



12.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

12.1 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

12.1.1 Study Area Overview

Agriculture is the economic base of both the Chinchilla and Warra Districts. Chinchilla has particular economic strengths in beef and pork production, wool growing, and horticulture being traditional industries in the local economy, whereas Warra is heavily reliant on cotton and grain production. Energy and resources (e.g. coal mining, coal seam gas development and power generation) are currently developing rapidly within this area.

The study alignment extends southeast from Banana Bridge Road, Hopeland, along Warra Kogan Road to Youngs Road, Warra to the east. The transmission line corridor will extend 30m on each side of the transmission line, and will therefore impact on a maximum of 34 allotments in the Kogan, Brigalow and Warra Districts. Of these allotments the majority (30 allotments) have a rural zoning and are utilised for cattle breeding and fattening purposes. The development of the transmission line will require 60m of land to be cleared (or partially cleared) directly under the transmission line however existing uses will be allowed to continue with minimal alteration to existing property lines and existing fencing.

The proposed Western Downs Substation will feed the Western Downs Transmission Line. The substation is to be 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.

As discussed in Section 11, the majority of the lots within the study alignment are zoned 'Rural' under the Chinchilla and Warra Planning Schemes. The transmission line alignment extends across L20 DY1072 on North Kogan Road, which is zoned 'Reserved for Gravel and Quarry' and is identified as being utilised for Extractive uses. The transmission line study alignment extends across areas which are identified as Class A and Class B Good Quality Agricultural Land under the Chinchilla and Warra Planning Schemes. The transmission line also extends across three allotments (L34 DY604, L27 DY374, and L7 RP176345) which have a Mining Lease of Mining Development Licence, which is related to the Kogan Creek Power Station and Coal Mine.

The most proximate residential communities are located at Warra, Brigalow and Kogan.

12.1.2 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 in 2006.
- 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%.
- The average annual household income in the Western Downs is substantially less than Queensland with \$58,293 compared with \$69,001 (September 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 traditional agricultural 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 this population within the community.

The study alignment extends between two ABS Collection Districts (3081008 and 3081603), which extend northwest to the Warrego Highway, southwest to Kogan, bounded by Moonie Highway to the southwest, and includes Daandine and Kumbarilla to the east. Some of the key demographic characteristics of the area surrounding the study alignment include:

- The 2006 ABS Census states that the surrounding area had a total resident population of approximately 559 people in 2006.
- The proportion of the population aged between 0 and 19 years old in the surrounding area is 32.7% which is higher than the proportion in the Western Downs Region (29.6%).
- The area surrounding the subject site has a proportion of residents aged 20 to 34 years old of 14.8% 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, 32.4%, is higher than the proportion in the Western Downs (27.9%).
- The proportion of people aged 55 and older in the surrounding area, of 19.9%, is significantly lower than the Western Downs average (25.7%).
- 93.4% of occupied dwellings in the surrounding area are separate house dwellings, which is 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 227 of which 61.8% are employed full time. The area has a much higher unemployment rate (9.3%) than the Western Downs average in 2006 (4.3%). Approximately 59.6% of the residents in the area surrounding the subject site have upper or lower white collar jobs, which is lower than the 61% of Western Downs residents.



- The average annual household income in the surrounding area is substantially less than the Western Downs with \$49,734 compared with \$58,293 (September 2009 dollars).

The demographic profile of the area surrounding the study alignment 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, with a limited provision of employment opportunities that provide higher incomes, which is in line with the lower proportion of white-collar employees in the area.

12.1.3 Landholders and Land Use

The subject site consists of 34 allotments extending from Banana Bridge in Hopeland to Youngs Road in Warra. Based on data collected from the RP Data ownership database, with the exception of the lots associated with the Kogan Creek Power Station and Coal Mine, and the two lots proposed for the Western Downs Powerlink Substation, the majority of lots along the transmission line study alignment are under the ownership of single and groups of individuals, and propriety companies who are utilising the land for agricultural purposes (with cattle breeding and grazing in particular).

12.2 POTENTIAL IMPACT

Social Impacts

Given the predominantly rural and industrial land use along the study alignment, there are few impacts expected on residential land uses. There are few social values associated with the study alignment, therefore the development of an electrical transmission line will have minimal social impact on how existing uses in the area function. In addition, the community profile of the surrounding area, as detailed above, is not anticipated to be impacted by the development of a transmission line. The existing residential dwelling, located adjacent to the proposed substation and at the western end of the transmission line, will be minimally impacted by the transmission line as towers will not be developed on the allotment. Therefore the development of the transmission line is not anticipated to negatively impact any residential or agricultural landowners.

It is recognised that Powerlink has further network developments planned that affect the Western Downs Region, and that water supply, sewerage, waste management matters and the burden on time and resources require attention across all projects.

Issues associated with impacts and associated mitigation have been addressed in the following sections:

- Dust (**Section 6.0**);
- Noise (**Section 13.0**);
- Electric and Magnetic Fields (**Section 14.0**); and
- Visual Amenity (**Section 15.0**).



Economic Impacts

The economic value of the land along the transmission line is largely based on the existing agricultural uses, which include cattle breeding and fattening and milk production. It is our understanding that the alignment and development of the transmission line will have minimal impact on existing ground uses as it is Powerlink's intention, wherever possible, for the transmission towers to be placed in a way that will ensure that they have minimal impact on existing uses. This will take into consideration property lines and existing fencing utilised for agricultural purposes.

The development of a transmission line will have positive economic impacts on the surrounding area. These include:

- The construction and installation of the transmission line and towers will generate short-term employment opportunities during the construction phase. Materials for construction should be procured from local sources as far as practicable;
- The development of the transmission line, in association with the substation on Banana Bridge Road, will enhance the surrounding area as an 'energy precinct' by increasing the existing industries in the immediate area; and
- The transmission line and substation may enhance the function of the Kogan Creek Power Station.

This increase in economic activity will benefit the surrounding community 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 transmission line is anticipated to have minimal negative social or economic impacts on the surrounding community. The transmission line will extend through an area utilised for agricultural purposes, and where possible the location of transmission towers will be placed in areas that have minimal adverse effect on the function of cattle grazing and milk production operations.

As the development of the transmission line will have minimal negative social implications on the surrounding community, there are no mitigation measures required.

Powerlink and Western Downs Regional Council representatives are consulting on matters such as water supply, sewerage, waste management and the burden on time and resources to ensure a coordinated approach aimed at minimising these impacts.