not have a Mining Lease or Mining Development License. The site is vacant with no rural, residential or industrial uses currently occurring.

The site is located south of the existing Kogan Creek Power Station, owned by CS Energy, which is a 750 megawatt, coal-fired power station that provides electricity into the Queensland transmission line via Braemar Substation. The Kogan Creek Power Station currently generates enough electricity to power almost 1 million homes and has a permanent workforce of 41. The power station is neighboured and fuelled by the Kogan Creek Coal Mine, which has an additional permanent workforce of 50 employees. These high impact uses in the area surrounding the Project site means that there is minimal to no residential uses in the immediate area. The most proximate residential communities are located at Warra, Brigalow and Kogan.

Linc Energy are currently operating a Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) facility to the west of the Project site, at Ulinda Park on Sixteen Mile Hall Road. Other uses in the surrounding area include rural residential bordering the Project site to the west, and cattle breeding and fattening rural uses to the south and east.

Agriculture is the economic base of the Chinchilla District, with particular economic strengths in beef and pork production, wool growing, and horticulture being traditional industries in the local economy.

12.1.1 Key Demographic Characteristics

Some of the key demographic characteristics of the Western Downs Regional Council include:

- The 2006 ABS Census states that the Western Downs Regional Council had a total resident population of approximately 28,100 people;
- The Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP) estimates that the population reached approximately 30,870 people by 2008;
- The proportion of the population aged between 0 and 19 years old is 29.6% which is marginally higher than the proportion in Queensland (27.6%);
- Western Downs has a lower proportion of residents aged 20 to 34 years old, with 16.7%, when compared to Queensland (20.3%);
- The proportion of residents aged between 35 and 54 years old in the Western Downs, 27.9%, is in line with Queensland (28.6%);
- The proportion of people aged 55 and older in the Western Downs, of 25.7%, is marginally higher than the Queensland average (23.6%);
- 90.5% of occupied dwellings in the Western Downs are separate house dwellings, which is significantly higher than the state average of 79.5%;
- Based on the 2006 ABS Census, the total workforce of the Western Downs Region was approximately 13,500 of which 65.1% are employed full time. Approximately 67.6% of the Western Downs workforce is

employed in upper and lower blue collar occupations, which is higher than the state average of 63.7%; and

- The average annual household income in the Western Downs is substantially less than Queensland with \$57,522 compared with \$68,090 (June 2009 dollars).

The demographic profile of the Western Downs Region is indicative of a traditional rural community, given the dispersed age demographic and the high proportion of separate house dwellings in the region. Whereas some traditionally agriculturally based communities experience a proportion of the young population of working age (between 20 and 35 years old) leaving their communities for diversified employment and education opportunities in urban centres, this is not occurring within the Western Downs. The strong agricultural base, in correlation with the emergence of mining and energy opportunities occurring within the Surat Basin, is currently able to retain (and possibly enhance) this population within the community.

The Project site is located within the ABS Collection District 3081008, which extends north to the Warrego Highway and south to Kogan. Some of the key demographic characteristics of the area surrounding the Project site include:

- The 2006 ABS Census states that the surrounding area had a total resident population of approximately 319 people;
- The proportion of the population aged between 0 and 19 years old in the surrounding area is 34.8% which is higher than the proportion in the Western Downs Region (29.6%);
- The area surrounding the Project site has a proportion of residents aged 20 to 34 years old which is only marginally lower than that of the Western Downs (16.7%);
- The proportion of residents aged between 35 and 54 years old in the surrounding area, 32.6%, is higher than the proportion in the Western Downs (27.9%);
- The proportion of people aged 55 and older in the surrounding area, of 16.9%, is significantly lower than the Western Downs average (25.7%);
- 100% of occupied dwellings in the Western Downs are separate house dwellings, which is significantly higher than the proportion of separate houses in the Western Downs (90.5%);
- Based on the 2006 ABS Census, the total workforce of the surrounding area was approximately 141 of which 68.1% are employed full time. Approximately 59.7% of the residents in the area surrounding the Project site have upper or lower white collar jobs, which is lower than the 67.6% of Western Downs residents; and
- The average annual household income in the Western Downs is substantially less than the Western Downs with \$47,124 compared with \$57,522 (June 2009 dollars).

The demographic profile of the area surrounding the Project site is in line with that of the Western Downs Region as a whole. The area does, however, have a higher proportion of residents aged between 35 and 54 years old which is representative of its rural character, with families establishing themselves in an area which offers low density residential living away from the centralised townships elsewhere in the region. The average household income in the area is also indicative of the rural nature of the surrounding area, and the limited provision of employment opportunities which provide higher incomes which is in line with the lower proportion of white-collar employees in the area.

12.1.2 Landholders and Land Use

The Project site consists of two allotments – Lot 3 of RP 176346 and Lot 4 of RP 176346. Based on data collected from the RP Data database, both allotments are currently owned by Kogan Creek Power Station Pty Ltd and were purchased in January 2009 and June 2007 respectively. The allotment bordering the Project site to the north is also owned by Kogan Creek Power Station Pty Ltd, after being purchased in October 2006. The allotment to the west is under private ownership with an associated dwelling which is approximately 400m from the proposed substation site.

The Project site is not currently used for residential purposes and as the landholders are a corporation involved in similar Public Utility activities to what is proposed at the Project site, the current landholders are not anticipated to experience any negative impacts due to the proposed substation development at the Project site.

12.2 POTENTIAL IMPACT

Social Impacts

There is currently little social value associated with the Project site, therefore the development of an electrical substation on the Project site will have no social impact on how the site functions. In addition, the community profile of the surrounding area, as detailed above, is not anticipated to be impacted by the development of a substation on the Project site.

As mentioned above, the Project site is currently under the ownership of Kogan Creek Power Station Pty Ltd and therefore the acquisition of the site for the development of the substation is not anticipated to negatively impact any residential landowners. Again as mentioned previously throughout the EIS, the allotment to the west of the Project site is under private ownership with an occupied residence. Issues associated with impacts and associated mitigation to this property and residence have been addressed in the following sections:

- Dust (Section 6); and
- Noise (Section 13);
- Electric and magnetic fields (Section 14); and
- Visual amenity (Section 15).

Economic Impacts

As the Project site is vacant, with no existing agricultural or industrial uses, it currently has no economic value contributing to the community, and therefore the development of a substation will have no negative economic impact on how the site functions.

The development of a substation on the Project site, will however, have positive economic impacts on the surrounding area. These include:

- The construction of the substation will generate short-term employment opportunities during the construction phase;

- The development of a substation onsite will potentially generate employment opportunities for the operation of the substation over the long term, such employment may however be located off-site;
- The development of the substation along Banana Bridge Road will enhance the surrounding area as an 'energy precinct' by increasing the existing industries in the immediate area; and
- The substation may enhance the function of the Kogan Creek Power Station.

This increase in economic activity that will be established at the Project site will benefit the surrounding community in the region by generating additional employment opportunities and enhancing the overall economic capacity of the Western Downs region. This has the potential to generate indirect community benefits through the additional economic contribution to the region.

12.3 MITIGATION MEASURES

The development of an electrical substation on the Project site is anticipated to have little negative social or economic impacts on the surrounding community. The Project site is currently vacant, and does not possess any social or economic value as it is not being utilised for residential, agricultural or industrial purposes.

As the development of the substation will not have any associated negative social and economic implications on the surrounding community, there are no mitigation measures required.