

APPENDIX K

Social Environment

K-1 Social Environment Technical Report

NORTHERN
WATER PROJECT



Northern Water

Social Environment

Technical Report

September 2026



Northern Water Social Environment Technical Report

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PART A: INTRODUCTION

1 Background

1.1 Project Description

Northern Water (NW; the Project) aims to provide a new climate resilient water source for industry in South Australia's Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North through the delivery of 51 GL/year of water from a seawater reverse osmosis desalination plant, and associated water transfer system (including pipeline, pump stations and water storages) and electricity infrastructure.

The Project comprises the following key elements:

- a 51 GL/year seawater reverse osmosis desalination plant located at Mullaquana Station approximately 25 km south-west of Whyalla
- marine intake and outfall tunnels extending underneath the seabed and into the Spencer Gulf
- diffuser structures for discharge of return water into the Spencer Gulf
- a transfer system consisting of
 - a ~360 km main transfer pipeline, largely constructed underground, terminating at the delivery point at the Olympic Dam copper-gold mine
 - a ~46 km lateral branch pipeline to a delivery point at the Carrapateena copper-gold mine (which may be constructed above or below ground)
 - associated transfer pump stations and product water storage
- high voltage electricity supply including new transmission lines, new network and facility substations to provide power to the desalination plant and transfer pump stations
- associated temporary construction-related infrastructure (e.g. construction camps, site offices and amenities, yards, storages and laydown areas)
- access tracks including establishing new tracks and upgrading existing tracks
- enabling roadworks and road upgrades.

The Project Reference Design (GHD 2025) has been used as the basis for the description of key Project components in this report. The Reference Design is preliminary and is expected to change through the detailed design process, or in response to cultural heritage matters or other refinements to minimise impacts as design and technical studies continue.

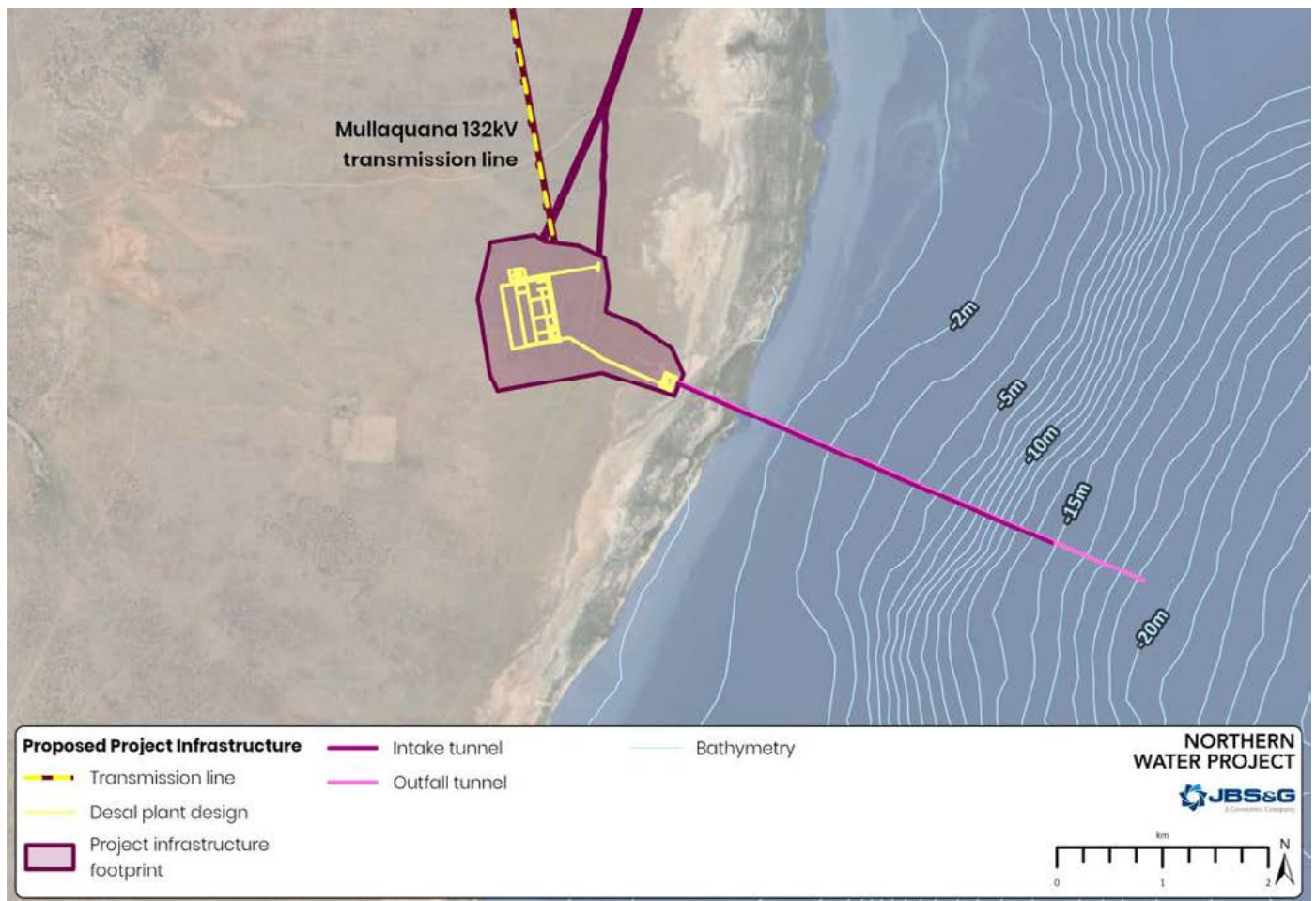
1.2 Project Location

1.2.1 Desalination plant

The desalination plant site is on the eastern shore of the Eyre Peninsula on Mullaquana Station, a station of approximately 13,000 ha located 25 km south-west of Whyalla. The desalination plant site is approximately 14 km from the Lincoln Highway and 1.5 km from Spencer Gulf coastal waters and will comprise approximately 200 ha of land for the purpose of construction. The site would be accessed in part via a new road from the Lincoln Highway, and then via the existing Eight Mile Creek Road, during both the construction and operation periods.

Marine infrastructure, including tunnels, intake and outfall structures, may extend as far as 5 km from the intake pump station (located on land to the far east of the desalination plant footprint), with no infrastructure to be constructed on the seabed at a distance of less than 3 km from the intake pump station.

The footprint of the desalination plant is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Northern Water Desalination Plant Footprint

1.2.2 Transfer system and supporting infrastructure

The transfer system runs generally north from the desalination plant to Olympic Dam passing Whyalla, Port Augusta, Woomera and Roxby Downs, with a lateral branch proposed to the operational Carrapateena mine delivery point. The indicative pipeline alignment (presented in the current engineering reference design) is shown in Figure 2 and described below:

- Desalination plant (Mullaquana Station) to Whyalla – alignment heads generally north following Eight Mile Creek Road and other existing tracks / fencelines on rural land skirting Whyalla to the west. The alignment then veers north-east and heads north following the Lincoln Highway.
- Whyalla to Port Augusta – alignment traverses a section of the Cultana Training Area following the Lincoln Highway heading north before meeting the Stuart Highway alignment via a short section of the Eyre Highway.
- Port Augusta to Pimba – alignment generally follows the Stuart Highway, with portions following the old Stuart Highway, and paralleling the existing Department of Defence Port Augusta to Woomera water pipeline.
- Pimba to Olympic Dam - generally follows the Olympic Dam Highway with the pipeline diverting to the east to avoid Woomera township.

Four new powerlines, two new network substations and two upgraded network substations are proposed to provide power to the desalination plant and the transfer pump stations. Four facility substations will also be constructed within the pump station compounds.

Figure 2 Northern Water Transfer System Footprint



1.3 Project Workforce

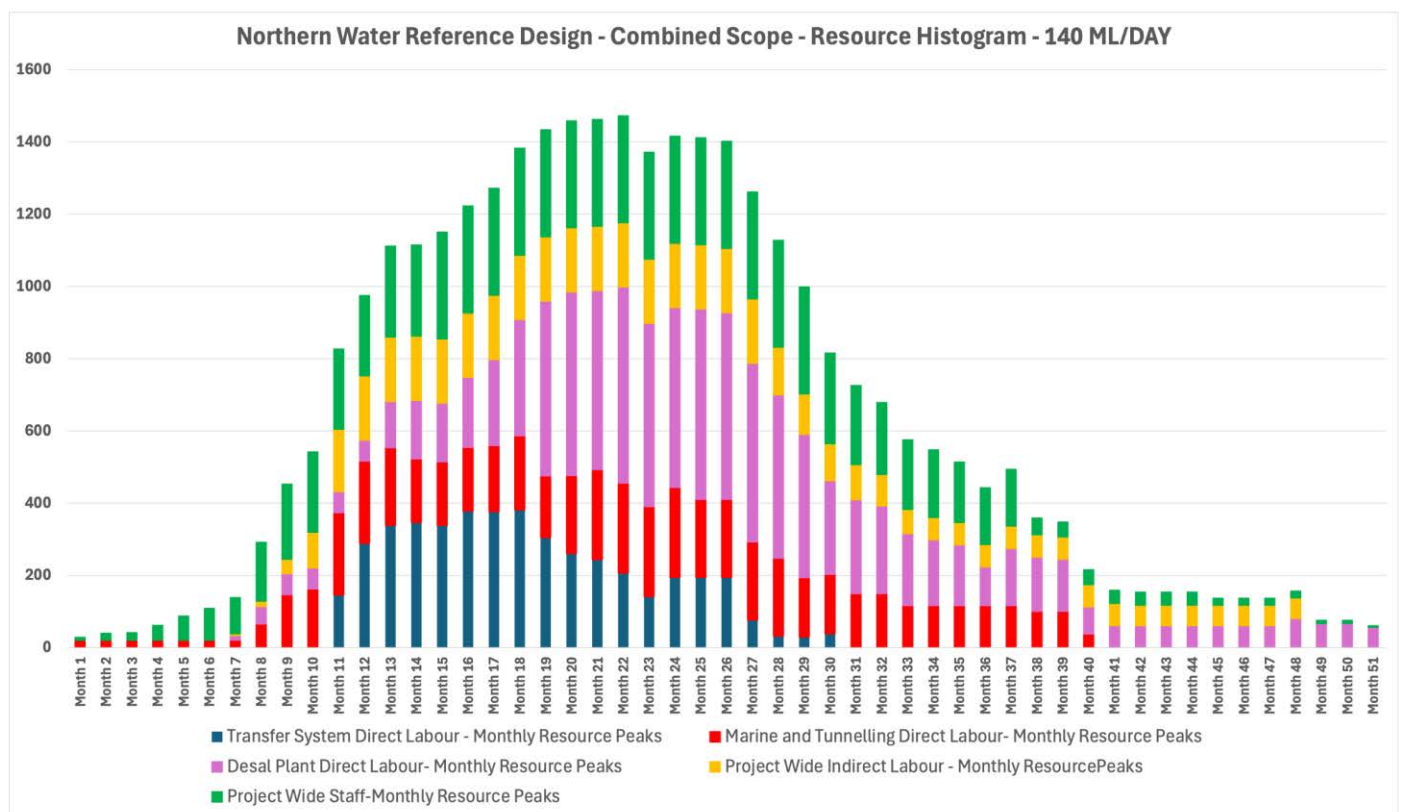
1.3.1 Construction workforce

Whilst the construction methodology is yet to be finalised, initial workforce planning has been undertaken for the reference design (refer Figure 3). It should be noted that the number of Full-Time Equivalent workers (FTEs) and the distribution over time and location would depend greatly on the construction methodology adopted.

It is projected that the total FTE workers required would peak at around 1,500 during year two (SYSTRA 2025) and would comprise workers on the desalination plant itself and marine and tunnelling infrastructure, the construction of the transfer system, and project-wide labour. Current estimates (Systra 2025) anticipate the proportions of FIFO versus local workforce split are:

- Transfer system – 60% FIFO, 40% local workforce
- Tunnelling – 80% FIFO, 20% local workforce
- Desalination Plant – 50% FIFO, 50% local workforce
- Indirect labour – 0% FIFO, 100% local workforce.

Figure 3 – Projected Construction Requirements, FTEs (SYSTRA 2025)



While it is anticipated that Whyalla and Port Augusta would be capable of providing some accommodation requirements for the Project, the workforce will be simultaneously concentrated at the desalination plant site and distributed along the main transfer pipeline at concurrent work fronts. Therefore, a combination of existing commercial premises and transportable construction camps are proposed during construction. Camp locations have been selected to minimise travel times for the workforce at no longer than 40 minutes each way and would include temporary accommodation, office building, sewage treatment systems, amenities (e.g. kitchen and laundry facilities) and recreational areas. Three main camps are proposed at Whyalla, Port Augusta and Pimba however it should be noted that these camp locations are subject to refinement as the project progresses.

1.3.2 Operational Workforce

Initial workforce planning has been undertaken for operation of the desalination plant and related assets, with an estimated 45 FTEs required across two to three depots located at Mullaquana Station and potentially at Port Augusta and in the Woomera/Roxby Downs area. Final locations of maintenance depot(s) would be subject to discussions with the operational contractor.

2 This Report

2.1 Purpose

This Social Environment Technical Report / Social Impact Assessment (SIA) has been undertaken to identify potential social impacts, together with potential mitigation and management initiatives that may eliminate or minimise social impacts and identify any opportunities and value-adds that may enhance potential benefits to local communities.

2.2 Report Structure

This report is structured into three sections:

- Part A: Introduction - outlines the background to the Project, this report, the study area, and the methodology used to prepare this SIA.
- Part B: Existing Environment - a description of the existing environment, including sense of place and character, demographic profile, housing profile, and a community services profile.
- Part C: Social Impacts – including potential impacts and opportunities, and potential mitigations and management initiatives.

3 Methodology

3.1 Assessment Approach

3.1.1 Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act, 2016

Development proposals that are considered to be of economic, social or environmental importance to South Australia can be declared Impact Assessed by the Minister for Planning under the *Planning Development and Infrastructure Act, 2016*. Impact Assessed development is the highest level of development assessment and is “*the most rigorous level of development assessment in South Australia and is reserved for projects which cannot be properly considered under alternative assessment pathways... due to the nature, scale and extent of their potential impacts, where the effects of those impacts are unknown or more uncertain*” (Plan SA, *Guide for Applicants Impact Assessed Development* (2023)).

Pursuant to s.131(25) of the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*, the Minister for Planning (SA) directed that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared for the Project, subject to the procedures and requirements of being an ‘impact assessed’ development, as if the development had been declared under s.108(1)(c) of the Act as an impact assessed development.

3.1.2 International Association of Impact Assessment

This SIA has been undertaken to assist in informing the Social Impact chapter of the NW Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and as such has had regard to the principles and guidelines outlined by the International Association of Impact Assessment and the *SIA Guidance for assessing and managing the social impact of projects* (Vanclay, 2015) specifically:

- Understand the issues

- Predict, analyse and assess the likely impact pathways, and
- Develop strategies.

The following IAIA principles have also been adopted in relation to the definition of social impacts and scope of the Assessment Requirements from the State Planning Commission, which are essentially the matters that must be addressed in the EIS.

Social impacts are defined as changes to one or more of the following:

- people's way of life, how they live, work, play and interact with one another on a day-to-day basis
- shared culture, beliefs, customs, values and language
- community cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities
- environmental impacts, including air, water, hazard, risks, physical safety, access to resources, dust and noise
- their health and wellbeing – health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity
- personal and property impacts, and
- community perceptions, fears and aspirations.

3.2 Scope and limitations of this SIA

3.2.1 SIA Scope

This SIA has considered the *Assessment Requirements Library* (Plan SA, 2022) and the Project's Assessment Requirements (30 June 2026), specifically Environmental Attribute 9 Social and Community, SC2 Community Wellbeing/Social Impact Assessment. The overarching requirement is to provide an assessment of the Project that addresses:

- The existing social environment of communities potentially impacted by the Project, and
- The potential social impacts (positive and negative) of the Project, and how they will be managed and monitored.

The scope of this SIA has interfaces with a number of other assessments that are being undertaken separately to this report. Where material to this SIA's scope, these interrelationships will be identified throughout this report.

The scope of this report is detailed in Table 1, together with any interfaces with other assessment areas that have been used to inform this assessment. It should be noted that the Social Impact Assessment Requirements that address workforce management, including an analysis of the labour market, employment opportunities, training and labour demands, and local business and industry procurement are not within the scope of this report and are addressed by other assessment areas, with the social impacts of those opportunities addressed in this report.

Table 1 – Report Scope

Report Scope	Interface with other EIS assessment areas
Baseline information including (but not limited to): • a demographic profile of potentially affected communities • an analysis of community characteristics (e.g. community history and culture, land/property ownership) • an overview of land use, key industries in the region, and relevant local and state government plans • an overview of the capacity and accessibility of infrastructure, facilities and services, including education, health and emergency services, and • an analysis of the existing housing and accommodation market, including availability, capacity and affordability.	Use of Land and Marine Waters Traffic and Transport Economic Environment

Report Scope	Interface with other EIS assessment areas
Key matters to be addressed – Housing and Accommodation: - proposed workforce accommodation arrangements including details of any proposed project workforce accommodation facilities or purpose-built housing developments - an analysis of the local and regional housing and accommodation market, and an assessment of potential social impacts, including: - potential impacts to availability and affordability of housing (open market and rental) and other forms of accommodation - consequences of project induced housing market changes for local residents - potential opportunities for local accommodation providers, and - workforce housing and accommodation management measures which [may] include: - measures to enhance potential benefits for project workers and the community, and to mitigate potential negative social impacts - policies regarding housing and accommodation support to be provided to project workers and their families who wish to live locally.	Economic Environment
Key matters to be addressed – health and community well-being: - an analysis of the availability, accessibility and capacity of, and an assessment of potential project impacts on, existing social services, facilities and infrastructure such as healthcare and emergency response, transport and utilities, education and childcare, and community support services - an analysis of the health and well-being of potentially impacted communities (in particular relevant disadvantaged groups e.g. Aboriginal people, disability, elderly), and an assessment of potential social impacts, including: - community health, safety and security - livelihoods, economic well-being and access to resources - community lifestyles and cultural practices, amenity value, social character, and community cohesion - potential temporary or permanent effects on community recreational facilities, affecting the use of open space and the enjoyment of passive and active recreational opportunities. - health and community wellbeing management measures which [may] include: - measures to ensure that the level of service provided to the local community by existing social services, facilities and infrastructure is not reduced - measures to mitigate potential health and well-being impacts on local communities, and enhance potential benefits - the level of on-site health services to be provided for workers - details of any workforce code of conduct to govern worker interactions with local communities - emergency response arrangements and management measures agreed with emergency service providers, for incidents both on and off the project site - details of any community development programs to be implemented, and the outcomes to be achieved.	Traffic and Transport Noise and Vibration Air Quality Landscape and Visual Amenity Economic Environment

3.2.2 Limitations and assumptions

This SIA has been prepared using the best available information at the time of assessment. Baseline demographic data relies primarily on the ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021, which provides the most recent comprehensive

demographic dataset available at the time of preparing this report. It is acknowledged that this data may not fully reflect more recent population, housing, workforce or socio-economic changes across the study areas, and that updated Census data is expected to be released in 2027. Where available, the assessment has therefore been supplemented by other contemporary data sources, government and regional reporting, technical studies, project information, and anecdotal or qualitative information obtained through stakeholder and community engagement.

The SIA also relies on a number of assumptions regarding construction and operational employment, workforce accommodation, local procurement and business participation. These assumptions reflect the current reference design and available workforce planning information and will be refined as the Project progresses, including through the detailed design, build, operate and maintain contractor's construction methodology, procurement strategy and workforce management planning.

3.3 Method

This assessment has been prepared using desktop research as well as the outcomes of the stakeholder and community engagement process undertaken to date, including consideration of community sentiment, concerns, opportunities and queries. Potential impacts have been identified, both negative and positive, and suggested mitigation and enhancement opportunities have been noted to identify where the Project can eliminate or reduce negative impacts and optimise positive impacts. Any gaps in knowledge or opportunities to improve understanding of local socio-economic conditions have also been noted for further investigation.

The following process has been used and is explained in detail in the following sub-sections:

- Establish a baseline
- Stakeholder and community engagement
- Identify and assess potential impacts
- Identify potential mitigation and monitoring.

3.3.1 Establish a baseline

A baseline for the assessment of social impacts and opportunities was established using desktop research and stakeholder engagement. The outcomes of this baseline research are presented in this report and include:

- The analysis of data from multiples sources,
- Research of case studies and academic research papers, and
- Identification of on-ground community services and facilities.

3.3.2 Stakeholder and community engagement

This report has been informed by extensive stakeholder and community engagement undertaken by the Northern Water team as part of this assessment including the outcomes of:

- One-on-one meetings with landowners and residents directly impacted by the Project footprint including members of the residential communities closest to Mullaquana Station, including Murninnie Beach (approximately 10.5km south) and Cowleds Landing (approximately 8km north)
- Meetings of the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG), including representatives of commercial and recreational fishers, tourism bodies, local government, Regional Development Australia, and environment and conservation groups
- Meetings of the Mullaquana Station Reference Sub-Group
- Cross-government agency briefings and discussions, including with the EPA, Department for Environment and Water (including the National Parks and Wildlife Service) and its various Boards and Councils, Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, PIRSA, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Environment and the National Native Title Tribunal

- Regular meetings, interviews and briefings with staff and Elected Members/Board of:
 - Upper Spencer Gulf Cities Board
 - Whyalla City Council
 - Port Augusta City Council
 - Roxby Downs Council
 - Outback Communities Authority
- Meetings, interviews and briefings with stakeholder groups and organisations including:
 - Traditional Owners, including Native Title and ILUA negotiations and cultural heritage surveys
 - Surrounding Traditional Owners
 - Commercial and recreational fishing industry associations
 - Local commercial fishers and recreational fishing groups
 - Environment and conservation groups
 - Emergency Services
 - Service Providers
 - Office of the Industry Advocate and Industry Capacity Network (ICN)
 - Local businesses and industries including key tourism operators
- Displays and discussions at industry events, business briefings and presentations and staffed po-ups and community information sessions in Roxby Downs, Whyalla, Port Pirie and Port Augusta.

The (Draft) Interim Engagement Outcomes Report for the Northern Water Project (May 2026) has been used to identify key issues of importance to local communities as they impact this Social Impact Assessment.

3.3.3 Identify and assess potential impacts

Potential impacts and opportunities are discussed in detail in this report and have been identified based on:

- The established baseline and knowledge of the area
- Stakeholder engagement
- The outcomes of other technical reports and discussions with their authors
- Experiences and lessons learned from other similar projects
- General community engagement sentiment and feedback, and
- Internal workshops held with the Project team.

3.3.4 Identify potential mitigation and monitoring

Potential mitigation and monitoring directions were identified, including opportunities to avoid or minimise impacts and enhance opportunities, and are detailed in this report based on discussions and workshops with the Project team, knowledge and experience of other projects, the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement, and social research.

4 Study Areas

For the purposes of this report, study areas are referred throughout as shown in Table 2. Study areas have been selected to address Assessment Requirements for a potential area of impact, and to provide comparisons with other areas. The potential area of impact is defined as:

- That area directly impacted by the project footprint, and
- Nearby population centres outside the project footprint that may be impacted by the project due to their proximity by way of visual, noise, traffic and transport, workforce opportunities, demand for community services, supply of goods or services, industry participation or other impact.

It should be noted that study areas referenced will vary depending on the source of the data, which may differ between organisations and agencies.

Table 2 – Study areas referred to in this report

Study area	Definition	Area included
Urban Centres/Localities		
Andamooka	ABS Urban Centre/Locality (UCL422004)	The whole of the township of Andamooka, exclusive of rural land within the suburb of Andamooka
Roxby Downs	ABS Urban Centre/Locality (UCL415039)	The whole of the township of Roxby Downs, exclusive of rural land within the suburb of Roxby Downs
Woomera	ABS Urban Centre/Locality (UCL422061)	The whole of the township of Woomera, exclusive of rural land within the suburb of Woomera
Local Government Areas		
City of Port Augusta	ABS Local Government Area (LGA46090)	The entirety of the City of Port Augusta local government area
City of Whyalla	ABS Local Government Area (LGA48540)	The entirety of the City of Whyalla local government area
Roxby Downs Council	ABS Local Government Area (LGA46970)	The entirety of the Roxby Downs Council local government area, also encompassing the Urban Centre/Locality of Roxby Downs referenced separately in this table
Statistical Areas Level 3		
Eyre Peninsula and South West	ABS Statistical Area Level 3 (SA340601)	The entirety of the Eyre Peninsula and the south west of South Australia extending to the Western Australian border
Outback North and East	ABS Statistical Area Level 3 (SA340602)	The entirety of Outback North extending to the northern part of the Western Australian border, the border of the Northern Territory, and east to the NSW border, not including the Mid North, Lower North, and Murray/Mallee Statistical Areas Level 3
Tourism Regions		
Eyre Peninsula Tourist Region	Tourism SA Eyre Peninsula Tourist Region	The entirety of the Eyre Peninsula Tourist Region
Flinders Ranges and Outback Tourist Region	Tourism SA Flinders Ranges and Outback Tourist Region	The entirety of the Flinders Ranges and Outback Tourist Region
Planning Regions		
Eyre and Western Planning Region	Planning and Land Use Services Eyre and Western Planning Region	The entirety of the Eyre and Western Planning Region, including the City of Whyalla
Far North Planning Region	Planning and Land Use Services Far North Planning Region	The entirety of the Far North Planning Region, including the Roxby Downs Council and Port Augusta City Council, and the Urban Centres/Localities of Andamooka, Roxby Downs and Woomera referenced separately in this table
Regional Development Australia (RDA) Regions		
Eyre Peninsula RDA area	RDA Board Region Eyre Peninsula	The entirety of the area covered by the Eyre Peninsula RDA Board

Study area	Definition	Area included
Far North RDA area	RDA Board Region Far North	The entirety of the area covered by the Far North RDA Board
Other Regions		
Upper Spencer Gulf	Spencer Gulf Cities region	The entirety of the City of Port Pirie, City of Port Augusta and City of Whyalla local government areas forming the Spencer Gulf Cities strategic partnership
Project footprint areas		
Desalination plant site	Project site	The site of the proposed desalination plant at Mullaquana Station
Transfer system footprint	Project site	The footprint of the pipeline, including associated infrastructure between the plant and Olympic Dam, including the branch pipeline to the Carrapateena mine
State		
South Australia	ABS State/Territory (S/T4)	The entirety of the State of South Australia

PART B: EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

Part B: Existing Environment is presented in response to the baseline data requirements of the Assessment Requirements Library SC2 as detailed in section 3.2 and includes the following matters:

- Strategic context
- Sense of place
- Demographic profile
- Housing profile
- Socio-economic profile, and
- Community services profile.

5 Strategic Context

A number of key plans and strategies that shape land use, economic development, infrastructure and community wellbeing across the study area and draw out the social and socio-economic priorities are relevant to this report. These include (but are not limited to the following, noting that a full list of references is contained in the back of this report:

- City of Port Augusta (2024). Four Year Priority Action Plan 2024–2028
- City of Port Augusta (2024). Strategic Directions 2035
- City of Whyalla (2022). Whyalla Economic Development Strategy 2022–2030
- City of Whyalla (2025). Whyalla Strategic Plan 2025–2034
- City of Whyalla (2025). Whyalla 2030 and Beyond: Community Plan
- Department for Environment and Water (2022). Water Security Statement
- Department for Environment and Water (2026). Annual Water Security Update 2026
- Department for Housing and Urban Development, Planning and Land Use Services (2026). Eyre and Western Regional Plan
- Department for Housing and Urban Development, Planning and Land Use Services (2026). Far North Regional Plan
- Department for Infrastructure and Transport (2025). South Australia's Transport Strategy
- Government of South Australia (2016). State Planning Policies. Adelaide: Government of South Australia, under the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016
- Infrastructure SA (2025). South Australia's 20-Year State Infrastructure Strategy
- Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula, Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association and Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board (2023). Eyre Peninsula Strategic Regional Plan 2023–26
- Regional Development Australia Far North (2025). Port Augusta Infrastructure for Growth Strategy
- Regional Development Australia Far North (n.d.). Port Augusta Strategic Tourism Development Plan 2018–2023
- Roxby Downs Council (2024). Roxby Regional Public Health Plan 2024–2029
- Roxby Downs Council (2021). Strategic Plan 2021–2025. Roxby Downs: Roxby Downs Council
- South Australian Tourism Commission (2025). South Australian Regional Visitor Strategy 2025. Adelaide: Government of South Australia
- Spencer Gulf Cities (2026). Upper Spencer Gulf Social Impact Checklist
- Spencer Gulf Cities (2025). Regional Partnership Priorities

Across all levels, a consistent set of social and socio-economic themes emerges from these documents: managing the benefits and pressures of major project-driven growth; protecting marine, coastal and cultural heritage values; ensuring housing and infrastructure keep pace with workforce change; realising local employment and business participation; and maintaining community wellbeing and liveability. These themes are taken up in the assessment that follows, and

the strategic context above provides the policy basis against which the Project's social impacts and contributions are considered.

6 Sense of Place

Understanding a community's connection to a place provides a baseline for assessing impacts that include the ability of communities to adjust to change, their perception of potential impacts, levels of community cohesion, public concern, and any mitigative actions required to minimise potential impacts. Sense of place and identity is a theoretical construct that describes how residents feel about the place they live in, including their attachment to and dependency on that place, social interactions and activity, place identity, community connectedness, community participation, and sense of belonging. Increased sense of place has been linked to higher levels of community participation and health and wellbeing outcomes (Anton and Lawrence, 2014).

Australian research undertaken by Anton and Lawrence (2014) found that rural people have been reported to have a higher place identity, place dependence, and place attachment when compared with people living in urbanised areas, and that threats, or perceived threats, (such as living in a place of high bushfire risk) can increase that sense of place. Factors including the length of residency in a place, external threats (real or perceived) to that place, the ability of that place to provide for its residents and meet their aspirations, levels of home ownership, and levels of community involvement. For the purposes of this assessment a consideration of place identity, place attachment, and place dependence has been undertaken.

Table 3 – Place identity, attachment and dependence

Place identity	Place attachment	Place dependence
- The extent to which a place reflects and expresses the identity, culture, and history of a group or individual. - Influenced by the physical features, symbols, narratives, and memories that are associated with a place. - A strong place identity can foster a sense of belonging, pride, and continuity. - A weak or disrupted place identity can lead to a loss of self-esteem, identity confusion, and alienation (Proshansky et al, 1983).	- The emotional bond and connection that people develop with a place over time. - Influenced by the frequency, duration, and quality of interactions that people have with a place, as well as the personal and social meanings that they assign to it. - A strong place attachment can enhance a sense of well-being, security, and satisfaction - A weak or threatened place attachment can cause a sense of loss, grief, and anxiety (Scannell and Gifford, 2010).	- The extent to which a place satisfies the needs, goals, and preferences of a group or individual. - Influenced by the functional, aesthetic, and symbolic qualities of a place, as well as the availability and accessibility of alternative places. - A high place dependence can increase a sense of satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment. - A low or compromised place dependence can result in a sense of dissatisfaction, frustration, and displacement (Stokols and Shumaker, 1981).

By applying these principles and reviewing the outcomes of the engagement undertaken for the Project, a number of observations are made in relation to place identity, place attachment, and place dependence, all of which enhance the sensitivity of the community to change. The analysis in this section is based on site visits, land use surveys, observations, analysis of demographics, and the community engagement outlined in section 3.3.2, and focuses on:

- The desalination plant site and immediate surrounds
- Transfer system/pipeline footprint and
- Indigenous sense of place.

6.1 Indigenous Connection to Country

Indigenous connection to Country and associated Cultural Heritage values are documented and assessed separately to this report. However, it is important to acknowledge the significant place identity, place attachment and place dependence associated with the Project footprint, in the assessment of social impacts.

The proposed desalination plant at Mullaquana Station, together with the southern sections of the transfer system are located on the traditional lands of the Barngarla people. The Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation has been appointed to manage the Barngarla Determination, which extends across the lower Eyre Peninsula from Port Lincoln in the south to north of Port Augusta, west to the Tod Highway and north-west to Wirulla (BDAC, 2024).

The northern section of the transfer system and associated infrastructure is located on the traditional lands of the Kokatha people, Traditional Owners of around 140,000 km² of land north of Port Augusta from Lake Torrens in the east to the Gawler Ranges in the West (KAC RNTBC, 2024). In 2021, the Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation was appointed as the Recognised Aboriginal Representative Body under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*.

Sites of significance according to Aboriginal tradition, and sites significant to Aboriginal archaeology, anthropology and history are protected in South Australia by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, which provides statutory protection and Aboriginal heritage rights to all lands and waters in South Australia. Separately, Native Title under the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993* encompasses the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over land and waters according to traditional laws and customs. The direct and indirect impacts relating to Aboriginal cultural heritage and Native Title matters, including the outcomes of extensive engagement with Traditional Owners undertaken as part of the Project are addressed as part of the EIS (outside of this report).

Connection to community, land and spirit is important to the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations people worldwide, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia (Bourke et al. 2018), and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2020) recognises that connection to land and culture is fundamental to the health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, specifically referencing that connection in Outcome 15. In setting out the spiritual context of Aboriginal sovereignty, the Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017) describes connection to land and sense of place in the following terms. *“This sovereignty is spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better of sovereignty.”*

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey of 10,500 people across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020) reported that Indigenous Australians who lived in very remote or remote areas, and outer regional areas were more likely than those living in major cities or inner regional areas to recognise, live on, and visit their homelands or traditional country.

6.2 Desalination Plant Site and Immediate Surrounds

6.2.1 Mullaquana Station and Homestead

The desalination plant site is on the western shore of the Upper Spencer Gulf on Mullaquana Station, a station of approximately 13,000 ha located approximately 25 km south-west of Whyalla. The desalination plant site is approximately 14 km from the Lincoln Hwy and 1.5 km from Spencer Gulf coastal waters and will comprise approximately 200 ha of land. The site would be accessed via a new road from the Lincoln Highway and then via the existing Eight Mile Creek Road during both the construction and operation periods. Refer Figure 4.

Land at Mullaquana Station and the adjoining station properties is currently utilised for sheep grazing and has not been cleared for agricultural cropping. The site is relatively flat and low-lying, sloping gently from the coast in the east to the escarpment in the west. Saline plains, low coastal dunes and mangrove areas lie to the east of the site moving to sandy loam saltbush/bluebush plains to the west. Surface water features across and around the desalination plant site are scarce and ephemeral. The desalination plant site is not located within an area where the water resource is prescribed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* and it is not within a water protection area. There are no areas protected

under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* or areas under native vegetation heritage agreement at the desalination plant site.

The desalination plant site and works are located in the Remote Areas and Conservation Zones under the Planning and Design Code. The desalination plant is within the determined Barngarla Native Title Claim which extends across the majority of the eastern and central Eyre Peninsula from the Spencer Gulf to the Eyre Highway. Native Title has been extinguished over Mullaquana Station and neighbouring properties but remains from the mean high water mark to approximately 700 m seaward along this section of the coast.

The station is sparsely populated, and the closest potential sensitive receptor is the Mullaquana Station homestead, located approximately 5 km west of the site. Refer Figure 5.

Figure 4 – Desalination plant site and access options



Figure 5 – Mullaquana Station Homestead (view looking north)

Source: Google Earth, 2025

6.2.2 Cowleds Landing

The small coastal settlement of Cowleds Landing is located approximately 8 km north of the desalination plant site. Access to Cowleds Landing is via the unsealed Eight Mile Creek Road, which will in part also provide access to the desalination plant site during construction and operation. The settlement was named for settler Mr Cowled, who used the site to receive and export goods via sea prior to the establishment of Whyalla (Whyalla News, 1945). Cowleds Landing now consists of 12 sites providing coastal accommodation of varying ages and remains a valued site for holiday makers.

Figure 6 – Cowleds Landing (view looking north west)

Source: Google Earth, 2025

Two sanctuary zones are also located at Cowleds Landing that are designed to protect mangroves, tidal creeks, saltmarsh, sand and mud flats, soft bottom and seagrass. Both sites are actively monitored by Landscape SA Eyre Peninsula for their role in providing important nursery areas for snapper, blue swimmer crabs and whiting, and for internationally important shorebird species. The sanctuaries are part of Landscape SA's Pix Stix Citizen Science Program, which encourages involvement in monitoring and documenting long-term changes in sea levels (Landscape SA, 2025). Refer Figure 7.

The role of the settlement in providing housing, holiday activities and water-based recreational needs for a small number of families, most likely over a number of years and even generations, together with its historical use and connections, and its association with community-led environmental custodianship is indicative of a high level of place identity, attachment and dependence.

Figure 7 – Cowleds Landing Sanctuary Zone 1



Source: Landscape SA Eyre Peninsula, 2025

6.2.3 Murninnie Beach

Murninnie Beach is located approximately 10.5 km south west of the desalination plant site and – like Cowleds Landing – is a small coastal shack settlement with importance to local holiday makers and recreational visitors due to its remote location on the coast, water activities and environmental conservation qualities. The settlement is accessed via an unsealed road off of Lincoln Highway at Moonabie and provides for 34 allotments, most of which accommodate holiday homes of varying ages.

As with Cowleds Landing, Murninnie Beach represents a high level of place identity, attachment and dependence associated with its role providing for the housing, holiday and recreational needs of a small number of families, most likely over a number of years and even generations.

Figure 8 – Murninnie Beach (view looking west)



6.2.4 Recreational beaches and the Gulf

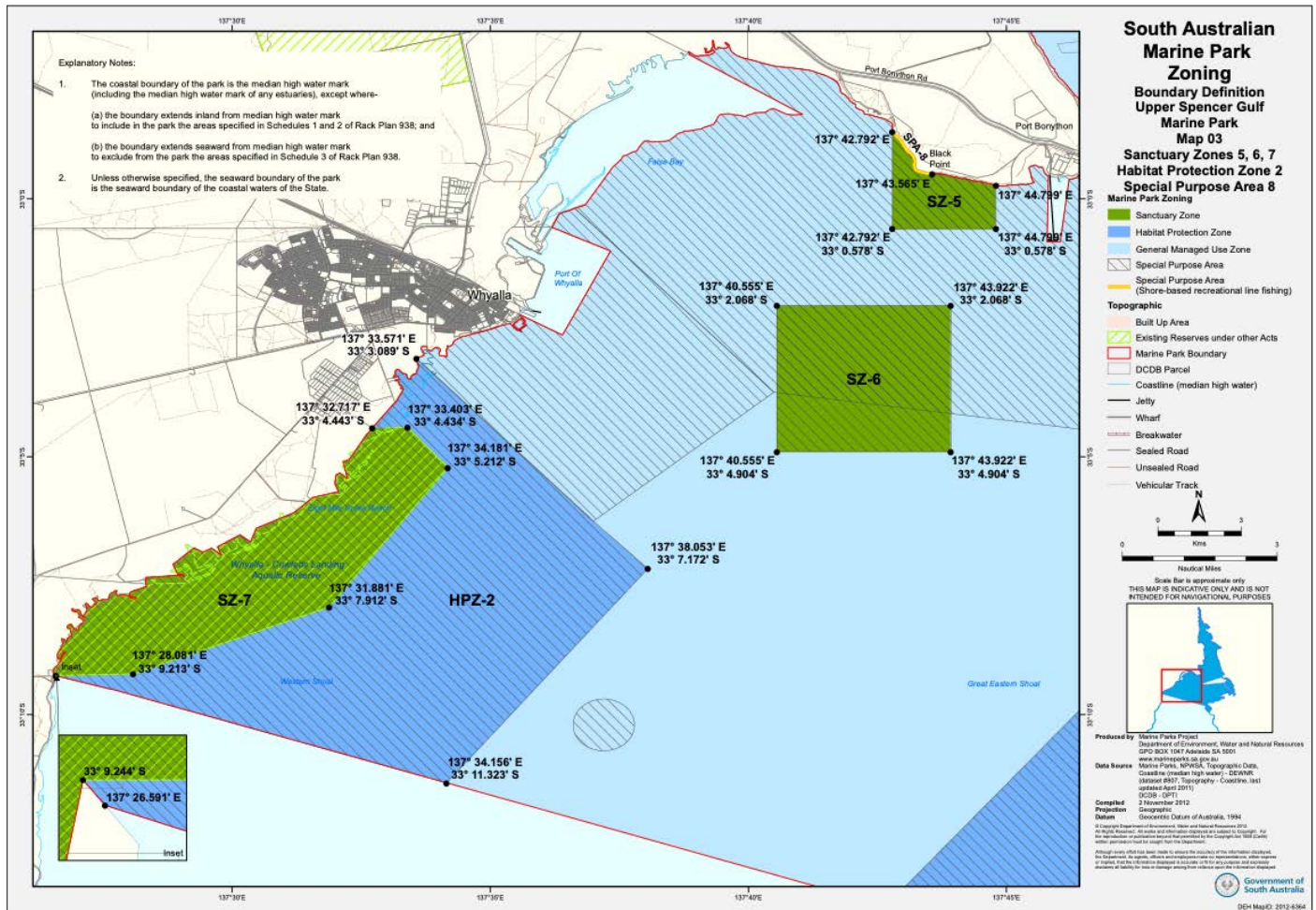
To the north east of Cowleds Landing are Murriippi and Eight Mile Creek Beaches, both of which provide for the recreational needs of the Whyalla population, its hinterland, and visitors to the Eyre Peninsula. Murriippi Beach was established in 1985 as a nude bathing beach and is supported by the Whyalla Nudist and Social Club and the Australian Naturist Federation.

Eight Mile Creek Beach is a low energy beach consisting of a 300m long section of open sand, located on a 500m long beach ridge-spit book-ended by small tidal creeks and mangroves (Surf Life Saving Australia, 2025) popular for swimming, fishing, boating and other water activities.

As with much of the Gulf, the aquatic areas around Mullaquana Station are significant to commercial, tourist and recreational activities focused on both the fishing and conservation of aquatic life. The Cowleds Landing Aquatic Reserve (Sanctuary Zone) extends along the coast from Whyalla south to the northern section of Cowleds Landing and east into the Gulf. Refer Figure 9. Whilst the Cuttlefish Coast Sanctuary Zone National Heritage Place is of significance to the wider Whyalla and Gulf community, it is located near Point Lowly, approximately 34 km north-east of the site of the desalination plant and associated marine works.

The importance of the coastline, its conservation, recreation and commercial values combine to create a strong sense of place attachment, identity and dependence that extends beyond the local community to encompass communities across the State.

Figure 9 – Upper Spencer Gulf Marine Park, Cowleds Landing Sanctuary Zone



Source: Government of South Australia, 2012

6.3 Transfer system footprint

6.3.1 Whyalla

The transfer system footprint extends north and north west from the site of the desalination plant around the western periphery of the regional city of Whyalla.

Feedback via the community and stakeholder engagement process, and review of Tourism SA reports suggests that the coastal stretch is important to both local and visiting populations, with Whyalla performing as a major gateway to the Spencer Gulf, and a growing location for tourism associated with the Giant Australian Cuttlefish breeding grounds.

Whyalla has an important history associated with its steelworks and shipbuilding industries that generated significant population growth during the middle of the 20th century, together with the operating iron ore mines at the Middleback Range to the west. On the southern edge of the city is the airport, which provides services to Adelaide and other regional locations.

The transfer system extends to meet the Lincoln Highway north of Whyalla, following the highway adjacent the Whyalla Conservation Park and the extensive Australian Army Cultana Training Area, which extends from Whyalla to Iron Knob and Port Augusta. Further inland to the north-west of Whyalla is the former mining town of Iron Knob that has a strong sense of community despite its declining population over time.

6.3.2 Port Augusta

Whyalla is connected to the city of Port Augusta by the continuation of the Lincoln Highway, which meets the Eyre Highway just south-west of Port Augusta at Lincoln Gap. The transfer system follows both highways to just west of the El Alamein Airfield and Port Augusta Airport.

The city of Port Augusta is a significant nexus of road, rail and sea transport, and both the Indian Pacific and The Ghan interstate train services transit through Port Augusta as well as connecting to Quorn via the Pichi Richi heritage Railway.

Whilst there are currently no commercial passenger services that operate to Port Augusta, it is nevertheless known as a gateway to the Far North of South Australia, and a significant number of tourists, fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers, drive-in-drive-out (DIDO) workers and road freight pass through Port Augusta every year and the city is the base for a number of services to the Far North including the School of the Air and Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) (Figure 10). In 2024, the RFDS commenced its plans to build a new \$21 million health, research and education centre with funding support from the Government of South Australia.

Figure 10 – Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Central Operations Base, Port Augusta



Source: Royal Flying Doctor Service, Port Augusta

6.3.3 Carrapateena Mine

The transfer system footprint incorporates a delivery point at the Carrapateena mine site located north of Pernatty Lagoon and the Mount Gunson copper mine and south of Lake Windabout. The Carrapateena lateral pipeline follows established roads to a delivery point for the mine site, which provides for a predominately FIFO workforce, minerals processing and an airstrip.

6.3.4 Stuart Highway to Pimba

From Yarrah, located to the north of Port Augusta, the pipeline generally follows the path of the Stuart Highway through sparsely populated arid land environments featuring salt lakes, large pastoral stations and mining operations.

The Project footprint follows the Stuart Highway to the small settlement of Pimba, which sits at the start of the Olympic Dam Highway. Pimba was established in association with the Adelaide-Darwin Railway and is home to Pimba Rail Station, Spud's Roadhouse (refer Figure 11) and a small number of dwellings.

Figure 11 – Spud's Roadhouse, Pimba

Source: Spud's Roadhouse, Pimba

6.3.5 Woomera

The transfer system footprint extends from Pimba to Woomera along the Olympic Dam Highway, noting that the transfer system 'bypasses' the township itself and any Commonwealth land via a route to the east. Woomera is a small township owned and operated by the Australian Defence Force as part of the Royal Australian Air Force Woomera Range Complex, a large aerospace and systems testing facility. The complex is located on the south-eastern edge of the Woomera Prohibited Area. With a history as a defence town, Woomera has experienced a declining population since its establishment after the Second World War, with a small increase during the late 1990s and early 2000s when the Woomera Immigration Detention Centre was active. Woomera remains home to a small number of mostly workers associated with the defence industry but is a tourist attraction due to its museums and missile park.

6.3.6 Roxby Downs and Andamooka

The town of Roxby Downs (refer Figure 12) sits in the northernmost extent of the Project footprint and has a population associated with the operations of the Olympic Dam Mine and was established in the late 1980s. To the north is the Arid Recovery Reserve and to the northeast the small township of Andamooka, which was established around a pastoral station and later opal mining. Roxby Downs and Andamooka are wholly dependent on water from the GAB drawn via the mine operations.

Figure 12 – Roxby Downs

Source: Roxby Council

7 Demographic Profile

This demographic profile refers to the ABS statistical areas detailed in Section 4 and presents a detailed baseline for the area impacted by the Project for:

- Population and growth
- Age
- Birthplace, ancestry and language
- Aboriginal population and language
- Households and families
- Migration
- Education
- Health and wellbeing, and
- Transport and access.

7.1 Population and Growth

7.1.1 Population distribution and change

At the time of the Census of Population and Housing 2021 (2021 Census), the population counted at home for the Eyre Peninsula and South West region comprised 3.2%, and the Outback North and East region 1.4% of South Australia's total population.

Most of this population resided in the larger urban areas including within Whyalla and Port Augusta (refer Table 4). The population of the three smaller urban centres/localities within the study area were 132 in Woomera, 260 in Andamooka, and 3,671 in Roxby Downs.

Across the region, population over the five years 2016-2021 has been generally steady, with the Eyre and South West experiencing a small increase of 1% and the Outback North and East a small decline of -2%. All three local government areas have experienced population decreases over the 10-year period including the City of Whyalla (-842 people), Roxby Downs Council (-726) and Port Augusta City Council (-158). It should be noted that the function of Roxby Downs as a mining town makes it more sensitive to population fluctuations associated with the operations of the mine.

Table 4 – Population and Growth 2016-2021

	Usual residents			Population change	Population change	Male: Female ratio
	2021	2016	2011	2016-21	2011-21	2021
	No.	No.	No.	%	%	
Urban Centres/Localities (UCL)						
Whyalla UCL	20,880	-	-	-	-	50:50
Port Augusta UCL	12,788	-	-	-	-	52:48
Andamooka UCL	260	-	-	-	-	54:46
Roxby Downs UCL	3,671	-	-	-	-	52:48
Woomera UCL	132	-	-	-	-	58:45
Local Government Areas						
Port Augusta City Council	13,829	13,812	13,987	0%	-1%	52:48
City of Whyalla	21,244	21,829	22,086	-3%	-4%	50:50

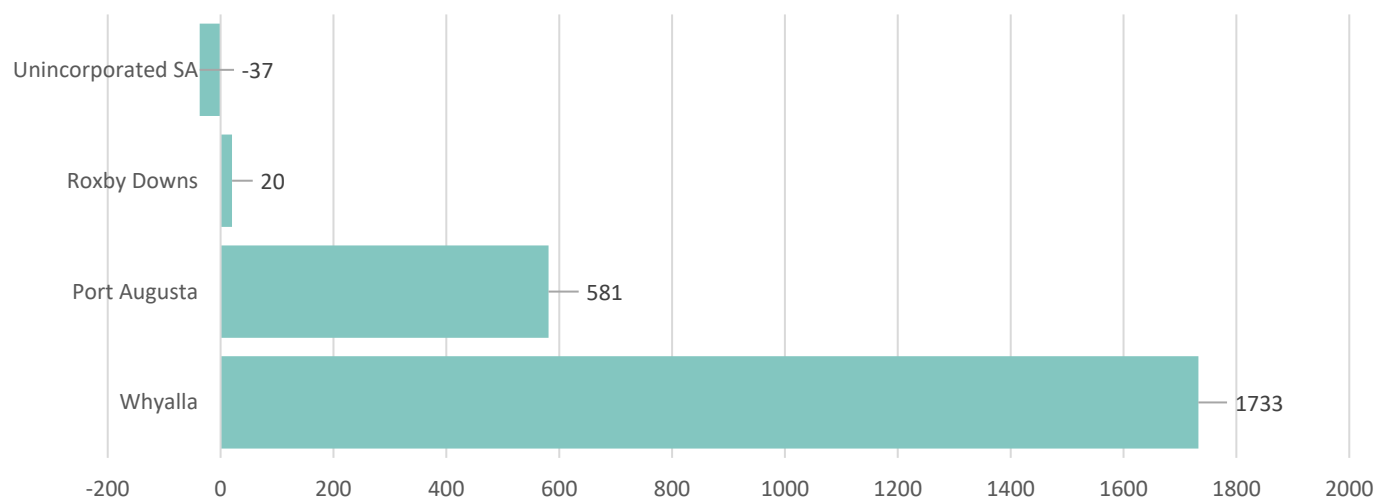
	Usual residents			Population change	Population change	Male: Female ratio
	2021	2016	2011	2016-21	2011-21	2021
	No.	No.	No.	%	%	
Roxby Downs Council	3,976	3,881	4,702	2%	-15%	54:46
Unincorporated SA	3,006	3,524	4,441	-0.1%	-0.3%	58:42
Statistical Areas Level 3						
Eyre Peninsula and South West	57,092	56,611	56,396	1%	1%	50:50
Outback North and East	25,560	26,202	28,220	-2%	-9%	52:48
State						
South Australia	1,781,516	1,676,653	1,596,570	6%	12%	49:51

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021

7.1.2 Population projections

Population Projections to 2041 have been prepared by the Government of South Australia based on the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (Plan SA, 2021) for the local government areas relevant to this report, including the unincorporated areas of South Australia. Projected population change (median series) to 2041 for these three areas is depicted in Figure 13.

Figure 13 – Projected Population Change by Local Government Area (Medium Series) 2021-2041



Source: Government of South Australia 2024

Whyalla is the third most populous city in South Australia behind Adelaide and Mount Gambier. Whilst Whyalla's population has declined over the last 10 years, with industrial growth, it is projected to grow its permanent population over the next 20 years by 1,733 people, an average of 87 people per year (Government of South Australia, 2023).

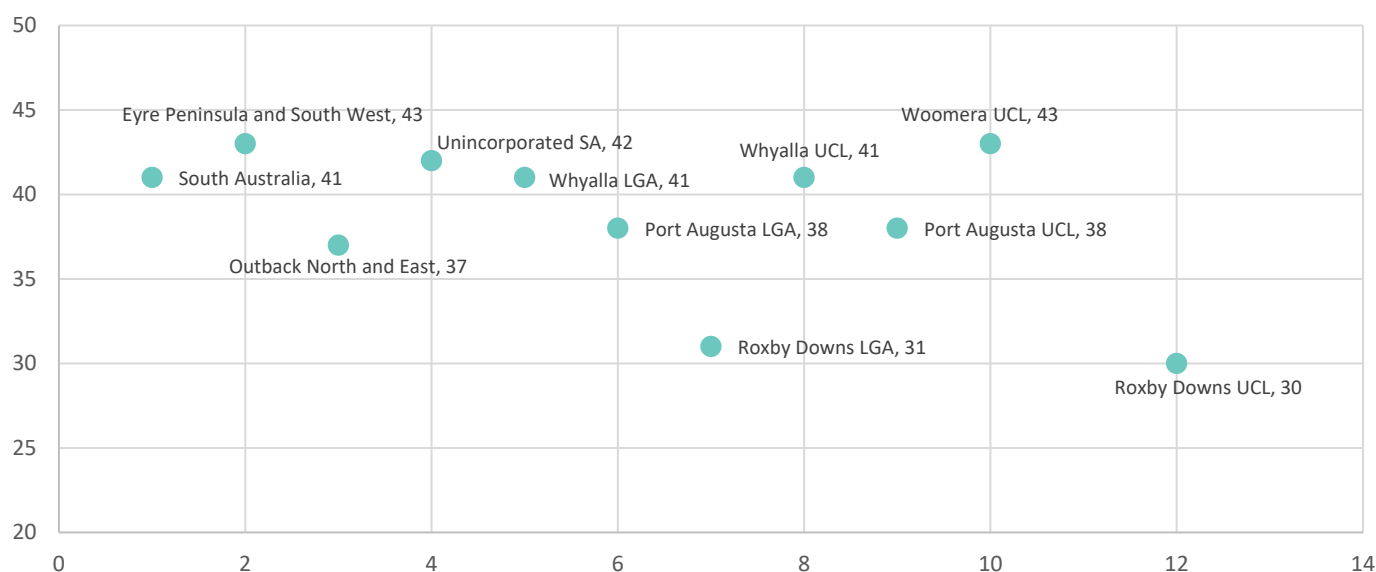
7.2 Age

7.2.1 Median age

At the time of the 2021 Census, the median age of usual residents in the study area varied from 30 years in Roxby Downs to 43 years in the towns of Woomera and Andamooka, and for the Eyre and South West region (refer to Figure 14).

Of interest is the lower median ages of settlements located inland in closer proximity to working pastoral areas when compared to coastal settlements, which are more likely to be popular retirement locations. Roxby Downs' very low median age reflects its status as a mining town, with a proportionally large working population. The Cities of Whyalla and Port Augusta have median ages the same as, or slightly lower than South Australia's.

Figure 14 - Median Age for townships, local government areas, regions and South Australia, 2021

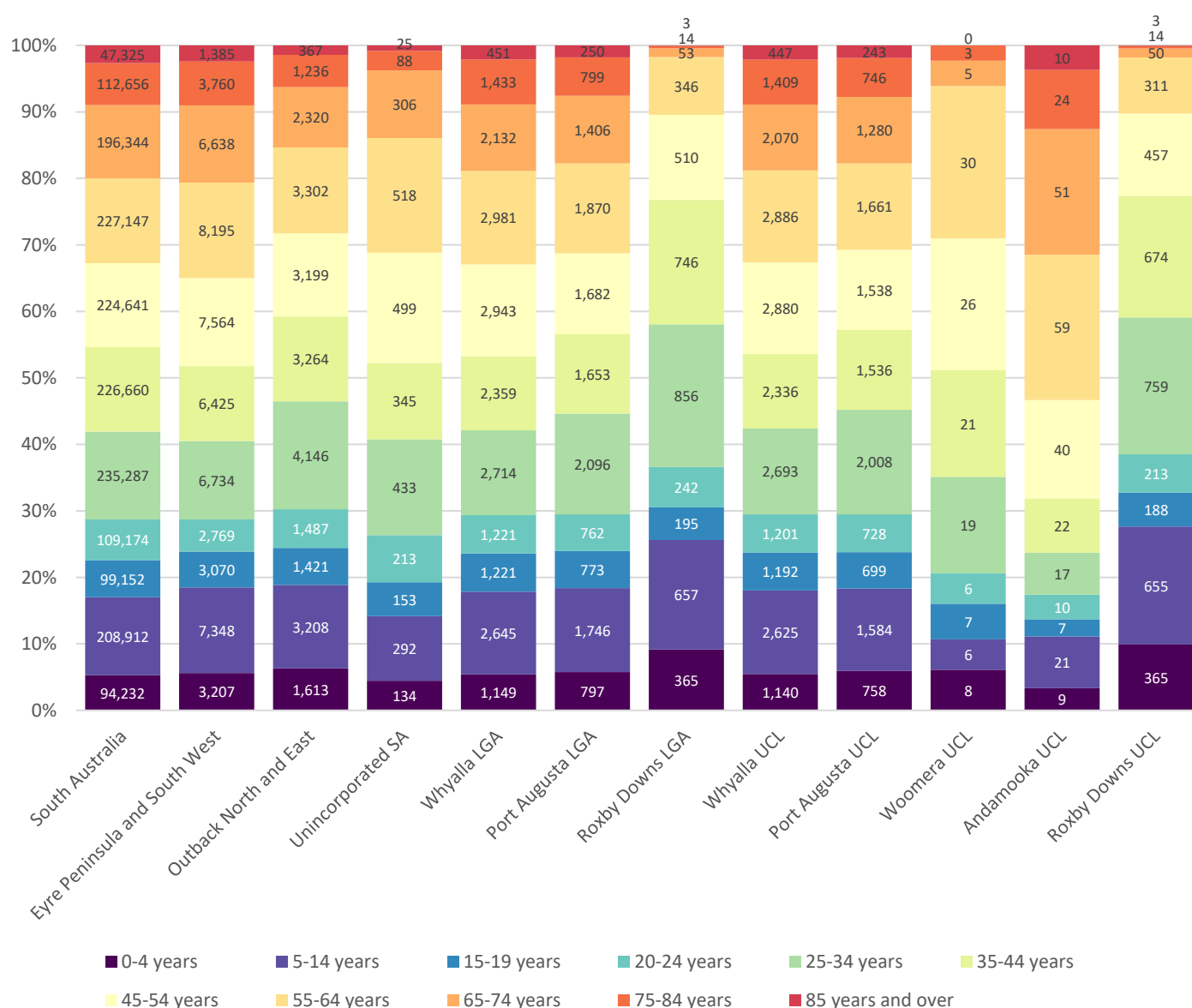


Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021

Age profile

The age profile for each of the study areas is depicted in Figure 15. Roxby Downs LGA and township is notable for its younger age profile, with 77.7% of the township's population aged under 45 years, compared with all other study areas that ranged between 33.1% in Andamooka to 57.2% in the Port Augusta UCL. The township of Andamooka had the oldest age profile, with 32.7% of its population aged 65 and over.

An analysis of the age structure for Whyalla indicates that, when compared with South Australia it has higher proportions of children aged under 15 years, working aged people 45-54 years, pre-retirees 55-64 years, and older people aged 75-84 years. Whilst Whyalla has similar (or slightly lower) proportions of people aged 15-24 years and 25-34 years when compared with South Australia, proportions of working age people 34-44, and younger retirees aged 65-74 are lower. The total number of pre-school aged children aged under five years living in Whyalla in 2021 was 1,149.

Figure 15 – Age Profile, Study Areas, 2021

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

7.3 Birthplace, Ancestry and Language

7.3.1 Place of birth and ancestry

At the time of the 2021 Census, the large majority of residents in all study areas were born in Australia with higher proportions of those born in Australia when compared with South Australia (71.5%), ranging from 74.3% in Roxby Downs LGA to 83.4% in Port Augusta. Other places of birth were predominately England, India, New Zealand and Germany, although the numbers of overseas born were generally low in all study areas.

A total of 76.1% of the population of Whyalla were born in Australia, compared with 81.4% for the Eyre Peninsula and South West region, and 71.5% for South Australia. Other main countries of birth were England, Scotland, Philippines and India.

Across all study areas, self-nominated ancestry generally reflected place of birth, with a focus on Australian, English, Irish, Scottish, Australian Aboriginal and German backgrounds. The larger cities of Port Augusta and Whyalla had a greater diversity of ancestry than smaller townships.

7.3.2 Language spoken at home

Across most study areas, language spoken home was almost universally English and generally higher than for South Australia (77.6%), with the exception of Unincorporated SA (70.7%). The proportion of people who spoke English only ranged from 70.7% in Unincorporated SA to 89.4% in Woomera.

Across all the study areas, the numbers and proportions of people who did not speak English well or not at all were very low compared with South Australia (2.7%) and ranged from 0% in Andamooka and Woomera to 1.6% in Outback North and East.

Households speaking another language other than English at home were more common in the very remote areas of Outback North and East and Unincorporated SA, and the larger population centres of Roxby Downs, Port Augusta and Whyalla with Southeast Asian Austronesian languages, Indo-Aryan languages being amongst the most common languages spoken in the larger population centres.

Across the Outback North and East Statistical Area and Unincorporated SA, the most dominant language spoken at home other than English was Australian Indigenous Languages. Within Unincorporated SA, 11.8% of the population spoke an Australian Indigenous Language at home. Australian Indigenous Languages were also more commonly spoken in non-English speaking households in the cities of Port Augusta.

A total of 70 residents of Whyalla (0.3%) indicated that they spoke English not well or not at all, a relatively low proportion when compared with South Australia (2.1%). Key languages other than English spoken in Whyalla were Indo-Aryan languages including Punjabi and Hindi, South East Asian Austronesian languages (including Tagalog and Filipino), Afrikaans, Italian, Greek, Spanish and Chinese languages.

7.4 Aboriginal Population and Language

7.4.1 Aboriginal population

Across Australia, the ABS estimates that in 2023, 39% of Aboriginal people lived in major cities, 44% in inner and outer regional areas, and 17% in remote and very remote areas (ABS, 2021).

At the time of the 2021 Census (ABS, 2021), Aboriginal populations were more likely to reside in the Port Augusta LGA (2,825 people) or Whyalla LGA (1,160). Both cities had higher proportions of Aboriginal residents (20.4% and 5.5% respectively) when compared to South Australia (2.4%). Outside of the two cities, higher numbers of Aboriginal populations were more likely to reside in Roxby Downs LGA (198, or 5.0%), or Unincorporated SA (733, or 22.9%).

At the time of the Census 2021, 5.5% of the population of Whyalla were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (1,093 Aboriginal, 24 Torres Strait Islander and 44 both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander), which is lower than for the Eyre Peninsula and South West region (6.7%), but higher than for South Australia (2.4%).

The median age of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Whyalla was significantly lower than the median age of the total population of Whyalla in 2021, at just 23 years of age compared with 41 years of age. A total of 35.7% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Whyalla was aged under 15 years and a total of 52.9% were aged under 25 years. Just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Whyalla 5.8% were aged 65 years and over.

Whilst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up a relatively low proportion of Whyalla's population, they nevertheless represent a higher proportion (5.5%) of the population when compared with South Australia (2.4%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Whyalla have a significantly young median age when compared with the broad population of Whyalla and are far more likely to live in households with children.

7.4.2 Aboriginal language

Language, together with ceremony, connection to place, and story-telling is used by Aboriginal communities not only for communication but to pass on cultural knowledge and tradition (Bourke et al. 2018). At the time of the Census of Population and Housing, 3,031 people were recorded as speaking an Australian Aboriginal Language at home across the Eyre and South West and Outback North and East Statistical Areas. In the Eyre and South West 662 (1.2%), and in the Outback North and East Statistical Area, 2,369 (9.3%) of the population spoke an Australian Aboriginal Language at home.

Of significance is the high proportion of people speaking an Australian Aboriginal Language at home in Unincorporated SA at 354 (11.8%) and the Port Augusta LGA at 264 people (1.9%). A total of 50 Whyalla residents (0.2%) spoke an Aboriginal language at home. A total of 90.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Whyalla used only English at home.

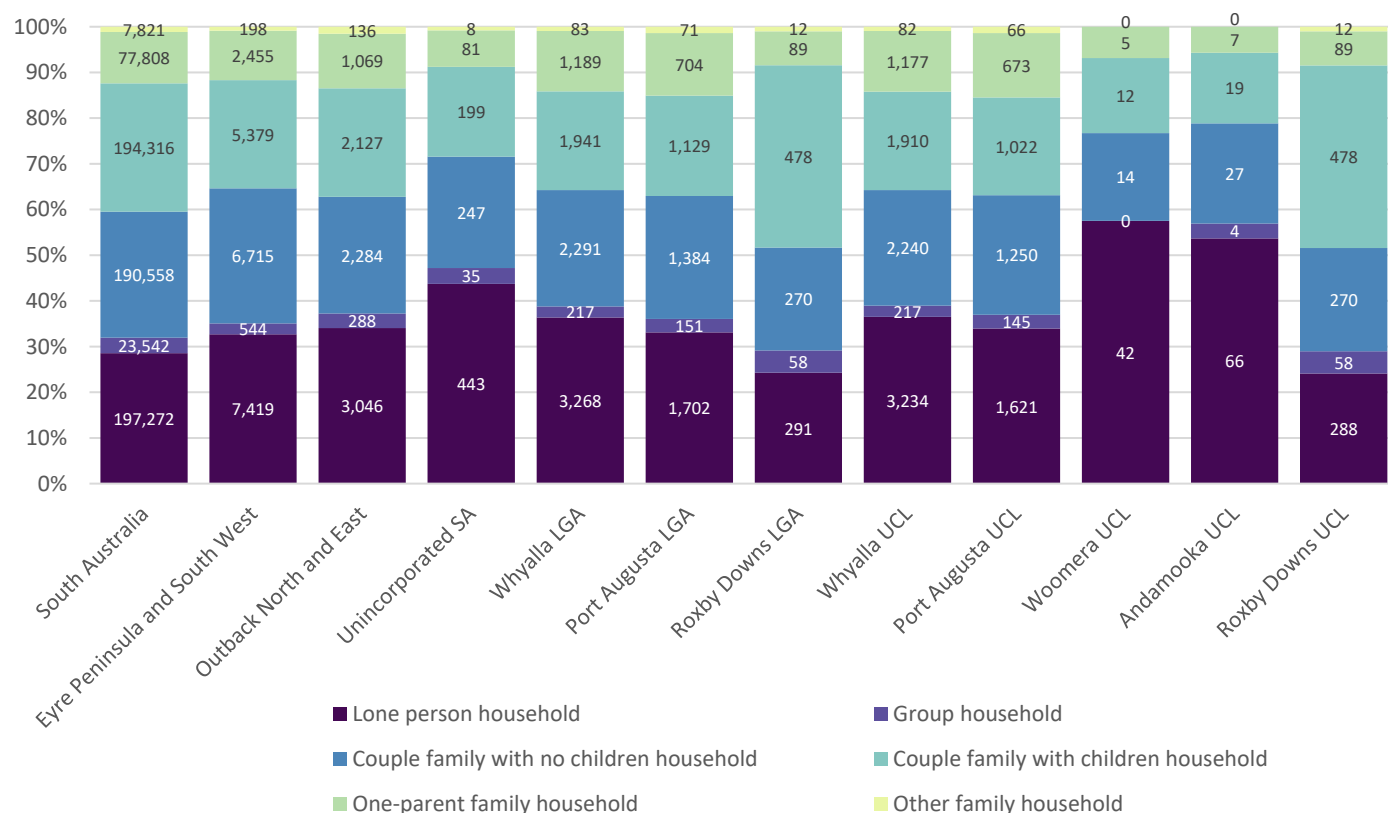
7.5 Households and Families

All study areas (other than Roxby Downs) had higher proportions of lone person households when compared with South Australia (28.5%), with Woomera and Andamooka Urban Centres and Localities (UCL) having the highest proportions at 57.5% and 51.2% respectively. Roxby Downs LGA and UCL had relatively low proportions of lone person families at 24.4% and 24.1% respectively. Refer Figure 16.

Notably, Roxby Downs had very high proportions of family households, with 47.4% of all households being families with children, compared with South Australia (39.4%). Single parent households were more prevalent in the two cities of Port Augusta and Whyalla, where the proportion of one-parent households were 13.7% and 13.2% respectively, compared with 11.3% for South Australia.

When comparing the household and family characteristics of Whyalla, of particular note is the higher proportions of single person households when compared with the Eyre Peninsula and South West and South Australia. The proportion of single-parent families is also higher in Whyalla. Whyalla also has lower proportions of couple households and couples with children, and a slightly lower proportion of group households. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Whyalla were more likely to live in a family with children (either a couple family or a one-parent family) and less likely to live in a single person or as a couple with no children.

Single person households are the dominant form of household in Whyalla and represent 36.4% of all households in Whyalla, in contrast to 32.7% in the Eyre Peninsula and South West and 28.5% in South Australia. Notwithstanding this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Whyalla were much less likely to live alone and more likely to live in either one-parent family or couple with children families.

Figure 16 – Household and Family Type, 2021

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021

7.6 Migration

The Census records where people were living at a different address one year ago and five years ago to help identify internal migration patterns.

Generally, there were lower rates of population movement in most study areas compared with South Australia, with the exception of Woomera and Roxby Downs, which had higher proportional levels of inward migration. It should be noted however that whilst proportionally higher, actual numbers are low.

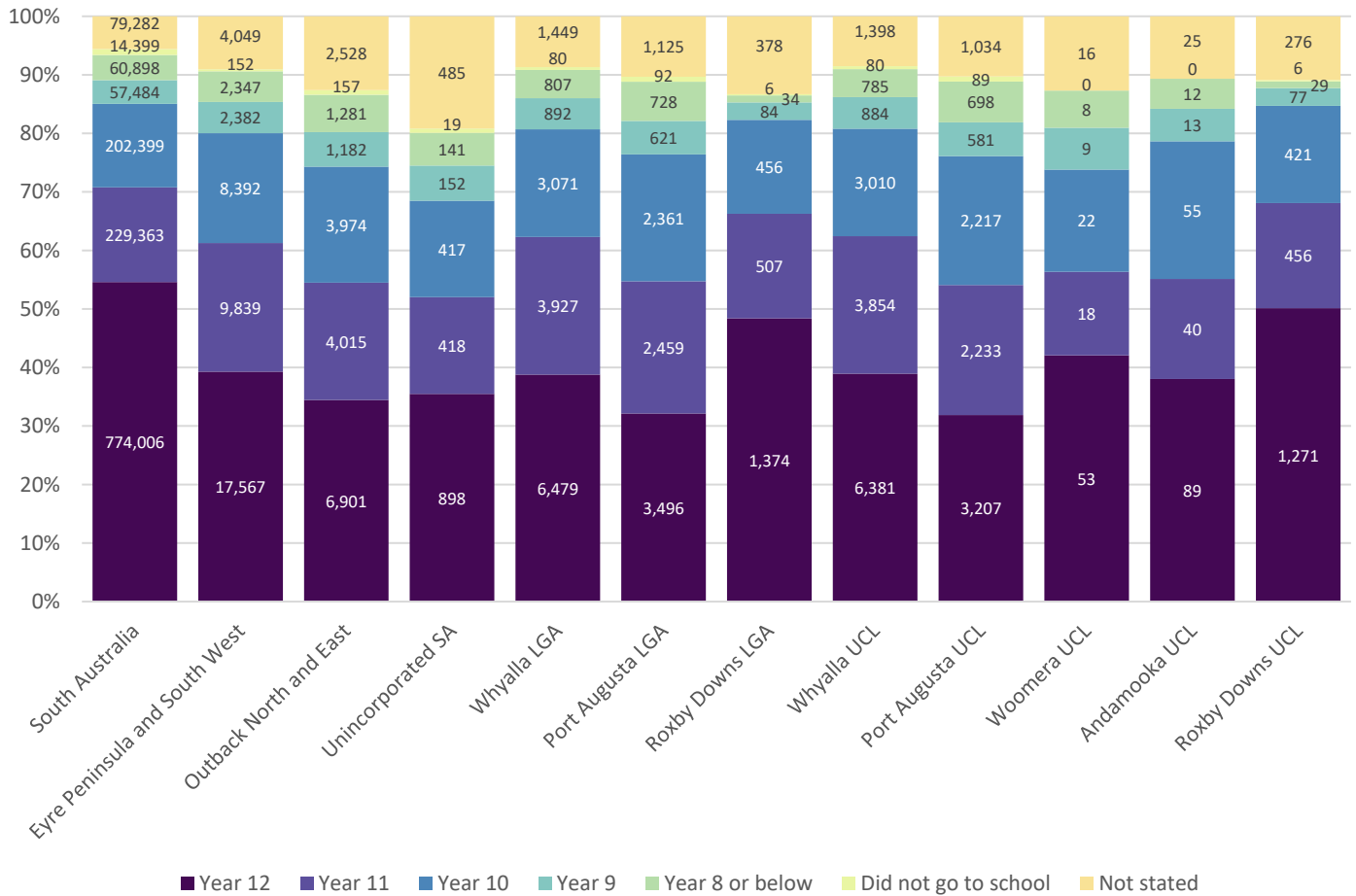
Some areas were more likely to receive new residents from outside the same Statistical Area Level 2 and these included Woomera, Roxby Downs and Andamooka. Again, high proportions do not necessarily equate to high numbers due to the low populations in these locations. These arrivals were much more likely to come from within South Australia, although some areas experienced inward migration from interstate or overseas albeit at lower rates.

7.7 Education

7.7.1 Educational attainment

School Completion

At the time of the 2021 Census, most study areas had lower rates of year 12 completion when compared with South Australia (refer Figure 17). Roxby Downs however had higher rates of year 11 and 12 completion when compared with the rest of the study areas, more similar to that of South Australia.

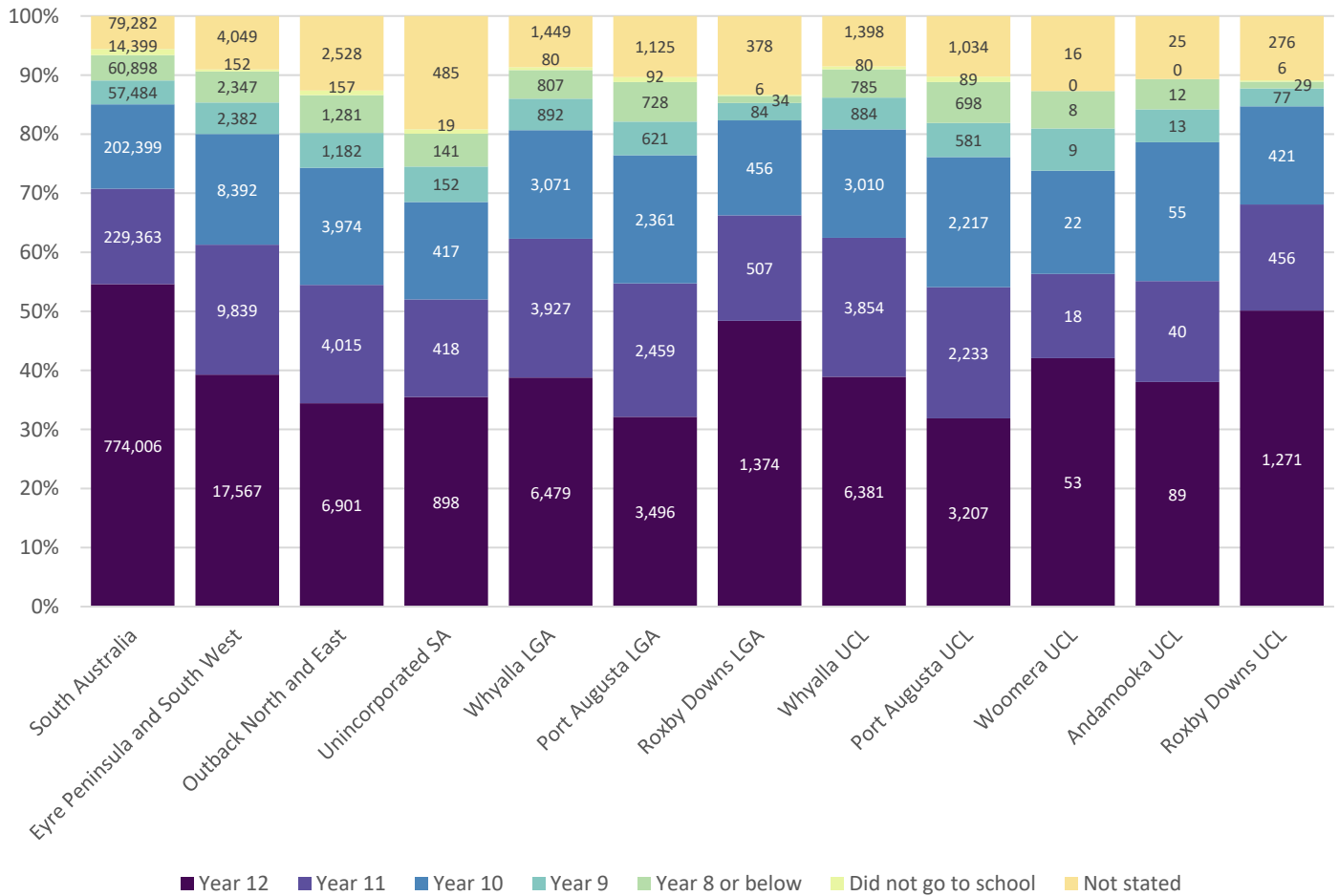
Figure 17 – Highest Level of School Education Completed, 2021

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021

Post school qualifications

At the time of the 2021 Census, proportions of Postgraduate, Graduate Diploma and Bachelor Degree level qualifications were relatively low in all study areas when compared with South Australia. Proportions of people with certificate level qualifications were higher however in all study areas when compared with South Australia (refer Figure 18), with over half of people over 15 years of age with a post-school qualification in Whyalla, Woomera, Andamooka and Roxby Downs having a certificate highest qualification level compared with 35.0% for South Australia.

Figure 18 – Highest Level of Non-School Qualification Completed, 2021



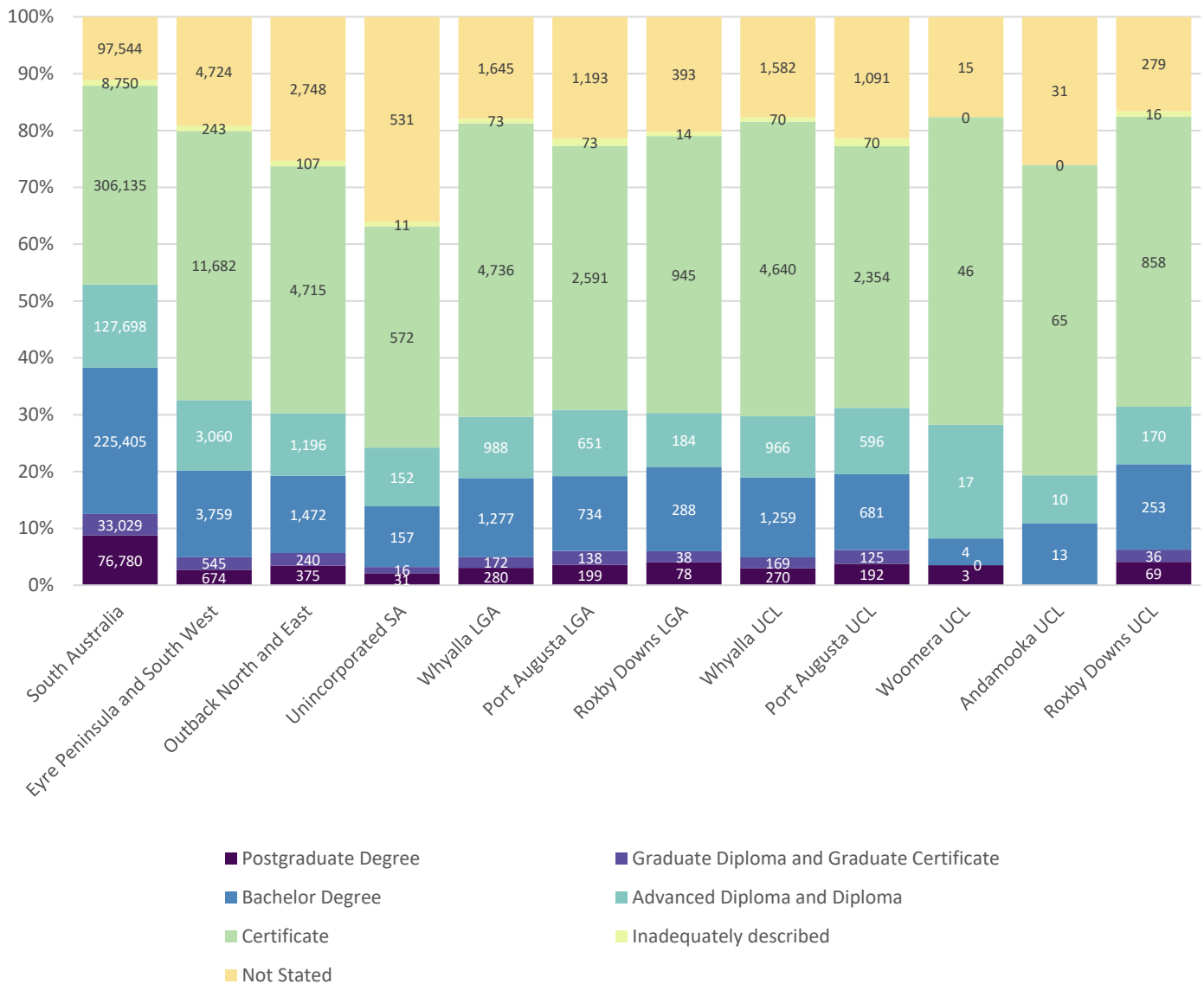
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021

7.7.2 Attending education

At the time of the 2021 Census, most study areas recorded similar or higher proportions of people attending an educational institution when compared with South Australia (28.0%), except for Woomera (18.2%) and Andamooka (20.8%). Roxby Downs had a relatively high proportion at 34.3%.

Of note is the relatively high proportion of people attending a preschool or primary school in Roxby Downs compared with South Australia, which reflects the higher proportion of families with children. With the exception of Andamooka, the proportion of people attending a secondary school or university across the study areas is lower than for South Australia, whilst attendance at tertiary vocation institution is approaching that of the State's within Roxby Downs, Whyalla and Port Augusta. Refer to Figure 19.

Figure 19 – Type of Education Currently Attending, 2021

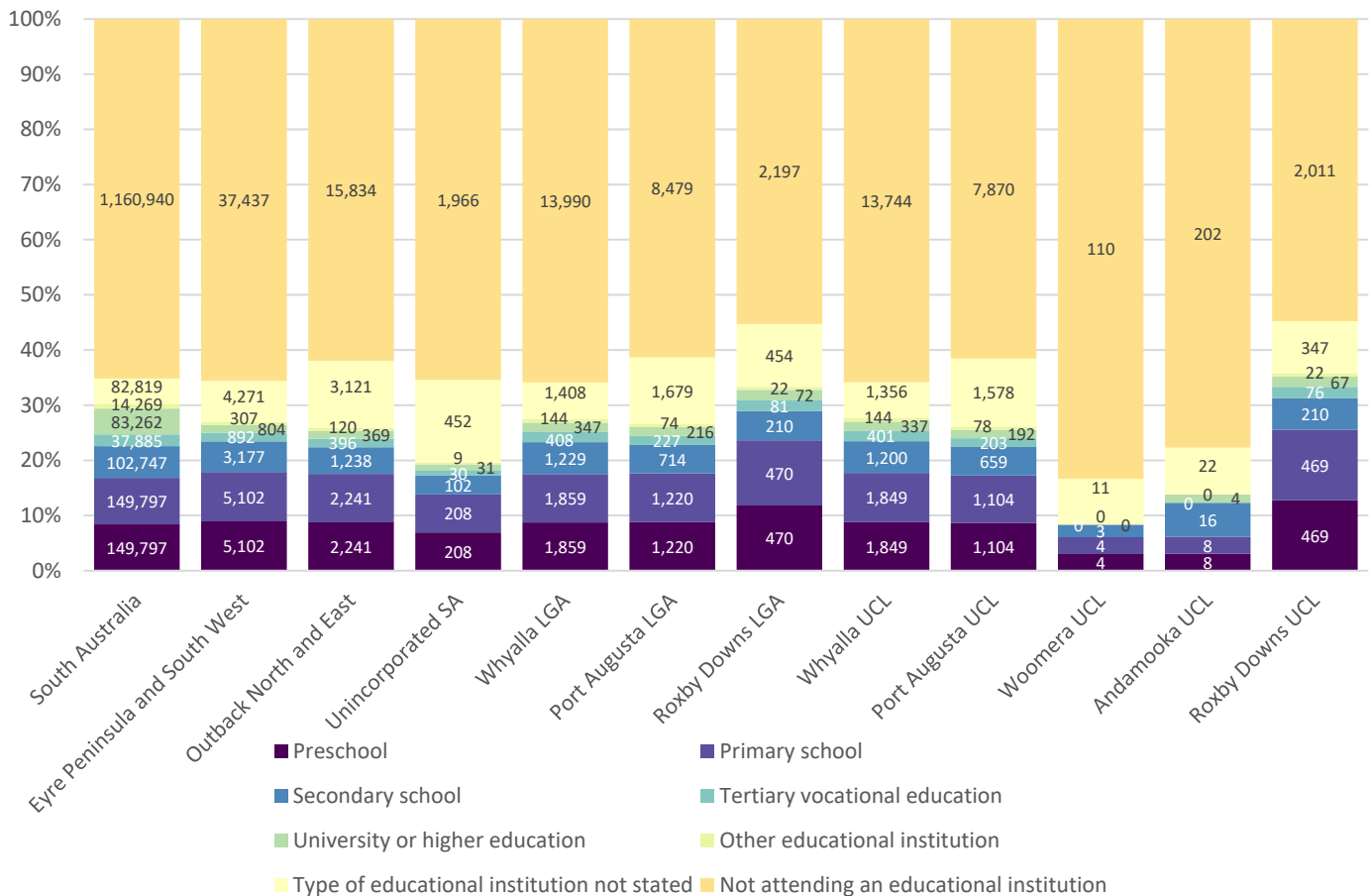


Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021

7.7.3 Household income

Median total household weekly incomes vary across the study areas with most having lower incomes when compared with South Australia (\$1,455). Exceptions to this were Roxby Downs and Woomera with \$3,142 and \$1,829 respectively, reflecting their association with the mining and defence industries. Andamooka had the lowest median household income (\$705). Refer Figure 20.

Figure 20 – Median Total Household Weekly Income, 2021



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

7.8 Health and Wellbeing

7.8.1 Advantage and disadvantage (SEIFA)

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Australia (SEIFA) (developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics) was last updated in 2023 and uses a number of indicators to calculate relative socio-economic disadvantage. For the purposes of this report, the various indexes have been reviewed by percentile across Australia at the Local Government Level.

In relation to relative socio-economic disadvantage, which is calculated having regard to the number of people with low incomes, low levels of qualification, unemployment, low rent, high disability and low skilled occupations, Whyalla and Port Augusta have relatively high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, similar to the unincorporated (remote) parts of South Australia. Roxby Downs has, by contrast, a very low index, indicating higher incomes, qualifications and employment. The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage, which also takes into account indicators of advantage, shows a similar outcome across the area (refer Table 5).

The Index of Economic Resources focuses on financial indicators including income, wealth and home ownership. Again, this Index shows a similar outcome as the more general indices of disadvantage and advantage. For Roxby Downs, it indicates that the township's relative lack of disadvantage is not due to income and wealth alone. In particular, the low level of home ownership in Roxby Downs may have resulted in the Index of Economic Resources being higher than for general disadvantage.

The final Index of Education and Occupation focuses on indicators that include qualifications and occupation, with a low score indicating larger numbers of people with no qualifications, higher unemployment and higher numbers of people with low skilled occupations. Again, the City of Whyalla and the City of Port Augusta have relatively low scores, whilst Roxby Downs and the unincorporated parts of South Australia have higher scores. For Roxby Downs, the percentile is higher than for general disadvantage and economic resources indicating that there may be a high proportion of lower skilled occupations or levels of education, notwithstanding higher incomes. For Unincorporated SA, the relatively high score compared to the other indices may indicate that there are higher levels of employment, education and occupation skill level, notwithstanding other factors of disadvantage such as lower incomes, higher levels of disability, lower rents, low internet connectivity, or single parent status.

Table 5 – Socio-Economic Indexes for Australia (SEIFA) – Percentiles within Australia (selected local government areas)

Area	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage	Index of Economic Resources	Index of Education and Occupation
City of Whyalla	10 th	9 th	10 th	7 th
City of Port Augusta	11 th	10 th	11 th	8 th
Roxby Downs Council	90 th	79 th	75 th	32 nd
Unincorporated SA*	13 th	18 th	10 th	16 th

*includes Andamooka and other localities within Unincorporated SA. Source: ABS SEIFA, 2023

7.8.2 Persons needing assistance

The Census collects information about persons needing assistance by age group and this can be used as an indicator of disability, especially if assessed in the context of age parameters. Within the study areas, those that recorded higher proportions of people needing assistance when compared with South Australia (6.7%) were Andamooka (10.0%), Whyalla (7.8%) and Woomera (7.6%), potentially indicating a higher demand for community support and health services and a higher vulnerability to health and wellbeing complications.

7.8.3 Health

At the time of the 2021 Census, people were asked to identify if they had a long-term health condition (including arthritis, asthma, cancer, dementia, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, lung conditions, mental health condition, and stroke). Across South Australia, 31.0% of the population indicated that they had one or more long-term health conditions, and 9.8% indicated specifically that they had a long-term mental health condition.

When compared with South Australia as a whole, rates of people who identified that they had a long-term health condition were particularly high in Andamooka (43.5%) and Woomera (37.9%). In Whyalla, 35.3% of the population indicated that they had one or more long-term health condition, which was higher than for South Australia (31.0%).

According to the AIHW, in 2020-21 (AIHW 2022), the Eyre Peninsula had the highest age-standardised rate of potentially preventable hospitalisations (3,485 per 100,000 population) among all regions in South Australia. The Eyre Peninsula also had the highest age-standardised rate of potentially preventable hospitalisations for chronic conditions (2,187 per 100,000 population) and the second highest age-standardised rate of potentially preventable hospitalisations for acute conditions (1,298 per 100,000 population) among all regions in South Australia.

In terms of mortality, the Eyre Peninsula had the highest age-standardised rate of deaths from all causes (783 per 100,000 population) and the highest age-standardised rate of deaths from avoidable causes (268 per 100,000 population) among all regions in South Australia in 2018-20. The Eyre Peninsula also had the highest age-standardised rate of deaths from cardiovascular diseases (225 per 100,000 population) and the second highest age-standardised rate of deaths from cancer (198 per 100,000 population) among all regions in South Australia in 2018-20.

7.8.4 Mental health

Specifically in relation to mental health, rates of people who identified that they had a long-term mental health condition when compared with South Australia (9.8%) were higher in Andamooka (10.8%), Whyalla (10.7%) and Woomera (10.6%) (ABS, 2021).

Mental Health Australia (MHA, 2023) estimates that 29.0% of the population of the Eyre Peninsula and South West, and 30.0% of the Outback North and East experienced high psychological distress during the National Health Survey, 2022. Using mental health services demand and supply data, Mental Health Australia also identified areas of concern by ranking psychological distress as an indicator of need, and mental health service use as an indicator of access. Statistical Areas were rated according to five different levels of concern, where areas with higher psychological distress and lower service access were rated as the highest concern (severe).

The Eyre Peninsula and South West, and the Outback North and East Statistical Areas were identified as two of just three Statistical Area Level 3s that were of highest concern across South Australia, with the third area being the Barossa Statistical Area. Mental Health Australia research indicates that people of greatest concern include those living regionally or remotely, young people, people on low incomes, unemployed, and those living in single parent households.

For 2022, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare records the age-standardised rate of suicide per 100,000 people as 24.5 for very remote and 23.7 for remote locations, compared with 16.0 and 16.2 for outer and inner regional areas, and 10.5 for major cities. An increase in suicide rates for remote and very remote areas can also be seen to increase since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (AIHW, 2022).

Whilst Mental Health Australia (MHA, 2023) estimates that there are nearly twice the number of psychologists and more than twice the number of psychiatrists per head of population in major cities compared to regional areas, Whyalla is home to the Country and Outback Mental Health Service and performs an important Mental Health service provision role across the Eyre Peninsula and Outback.

7.8.5 Volunteering

Volunteering is recognised as an indicator of community wellbeing due to its links to social connectivity, physical and mental health, sense of purpose and connection to place. It can also help build social cohesion and networks, support mechanisms in times of need and community resilience (Volunteering Australia, 2023). Common forms of volunteering include giving time to health agencies, sporting clubs, community progress groups, community transport programs, environmental groups such as Bush for Life and Coastcare, emergency services such as the Country Fire Service (CFS), councils and schools.

At the time of the 2021 Census of Population and Housing, 17.0% of all people in South Australia over 15 years of age reported that they undertook voluntary work for an organisation or group. Across the study areas, rates of volunteerism were significantly higher in rural areas and smaller townships. The Eyre Peninsula and South West, Outback North and East, and Unincorporated SA all had higher rates of volunteering (22.0%, 15.0% and 21.7% respectively) when compared with the more urban areas of Whyalla and Port Augusta (14.5% and 13.7%). The townships of Woomera, Andamooka and Roxby Downs also had high levels of volunteering (35.3%, 20.6% and 14.8% respectively). This is consistent with Australia's General Social Survey (ABS, 2026), which found that people living in remote, inner regional and outer regional Australia were more likely to volunteer than those in major cities.

7.8.6 Community support

Community services are commonly provided by not-for-profit sectors and local government and include community centres, support services and programs, places of worship and support organisations. Such services not only meet the specific needs of the local community but can also provide important meeting spaces and social interaction that help ensure mental wellbeing. Community services provided in Whyalla are focused on housing support, mental health and general community support services. Whyalla also has a number of services that provide particular support to people recovering from or living with major health challenges.

Sporting, hobby, service and other clubs that encourage social networking, health and physical activity are acknowledged to play an important part in the health of rural communities (Townsend, Moore and Mahoney, 2002). Tonts, 2005 also states that *‘sport is often regarded as an important part of life in rural Australia, contributing to community identity, sense of place, social interaction and good health’*, and Lyons et al states that *‘community groups, such as charities, sports clubs, and arts and hobby groups, bring residents together and provide group members with opportunities to give and receive social support, such as a sense of belonging, practical help, or emotional support’*.

7.9 Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing

The National Indigenous Australians Agency identifies connection to family and community, land and sea, culture and identity as being a significant determinant of health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (NIAA, 2024) and reports a range of socio-economic health and wellbeing outcomes from ongoing access to traditional lands as well as negative outcomes associated with disconnection from Country, which it likens to a form of homelessness.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey of 10,500 people across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020) reported that in South Australia:

- Four in 10 (39%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged over 15 years reported their own health as excellent or very good, which was lower than that for Australia (45%).
- Around 4 in 10 (44%) young people aged 2-17 were overweight or obese.
- Hypertension affects 7% of people, in line with the national average of 8%.
- Diabetes affects 9% of people, in line with the national average.
- 30% of people aged over two years reported experiencing mental or behavioural conditions, in line with the national average, and was generally higher in non-remote areas than remote areas.
- Asthma affects around 2 in 10 (23%) people, higher than the national average of 16%.
- Around 4 in 10 (38%) people aged over seven years had a hearing impairment in one or both ears.

The survey also reported that 15% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in South Australia said they needed to go to a doctor at least once in the last 12 months, but did not go (24% of adults aged over 18 years, and 3% of young people aged under 18 years).

At the regional level, health outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North reflect, and in places exceed, the disparities seen in the state and national data above. Chronic disease rates across country South Australia are consistently above the state average, and rates among the Aboriginal population are higher than for other groups across every chronic disease and risk factor, likely driving the elevated rates seen across the Outback (Country SA PHN, Needs Assessment 2022-2025). This is reflected in hospitalisation patterns, with potentially preventable hospitalisations for chronic conditions higher than the state average in most country regions and highest in the Outback North and East.

Service access is reported as a recurring barrier, with only around one in three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people access the 715 Health Check in country South Australia, against a national target of two in three, and workforce rates per 1,000 population for allied health disciplines, including podiatrists, psychologists, registered nurses, optometrists and physiotherapists, sit below state averages across all Country SA PHN regions despite the higher burden of chronic disease and mental illness. Stakeholders have also identified a shortage of workforce and primary health services providing culturally appropriate care, cultural communication and Aboriginal-specific resources.

Locally, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations remain central to service delivery, with Pika Wiya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation serving Port Augusta and surrounding communities and Nunyara Aboriginal Health Service delivering primary health care to more than 1,400 Aboriginal people in Whyalla.

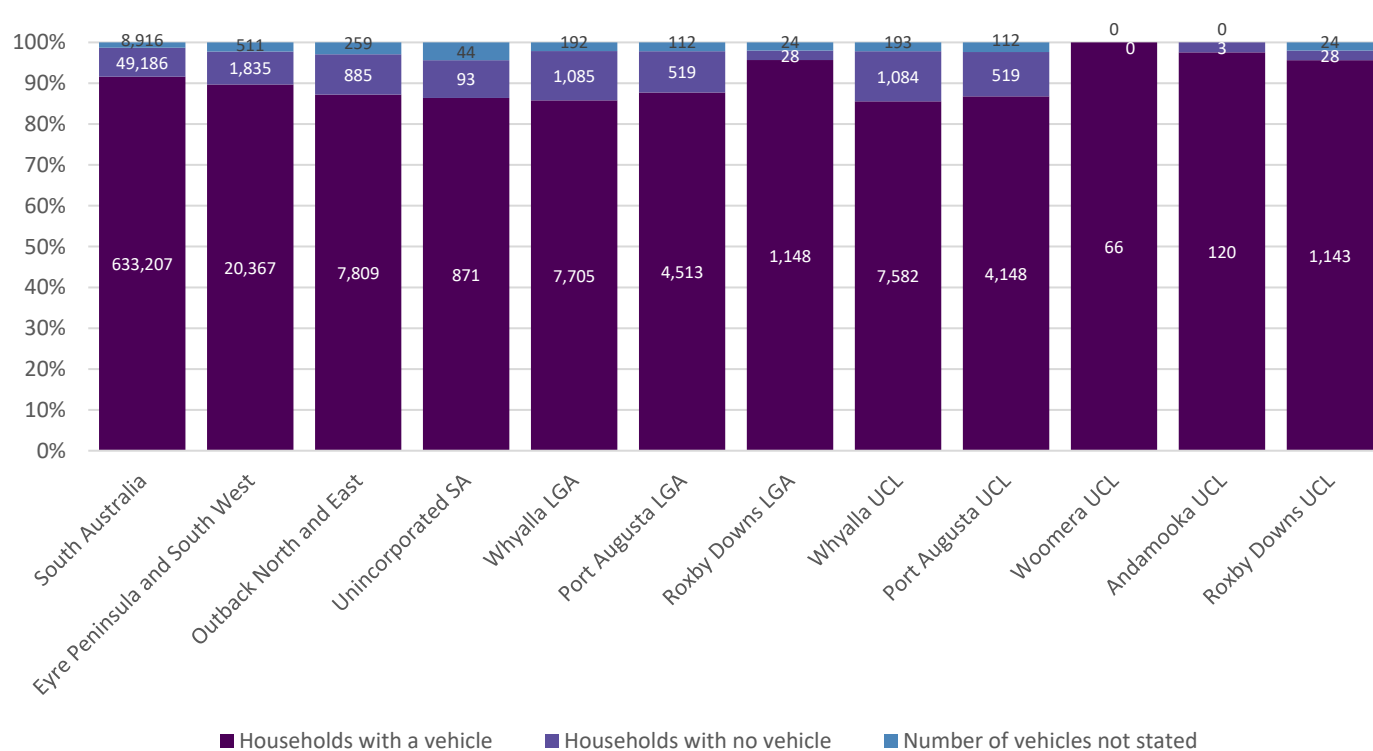
7.10 Transport and Access

7.10.1 Road network and car use

The road network across the Eyre Peninsula and Far North is dominated by two lane single carriageway highways supported by a small number of sealed connections and a significant, unsealed road network. Discussions with local government representatives indicates that there is a high community dependence on a small number of major roads for access to services, particularly the Lincoln Highway (Port Lincoln to Whyalla and Lincoln Gap), the Eyre Highway (Perth to Port Augusta) the Stuart Highway (Port Augusta to Pimba, Coober Pedy, Alice springs and Darwin), the Olympic Dam Highway (Pimba to Woomera, Roxby Downs and Olympic Dam), and some lower order sealed roads that connect to townships and settlements.

Whilst sometimes a lifestyle choice, levels of car ownership can be viewed as an indicator of disadvantage, higher levels of financial distress, or higher levels of disability. Except for Roxby Downs, the proportion of households owning a car were generally lower across the study areas when compared with South Australia (91.6%), ranging from 90.4% in Woomera to 96.1% in the Roxby Downs LGA. Notably, both Whyalla and Port Augusta had relatively high proportions of households with no vehicle at all (12.1% and 10.1% respectively) when compared with South Australia (7.1%).

Figure 21 – Households with a motor vehicle, 2021



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

7.10.2 Road safety

The Traffic Impact Assessment prepared for the Project (GHD, 2026) establishes the existing road safety conditions along the Project corridor. The arterial network relevant to the Project comprises Lincoln Highway, Eyre Highway, Stuart Highway and Olympic Dam Highway. Existing traffic volumes are highest on the section between Whyalla and Port Augusta, which carries over 2,000 vehicles per day, including approximately 400 heavy vehicles per day on Lincoln Highway and around 750 heavy vehicles per day on the northern arm of Eyre Highway. Through Whyalla itself, Broadbent Terrace and Playford Avenue carry close to 4,000 vehicles per day, including over 550 heavy vehicles. The

proportion of heavy vehicles increases towards the northern end of the corridor, reflecting the remoteness of the area and its connection to the Olympic Dam mine.

Analysis of crash data recorded on Location SA for 2020 to 2024 found that crashes are most concentrated within the towns of Whyalla, Port Augusta and Roxby Downs, and that of the highway routes, the stretch between Whyalla and Port Augusta has the densest crash history, with 51 recorded crashes including two fatalities. The most common crash types across the highway network are hitting a fixed object (24%), roll overs (23%) and hitting an animal (16%), which are typical of high-speed rural roads. The corridor between Port Augusta and Pimba also records a significant crash history, including one fatality.

These findings are consistent with broader concerns about the Eyre Peninsula road network. A 2023 survey undertaken by the RAA (RAA, 2023) of more than 1,300 Eyre Peninsula residents found a 43% dissatisfaction rate with the local road network, with many respondents identifying a need for urgent maintenance of the major connecting highways (Lincoln, Flinders and Eyre Highways) and reporting increased road freight as the biggest issue facing the network. The RAA subsequently undertook a road safety assessment updating its earlier 2015 report, which had found that crashes were concentrated on the main highway network, with key priorities for improvement being intersection upgrades, barrier protection and protected turn lanes at intersections with high volumes of turning movements.

The RAA's final report (RAA, 2024) made a number of recommendations for improvements to the Lincoln, Flinders, Tod, Birdseye and Eyre Highways, alongside visitor experience enhancements, improved freight operations, and improvements to road networks across the region including in and around Whyalla (including a feasibility assessment of a Whyalla freight bypass).

Regional Development Australia Far North (RDAFN, 2025) highlights the importance of road safety through and within Port Augusta, particularly given its position at the crossroads of freight road and rail transport. It advocates for consideration of the challenges associated with growth in the mining, renewables and agricultural sectors across the Far North and the potential impact on road safety, particularly given that the Stuart, Augusta and Eyre Highways intersect in the centre of the city.

A traffic impact assessment has been undertaken for the Project separately to this report (GHD, 2026), which provides a detailed assessment of road safety relating to the construction and operation of the Project.

7.10.3 Air and sea travel

In addition to the road network, the communities and businesses of the Eyre Peninsula and Far North depend on a regional network of airports offering flights to Adelaide and other locations for access to health services, education and visiting family. Tourism SA, in its year-end December 2022 Regional Profile (Tourism SA, 2023), indicated that around 19% of visitors used aircraft to visit the Eyre Peninsula, while 78% were self-drive. Air travel is also used by the tourism industry and businesses, particularly for fly-in fly-out (FIFO) workers. The key airports are at Whyalla and Port Augusta, while private flights servicing the working community also operate from smaller airports such as Woomera, Carrapateena and Olympic Dam. Discussions with airport operators and local government representatives indicate that the provision of regular and affordable air services is considered critical to community wellbeing and access to services, and is an ongoing challenge in the face of rising costs and external pressures.

The Traffic Impact Assessment prepared for the Project (GHD, 2026) identifies Whyalla, Port Augusta and Olympic Dam airports as the existing airports relevant to the Project. Whyalla and Port Augusta airports are owned and operated by the City of Whyalla and the City of Port Augusta respectively.

Whyalla Airport is located in the suburb of Mullaquana on the southern outskirts of the city and is a key aviation hub for the Eyre Peninsula, supporting daily connections to Adelaide and serving as a base for aviation industry businesses. The airport handled approximately 21,800 outbound and 21,600 inbound passengers per year on average (GHD, 2026, citing DITRDCSA, 2024). It currently supports around 15 flights per week to Adelaide. In 2025, a \$30 million upgrade was delivered enabling larger 74-seat Q400 (Dash-8-400) aircraft to operate. Airport management confirms that flights on Thursdays and Fridays are more heavily utilised, but that the airport has capacity to sustain additional flights if required, with the capacity to respond to greater demand depending primarily on the ability of carriers to service additional flights

based on fleet and resource availability. The airport is also used by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) and the Country Fire Service (CFS).

The City of Whyalla plans to review the Airport Master Plan to futureproof the facility, with a focus on:

- upgrading the main runway to attract larger and faster aircraft and direct interstate flights to attract a skilled workforce
- enhancing refuelling infrastructure (including for hydrogen and electric aircraft)
- supporting military operations and pilot training
- creating an aeropark and hosting bi-annual air shows, and
- establishing joint ventures with universities for aviation management training.

Whyalla Airport recently completed upgraded runway and facility upgrades following grants received from the State and Commonwealth Governments. These upgrades were considered critical for supporting workforce needs tied to major regional projects, including the Whyalla Steelworks and this Project.

Port Augusta Airport is located approximately 4 km south-west of Port Augusta. It has no regular passenger flights other than charter services, predominantly for FIFO workers, and handles approximately 16,000 passengers per year (GHD, 2026, citing City of Port Augusta, 2016). The airport is a major hub for the RFDS, and is the base of the RFDS Central Operations Communications Centre. In addition to providing a base for FIFO workers travelling to the Far North, it provides the community of Port Augusta and surrounding areas with access to services including education, health and training, allowing the direct delivery of services that would otherwise only be available in Adelaide (City of Port Augusta, 2016). Regional Development Australia Far North (RDAFN, 2025) has identified enhancing the capability of the airport to meet the needs of FIFO workers, tourism operators, healthcare services and passengers, through the development of an Airport Strategy, as a key strategic action required to facilitate growth.

Olympic Dam Airport, located approximately 8 km north of Roxby Downs, is privately owned and operated by BHP and primarily serves the Olympic Dam mine and surrounding community. It is the busiest airport in the study area, handling approximately 54,000 outbound and 47,700 inbound passengers per year (GHD, 2026, citing DITRDCA, 2024), reflecting the scale of FIFO movements to the Far North.

Sea travel is generally limited to private vessels and the currently suspended Lucky Bay Ferry. While the ferry has been used by local communities as a means of avoiding the long road journey around the head of the Spencer Gulf, it is predominantly been focused on servicing the tourism industry. The Lucky Bay Ferry was temporarily suspended on 4 November 2025 due to its vessel requiring a refit. Whilst the operator has attempted to find a temporary interim vessel and has pursued plans for the construction of a new electric vessel, there are currently no specified resumption dates for the service.

8 Housing Profile

The following housing profile provides a baseline for the area affected by the Project in relation to:

- Dwelling supply
- Housing Tenure
- Workers' accommodation
- Development and Land Supply

Whyalla's existing accommodation providers have been reported as experiencing high occupancy rates year-round, reflecting limited spare capacity in the local market (Government of South Australia, 2024). This baseline pressure is significant given the scale of major projects underway and proposed in the Upper Spencer Gulf, including the transformation of the Whyalla Steelworks and associated mining investment such as the Magnetite Expansion Project. Together these projects are expected to draw substantial construction workforces to the region over a sustained period.

In recognition of accommodation pressure of this kind, recent investment has expanded accommodation capacity in Whyalla. This has included the construction of 32 modular cabins at Discovery Parks' Whyalla Foreshore Caravan and Holiday Park, which serve both visitors and workers. This illustrates both the constrained baseline capacity of Whyalla's accommodation market and the reliance on tourist accommodation providers and purpose-built capacity to absorb additional workforce demand.

In Port Augusta, workers' accommodation is met partly through tourist accommodation providers that cater for workers alongside visitors, including Discovery Parks Port Augusta and the associated Acacia Motor Lodge (Discovery Parks, 2025), the Standpipe Golf Motor Inn, Comfort Inn and Bentley's Cabin Park. The shortage of suitable worker housing is recognised in the city's own infrastructure planning and the Port Augusta Infrastructure for Growth Strategy identifies increasing the availability, quality and diversity of accommodation to meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors as a strategic priority, and records community and stakeholder calls for increased housing supply with a specific focus on housing for professional and essential workers (RDA Far North, 2025). This is reinforced at the State level through the Regional Key Worker Housing Scheme, under which the Office for Regional Housing (Renewal SA) has secured land in Port Augusta for new homes for police, healthcare workers and teachers, acknowledging that regional growth is being constrained by a shortage of housing stock and that regional employers are often unable to fill vacancies due to a lack of suitable housing for additional workers (Renewal SA, 2025).

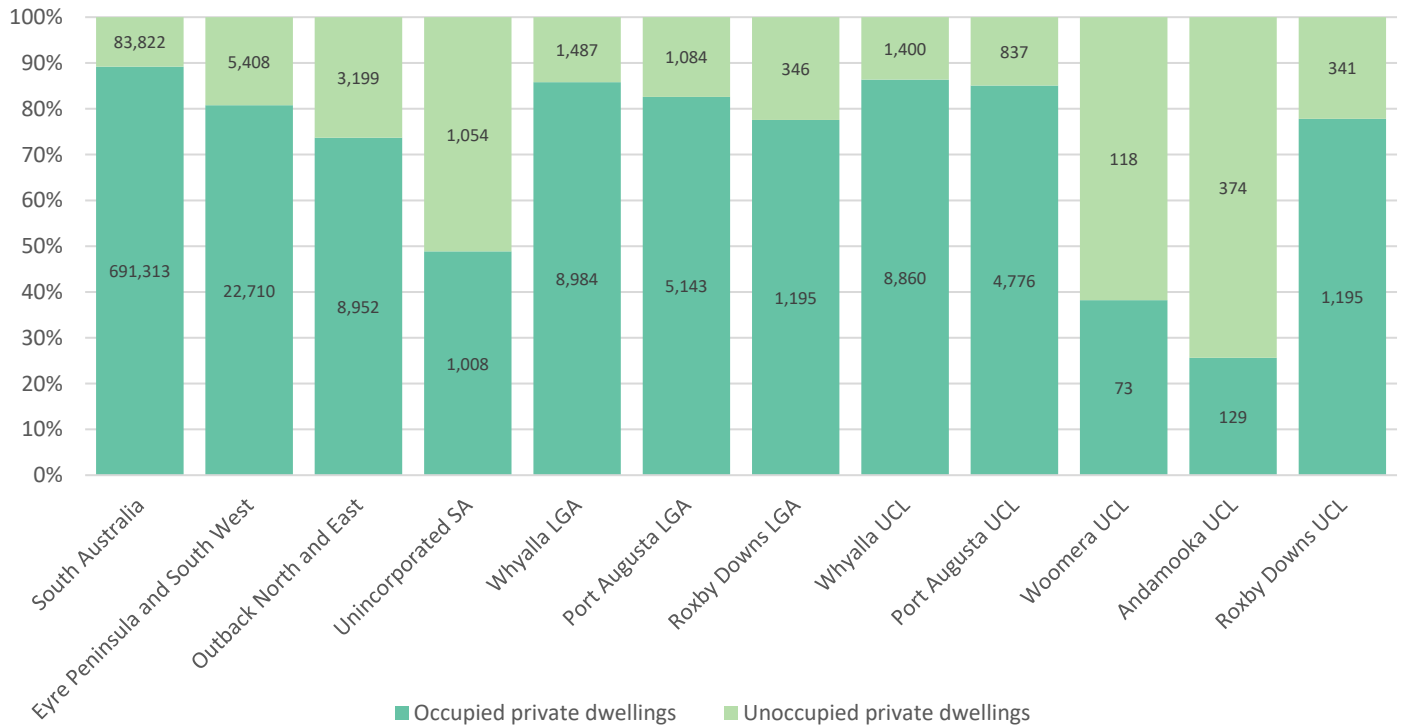
As a company town serving the Olympic Dam operation, Roxby Downs has a more formalised model of workers' accommodation, substantially provided through dedicated workforce villages rather than through competition with the residential rental market. Discovery Parks Roxby Downs operates as a predominantly fly-in fly-out (FIFO) focused facility with more than 200 cabins, while Discovery Workstay Roxby Downs provides dedicated village accommodation ranging from motel units to two-bedroom villas for short and long-term worker stays (Discovery Parks, 2026). Smaller centres in the surrounding area, including Andamooka and Woomera, provide limited additional capacity.

8.1 Dwelling supply, diversity and utilisation

At the time of the 2021 Census, a total of 40,260 dwellings were located within the two statistical areas, Eyre and South West (70%), and Outback North and East (30%). Figure 22 shows the number of dwellings across the three local government areas and Unincorporated SA (including Andamooka), indicating the main population centres of Whyalla and Port Augusta as having the greatest supply of dwellings.

The proportion of unoccupied private dwellings can be an indicator of the presence of beach or rural retreats that are only used for short periods of the year, locations that have experienced population decline, dwellings on rural properties where owners have moved into towns, houses temporarily vacant due to sale or vacation, homes temporarily vacant due to a transient workforce, homes being renovated or homes that are otherwise vacant.

Across South Australia, the proportion of unoccupied private dwellings was 10.8%. Unincorporated SA recorded a very high proportion of unoccupied private dwellings (51.1%), likely due to the depopulation of remote and very remote South Australia over a long period of time. Similarly, Andamooka and Woomera also had a high proportion of unoccupied private dwellings again most likely due to depopulation over time (74.4% and 61.8% respectively). There was a total of 10,471 private dwellings in Whyalla, of which 1,489 (14.2%) were unoccupied at the time. Higher rates of unoccupancy in coastal locations during the winter months is not unusual and this compares with an unoccupancy rate of 19.2% for the Eyre Peninsula and South West region, and 10.8% for South Australia.

Figure 22 – Occupied and Unoccupied Dwellings, 2021

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Most dwellings across the study areas were separate houses and, except for the Whyalla LGA, all study areas had higher proportions of separate houses when compared with South Australia when taken as a percent of occupied private dwellings. It is notable that the diversity of dwelling types in the LGA was much higher when compared with all other areas including South Australia, with only 56.0% of dwelling types in the City of Whyalla being separate housing (refer Figure 23). In the Whyalla LGA, 38.9% of occupied private dwellings were semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse, and 4.5% were flats or apartments.

The diversity of Whyalla's housing stock, particularly in relation to the number of semi-detached, row or terrace houses and townhouses, is likely a result of industry investment in workers' housing. However, despite the relative diversity of Whyalla's housing stock, the number of bedrooms per person remain the same as for the Eyre Peninsula and South West at just 0.7 people per bedroom, and slightly less than for South Australia (0.8%). The majority of dwellings in Whyalla (61.5%) have three bedrooms. Just 14.7% of Whyalla's dwellings have two bedrooms and 2.2% have one.

Underutilised dwellings (defined as two or more spare bedrooms in a dwelling) can also be an indicator of the lack of alternative options. Given the significantly high number of lone-person households in Whyalla (36.4%) compared with the Eyre Peninsula and South West (32.7%) and South Australia (28.5%), there is likely to be a high number of underutilised dwellings.

Of the 3,268 lone-person households living in Whyalla, 50.4% lived in a semi-detached, row or terrace house, or townhouse, 39.3% lived in a separate house, and 9.5% lived in a flat or apartment. One-parent families living in Whyalla were more likely than lone-person households to live in a semi-detached, row or terrace house.

The provision of smaller dwellings can suit older residents wishing to downsize, and the working population, many of whom are lone-person households. Providing greater choice and smaller housing options can also release larger dwellings to the market for the use by larger families and can potentially address housing affordability for small households (by providing a greater range of smaller housing options) and for large households (by releasing a greater number of larger housing options to the market).

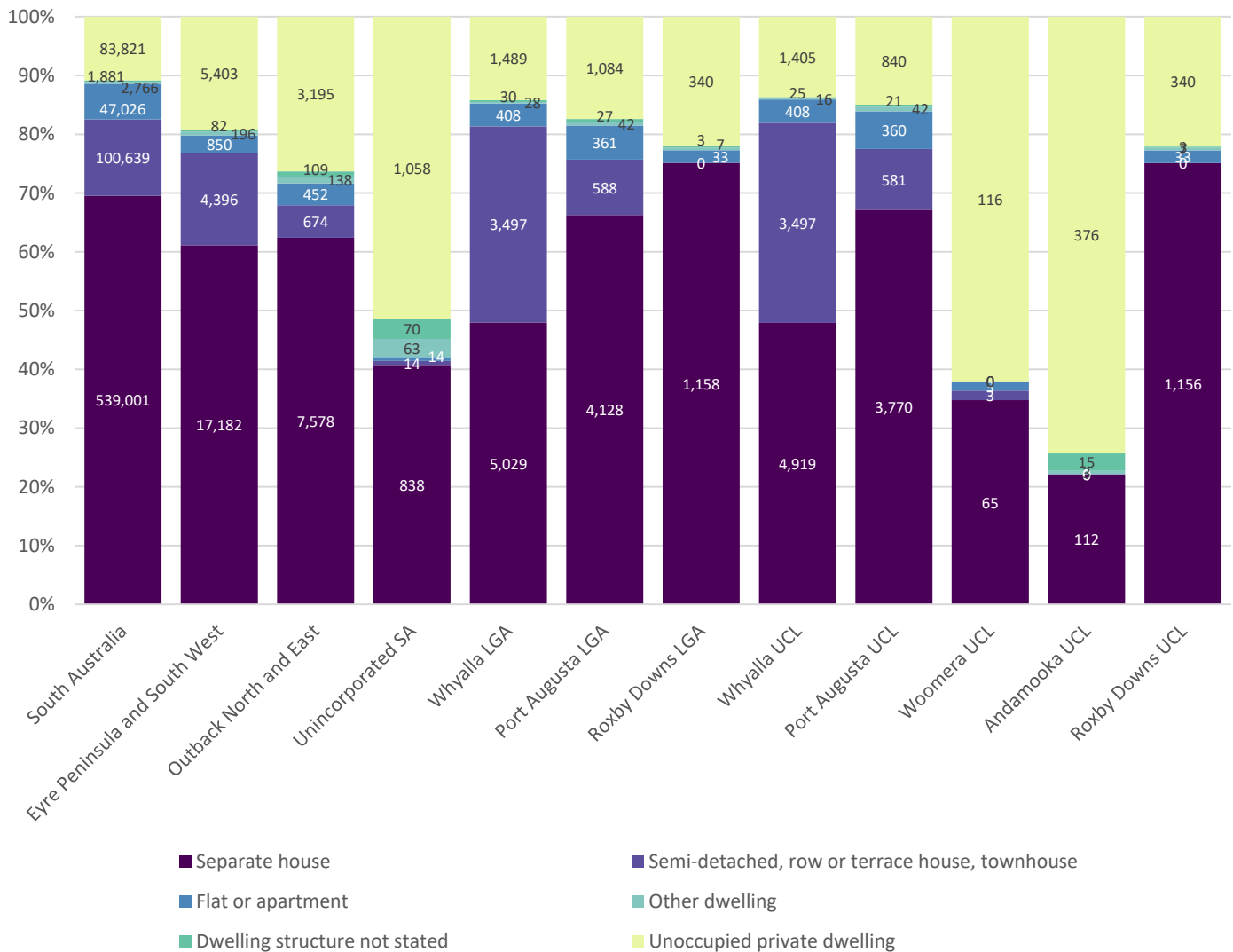
Separately, the quality of housing in Whyalla has been raised by the Spencer Gulf Cities in its Housing Survey Report (2022) with specific references to housing not meeting the needs of various households. The report also highlighted that much of the housing stock within the region – particularly within the rental market – is over 40 years old and in need of considerable upgrade and modernisation.

The Port Augusta LGA had a higher diversity of housing when compared with more outback areas and settlements but still had much lower proportions of semi-detached, row or terrace houses, or townhouses (11.4%) when compared with the Whyalla LGA (39.1%) and South Australia (14.6%). However, the Port Augusta LGA had a relatively high proportion of flats and apartments (7.0%) when compared with the Whyalla LGA (4.6%) and South Australia as a whole (6.8%).

Regional Development Australia Far North (RDA Far North, 2025) and the South Australian Business Chamber (SA Business Chamber, 2024) identify housing for workers as one of the main barriers to economic growth in regional areas.

In response to housing demand for workers in regional areas, the Office for Regional Housing has been established to work with local government, economic development agencies and employers to address housing shortages across regional South Australia. Initiatives have included the Regional Key Worker Housing Scheme, which aims to encourage private investment in rental housing and a pilot program has delivered 35 homes, including in Port Augusta. In addition, the Regional Housing Initiatives Program provides \$6m of funding to housing projects, including \$200,000 of funding for five rental dwellings in Port Augusta (Office of Regional Housing, 2024).

Figure 23 – Dwelling Structure, 2021



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

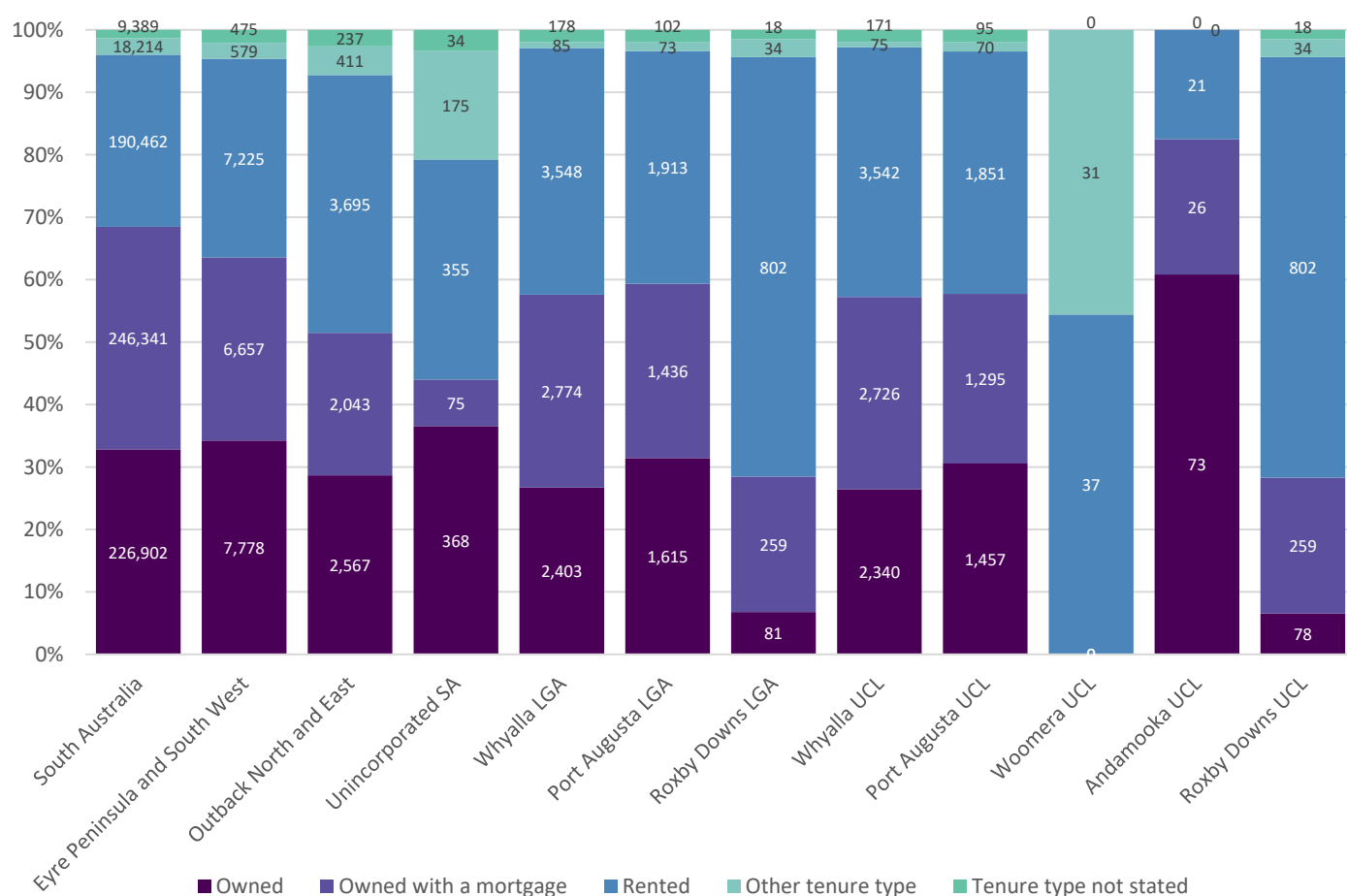
8.2 Housing Tenure

At the time of the 2021 Census, most private occupied dwellings across all study areas were owned outright or owned with a mortgage, except for Woomera and Roxby Downs. Households were slightly more likely to own dwellings outright in Port Augusta than Whyalla where there was a higher proportion of mortgaged dwellings. Refer Figure 24.

In Woomera and Roxby Downs, there were much lower rates of home ownership (owned outright or mortgaged) likely due to the prevalence of company or defence-owned housing. In Roxby Downs, the proportion of mortgaged dwellings compared with dwellings owned outright was much higher. The cities of Whyalla and Port Augusta also had lower proportions of home ownership and higher proportions of rentals when compared to South Australia.

Rates of home ownership were lower for the Whyalla council area (26.7%) when compared to the Eyre Peninsula and South West (34.2%) and South Australia (32.8%). Whilst Whyalla households were more likely to own a house with a mortgage (30.9%) when compared with the Eyre Peninsula and South West (29.3%), they were less likely when compared with South Australia (35.6%).

Figure 24 – Tenure Type, 2021



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

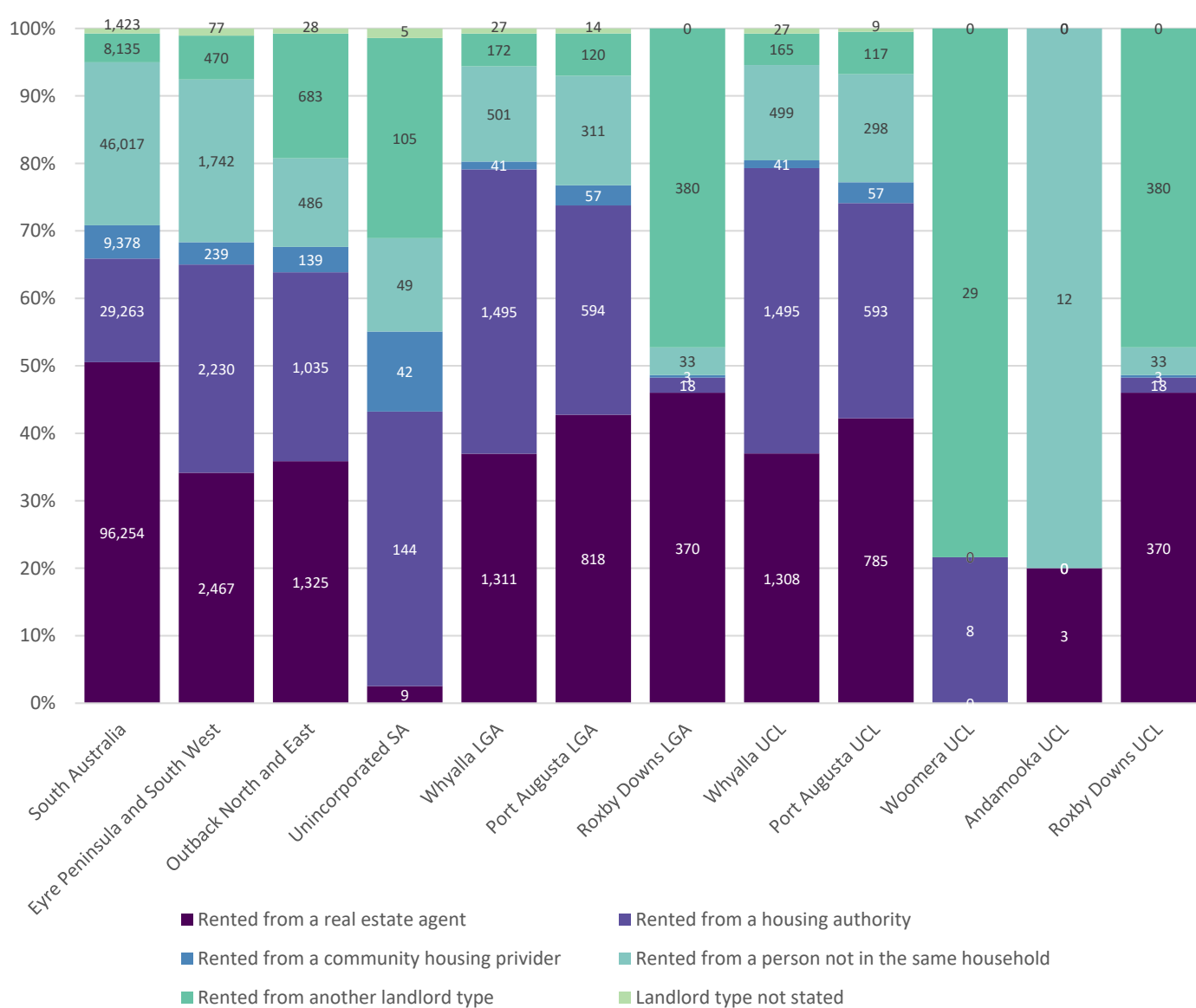
Whyalla, Port Augusta and Woomera had much larger proportions of housing rented from a government housing authority (42.2%, 32.0% and 21.6%) when compared with South Australia (15.4%), in part influenced by the volume government-supplied workers' accommodation in these three locations. Woomera, Roxby Downs and Unincorporated

SA had higher volumes of rentals from another landlord type, which is commonly indicative of employer-provided housing.

The community housing market (social housing provided by non-government, not-for-profit organisations or housing co-ops) was very strong in Unincorporated SA (11.8%) when compared with South Australia (4.9%). Port Augusta also had a relatively high proportion of community housing (3.0%) when compared with other study areas, which ranged from 0.0% in Andamooka and Woomera to 1.2% in Whyalla LGA. The Regional Plan for the Far North (Plan SA, 2024) highlights that greater housing choice, together with increasing community and social housing, and key worker accommodation are a key focus.

Dwellings were more likely to be rented in Whyalla (39.5%) than in the Eyre Peninsula and South West (31.8%), and South Australia (27.6%), and were much more likely to be rented from a state housing authority. A total of 1,495 dwellings were rented from a state housing authority, which represents 16.6% of all dwellings in Whyalla, and is higher than the Eyre Peninsula and South West (9.8%), and South Australia (4.2%). Community housing providers (Uniting Country Housing) had a relatively low presence in Whyalla, likely due to the strong presence of the public housing sector.

Figure 25 – Landlord type, 2021



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

8.3 Workers' accommodation

Workers' accommodation in the region is provided via four overlapping markets, none of which is fully captured by standard housing or tourism data on its own:

- the private rental market, where demand from workers competes with that of resident households
- social and key worker housing, captured within government housing tenure
- tourist accommodation such as caravan parks, cabins and motels, which is recorded as visitor accommodation but is frequently used by workers on a short or long-term basis, and
- purpose-built workforce camps and villages, which are often not recorded within residential dwelling data at all due to their temporary nature.

Whyalla's existing accommodation providers have been reported as experiencing high occupancy rates year-round, reflecting limited spare capacity in the local market (Government of South Australia, 2024). This baseline pressure is significant given the scale of major projects underway and proposed in the Upper Spencer Gulf, including the transformation of the Whyalla Steelworks and associated mining investment such as the Magnetite Expansion Project. Together these projects are expected to draw substantial construction workforces to the region over a sustained period.

In recognition of accommodation pressure of this kind, recent investment has expanded accommodation capacity in Whyalla. This has included the construction of 32 modular cabins at Discovery Parks' Whyalla Foreshore Caravan and Holiday Park, which serve both visitors and workers. This illustrates both the constrained baseline capacity of Whyalla's accommodation market and the reliance on tourist accommodation providers and purpose-built capacity to absorb additional workforce demand.

In Port Augusta, workers' accommodation is met partly through tourist accommodation providers that cater for workers alongside visitors, including Discovery Parks Port Augusta and the associated Acacia Motor Lodge (Discovery Parks, 2025), the Standpipe Golf Motor Inn, Comfort Inn and Bentley's Cabin Park. The shortage of suitable worker housing is recognised in the city's own infrastructure planning and the Port Augusta Infrastructure for Growth Strategy identifies increasing the availability, quality and diversity of accommodation to meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors as a strategic priority, and records community and stakeholder calls for increased housing supply with a specific focus on housing for professional and essential workers (RDA Far North, 2025). This is reinforced at the State level through the Regional Key Worker Housing Scheme, under which the Office for Regional Housing (Renewal SA) has secured land in Port Augusta for new homes for police, healthcare workers and teachers, acknowledging that regional growth is being constrained by a shortage of housing stock and that regional employers are often unable to fill vacancies due to a lack of suitable housing for additional workers (Renewal SA, 2025).

As a company town serving the Olympic Dam operation, Roxby Downs has a more formalised model of workers' accommodation, substantially provided through dedicated workforce villages rather than through competition with the residential rental market. Discovery Parks Roxby Downs operates as a predominantly fly-in fly-out (FIFO) focused facility with more than 200 cabins, while Discovery Workstay Roxby Downs provides dedicated village accommodation ranging from motel units to two-bedroom villas for short and long-term worker stays (Discovery Parks, 2026). Smaller centres in the surrounding area, including Andamooka and Woomera, provide limited additional capacity.

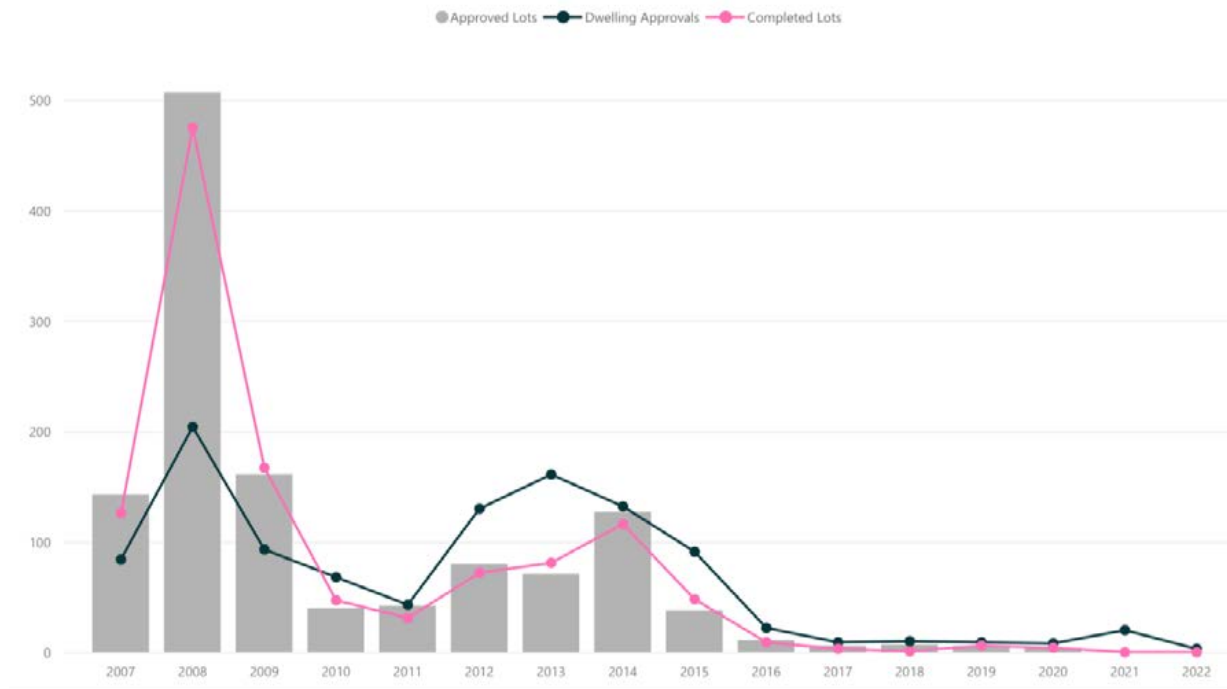
The Project will minimise impacts on local housing availability and affordability by accommodating the majority of non-local construction workers in temporary workforce accommodation and existing short-stay / tourism accommodation facilities, rather than relying on local residential housing stock.

8.4 Development and Land Supply

An analysis of land supply undertaken as part of this report, together with the findings of the Spencer Gulf Cities (Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Whyalla) Housing Survey Report (Spencer Gulf Cities, 2022), the RDA Far North Infrastructure for Growth Strategy (RDAFN, 2025) and the draft Far North Regional Plan (Plan SA, 2024), all indicate that there is more than sufficient suitably zoned residential land in Whyalla and Port Augusta to support an ongoing pipeline of housing for the future. These locations include private land, as well as land under the care and control of state government

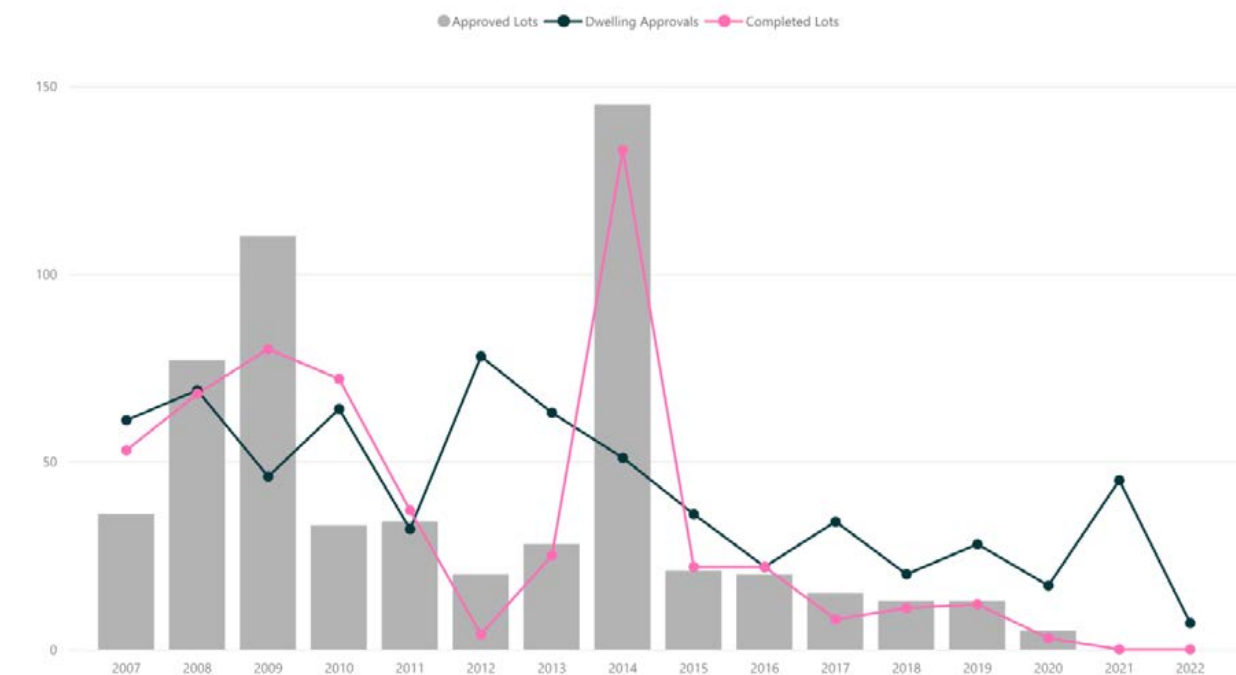
agencies. This is further reinforced by supply pipeline indicators from the Residential Land Development Monitor (Plan SA, 2023), which shows the lots approved in Whyalla, and Port Augusta, predominately during 2008, 2009 and 2014 (refer Figure 26 and Figure 27).

Figure 26 – Land supply pipeline indicators for Whyalla



Source: Residential Land Development Monitor, SA Planning Portal 2023 www.plan.sa.gov.au

Figure 27 – Land supply pipeline indicators for Port Augusta



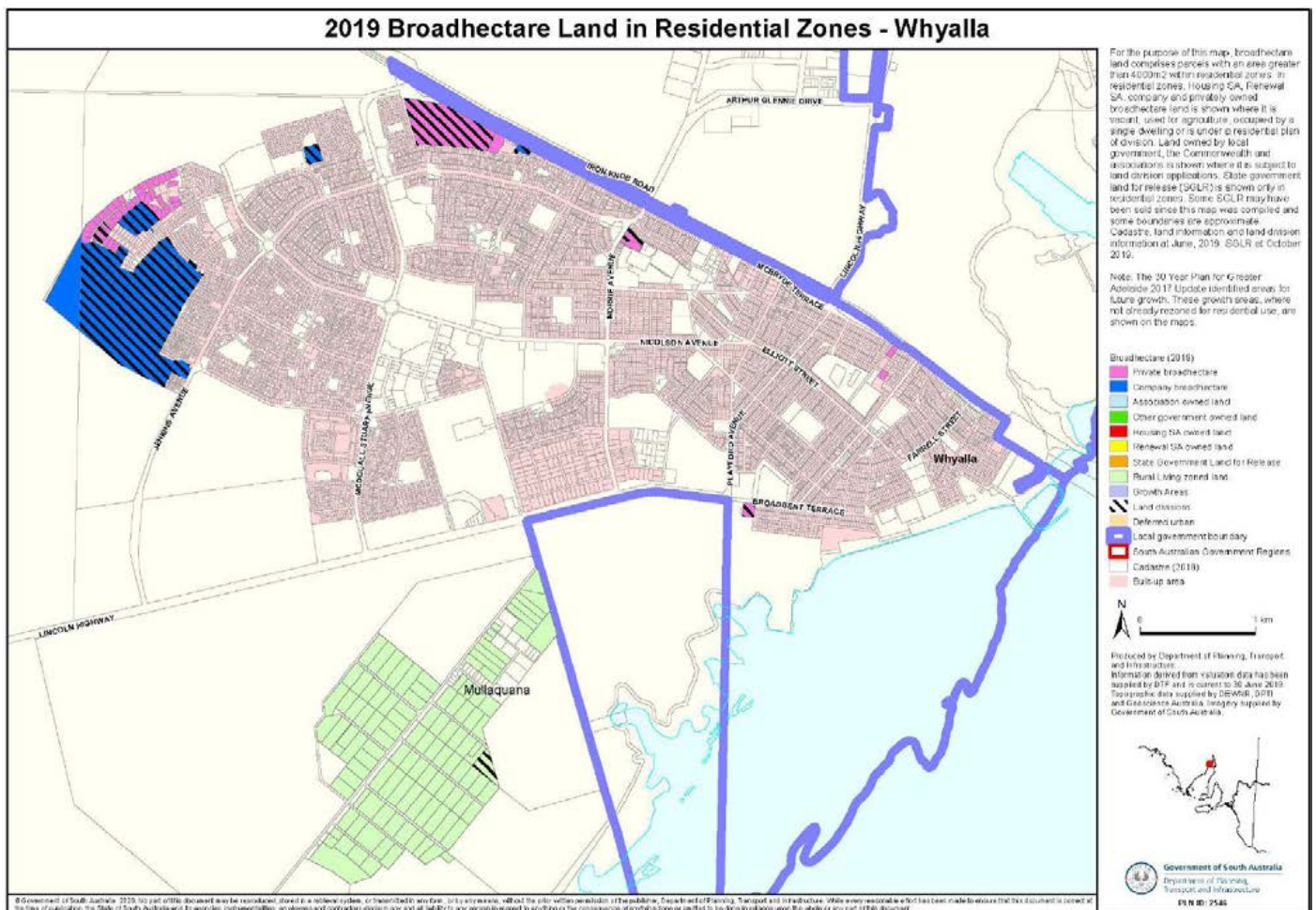
Source: Residential Land Development Monitor, SA Planning Portal 2023 www.plan.sa.gov.au

The Residential Broadhectare Land Supply Report (Plan SA, 2019) found that there were 157 hectares of land in Whyalla that were zoned residential. Of this land, 71% was owned by companies and 29% private landholders. Whilst there was substantial council-owned residential zoned land, it was not considered available for development until under a land division. There was no deferred urban zoned land in the LGA.

In Port Augusta, there was 497 hectares of land zoned residential, with 33.9% owned by companies, 55% owned privately, 6.7% owned by Housing SA and 4.4% owned by other government agencies. In addition, there is around 16 hectares of land zoned deferred urban and the RDA Far North has identified a sufficient supply of residentially zoned land in Port Augusta (RDA Far North 2025). Notwithstanding, the mayors of the Spencer Gulf Cities have identified a need to rezone land to provide housing to meet future demand, specifically in relation to the anticipated increase in workers associated with industry growth in Whyalla (The Advertiser, 2024).

The challenges identified by the Spencer Gulf Cities Housing Survey Report indicate that whilst there is sufficient residentially zoned land (Refer Figure 28.), barriers include the release of land to the market for development, the cost and availability of housing construction companies and labour, difficulty attracting developers to the region, and the cost of infrastructure headworks.

Figure 28 – Broadhectare Land in Residential Zones, Whyalla, 2019



Source: Government of South Australia, 2019

8.5 Repayments and Rents

Notwithstanding the fact that there is more than sufficient residentially zoned land, the availability of housing for the home ownership and rental markets is low. A Housing Survey Report was undertaken by the Spencer Gulf Cities in March

2022 (Spencer Gulf Cities, 2022) that found the lack of housing availability is forcing up rents in the region, with rent increases experienced across all housing types up to \$20-\$80 over 12 months. The report also found that people in lower income brackets, are struggling to find affordable housing options.

The report attributed much of this pressure to the cumulative impact of a large number of short-term construction projects that had introduced a significant transient working population, noting that holiday cabin and caravan parks were heading toward 98% worker occupancy, rather than tourist occupancy, in some cities (Spencer Gulf Cities, 2022, p. 7). The report's central concern was that this cumulative impact was displacing low and very low income private renters and, in turn, increasing demand for social housing. For Spencer Gulf Cities, the economic desire to encourage workers to remain in the region, rather than fly-in fly-out or drive-in drive-out, often conflicted with the needs of lower socio-economic residents requiring good quality and affordable housing.

While the specific projects driving this pressure in 2022 have largely been completed, they have been succeeded by a new wave of major project activity in the Upper Spencer Gulf, including the transformation of the Whyalla Steelworks, the Magnetite Expansion Project, ongoing renewable energy development, and the proposed Northern Water Project.

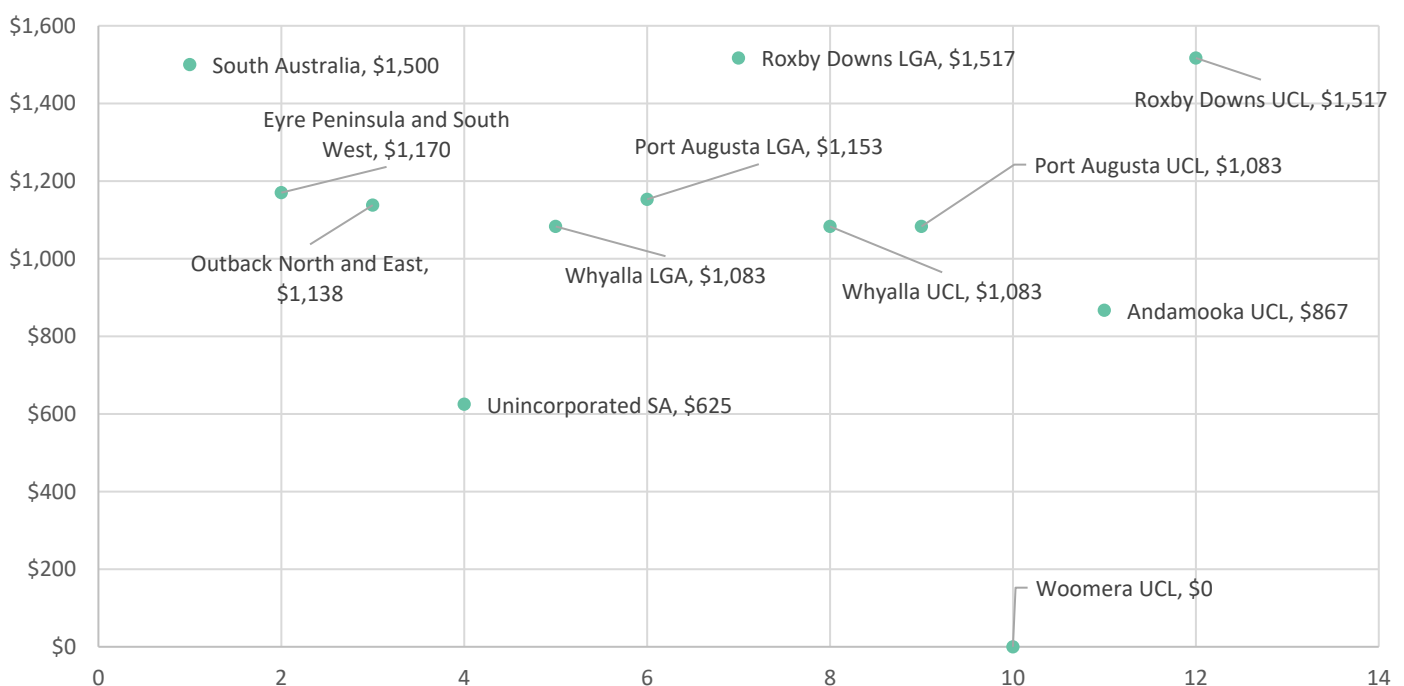
8.5.1 Mortgage repayments

At the time of the 2021 Census, mortgage repayments were generally lower across all study areas when compared with South Australia, except for Roxby Downs where the median monthly mortgage repayment was \$1,517, slightly above South Australia's \$1,500 per month. Refer Figure 29.

A total of 2,774 dwellings in Whyalla were owned with a mortgage. The median monthly mortgage repayments were \$1,083, lower than the Eyre Peninsula and South West (\$1,170) and South Australia (\$1,500).

Mortgage Affordability Indicators (ABS, 2021) identify the percentage of households with mortgage repayments over 30% of their household income for each of the Local Government Areas, with the City of Whyalla having the highest rate (12.1%) when compared with South Australia as a whole (12.0%). All other Local Government Areas had rates lower than South Australia's.

Figure 29 – Median Monthly Mortgage Repayments, 2021



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

More recent market data indicates that house prices have risen substantially across the study area since the 2021 Census and the 2022 survey. Table 6 presents median house sale prices by suburb for the 12 months to May 2026. house prices rose in every township suburb over the year, with growth strongest in the most affordable suburbs of Whyalla Stuart (up 36.6%) and Whyalla Norrie (up 20.7%) in Whyalla, and Port Augusta (up 29.4%) in Port Augusta.

This pattern, in which the lowest-priced suburbs are experiencing the steepest price growth, indicates acute demand pressure at the more affordable end of the market, where lower-income purchasers and renters are least able to absorb increases. Over the same period, median house prices in Whyalla and Port Augusta moved well above the levels recorded in the 2021 Census, impacting on the relative affordability the region has historically offered.

Table 6 – Median house prices by key suburbs 12 months to May 2026

Suburb	Median house price	12-month change	Houses sold
City of Whyalla			
Whyalla	\$447,500	+11.9%	78
Whyalla Jenkins	\$415,011	+5.1%	73
Whyalla Playford	\$370,000	+2.8%	60
Whyalla Stuart	\$280,000	+36.6%	199
Whyalla Norrie	\$277,500	+20.7%	165
Mullaquana*	\$614,500	-8.3%	8
City of Port Augusta			
Port Augusta	\$330,000	+29.4%	164
Port Augusta West	\$371,250	+22.7%	104
Stirling North	\$440,000	+23.9%	29
Unincorporated SA			
Roxby Downs	\$260,000	0.0%	113
Andamooka	\$65,000	0.0%	16

Source: realestate.com.au (CoreLogic data), accessed 25 June 2026

* Mullaquana is a rural-living locality on Whyalla's southern outskirts with a small number of sales (eight over the year). Its higher median sale price (\$614,500) reflects larger rural-living holdings rather than a comparable residential market

8.5.2 Rent

At the time of the 2021 Census, all study areas had lower or substantially lower rents when compared with South Australia. The median rent was particularly low in Woomera, most likely subsidised by the Department of Defence. Rent affordability indicators (ABS, 2021) identify the percentage of households with rents over 30% of household income for each Local Government Area. All Local Government Areas had rates lower than South Australia's.

As shown in Table 7, median weekly rents have risen across all township suburbs in the 12 months to May 2026, with the steepest increases in Port Augusta West (up 11.8%) and Whyalla Norrie (up 10.0%). Rental markets are also turning over quickly, with a median time to lease of around three to four weeks in most township suburbs, indicating strong competition for the limited rental housing available.

More recent discussions with the City of Whyalla indicate a lack of available rental accommodation in the city, with an occupancy rate of approximately 99% significantly affecting housing availability and rents (City of Whyalla, pers comm, 2026). This is consistent with the South Australian Government's observation that rental vacancies remain very low across many regional centres, placing increasing financial pressure on low-income households (Government of South Australia, 2024).

In response to these pressures, the State has expanded social and affordable housing provision in the region, with new public homes recently completed, contracted, and commenced construction in regional centres including Whyalla and

Port Augusta, delivered in part through the Public Housing Improvement Program (Government of South Australia, 2024). Given the scale of the current major project pipeline, however, demand for affordable housing across the region is likely to remain high.

Table 7 – Median rents by key suburbs 12 months to May 2026

Suburb	Median rents	12-month change	Houses leased
City of Whyalla			
Whyalla	\$400	+3.9%	65
Whyalla Jenkins	\$433	+5.6%	71
Whyalla Playford	\$375	+4.2%	42
Whyalla Stuart	\$300	+7.1%	187
Whyalla Norrie	\$330	+10.0%	169
Mullaquana	n/a	n/a	0
City of Port Augusta			
Port Augusta	\$360	+5.9%	204
Port Augusta West	\$380	+11.8%	73
Stirling North	\$395	+2.6%	22
Unincorporated SA			
Roxby Downs*	\$380	+2.7%	188
Andamooka	\$243	+21.5%	2

Source: realestate.com.au (CoreLogic data), accessed 25 June 2026

* Roxby Downs, as a company town serving the Olympic Dam operation, has a flat sale market with extended selling periods (a median of 157 days) but a strong and active rental market (188 houses leased), reflecting its predominantly rental and employer-linked housing profile

9 Socio-Economic Profile

The following socio-economic profile provides a baseline for the area affected by the Project in relation to regional development, economy, employment and workforce, and tourism.

9.1 Regional Development

The Project has potential to facilitate significant investment in the region. There are also various large-scale energy and mineral projects being pursued by public and private investment in areas throughout and adjacent to the Project alignment, particularly in the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North.

The Project represents a significant transformation for the region in the context of its growing role in the transition to renewable energy and Australia's commitment to net zero emissions. This transformation presents challenges for the local communities of the Far North and Upper Spencer Gulf, which have a strong connection and intergenerational identity as agricultural and fishing communities.

In its Framework to Rebalance the Nation, Regional Australia Institute (Regional Australia Institute, 2024) (the Framework) acknowledges the desire for a long-term ambition for strengthening our regional communities. The Project is a potential catalyst for regionalisation, acknowledging the role that regional Australia plays in 'unlocking the potential for productivity gains across regional centres and industries' (Regional Australia Institute, 2024, pp11). The Framework highlights five pillars, with associated targets, actions and benefits:

- Jobs and Skills
- Liveability

- Population
- Productivity and Innovation, and
- Sustainability and Resilience.

Place-based decision-making, planning, infrastructure, prosperity, inclusion and collaboration are key themes of the Framework and there is potential for the Project to optimise its part in contributing to Regional Australia Institute's targets. The location of the Project in remote and very remote locations (as opposed to major population centres) highlights the potential to ensure support is provided to communities making this transition via collaborative and inclusive planning processes.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) plays a crucial role in fostering economic growth and strengthening communities across regional Australia by connecting local businesses, government, and stakeholders to create opportunities and support sustainable development. The organisation works collaboratively to address local challenges and promote long-term prosperity in regional areas. The two key organisations active in the study area are RDA Far North and RDA Eyre Peninsula.

Both regions have traditionally depended on primary industries including mining, agriculture, and tourism in the Far North, and agriculture, aquaculture, and fishing on the Eyre Peninsula. This reliance can increase vulnerability to market fluctuations and economic shocks. Diversification is a top priority for both organisations, with a focus on developing new industries, fostering innovation, and value-adding to existing sectors. RDA Eyre Peninsula is particularly focused on expanding aquaculture, renewable energy, and advanced agriculture, while RDA Far North is driving innovation in mining, tourism, and clean energy. These efforts aim to build more resilient, dynamic regional economies (RDA Far North, 2025, RDA Eyre Peninsula, 2023).

9.2 Economy

Gross Regional Product (GRP) is a measure of the net wealth generated by the local economy of a particular area. The RDA Far North region recorded a GRP of \$6.58 billion in 2024, an increase of 5.3% from the previous year, and a total output of \$14.9 billion, accounting for 4.8% of South Australia's total output. The mining industry contributed 69.7% towards the total output of the region and was also its largest employer, providing 6,041 jobs or 32.9% of total employment in the Far North (REMPLAN, 2025).

Total jobs in the region accounted for 2.2% of South Australia's total jobs. The region's largest population centre Port Augusta recorded a 2024 GDP of \$0.97 billion, a 4.1% increase since 2023, contributing a total output of \$1.8 billion. Port Augusta also provided for 5,947 jobs. The health care and social assistance sector was the largest contributor to Port Augusta's employment, accounting for 18.8% of all jobs, and construction was the largest contributor to Port Augusta's total output (17.5% of total output).

Also located within the Far North RDA region, the Roxby Downs LGA recorded a GRP of \$1.74 billion in 2024, a 3.4% increase from 2023, and a total output of \$4.8 billion. Again, the industry contributing the greatest to output and employment was mining and a total of 2,368 jobs were provided in the LGA (57.1% of all employment in the LGA).

The RDA Eyre Peninsula region recorded a GRP of \$5.16 billion in 2024, an increase of 6.2% from 2023. Agriculture, forestry and fishing accounted for almost a quarter of the region's total output, with construction, mining and manufacturing also high contributors. Located within the RDA Eyre Peninsula region, the Whyalla LGA recorded a GRP of \$1.69 billion in 2024, an increase of 6.3% from 2023.

A total of 7,094 jobs were generated within the LGA and its total output was \$2.9 billion (REMPLAN, 2025). The mining sector was the largest contributor to Whyalla's total output, accounting for 28.0% of the total output, whilst the health care and social assistance sector was the largest contributor to Port Augusta's employment (20.1% of total jobs).

The City of Whyalla in its Economic Development Strategy 2022-2030 identifies a number of economic development projects and initiatives as driving the future of Whyalla's economy:

- Defence industry, focused on the Cultana Training Area located north of Whyalla.

- Energy and mining industry, focused on the Whyalla Green Hydrogen Hub, solar and wind farms, and mining and rare earths.
- Space industry in relation to providing a location close to established infrastructure and facilities.
- Hi-tech industries in relation to green industries, resource recovery, rail transport hub, port expansion and diversification, and decarbonisation of heavy industry.
- Food, wine and agribusiness, including food processing and aquaculture.
- International and domestic students and expansion of education offerings.
- Tourism, recognising Whyalla as a gateway to the Eyre Peninsula.
- Health and medical industries, including ageing in place and workforce support.
- Creative industries.
- Housing and accommodation.
- Main Street redevelopment.
- Foreshore and beach redevelopment.
- Whyalla foreshore hotel.
- Waterproofing Whyalla.
- Whyalla Airport master planning.
- 21st century telecommunications.
- Skilled workforce immigration.
- Business support.

The Project is anticipated to provide (along with other planned projects) a catalyst for economic renewal of Whyalla, and other locations within the Project footprint. The Project aims to maximise local business opportunities through the application of an Industry Participation Plan (IPP). A detailed analysis of the capacity of existing regional businesses to supply goods and/or services to the project would assist in identifying strengths and gaps. Partnering with others to develop business support strategies to help local businesses understand the procurement process, achieve minimum licencing requirements and pre-requisites, and generally be project-ready would help achieve the project's aims.

A more detailed economic impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the EIS, separately to this report.

9.3 Employment and Workforce

9.3.1 Industries of employment

Within the City of Whyalla at the time of the 2021 Census, the two top industries of employment were manufacturing, and health care and social assistance, with 15.8% and 15.3% of employed persons aged over 15 years working in these industries. Also rating high on the list of top industries were retail trade (9.8%), education and training (9.2%), construction (8.6%), mining (7.6%), and accommodation and food services (6.5%).

In the City of Port Augusta, the top industry of employment was health care and social assistance, with 16.0% of employed persons aged over 15 years, followed by public administration and safety (12.3%) and retail trade (10.7%). Other industries included education and training (9.2%), accommodation and food services (8.2%), construction (7.4%), and transport, postal and warehousing (6.1%).

Mining (49.9%) and construction (11.4%) were the top industries of employment for Roxby Downs local government area (including Olympic Dam) with accommodation and food services (5.9%), education and training (5.3%), and retail trade (4.7%) also providing employment for its residents. In Woomera, people were employed in either public administration and safety, or construction. Across the SA Outback more generally, health care and social assistance, followed by agriculture, forestry and fishing were the two main industries of employment.

The industry of employment data above reflects the resident workforce by Local Government Area and understates the significance of commercial fishing to the wider region, which is largely seasonal and operator-based and so not strongly represented in Census employment counts for any single area. The Spencer Gulf and its adjacent waters support several commercial fisheries, the most significant being the Spencer Gulf Prawn Fishery, which recorded a gross value of

production of \$24 million in 2023/24 and contributes an estimated \$28.8 million to gross regional product and 298 full-time equivalent jobs on the Eyre Peninsula. The Marine Scalefish Fishery (targeting snapper, garfish, King George whiting and southern calamari) and the Blue Crab Fishery also operate in the Gulf, with state-wide gross values of production of \$38.4 million and approximately \$9 million respectively (BDO, 2025).

9.3.2 Non-school qualifications

Across South Australia at the time of the 2021 Census, the proportion of residents aged over 15 years with a non-school qualification (educational attainments other than those of a pre-primary, primary or secondary education level) and no longer attending school was 61.7%. Qualification rates across the study areas varied with all areas other than Woomera (72.3%), Roxby Downs (66.1%), and Roxby Downs Council (68.0%) recording rates of non-school qualification lower than that for South Australia. Lowest rates were recorded in Port Augusta UCL (50.8%) and Port Augusta LGA (51.4%).

9.3.3 Labour force and employment

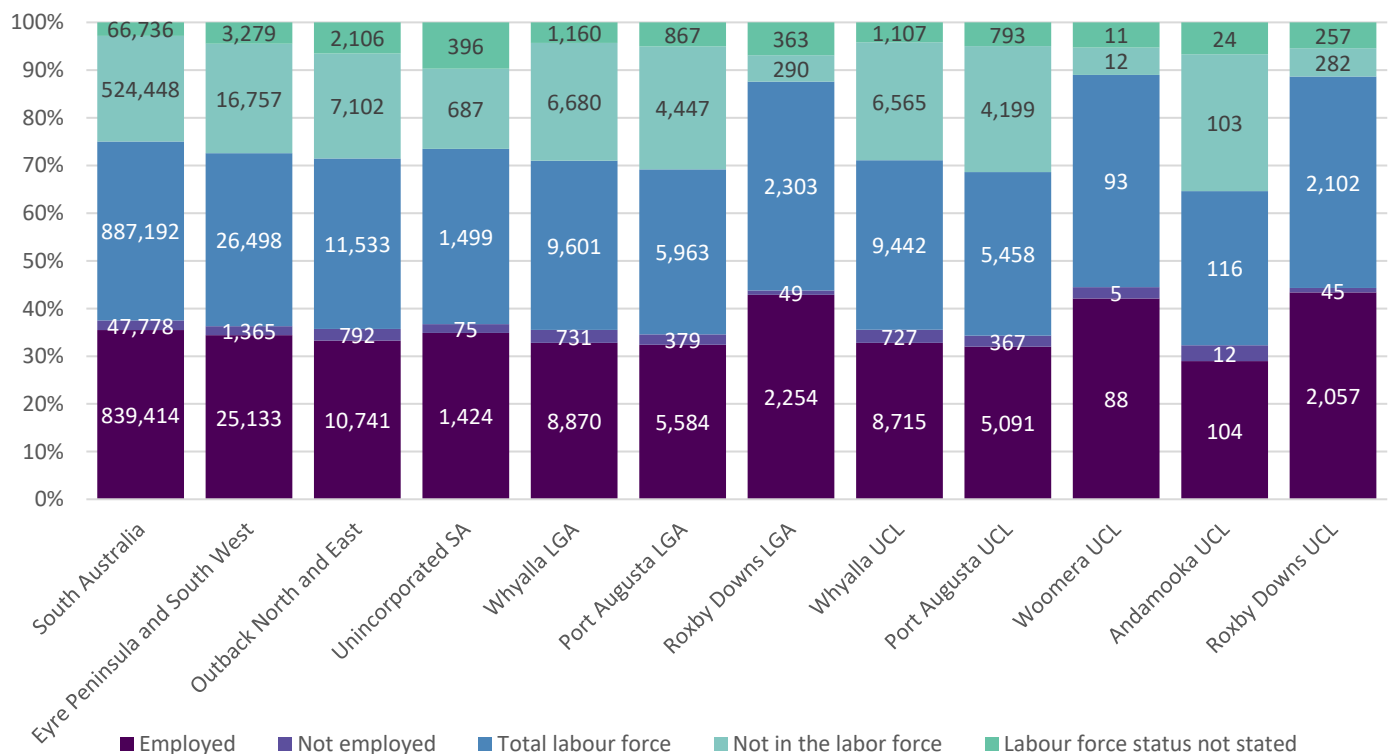
At the time of the 2021 Census, 60.0% of South Australia's population over 15 years was participating in the labour force. Across the study areas, Roxby Downs and Woomera recorded much higher rates (79.4% and 80.2%), which is reflective of their status as major employment centres for the mining and defence industries.

All other townships and settlement areas recorded lower participation rates that ranged between 49.8% in the township of Andamooka, and 58.1% across Unincorporated SA. The Whyalla and Port Augusta LGAs had labour force participation rates of 55.0% and 52.8% respectively.

Participations rates for women in the workforce when compared with rates for the total population vary across the study area, with females living in Port Augusta having higher labour force participation rates. For all other areas, participation rates for women are generally lower, particularly in Woomera, Andamooka, Whyalla and Roxby Downs.

Unemployment rates across the study areas varied considerably compared with South Australia (5.4%). The highest unemployment rate was in Andamooka (10.3%) and the lowest was Roxby Downs (2.1%). The Whyalla and Port Augusta LGAs had unemployment rates of 7.6% and 6.4% respectively, and Woomera had an unemployment rate of 5.4%.

Figure 30 – Labour force status (people over 15 years of age), 2021



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2021

9.4 Tourism

9.4.1 Eyre Peninsula Region

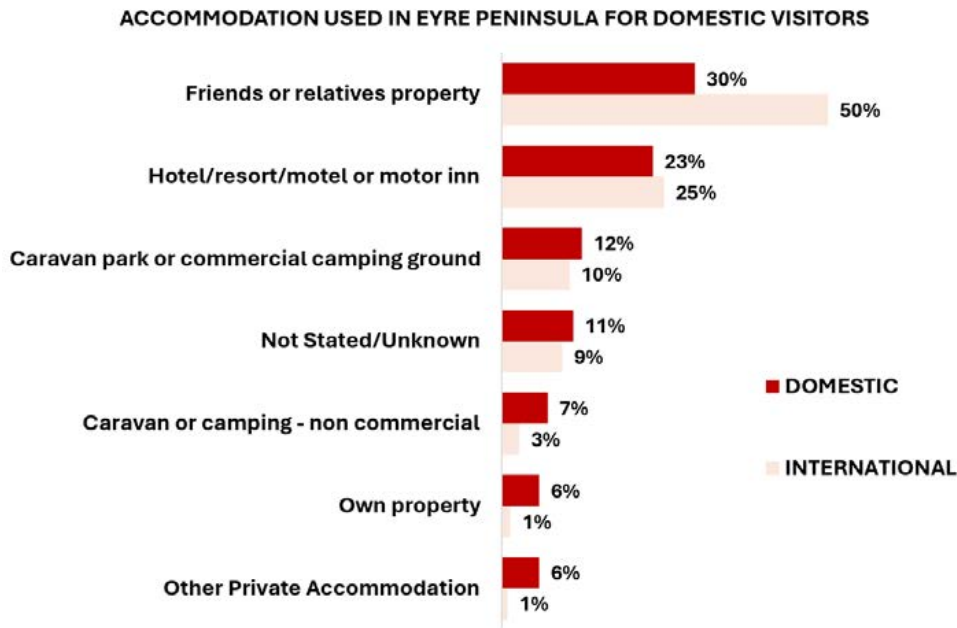
The Eyre Peninsula is known for its pristine nature, immersive wildlife experiences and coastal lifestyle. The region has approximately 100 National and Conservation Parks and Wilderness Protection Areas, ten State Marine Parks and three Commonwealth Marine Reserves (Tourism SA, 2023). Visitor expenditure on the Eyre Peninsula peaked at \$591M in the year ending December 2023 before easing to \$55M in the year ending December 2024, around 17% below the pre-COVID level recorded in 2019. Regional visitor figures are based on sample surveys and can fluctuate from year to year and the SA Tourism Commission advised that they be treated as indicative.

Of the \$455M, the majority of expenditure (\$392M) was derived from overnight expenditure. The Eyre Peninsula had 455,000 overnight visitors in 2023, with 72% being intrastate, 25% interstate and 3% international. Overnight visitors stayed a total of 1.66 million nights during 2024, with an average length of stay being 3.7 nights. Of the total overnight visitors, 39% were on holiday, 25% were visiting friends or relatives, 25% were visiting on business, and 11% for other reasons. Whilst international visitors were comparatively low at 13,000 people, they tended to stay longer (12.5 nights average) and spent \$16M.

In 2023-24, the tourism industry contributed an estimated \$631M to the Eyre Peninsula regional economy and directly employed approximately 2,400 people, with a further 1,100 indirect jobs and a total employment impact of around 3,500 people (Tourism SA, 2024). An earlier (2021-22) breakdown of direct tourism employment indicated that 39% worked within cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services, 20% in accommodation, 15% in retail trade, 8% in clubs, pubs, taverns and bars, 8% in air, water and other transport, 5% in travel agency and tour operator services, and the remainder in other industries.

A total of 2,944 rooms across 166 establishments were provided in the region in the year ending December 2024, with January and July being the strongest months for visitation, coinciding with school holidays. According to Tourism SA, 30% of domestic overnight visitor nights were spent with friends or relatives compared to the international average of 50%, while 23% were spent in a hotel, resort, motel or motor inn, and 19% in a caravan park or commercial camping ground (refer Figure 31).

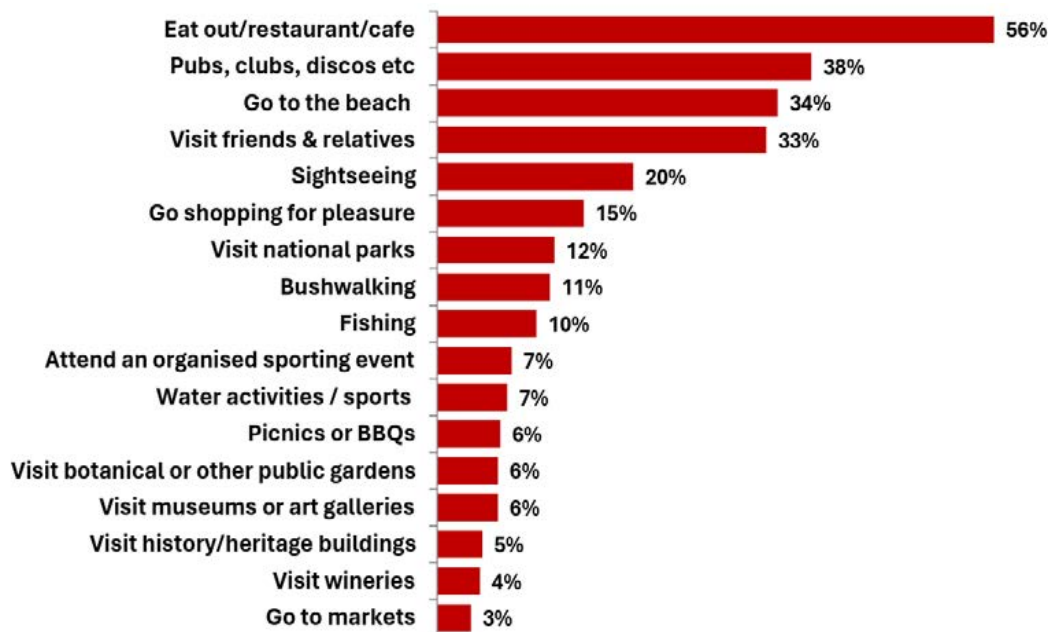
Figure 31 – Eyre Peninsula accommodation for domestic and international visitors year end December 2024



Source: Tourism SA, December 2025

According to its Regional Profile, Tourism SA highlights that the key visitor activities for domestic overnight visitors in the year ending December 2024 were eating out, visiting pubs/clubs, going to the beach, visiting friends and relatives, sightseeing, leisure shopping, visiting national parks, bushwalking and fishing (refer Figure 32).

Figure 32 – Domestic Overnight Visitor Activities in Eyre Peninsula year end December 2024



Source: Tourism SA, December 2025

Whyalla

Whyalla is considered the north-eastern gateway to the Eyre Peninsula and, as South Australia's third-largest city, is accessible to visitors by road and air. It offers a diverse tourism experience that combines coastal, natural, cultural and industrial attractions, supported by a relatively mild climate and an average of around 300 days of sunshine per year.

The region's signature drawcard is the annual aggregation of the Giant Australian Cuttlefish (*Sepia apama*), which congregate in the shallow waters of the northern Spencer Gulf adjacent to Whyalla each winter to breed. This is the only known location in the world where the species gathers in such large numbers, with tens of thousands of cuttlefish massing along an approximately 8 to 10 km stretch of rocky reef between roughly May and August, peaking in June and July. The breeding grounds generally stretch from Fitzgerald Bay, around Point Lowly to Black Point and False Bay, with Stony Point (approximately 20 km north-east of Whyalla) being the most popular and accessible place to swim with the cuttlefish, offering boardwalk access, a designated snorkel and dive safe zone, and visitor amenities. Guided snorkelling and diving tours, equipment hire and glass-bottomed boat experiences are offered by a number of local operators during the season.

The aggregation is internationally renowned, has been described by marine scientists as one of the premier marine wildlife attractions in the world, and has attracted extensive national and international media and scientific interest, including coverage by BBC World, Diveplanit, GetLost and the Nature of Science. The population is monitored annually by the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) and has fluctuated considerably, from a recorded low of around 13,500 in 2013 to a peak of approximately 247,000 in 2020, recovering strongly over the past decade. In February 2023, the Cuttlefish Coast Sanctuary Zone (approximately 15 km north-east of Whyalla) was added to Australia's National Heritage List, recognising the international significance of the aggregation.

The cuttlefish season drives Whyalla's busiest visitor period, in June and July, well outside the summer peak that characterises most of the Eyre Peninsula. The City of Whyalla celebrates the phenomenon each year through its Cuttlefest festival, a program of community and visitor events built around the aggregation, which has become an

important fixture in the regional events calendar and a significant contributor to winter visitation and accommodation demand.

The Whyalla Foreshore and Marina form a central waterfront precinct along the Spencer Gulf, offering safe beach swimming with a marina swimming enclosure, the distinctive Whyalla circular jetty for fishing, a marina boat ramp, playgrounds and lawned areas for picnics. A pod of resident bottlenose dolphins regularly visits the marina, and the nearby Hummock Hill Lookout offers panoramic views over the gulf and the city. The adjacent Ada Ryan Gardens, Whyalla's most popular park, includes a bird aviary, tennis courts and barbecue facilities. The foreshore is a focus of ongoing Council investment through the Whyalla Foreshore Master Plan.

Located a short drive from the city, the Whyalla Conservation Park protects local arid-zone flora and fauna and features walking trails and the prominent red sandstone outcrop of Wild Dog Hill, a popular spot for walking and photography, particularly at dawn and dusk. The surrounding coast and gulf waters also support recreational fishing (Whyalla is promoted as Australia's 'snapper capital'), crabbing, and wildlife encounters.

Whyalla's cultural and industrial heritage is reflected in the Whyalla Maritime Museum (home to the HMAS Whyalla, the first ship built at the Whyalla shipyards), the Mount Laura Homestead Museum, the Point Lowly Lighthouse, and tours of the Whyalla Steelworks, which interpret over a century of Australian iron and steel-making.

Visitor accommodation in Whyalla includes hotels, motels, serviced and self-contained apartments, and caravan and holiday parks. The Discovery Parks – Whyalla Foreshore park is a key coastal accommodation provider, located directly on the foreshore and offering powered sites and cabins, while a range of motels and apartment-style properties operate across the city. Accommodation demand peaks during the winter cuttlefish season and around major events.

Tourism is a focus of the City of Whyalla's strategic planning. The Council's vision is for Whyalla to be a vibrant, attractive city offering a diverse range of sustainable economic, social, environmental and cultural opportunities, and its Economic Development Strategy 2022–2030 identifies developing and improving the city's tourism offer as a priority, building on Whyalla's combination of coastal and outback experiences (City of Whyalla, 2022). The Council has reinforced this direction through initiatives such as the Whyalla Foreshore Master Plan and the release of an updated Whyalla Visitor Guide, positioning the city as a year-round coastal and outback tourism destination.

9.4.2 Flinders Ranges and Outback Region

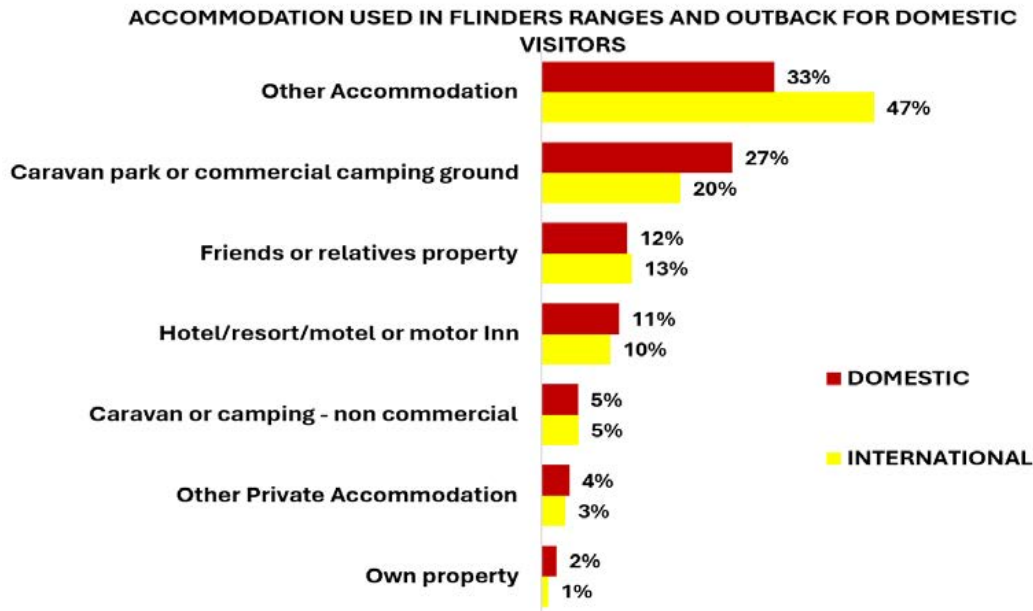
At the year ending December 2024, the Flinders Ranges and Outback (FRO) Region recorded a visitor expenditure of \$603M. This was broadly steady on the year ending December 2023 (\$606M) and remains around 17% higher than the pre-COVID level recorded in 2019, indicating that the region has sustained its recovery. Regional visitor figures are based on sample surveys and can fluctuate from year to year, and the South Australian Tourism Commission advises that they be treated as indicative.

Of the \$603M, the majority (\$461M) was derived from overnight expenditure. The Flinders Ranges and Outback had 699,000 overnight visitors in the year ending December 2024, with 66% being intrastate, 29% interstate and 5% international. Overnight visitors stayed a total of 3.27 million nights, with an average length of stay of 4.7 nights. Of the total overnight visitors, 38% were visiting on business, 33% were on holiday, 20% were visiting friends or relatives, and 10% for other reasons. The high business share reflects the region's substantial mining and fly-in fly-out workforce, with business visitors contributing \$202M of the \$461M in regional overnight spend. Whilst international visitors were comparatively low at 37,000 people, they tended to stay longer (14.7 nights average) and spent \$24M.

In 2023-24, the tourism industry contributed an estimated \$779M to the Flinders Ranges and Outback regional economy and directly employed approximately 2,500 people, with a further 1,200 indirect jobs and a total employment impact of around 3,700 people (Tourism SA, 2024). An earlier (2021-22) breakdown of direct tourism employment indicated that 40% worked within cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services, 23% in accommodation, 13% in retail trade, 8% in clubs, pubs, taverns and bars, 5% in air, water and other transport, and the remainder across travel, road transport, education and other industries.

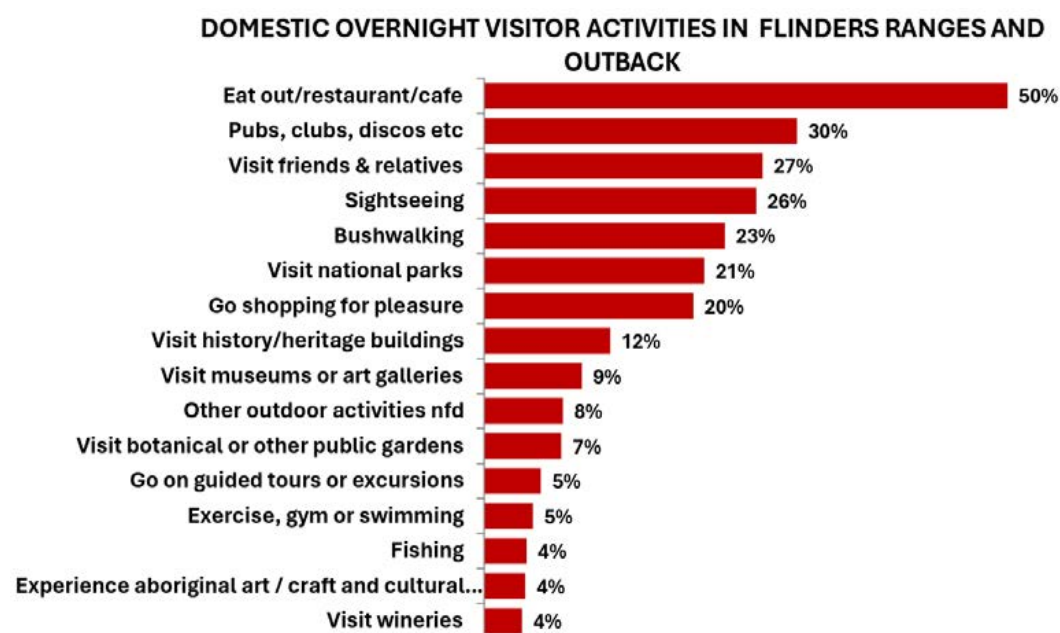
A total of 3,091 rooms across 125 establishments were provided in the region in the year ending December 2024, with June, July, September and October being the strongest months for visitation, coinciding with the cooler and shoulder months and school holidays. The hotter summer months experience the lowest visitation. According to Tourism SA, 33% of domestic overnight visitor nights were spent in 'other accommodation' (the majority relating to fly-in fly-out worker accommodation), 27% in a commercial or non-commercial caravan park or camping area, 12% with friends or relatives, and 11% in a hotel, resort, motel or motor inn (refer Figure 33).

Figure 33 – Flinders Ranges and Outback region accommodation for domestic and international visitors year end December 2024



Source: Tourism SA, December 2025

According to its Regional Profile, Tourism SA highlights that the key visitor activities for domestic overnight visitors in the year ending December 2024 were eating out, visiting pubs/clubs, visiting friends and relatives, sightseeing, bushwalking and visiting national parks (refer Figure 34).

Figure 34 – Domestic Overnight Visitor Activities in Flinders Ranges and Outback year end December 2023

Source: Tourism SA, December 2025

Port Augusta

Port Augusta is considered the gateway to the FRO tourism region, with over half of the total visitors to the region visiting Port Augusta throughout their stay. Key tourism attractions in Port Augusta include the Wadlata Outback Centre (which incorporates the region's accredited Visitor Information Centre and the Tunnel of Time interpretive display), the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden, the Yarta Purtli art gallery, and the Pichi Richi Railway operating between Port Augusta and Quorn, as well as a range of water-based activities at the top of the Spencer Gulf. Scenic Flights over the Flinders Ranges and Outback region also operate out of Port Augusta. A small number of major events occur in Port Augusta each year, including Wharfest, Show'n'Shine, Golf Week, the Port Augusta Cup, markets and Christmas festivities. These events are mostly volunteer based.

In 2019, Port Augusta attracted 376,000 visitors, staying a total of 463,000 nights in the city. Visitors spent in the order of \$87m during this time (*Tourism Research Australia, 2019*). Around two-fifths of the total visitors were in Port Augusta for a holiday, just over a fifth visiting friends and relatives, just under a fifth for business, and just over a fifth for other reasons.

In 2025, the Port Augusta City Council released its Port Augusta Tourism Development Strategy 2025-2030, replacing the previous Strategic Tourism Development Plan 2018-2023. The new strategy sets out a long-term vision for a tourism future that is community-led, environmentally conscious and economically sustainable, and is structured around five key pillars defining the Council's tourism priorities through to 2030, supported by focus areas, actions and performance measures (Port Augusta City Council, 2025). It reflects a continued emphasis on growing and diversifying Port Augusta's visitor economy, building on the city's role as the gateway to the Flinders Ranges and Outback and its position at the head of the Spencer Gulf.

The Port Augusta Strategic Tourism Plan also identified that there were limited tours and attractions (i.e. cultural, water-based, nature-based, maritime and historical) available to attract and retain visitors, with opportunities to create new tour and attraction products focused on the renewable energy market and facilities (e.g. Sundrop Farms).

The earlier Strategic Tourism Development Plan 2018-2023 had identified a number of constraints in the local visitor economy, including a limited range of tours and attractions (cultural, water-based, nature-based, maritime and historical) to attract and retain visitors, and accommodation stock in need of refurbishment, with around 20 accommodation businesses then operating in the city at average occupancy of 60-70% per annum. It also identified

opportunities to develop new tour and attraction products, including those focused on the renewable energy sector. Several of these themes have since been carried forward, including the realisation of cabin park developments such as Bentley's Cabin Park, which has progressed as part of the region's expanding worker and visitor accommodation supply.

Roxby Downs and Woomera

In 2019, Roxby Downs also attracted around 70,000 visitors, staying a total of 347,000 nights in the township and anecdotally, Woomera attracts in the order of 65,000-70,000+ tourists per year (Tourism Research Australia, 2019). At the regional scale, by the year ending December 2024 the Flinders Ranges and Outback region attracted approximately 699,000 overnight visitors, including 37,000 international visitors, staying a total of 3.27 million nights, with visitors spending in the order of \$603m in the region (Tourism SA, 2024).

10 Community Services Profile

10.1 Emergency Services

As with other community services, most emergency services are provided in the main population centres of Whyalla and Port Augusta and these include the State Emergency Service (SES), Metropolitan Fire Service, Country Fire Service (CFS), SA Ambulance Service, and SA Police. The Region 4 CFS headquarters and the RFDS are also located in Port Augusta (with an auxiliary in Roxby Downs), and the Middleback CFS is in Whyalla.

Outside of the main cities, the SA Ambulance Service and the SA Police also operate out of Woomera and Roxby Downs, the CFS has operations based in Woomera, both the CFS and SES have operations at Roxby Downs, and the SES has operations at Andamooka. In regional areas, emergency services are heavily dependent on volunteers, who provide first response, education, promotion and other essential support for emergency services.

A list of emergency service facilities is provided in Table 8.

Table 8 – List of emergency services

Emergency Services	Location/Address
SES	
Whyalla SES	41 Keith St, Whyalla Playford SA 5600
Port Augusta SES	32 Woodcock St, Port Augusta SA 5700
Woomera Emergency Services/CFS	625 Killara Avenue, Woomera SA 5720
Andamooka SES	Christmas Hill Road, Andamooka SA 5722
MFS	
Whyalla Metropolitan Fire Services	89 Nicolson Ave, Whyalla Playford SA 5600
Port Augusta Metropolitan Fire Services	Trent Rd, Port Augusta SA 5700
CFS	
Middleback CFS	41 Keith St, Whyalla SA 5600
Iron Knob CFS	Amalgamated with Middleback CFS and moved to 41 Keith St, Whyalla SA 5600 adjacent SES
SA CFS Region 4 Headquarters	40 Flinders Terrace, Port Augusta SA 5700
Roxby Downs CFS	Olympic Way, Roxby Downs SA
Andamooka CFS Region 4	Christmas Hill Road, Andamooka SA 5722
SAAS	
SA Ambulance Service – Whyalla	89 Nicholson Avenue, Whyalla Norrie SA 5608
SA Ambulance Service – Port Augusta	45 Elizabeth Terrace, Port Augusta SA 5700

Emergency Services	Location/Address
SA Ambulance Service – Roxby Downs	Burgoyne St, Roxby Downs SA 5725
SA Ambulance Station – Woomera	Killara Ave, Woomera SA 5720
SAPOL	
SA Police – Whyalla	3 Whitehead Street, Whyalla SA 5600
SA Police – Port Augusta	106 Commercial Road, Port Augusta SA 5700
SA Police – Roxby Downs	Burgoyne St, Roxby Downs SA 5725
SA Police – Woomera	Kotara Cres, Woomera SA 5720
SA Police – Andamooka	Lot 565 Opal Creek Road, Andamooka SA 5722

10.2 Education

10.2.1 Schools

Education services within the study area are predominately located close to population centres, within the cities of Whyalla and Port Augusta as well as a number of towns and settlements. Discussions with councils and education providers indicates that whilst most education facilities have capacity to expand, there are significant shortages in child care places, with long waiting lists experienced in most locations.

The Whyalla Secondary College 7-12 opened in 2022, replacing the three former campuses of Edward John Eyre High, Whyalla High and Stuart High. It has a capacity of 1,500 and a 2022 enrolment of 1,194 (Department for Education, 2023). There are seven government primary schools located in Whyalla, together with two non-government schools (R-9 and R-12). Whyalla also provides a Special Education Centre in Whyalla Norrie and a number of early learning centres and childcares are located within the city. Tertiary education in Whyalla includes the TAFE SA Whyalla campus, University of SA Whyalla Campus, and the University of Adelaide Rural Clinical School, which is focused on servicing the local health industry.

In Port Augusta, the Port Augusta Secondary School 8-12 and the Carlton School R-9 provide secondary school services to the area, and there are five government primary schools providing primary education services in addition to Carlton School. Port Augusta has a Special School on McSporran Crescent, and a number of early learning centres and childcares are also provided within the city. Two additional R-11/12 non-government schools are also located in Port Augusta. Port Augusta is also home to the TAFE SA Port Augusta Campus, a campus of the University of Adelaide Rural Clinical School and the Port Augusta Technical College, which opened in 2025.

Across the Far North are the Woomera Area School R-12, the Roxby Downs Area School R-12, the non-government St Barbara's Parish School in Roxby Downs and a primary school at Andamooka. The School of the Air (based in Port Augusta) providing R-7 services to geographically remote students. Roxby Downs also has both childcare and early learning facilities, as well as a TAFE SA campus.

10.2.2 Childcare

In its Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation Australia, 2023, the ABS reported the most common reason women were unavailable to start a job or work more hours within four weeks as being 'Caring for children', with 46% of all women who otherwise wanted a job saying that they were unavailable because of this reason. For women aged 25-39 years, the most important incentives to encourage them into the workforce were 'Financial assistance with childcare costs' and 'Ability to work part-time hours' (both 55%), followed by 'Working a set number of hours on set days' (54%) and 'Access to childcare' (52%).

The availability of affordable and accessible childcare services has also been widely documented as a significant barrier to workforce retention and participation and one that extends across the whole of the Eyre Peninsula and Upper Spencer Gulf. In November 2023 RDA Eyre Peninsula, together with Community Early Learning Australia developed a

business case to support advocacy for investment in early childhood education and care in the Eyre Peninsula. The report found that:

- Most children across the region are more likely to start school behind their peers than across the rest of South Australia.
- Female employment is most likely to be part time and many mothers are out of the labour force.
- Larger cities such as Whyalla and Port Augusta have much lower levels of household income and higher unemployment as well as very high levels of child vulnerability.
- Larger cities such as Whyalla and Port Augusta have lower capacity to pay for long daycare, and a lower likelihood that private providers will seek to establish services in the area given that lower fees would need to be levied.

Reports (RDA Far North, 2024, RDA Far North, 2025) have highlighted the undersupply of long day care services across the Far North as a significant barrier to economic growth and workforce participation. It found that additional quality places were required to meet existing demand and ensure workforce availability for significant new industry investment, particularly within Port Augusta and Roxby Downs. Overall, the key findings of the Far North report were:

- Workforce supply is the most significant challenge for childcare providers
- Shortages in relation to childcare vary across the Far North Region although overall there is a significant under-supply of childcare places for families
- Many families are having to wait long periods of time to access the childcare that they need and when it is offered, it is often inflexible and does not suit the entirety of their needs
- Childcare shortages are having an impact on families in a variety of ways
- Advocacy across the region from a range of stakeholders will be necessary to improve the situation
- Some facilities are pushing the compliance boundaries in terms of staffing and regulations to meet consumer needs, and
- There are some positive initiatives across the region addressing childcare issues.

10.3 Health Services

10.3.1 Health workforce

The medical and broader health workforce across the study area is generally lower, relative to population, than in metropolitan South Australia, consistent with the established pattern of health workforce shortages in regional and remote areas. Data from the National Health Workforce Dataset (2022), presented through the National Rural Health Alliance's Rural Health Workforce Mapping Tool, reports the clinical full-time equivalent (FTE) health workforce for each of the study area's local government areas, expressed as clinical FTE per 100,000 population and benchmarked against the rate for major cities (Modified Monash category MM1) (National Rural Health Alliance, 2024). The position differs markedly between the three areas, and between professions.

The City of Whyalla recorded a total health workforce of 1,765 clinical FTE per 100,000 population, around 492 per 100,000 below the major-cities benchmark, with shortfalls across most professional groups. Whyalla's medical practitioner workforce was 233 per 100,000 (around 196 below the benchmark), including general practitioners (84.5 per 100,000) and specialists (69.4). Nurses and midwives totalled 1,100 per 100,000 (around 63 below benchmark), while dentists (38.4 per 100,000) and pharmacists (53.9) were both well below metropolitan rates.

The City of Port Augusta presented a different profile, reflecting its role as the principal health service centre for the wider region. Its total health workforce of 2,648 clinical FTE per 100,000 population was above the major-cities benchmark, driven by a large nursing and midwifery workforce (1,751 per 100,000, well above the metropolitan rate). However, this aggregate masks a significant shortfall in medical practitioners (291 per 100,000, around 138 below benchmark), and in specialists in particular (39.4 per 100,000, around 121 below benchmark). General practitioner supply (165 per 100,000) was above the metropolitan rate, but residents must typically travel for specialist care. Dentists (44.3 per 100,000) remained below the benchmark.

The Municipal Council of Roxby Downs recorded the largest relative shortfall of the three areas, with a total health workforce of 934 clinical FTE per 100,000 population, around 1,324 below the major-cities benchmark. The resident medical workforce comprised general practitioners only (78 per 100,000), with the tool recording no resident specialists, specialists-in-training or hospital non-specialists. It likewise recorded no resident dentists, registered midwives, optometrists or psychologists, which may reflect either genuine absence or the suppression of very small numbers (the dataset suppresses headcounts below three). The nursing and midwifery workforce (512 per 100,000) was well below the metropolitan rate. Residents consequently rely heavily on visiting services and referral to larger centres for most care beyond general practice.

Across the three areas, the data indicate limited local access to medical practitioners and, in particular, to specialist medical and dental services, with residents dependent on travel to metropolitan Adelaide or larger regional centres for much specialist care. While nursing capacity is comparatively strong in Port Augusta, the overall picture is one of constrained local health service capacity. It should also be noted that the mapping tool reports only health professions registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and, by its own technical notes, is likely to underestimate the true rural workforce shortfall. This constrained capacity has implications for the additional demand that a major construction workforce would place on regional health services.

Mental Health Australia (MHA, 2023) estimates that there are nearly twice the number of psychologists and more than twice the number of psychiatrists per head of population in major cities compared to regional areas, highlighting that regional areas such as the Eyre Peninsula and Far North experience a current lack of mental health services when compared with metropolitan areas.

10.3.2 Health facilities

Most health services in the study area are concentrated in the cities of Whyalla and Port Augusta, each of which has a public hospital and a range of supporting health services, while a smaller health service operates at Roxby Downs. Whyalla is also home to the Country and Outback Health service, the University of South Australia's Whyalla-based rural health clinic and the Whyalla Medical Centre, and general practices operate in each of the main centres. Smaller hospitals and health services across the surrounding region are operated by the Eyre and Far North Local Health Network, with Port Augusta served by the Flinders and Upper North Local Health Network. Outreach and emergency services, including Royal Flying Doctor Service clinics and retrieval, supplement resident services across the region (SA Health, 2026).

The hospitals in the study area are typical of regional South Australia in offering acute, emergency, general medical and aged-care services, with more specialised and complex care requiring referral and travel to Adelaide. This pattern of service provision, combined with the medical and specialist workforce shortfalls described above, means residents routinely travel outside their local area for specialist, surgical and other higher-acuity care.

Whyalla is home to the Country and Outback Mental Health Service, University of South Australia's Rural Health Clinic and Whyalla Medical Centre, and a number of general practitioners, serving as an important focus for the provision of health services to the population of Whyalla and the wider Eyre Peninsula, Far North and Outback regions. Port Augusta also provides a significant hub for health and community wellbeing services across outback SA.

Of note are the number of Aboriginal health services in key locations that focus on providing health, mental health and care services in locations close to Aboriginal populations. In this respect, the City of Port Augusta is a key location for the provision of health services and facilities supporting remote and very remote Aboriginal populations in the Far North.

10.4 Transport

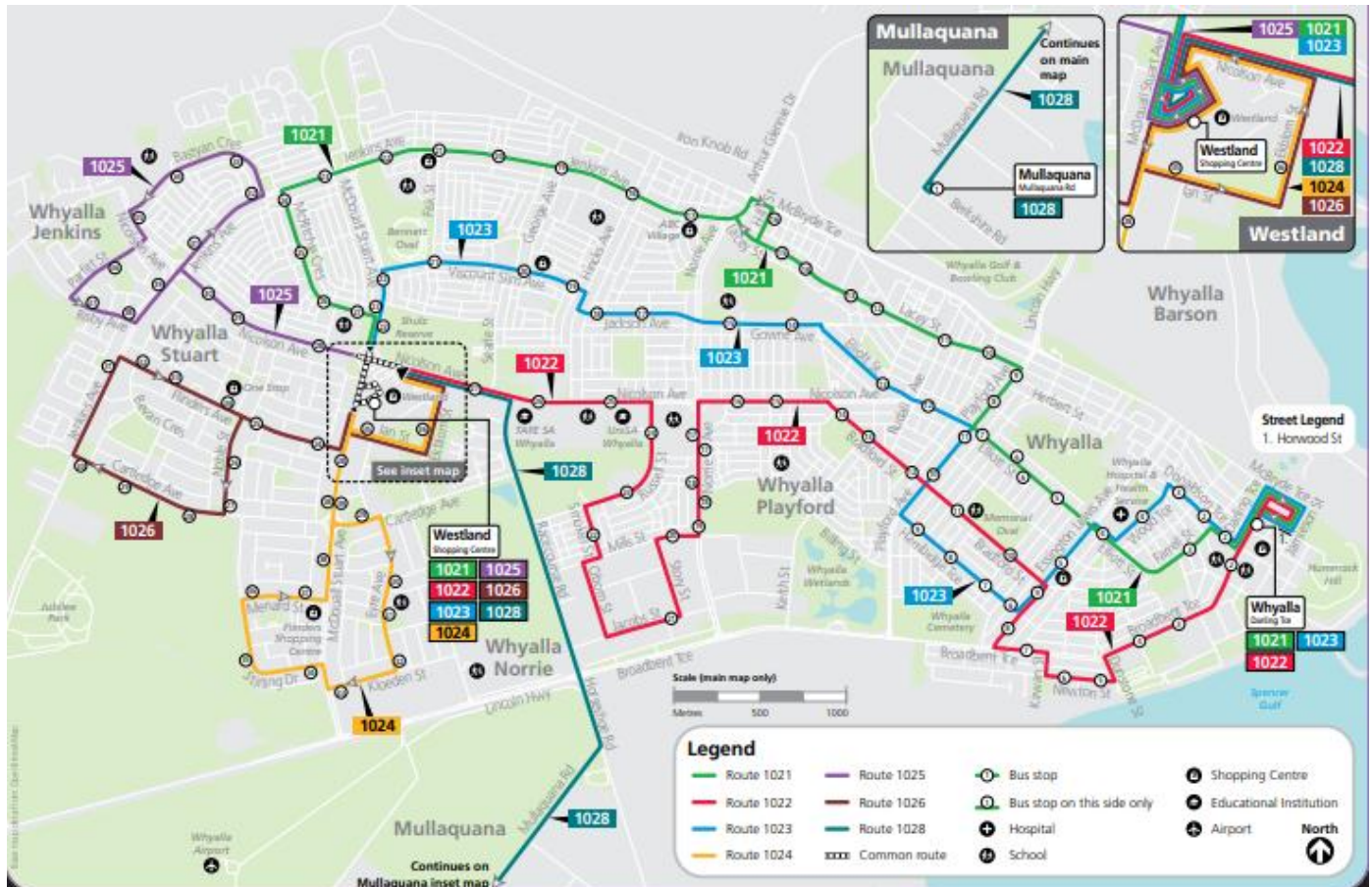
Public transport and school bus services in Whyalla are provided by the State Government via a contract with Des's Transport. A number of routes connect residential areas and key community services and centres (refer Figure 35), and these are supplemented by several school bus routes. This is confirmed through the projects Traffic Impact Assessment (GHD, 2025). At the 2021 Census, 3.1% of Whyalla's working population travelled to work by bus, a high proportion for

a regional centre, well above Port Augusta (1.6%) and approaching the South Australian figure (3.7%). Taxi services in Whyalla are provided by a local operator (Des's Cabs). Data on ride share services such as Uber was unable to be obtained.

In Port Augusta, the Port Pirie Bus Service provides a similar service on behalf of the State Government and is also run by Des' Transport and includes dedicated school bus services. The Regional Development Australia Far North (RDA Far North, 2025) has identified public transport as an opportunity for improvement, particularly in relation to connectivity to Adelaide, smaller townships and the Aboriginal settlements of the Far North.

Private companies such as Stateliner (Figure 36) provide bus services along major routes, including the Adelaide to Darwin Route (via Port Augusta), and the Adelaide to Port Lincoln route (via Port Augusta and Whyalla). Bus travel to Adelaide is around six hours from Whyalla, and 5.5 hours from Port Augusta. Connectivity to critical health services within the study areas and to Adelaide is also offered by local health services and not-for-profit organisations such as the Red Cross to people without access to private transport.

Figure 35 – Whyalla Bus Service



[Source: <https://des.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2026-Bus-Timetable-Whyalla-webview-1.pdf>]

Figure 36 – Map of Stateliner Coach Services

Source: Stateliner, 2026

Air services are provided out of several airports, principally the three largest airports at Port Lincoln, Whyalla and Port Augusta. Further information about these services is provided in 7.10.3.

10.5 Community Services

Community services are commonly provided by not-for-profit sectors and local government and include community centres, support services and programs, places of worship and support organisations. Such services not only meet the specific needs of the local community but can also provide important meeting spaces and social interaction that help ensure mental wellbeing.

Most community services provided in the study area are focused on the main population centres of Whyalla and Port Augusta, including a number of housing support, mental health and general community support services. Whyalla has a number of services that support people recovering from or living with major health challenges and Port Augusta has a large number of services that specifically focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs. Port Augusta also provides a central location for services that extend to remote and regional areas in the outback including the Outback Communities Authority, Traditional Owner groups, the RFDS and the School of the Air. A smaller number of services are provided in Andamooka, Woomera and Roxby Downs.

Of particular note is the number of progress associations, community associations and service clubs in operation across the study area. As discussed previously in this report, the rural townships in the study area demonstrate a significantly high proportion of volunteers, with many being active participants. Also of note is the significant role played by the general store and/or post offices in each township, with most also functioning as community focal points, sources of information and community support, and places offering basic supplies.

In Whyalla and Port Augusta, volunteering is supported through a broad mix of organisations spanning service clubs (such as Rotary and Lions), sporting and recreation clubs, health and welfare agencies, schools, emergency services including the CFS and SES, and church and cultural groups. These organisations provide both formal volunteering roles and informal community support networks.

10.6 Water Supply

The Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North regions rely on a range of water sources including the River Murray, groundwater resources and, in some locations, Great Artesian Basin (GAB) water supplies. These water sources support communities, industry, mining operations and other economic activities across the region. Access to reliable water supplies is an important consideration for regional development, economic activity and community sustainability, particularly in remote and arid areas where local water resources are limited.

The Northern Water Project has been developed to provide a new climate-resilient water supply source for industrial users within the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North. The social implications of this role are considered in Section 15.

10.7 Recreation and Tourism

10.7.1 Recreation and leisure facilities

A desktop review of recreation and leisure facilities and services across the study area indicates strong community involvement in sport, clubs and other leisure activities across most cities and townships. While sporting and leisure clubs are concentrated in the main population centres, Roxby Downs and the smaller townships also support a range of recreation opportunities that service their remote populations. The following profiles are indicative rather than exhaustive and are drawn from a desktop and mapping review of publicly available information.

As the largest centre in the study area, Whyalla has the broadest range of facilities. These include the Whyalla Recreation Centre (operated by the YMCA), which combines indoor aquatic facilities, a gymnasium and indoor courts, alongside a number of sporting ovals and club grounds such as Bennett Oval and Memorial Oval. The city supports active Australian football, soccer, netball and other sporting clubs, including the Whyalla Football League, North Whyalla Football and Sporting Club and the Whyalla Wanderers Soccer Club. The coastal foreshore, marina, jetty and boat ramp form a significant recreational and passive open space asset, well used by residents and visitors and notable for regular dolphin activity.

Port Augusta supports a range of sporting and community facilities, including the Port Augusta Aquatic Centre and several major sporting grounds such as Central Oval, ETSA Oval and Chinnery Oval, which host Australian football, cricket, netball and associated clubs. The city's position at the head of Spencer Gulf and along the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden provides additional open space and passive recreation opportunities, complementing its role as a regional service and sporting hub for the wider Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North.

Despite its remote location and relatively small population, Roxby Downs has a comparatively strong recreation offering, reflecting its origins as a planned mining town. The Roxby Link facility brings together an indoor and outdoor aquatic centre, gymnasium, stadium, tennis courts, library, cinema and visitor centre under one roof. The town also has the Roxby Downs Golf Club, well-regarded landscaped parks and reserves such as Lions Park and Rotary Park (incorporating playgrounds, barbecues, a skate park and open oval space) and hosts local Australian football within the Far North Football League. These facilities provide a notable level of amenity for a community of its size and isolation.

As a small township within Unincorporated SA, Woomera has a more limited but still functioning set of community recreation facilities, including the Woomera Sports Club, lawn bowls and RSL, community gym facilities, O'Donoghue Oval and outdoor courts. The facility base reflects the township's small and defence-linked population, and is more modest than that of the larger centres.

In addition to sport and recreation facilities, the coastal foreshore plays a significant role in facilitating passive open space opportunities. Coastal foreshore infrastructure including boat ramps, landscaped reserves, beach access and jetties is highly prized, as evidenced in recent community-led discussions around maintenance of the jetties across the Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas. Of note are the significant challenges facing communities in managing and maintaining coastal infrastructure that is heavily used by resident populations and tourists in significant numbers.

10.7.2 Community events

The eastern Eyre Peninsula and Far North regions run a number of community events on an annual basis, including smaller community-run events such as markets, fundraising events, and larger festivals that attract visitors from outside the regions. Table 9 provides a list of some of the larger community events across the study area. These are in addition to various industry events that occur each year across the eastern Eyre Peninsula and Far North regions, including (but not limited to) the Tactic Conference.

Table 9 – List of major community events on Eyre Peninsula and far North

Event	Description	Timing	Location
Roxby Downs Triathlon	Triathlon	Annual - March	Roxby Downs
Roxby World Food and Music Festival	Food and music	Annual	Roxby Downs
Outback Cup Race Day	Racing	Annual - August	Roxby Downs
Flinders Ranges Country Music Muster	Music	Annual - May	Port Augusta
Port Augusta Christmas Pageant and Light Up and Shine	Christmas	Annual - December	Port Augusta
Salt Festival	Seafood, music, theatre	Annual - April	Eyre Peninsula multiple venues
Cuttlefest	Environment	Annual – May to August	Whyalla
Whyalla Running Festival	Sporting	Annual - August	Whyalla
Whyalla Christmas Pageant Christmas on the Avenue	Christmas	Annual – November/December	Whyalla
Whyalla Show	Agricultural Show	Annual - August	Whyalla
uneARTh Festival	Arts and culture festival	Annual – March	Whyalla
Opal Evolution Festival	Arts	Annual – October	Andamooka
Andamooka Opal Classic	Sporting – clay shooting	Annual – June	Andamooka

PART C: POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS

This section identifies and assesses the potential social impacts associated with the construction and operation of the proposed desalination plant and transfer system, including infrastructure associated with the provision of power and storage of water as detailed in section 1.1. Potential mitigations and management initiatives are also identified and together, the social impacts and mitigations identified by this report will be used to inform the relevant impact assessment undertaken as part of the Project's EIS.

The following themes have been identified through research and stakeholder engagement and are discussed in detail throughout this section:

- Community Health and Wellbeing
- Housing and Tourist Accommodation
- Transport and Access
- Community Services, and
- Water Security.

11 Community Health and Wellbeing

The Project has a far-reaching footprint that stretches from Mullaquana Station to Olympic Dam. The social impacts and benefits on community health and wellbeing are likely to extend well beyond the footprint to adjoining townships, regional cities and rural areas. In relation to community health and wellbeing, the following potential impacts have been identified and are discussed below:

- Public Perception, Cohesion
- Place Identity, Attachment and Dependence
- Indigenous Health and Wellbeing,
- Impact on Landholders, and
- Noise, Vibration and Air Emissions.

11.1 Public Perception, Cohesion and Benefits Realisation

11.1.1 Assessment – construction and operations

Large infrastructure developments can generate high levels of public concern during construction and operation, especially if they are perceived to have a major impact on an area of high amenity or community value, are close to residential populations, are perceived to negatively impact on established local industries, or are not perceived to have benefits for local communities. Differences of opinion about a project within communities can also impact on community cohesion. For the Upper Spencer Gulf and Eyre Peninsula, this is exacerbated by the cumulative impact of a number of large projects that together generate significant change and 'project fatigue' for local communities.

During the construction period, a large project can be viewed as negatively impacting on a local population, particularly in relation to the influx of a large workforce that can generate social division through poor behaviours. Conversely, large influxes can also contribute to local expenditure, increase social activity, and make local services more viable to the benefit of local residents. Port Augusta in particular has had recent experiences with large numbers of workers and this is likely to influence positive and negative perceptions about an incoming workforce further. Public perceptions and social cohesion impacts are likely to be heightened during the construction phase and are also likely to be cumulative, particularly in the areas of Whyalla and Port Augusta where other projects are planned including the Whyalla

Steelworks. Apprehension about incoming workforces is likely to be mitigated through support for local employment opportunities and economic growth.

Engagement undertaken over the life of the Project, spanning approximately 266 recorded interactions between late 2024 and May 2026, indicates that community and stakeholder sentiment has been predominantly neutral to positive. The Engagement Outcomes Report records that around 51 per cent of interactions reflected neutral sentiment, 33 per cent positive and 14 per cent negative. Positive sentiment has been associated particularly with the Project's potential workforce, employment and local business participation opportunities, and with the broader economic and water-security benefits for the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North. This sentiment is most evident in Whyalla, where the Project is widely viewed as a positive socio-economic opportunity for the community. The prospect of an incoming construction and operational workforce is generally perceived positively, as a source of local economic benefit rather than primarily as a source of disruption. Due to the project, the GRP for Northern South Australia could be expected to be approximately 12% (or \$3 billion) larger on average over the period 2026 to 2062, with substantial positive flow-on impacts also expected across the State.

This broadly supportive position is, however, conditional. Stakeholders have consistently made clear that the Project's benefits must be balanced against the protection of the marine environment and existing regional industries, with reactions most mixed in relation to the desalination aspects and potential impacts on the Upper Spencer Gulf. Protection of the marine environment was the single most prominent theme raised throughout engagement, and negative sentiment was concentrated around marine, desalination and environmental-assessment concerns rather than the Project's socio-economic effects. Second, there is a degree of community scepticism arising from earlier expectations around planned projects that have not proceeded. This has tempered some optimism and contributed to a degree of caution about whether anticipated economic benefits will be realised, reinforcing stakeholder expectations that opportunities be translated into tangible, local outcomes.

As large infrastructure projects can attract differing community views and, where poorly managed, affect social cohesion, the generally positive socio-economic perception of the Project provides a sound foundation for maintaining community confidence. Sustaining this position will depend on continued transparent, evidence-based engagement, particularly in relation to marine and environmental concerns, and on clearly distinguishing potential opportunities from confirmed commitments so that community expectations, especially around local employment and procurement, are realistic and met.

11.1.2 Potential mitigations

Open and transparent community engagement in collaboration with other projects would greatly assist in mitigating the impacts of public perception and cohesion and should be undertaken in advance of workforce planning to inform the Project establishment phase. Given the number of projects and proposals in the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North, collaboration with other proponents, all levels of government, and service providers would also assist in mitigating 'project fatigue' and cumulative impacts. Potential mitigations include:

- Develop and implement a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan that supports transparent communication, ongoing consultation and enquiry, issue and grievance management processes.
- Communicate local workforce, industry participation and community benefit opportunities, including the distinction between potential opportunities and confirmed commitments.
- Prepare Tailored Industry Participation Plan addressing the approach to local industry participation during construction and operation.
- Prepare a Local Industry Engagement Plan which details the approach to addressing targets for local and regional industry participation.

11.2 Place Identity, Attachment and Dependence

11.2.1 Assessment – construction and operations

The existing community place identity, attachment and dependence is described in detail in Section 5, which highlights a strong sense of place associated with regional towns and settlements, recreational places along the coast and a strong association with the waters of the Gulf and the marine environment. These settlements express the identity of local residents, semi-permanent residents from the rural hinterland and regional cities, and regular visitors. A strong sense of identity and attachment translates to a sense of belonging, pride and continuity that makes these communities more sensitive to change.

There is also a strong demonstrated sense of place identity and attachment associated with the Far North arid lands, including the GAB, remote townships, tracks and trails, mound springs, Traditional Owner cultural identity, and environmental custodianship. Many of the townships across the Upper Spencer Gulf, Far North and Eastern Eyre Peninsula also demonstrate a very strong place attachment for communities that extends beyond the townships themselves, including intergenerational bonds and connections developed over long periods of time. Those townships that function as service centres for larger areas also foster a sense of place dependence based on their function and role.

Major change and disruption to places with strong community identity and attachment has the potential to create alienation, loss of identity, sense of loss, anxiety and social disruption, and potentially public opposition to the Project, whilst disruption to places that have a strong sense of dependence can result in community frustration and displacement.

The Desalination Plant and surrounds

Mullaquana Station is relatively remote and accessed via private property. However, it is in proximity to two coastal 'shack' settlements at Cowleds Landing (8km) and Murninnie Beach (10.5km). In particular, the site of the desalination plant will use Eight Mile Creek Road (noting a new road from the Lincoln Highway is the base case for primary access), which serves as the main access to Cowleds Landing and the nearby recreational Murruppi Beach. It is likely that this would generate a change in character due to construction traffic and general construction activities and the remote and recreational nature of Cowleds Landing, noting that this would be mitigated when a new road from Lincoln Highway is built.

Impacts on sense of place are expected to be short-term and unavoidable during construction. Whilst the connection to the site as a place of remote relaxation and recreation that is likely to be strong, attachment to the site is limited to a small number of local residents. In the long term, impacts are likely to be minimal, although there may be some concern about visual impacts from coastal settlements and the waters of the Spencer Gulf for recreational users seeking peace, quiet and natural environments.

The Mullaquana Station desalination plant site is located approximately 34 km south-west of the Cuttlefish Coast Sanctuary Zone National Heritage Place, which is a significant element of place identity and sense of place for the wider Whyalla community. Due to the distance between the proposed action and the Cuttlefish Coast Sanctuary Zone however, it is considered that there is no potential impact and preliminary results of marine hydrodynamic dispersion modelling of the desalination plant return water also support this conclusion.

Separately to this report, a Visual Impact Assessment (Hemisphere Design, 2026) has been undertaken that concludes that the plant and associated infrastructure located at Mullaquana Station would have no discernible impact on the wider landscape outside a 10km radius and would be a largely inconsequential feature within the panoramic vistas obtained from publicly accessible vantage spots.

Ongoing engagement with local landholders would be important in relation to the design and appearance of the desalination plant and associated infrastructure at Mullaquana Station to ensure open and transparent information about potential impacts and to identify any potential mitigation opportunities that could minimise impacts on place

identity and character. In the shorter term, the potential for disruption to the operation of Mullaquana Station as a result of construction activities, and to a lesser extent operational activities, associated with the desalination plant would also need to be addressed via ongoing engagement.

Port Augusta and Whyalla

Port Augusta and Whyalla are important regional cities offering a range of services and facilities that support the wider communities of the Eyre Peninsula and the Far North. Potential impacts to place identity, character and dependence are likely to be associated with the cities' role as gateways to the regions, either via air or road. Port Augusta in particular is a significant national nexus of road, rail, air and sea transport. Both cities would accommodate a temporary workforce and storage of materials for the construction of the pipeline and associated water storage and power infrastructure.

Impacts on place identity and attachment during construction are likely to be mitigated by their historical roles as industrial cities. However, the potential cumulative impacts of several projects, particularly at Whyalla, could impact on sense of place, especially if an influx of workforce generates a demand on community services and housing beyond the cities' capacities. For Port Augusta, its role as a hub for transient workers and its high dependence on workers' accommodation to support community services may also generate concerns about a construction workforce, particularly given experiences at high peak demand such as during construction of the Joy Baluch Bridge.

The importance of the waters of the Gulf to local sense of place is well documented and use of the waters for recreational and commercial activities is significant. The Whyalla Marina itself is used by over a thousand recreational vessels a year for fishing, sailing or cruising, with users including the Yacht Club, Sea Rescue, Sport Fishing Club and tour operators. Whilst restrictions on the use of the Gulf have the potential to impact this sense of place, these impacts would be expected to be limited in their scale and duration to the area of marine construction activities associated with a jack-up barge and a short transit corridor between Whyalla Port and the work front that may require implementation of temporary marine safety zones (GHD, 2026). During operations, approximately 15 small vessel inspection trips would be expected each year to the intake and outfall infrastructure with a negligible impact on marine activities.

During operations, the intake and outfall structures could be expected to require an area of restriction to protect them from anchoring or trawling activities. The geographic extent of these protection areas however is currently unknown and subject to further investigations that will include a navigation risk assessment. Engagement with commercial fishers and relevant peak industry bodies will be essential to this process to minimise impact on commercial fishing businesses and the industry as a whole.

It should be noted that there has been ongoing and long-term concern about loss of jobs and economic activity over many years in both cities that is likely to generate higher levels of support for the Project if it were to result in employment and growth opportunities for the local populace during the construction phase. The flow on impacts associated with economic revitalisation, identity and sense of place, increased workforce participation, community connection and improved community facilities and services may deliver positive outcomes that transfer well into the operational phase, particularly if the project incorporates legacy elements designed to ensure the flow of benefits to local communities.

The departure of a temporary workforce as a project transitions from construction into operation can affect a community's sense of place and identity in ways that are distinct from the more visible economic effects of demobilisation. While much of the social impact concern associated with major projects relates to the arrival of a non-resident workforce, the withdrawal phase can create its own consequences. For an established resident community, the transition can prompt a resetting of local identity, particularly where a town's self-image and economy is closely tied to the project during its peak (Lawrie, Tonts and Plummer 2011; Tonts, Plummer and Lawrie 2011).

However a defining feature of temporary and long-distance-commuting workforces, particularly for shorter term projects is that these workers typically form weak or limited social ties to the host community (Haslam McKenzie 2010), which means their presence contributes less to durable local identity than equivalent resident population growth (McGuirk and Argent 2011).

Pimba, Woomera and Roxby Downs

Roxby Downs, Woomera and Pimba are located at the northern-most end of the transfer system works. Roxby Downs could expect to house a workforce for a short period of time and accommodate construction activities such as the storage of materials, construction traffic and staff via the arterial road network. In its role as a service centre, Roxby Downs would also be expected to attract workers accessing essential goods and services, and recreational activities. Given Roxby Downs' role as a service town to the mining industry, social impacts are expected to be minimal.

As smaller townships, Woomera, Andamooka and Pimba could be expected to experience some social impacts from additional workforce and traffic movements, however this could be expected to be limited to their relationship to larger service centres such as Roxby Downs and of low intensity, scale and duration. Ongoing engagement of residential and business communities in relation to potential impacts and collaborative approaches to mitigating and/or offsetting these impacts would assist in mitigating impacts on sense of place in these locations.

Rural hinterland and arid lands

Much of the water system infrastructure, pipeline, water storage facilities, pumping stations, transmission line, and power stations would be constructed in remote or very remote parts of the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North through areas that are characterised by pastoral land uses, natural vegetated areas, saltbush, ephemeral watercourses, and arid lands, with scattered rural settlements and stations. The sense of place identity and attachment associated with these rural and arid lands is described in Section 5.

Impacts on sense of place and attachment in rural and arid land locations would predominately be temporary in nature and associated with construction impacts such as traffic movements, transport of materials and workers.

Longer term impacts could be associated with the visual impact and/or operational noise of transmission lines, pumping stations and power stations where located in open landscapes, especially when viewed from tourist routes and destinations. In this regard, visual and noise impact assessments have been undertaken separately to this report.

Continued engagement with landowners, Traditional Owners and local authorities would be important to ensure that potential impacts on sense of place are well understood and can be minimised.

11.2.2 Potential mitigations

Measures that would minimise potential impacts and maximise benefits to place identity, attachment and dependence could include:

- Continue engagement with recreational users, commercial fishers, tourism stakeholders and local communities regarding project design, construction activities and operations.
- Prepare and adopt codes of conduct, induction processes and internal behavioural management practices for Project construction workforce.
- Prepare a Local Industry Engagement Plan which details the approach to addressing targets for local and regional industry participation.
- In consultation with relevant stakeholders and community, consider opportunities for community benefit or legacy initiatives that support local amenity and community wellbeing.
- Implement appropriate environmental management measures in accordance with approvals to address changes to visual amenity.

11.3 Indigenous Health and Wellbeing

11.3.1 Assessment – construction and operations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up a substantially higher proportion of the population in the study area, particularly in centres such as Port Augusta and Whyalla, than across South Australia or nationally. This greater representation, combined with the Project area extending through the Barngarla and Kokatha Native Title Determination areas and the well-documented link between connection to Country and Aboriginal health and

wellbeing, means the Project's impacts on land, water and access carry particular significance for Aboriginal people and warrant a specifically tailored approach.

Connection to Country is a significant determinant of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing (refer Sections 6.1, 7.4 and 7.9). Outcome 15 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap specifically recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters. The Project's most direct potential impacts on Aboriginal health and wellbeing therefore relate to Aboriginal cultural heritage values and Native Title rights and interests. These are the subject of separate investigations and an extensive engagement program with the two Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate, the Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation and the Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation, and are addressed separately to this report. Several related social aspects, however, are relevant here.

Direct potential impacts of the Project on Indigenous Health and Wellbeing are primarily related to Aboriginal cultural heritage values and Native Title rights and interests, which are the subject of separate investigations and an extensive engagement program with the two Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate, being the Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation and Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation.

The Project's substantial workforce and procurement demand presents a significant opportunity for the region's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. In particular, the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of Port Augusta and Whyalla mean there is a cohort entering working age for whom the Project could provide employment, training and business participation pathways. With culturally appropriate support, these benefits could be significant and enduring, contributing to economic participation, skills and intergenerational outcomes that extend well beyond construction. Realising them would depend on tailored measures, culturally safe workplaces, support designed around community needs, and pathways developed in partnership with local Aboriginal communities, rather than a general workforce approach.

Conversely, the Project also carries the potential for disadvantage if these considerations are not actively managed. Without a tailored approach, Aboriginal people could be under-represented in the Project's workforce and benefits while remaining exposed to its pressures, for example competition for limited housing and services in communities already experiencing disadvantage, or the heightened wellbeing vulnerabilities affecting young Aboriginal people in the region. There is also the risk that workforce mental health and other services benefit the Project's workforce while doing little for the Aboriginal community, widening rather than narrowing existing gaps. The health equity considerations described above are therefore heightened for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The distribution of the Project's impacts across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population would depend substantially on how actively the opportunities are pursued and the risks managed, in genuine partnership with local Aboriginal communities. These matters would be addressed through the Project's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and workforce measures.

11.3.2 Potential mitigations

Measures that would minimise potential impacts and maximise benefits to Indigenous health and wellbeing, including connection to Country could include:

- Continue engagement with Traditional Owners and deliver on commitments arising from cultural heritage processes, Native Title discussions and the Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs).
- Prepare an Aboriginal Employment Strategy outlining how the Project will achieve opportunities for businesses, training, employment and retention of Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal People during construction and operation of the Project.

11.4 Landholder Impacts

11.4.1 Assessment – construction and operations

Whilst the direct and indirect impacts on land use are addressed outside the scope of this report, there remains the potential indirect social impacts of the change in use of land required for the long-term use for a desalination plant, as well as easements and other tenure required for pumps, pipeline, transmission lines and supporting facilities. Potential social impacts include stress and anxiety associated with the acquisition of land either through purchase or easement, and temporary or long-term impacts on the operation of the land, which can have a negative impact on business viability and therefore household income (in the case of land used for primary production). The Northern Water engagement team has undertaken engagement process with directly affected landholders, government departments, Traditional Owners, infrastructure owners and mining and energy companies with relevant interests. The engagement process is ongoing.

In relation to the operation of the plant, transfer pipeline, transmission lines and associated pumping and storage facilities (as distinct from construction), the establishment of, in most cases, an easement may impact peoples' way of life and their environment associated with both temporary and permanent changes to access over easements, the long-term use of easement land, and short-term construction impacts such as noise, safety, agricultural disease control, dust and soil erosion. In this respect, direct impacts are discussed in detail outside of this report as part of the noise, land use, air quality and soils technical reports.

Engagement has been ongoing with landholders since 2022, and general support has been received, with some refinements made to the route of the pipeline as a result in order to minimise impacts on the existing land use. Impacts have also been mitigated where possible via the deliberate location of the corridor along already disturbed areas such as roads, property lines or fence lines, and potential mitigation opportunities will continue to be identified through the detailed design process. There continues to be engagement directly with landholders about Project activities and the presence of Project infrastructure on the use and enjoyment of their properties and land. Conduct of activities on private property will be determined in consultation with affected landholders and will take into account landholder concerns around access, property security, privacy and similar matters.

Construction impacts on primary production as a result of pipeline construction may include dust drift, erosion, temporary disruption to access, property security, fire risk or transmission of disease and weeds affecting crops. The implementation of appropriate construction methodologies as part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan such as dust suppression, weed/pest management, vehicle hygiene practices, policies around accessing property, and construction scheduling in consultation with landowners and operators would address these potential impacts.

11.4.2 Potential mitigations

Extensive discussions have also been held with Traditional Owners and the two registered bodies in relation to Native Title obligations and these discussions will continue. Protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage and native title rights during Project activities is addressed separately to this report.

Measures that would minimise potential impacts and maximise benefits to landholders could include:

- Continue ongoing engagement with affected landholders during detailed design, construction and operation.
- In consultation with affected landholders, prepare and implement Landholder Management Plans, with the aim of capturing measures that can minimise disturbance. Where relevant, incorporate measures into construction planning and other management plans.

11.5 Air, Noise and Vibration Emissions

11.5.1 Assessment – construction and operations

The Terrestrial Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment (Resonate, 2026) and the Air Quality Assessment (Jacobs 2026) identified the nearest noise-sensitive receivers along the Project alignment, covering both residential and non-

residential receptors with the potential to be affected by construction or operational noise or air emissions (including dust).

Most receivers fall within remote areas, reflecting the sparsely settled, pastoral character of the alignment between the desalination plant near Mullaquana Station and the northern terminus at Olympic Dam and Carrapateena. They include homesteads and rural residences (such as Mullaquana Station, Mount Arden, Purple Downs Station and the Roxby Downs residences), small settlements (Cowleds Landing, Olympic Dam Village, Woomera and Pimba), and non-residential receivers such as roadside rest areas and an airstrip.

11.5.2 Potential mitigations

Potential mitigations of impacts from noise or air emissions would consider the recommendations of the Noise and Vibration Assessment (Resonate, 2026) and the Air Quality Assessment (Jacobs 2026). Appropriate environmental management measures in accordance with approvals would be implemented to address noise and air emissions.

11.6 Local industry and workforce opportunities

11.6.1 Assessment – construction and operations

The Project represents a significant economic opportunity for the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North, generating substantial demand for labour, goods and services across an extended construction period. At peak construction, the Project is expected to require a workforce of approximately 1,500 full-time equivalent positions, with a smaller ongoing workforce during operation. This demand spans a range of occupations and skill levels, from civil, marine and tunnelling trades through to plant operation, logistics, professional and support roles, and creates opportunities for local employment, training and business participation across the study area.

Employment and business participation emerged as one of the most prominent themes raised through community and stakeholder engagement, with the Engagement Outcomes Report recording 73 interactions specifically related to employment, procurement and business participation. Stakeholders across local, state and national organisations expressed strong interest in supplying goods and services to the Project and consistently emphasised the importance of maximising local workforce participation and meaningful access for regional businesses. This included expectations around early visibility of procurement opportunities, contract packaging that enables local businesses to compete, and clear requirements for delivery partners to prioritise local suppliers and workers where practicable. There was also strong interest in broader workforce development outcomes, including apprenticeships, skills transfer, and Aboriginal employment and procurement pathways.

The scale of the construction workforce also presents opportunities to address longstanding regional challenges. The study area, and Whyalla in particular, has historically recorded comparatively low workforce participation rates, especially among women, with access to childcare identified as a barrier. A large, sustained construction program offers the potential to support local skills development, attract and retain workers, and strengthen the regional labour market, provided participation barriers are actively managed. Realising these benefits will depend on coordinated workforce planning, including training pathways aligned to Project needs and measures that enable broader local participation.

These opportunities are, however, accompanied by community expectations and some caution. Stakeholders have been clear that support for the Project is conditional on it delivering tangible local outcomes rather than short-term benefits that dissipate once major works conclude, and on protecting existing regional industries, commercial fishing, aquaculture, tourism and agriculture, that are integral to regional identity and economic stability. Engagement also reflected a degree of scepticism informed by earlier regional proposals that did not proceed, reinforcing the importance of distinguishing potential opportunities from confirmed commitments. The cumulative demands of concurrent regional projects on a finite local labour pool, and associated pressures on housing and services, are addressed elsewhere in this assessment.

Beyond direct employment and procurement, the Project has the potential to contribute to broader economic revitalisation and to reinforce community confidence, sense of place and resilience across the study area, and

particularly in Whyalla. As a long-established industrial city, Whyalla's identity is closely tied to its role in steel production and heavy industry, and the community has navigated a period of significant change and uncertainty in relation to the future of the Whyalla Steelworks. Substantial Commonwealth and State Government investment is now supporting the steelworks' transition toward a lower-emissions future, alongside associated developments such as magnetite supply and broader industrial growth in the Upper Spencer Gulf.

By providing a secure, climate-independent water supply to underpin industry and mining across the region, the Northern Water Project aligns with and supports this wider transformation agenda. In doing so, it has the potential to strengthen long-term economic confidence, support local skills development and employment pathways, and contribute positively to the sense of stability, optimism and renewal within communities that have experienced considerable change. Realising these flow-on benefits and ensuring they are delivered locally will depend on coordinated regional planning and on the Project being delivered in a way that complements other major initiatives across the Upper Spencer Gulf.

11.6.2 Potential mitigations

Potential mitigations/optimisations to ensure the realisation of local benefits to the community associated with the Project could include:

- Communicate local workforce, industry participation and community benefit opportunities, including the distinction between potential opportunities and confirmed commitments.
- Prepare a Tailored Industry Participation Plan addressing the approach to local industry participation during construction and operation.
- Prepare a Local Industry Engagement Plan which details the approach to addressing targets for local and regional industry participation.
- Continue engagement with recreational users, commercial fishers, tourism stakeholders and local communities regarding Project design, construction activities and operations.
- Support local workforce development and industry participation initiatives through procurement and workforce planning processes.
- Continue engagement with regional stakeholders regarding local employment, workforce development and industry participation opportunities. Where appropriate, collaborate with regional planning and development organisations.

12 Housing and Tourist Accommodation

Workforce planning has been undertaken for both the construction and the operational phases of the Project, with the workforce peaking at around 1,500 in year two (refer Section 1.3 for details of the projected construction and operational workforce).

Potential impacts relating to housing and tourist accommodation are discussed in this section and relate to Housing Availability and Affordability, and Availability of Tourist Accommodation.

12.1 Housing Availability and Affordability

12.1.1 Assessment – construction and operations

As discussed in Section 8, housing and accommodation availability is an existing challenge across the study area. In Whyalla, this reflects broader pressures on housing and short-term accommodation, while in Port Augusta it is associated in particular with demand from a high number of essential workers, placing the local housing market under similar pressure. These pre-existing constraints were reflected in engagement feedback, with stakeholders, including the Whyalla City Council and local residents, raising concern that a large construction workforce could further strain housing and accommodation availability during peak construction.

The Northern Water Project will seek to minimise impacts on local housing availability and affordability by accommodating the majority of non-local construction workers in a combination of temporary workforce accommodation, existing short-stay accommodation and, where appropriate, marine-based accommodation facilities, rather than relying on local residential housing stock.

Workforce accommodation is expected to comprise a combination of existing accommodation facilities and temporary workforce accommodation. Based on current workforce planning assumptions, existing short-stay and tourism accommodation in Whyalla and Port Augusta may accommodate portions of the transfer system, tunnelling and marine workforces, while additional temporary workforce accommodation is expected to be required for the peak desalination plant workforce and construction activities associated with the transfer system and supporting infrastructure north of Port Augusta. Where appropriate, marine construction personnel may also be accommodated on marine construction vessels, including jack-up barges.

The use of purpose-built temporary workforce accommodation and strategically located accommodation facilities is expected to substantially reduce reliance on local residential housing markets and assist in managing potential impacts on housing availability and affordability. The scale, location and configuration of temporary workforce accommodation will be determined by the preferred DBOM Contractor having regard to workforce requirements, construction method, program and planning approval.

It should be noted that even with a self-contained camp option, the start-up phase may require the use of existing accommodation options until the camp is established. This may take time as the workforce mobilises. Similar draw on local accommodation is likely to occur in peak times for shorter term contractors and project-wide staff, indirect labour, and flow on demand generated by the provision of services to the project, and during the demobilisation phases of the Project.

The existing housing market in Whyalla and Port Augusta is experiencing capacity and affordability pressures, including low rental vacancy rates, increasing rents and increasing property values. In this context, reliance on existing dwelling stock to accommodate construction or operational workers could place additional pressure on housing availability and affordability, particularly for lower-income households and other vulnerable community members. The Project's proposed accommodation approach seeks to minimise these potential impacts by accommodating the majority of non-local workers outside the residential housing market.

Key challenges will be ensuring that any demand for housing over and above the proposed accommodation camps:

- Do not increase the cost of housing for residents
- Do not decrease the availability of housing for residents
- Does not displace essential worker accommodation (including police, teaching and health professionals), thus exacerbating existing challenges with attraction and retention of workers, and
- Maximise opportunities associated with long-term new legacy housing investments and/or potential improvements to the existing housing quality and diversity.

During its operational phase, the Project is expected to generate a small number of long-term staff associated with management of the plant itself, together with maintenance of the transfer pipeline and associated infrastructure. The potential community benefits associated with these additional permanent workers will depend on whether they are FIFO or locally based, with the latter likely to generate moderate benefits to the sustainability and viability to the local community.

Whyalla

Whyalla has a greater diversity of housing than Port Augusta, although still has a high number of underutilised dwellings (defined as two or more spare bedrooms) and a significantly high number of lone-person households. Further choice in housing, modernisation and improved housing quality has been identified as priorities by the Spencer Gulf Cities (2022).

The Project is one of a number of major developments proposed or underway across the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North, and its socio-economic effects, particularly on workforce and accommodation, should be understood in the

context of this broader pipeline of regional activity. These developments are at varying stages of commitment and certainty. Some are committed and proceeding, including BHP's announced investment of over \$840 million in growth-enabling works at Olympic Dam and associated worker accommodation, and the broader transformation and sale process at the Whyalla Steelworks supported by Commonwealth and State Government funding.

Other projects, including a potential major expansion of copper production and smelting capacity at Olympic Dam, are proposed but subject to future investment decisions, with BHP not expected to make a final decision until at least the second half of 2027. Other projects yet to reach final investment decisions include ElectraNet transmission upgrades, and various renewable energy projects. A further group of earlier regional proposals have been deferred or remain uncertain.

The region has experienced instances of announced projects not proceeding as anticipated, and a realistic assessment of cumulative impact must therefore weight committed projects more heavily than those that remain conditional or speculative. Consistent with this, the cumulative socio-economic assessment in this report focuses on developments with a reasonable prospect of overlapping with the Project's construction period, while acknowledging that the scale and timing of several remain subject to change.

The presence of these other planned projects in Whyalla and the Upper Spencer Gulf more broadly highlights the need to collaborate across the region, particularly in relation to housing, workforce and industry participation. A number of existing structures and mechanisms already exist to help facilitate this coordination including the Whyalla Delivery Co-ordination Group, Spencer Gulf Cities and the annual USG Workforce Summit.

Port Augusta

Port Augusta is a larger regional city and whilst housing availability and affordability is strained, it otherwise has a broader range of health, community and support services than many smaller regional centres and is therefore better placed to accommodate some workforce-related activity, subject to ongoing management of accommodation and service demands.

Port Augusta has significant experience in managing a workforce gained through the delivery of the Joy Baluch Bridge project between 2020 and 2023. Whilst the project provided significant returns to the local community using existing housing options and generating local spend, some adverse impacts were reported including increased costs and decreased availability of rental housing.

Regional Development Australia Far North (RDA Far North 2025) reports that despite the already high proportion of rented households in Port Augusta that is indicative of its working population, demand for workers' housing is a significant barrier to the attraction and retention of essential workers and thus economic growth. The RDA also notes anecdotal evidence that houses in Port Augusta are increasingly being sold to interstate buyers keen to take advantage of high rental returns for worker accommodation, increasing the cost of rentals and decreasing housing availability to local residents. Concerns raised by the RDA Far North included the quality and diversity of housing in Port Augusta, which is not always suitable for the needs of workers, is unattractive or poorly located.

Roxby Downs and Pimba

Roxby Downs currently functions as a working town with a significant FIFO population generally accommodated in either the Olympic Village or Roxby Downs Village. It is expected to be able to sustain a moderate number of short-term Project workers associated with the northern-most construction of the pipeline, with potential opportunities for coordination with other major employers and accommodation providers during detailed workforce planning. Roxby Downs is relatively self-sufficient in relation to services and is experienced in providing for a variable workforce.

Pimba does not offer the services provided by Roxby Downs but is close enough to make use of the services provided within the larger town. There may be opportunities to investigate small-scale legacy options at Pimba and/or Roxby Downs depending on demand.

Other townships

Other townships around the Upper Spencer Gulf provide accommodation options for those seeking a smaller township lifestyle while remaining connected to larger regional service centres such as Port Augusta and Whyalla. Limited short-term accommodation demand associated with the broader Project footprint may also occur in smaller settlements and townships outside the larger population centres, including locations further north such as Andamooka. Where appropriate, opportunities may be explored to coordinate accommodation planning with accommodation providers and other regional projects to minimise impacts on local housing affordability and availability and optimise potential community benefits.

12.1.2 Potential mitigations

The following potential mitigations are suggested:

- Accommodate the majority of non-local construction workers through a combination of workforce accommodation arrangements, existing short-stay accommodation and other suitable accommodation options, with the objective of minimising reliance on local residential housing stock and reducing impacts on housing availability, affordability and community access to housing.
- Develop and implement an Accommodation Strategy in consultation with local authorities, accommodation providers, regional stakeholders and other major projects to manage workforce accommodation requirements and minimise impacts on local housing and accommodation markets.
- Where practicable, maximise opportunities for locally based operational employment to support long-term community and economic benefits.
- Investigate opportunities for workforce accommodation solutions to deliver accommodation capacity or other longer-term community benefits beyond the construction phase, where practical and economically viable.
- Collaborate through existing regional coordination mechanisms, including the Whyalla Delivery Co-ordination Group, Spencer Gulf Cities and other relevant forums, to manage cumulative housing and workforce accommodation pressures associated with major projects.

12.2 Availability of Tourist Accommodation

12.2.1 Assessment – construction and operations

Tourist accommodation is commonly used by working populations for short and long-stay options and it is likely that the Project will generate additional demand over and above the use of workers camps.

Regional tourism accommodation occupancy data shows average occupancy rates across the Eyre Peninsula tourism region is predominantly leisure-driven and seasonal, peaking around school holidays and long weekends and, in the Flinders Ranges and Outback, during the cooler autumn-to-spring months. Whyalla's short-term accommodation demand reflects this seasonal visitor pattern alongside industry and contractor activity.

Port Augusta's accommodation market differs from Whyalla's in its underlying drivers. In Port Augusta, discussions with local tourist accommodation providers reported through the Infrastructure for Growth Strategy (RDA, 2025) indicates a very high occupation rate during the week that decreases over the weekend, indicating a significant level of use by workers, including police, health and allied health workers.

Much of the Upper Spencer Gulf, including Whyalla and Port Augusta, together with the Far North townships of Roxby Downs, Pimba and Woomera, are popular tourist destinations, and are highly dependent on intrastate, interstate and, to a lesser extent, overseas visitors. The use of tourist accommodation for workers during the construction phase is likely to pose the biggest challenge for the Project in relation to tourism impacts. Potential impacts of the Project using tourist accommodation during peak periods include increased costs of accommodation and displacement of visitors to the region, with flow on effects to non-accommodation tourist operators.

The use of existing tourist accommodation where available would increase the sustainability of tourist facilities, particularly outside of tourist peak season returning benefits to local businesses and communities. Discussions with

tourist accommodation operators indicates that, based on experience with other projects, this additional support from a construction workforce significantly assists them to be financially sustainable in the context of a highly seasonal operation.

A key challenge for the Project will be to ensure that construction and operation of the infrastructure maximises returns for tourist accommodation providers during low tourism peaks without displacing or inconveniencing tourists during high peak seasons, or otherwise dissuading tourists from visiting. Opportunities include optimising benefits associated with the use of tourist accommodation outside of high peak periods for overflow accommodation demands whilst minimising the impacts on the wider tourism industry.

12.2.2 Potential mitigations

Potential mitigations for minimising impacts on tourist accommodation could include:

- Develop and implement an Accommodation Strategy in consultation with local authorities, accommodation providers, regional stakeholders and other major projects to manage workforce accommodation demand and minimise impacts on tourism accommodation availability and affordability.
- Investigate opportunities for workforce accommodation solutions to contribute to accommodation capacity or other longer-term benefits for the regional visitor economy beyond the construction phase, where practical and economically viable.
- Accommodate the majority of non-local construction workers through workforce accommodation arrangements, existing short-stay accommodation and other suitable accommodation options in a manner that minimises impacts on tourism accommodation availability during peak visitor periods.
- Engage with accommodation providers, tourism industry representatives and local authorities to understand seasonal demand patterns and identify measures that minimise impacts on visitors and tourism businesses.
- Monitor workforce use of tourist accommodation and, where required, adapt accommodation arrangements to minimise impacts on accommodation availability and affordability during periods of peak visitor demand.

13 Transport and Access

The Project has a far-reaching footprint that stretches from Mullaquana Station to Roxby Downs. The social impacts related to transport and access are likely to extend beyond the footprint to adjoining townships, regional cities and wider road networks. In relation to transport and access, the following potential impacts have been identified and are discussed below:

- Road safety
- Road network, and
- Availability of transport services.

13.1 Road Safety

13.1.1 Assessment – construction and operations

An assessment of the Project's impact to traffic on the road network has been undertaken separately to this report and is contained in the Traffic Impact Assessment (GHD, 2026) and responds to the existing road safety environment detailed in Section 7.10.2. It is considered likely that traffic impacts on the community would be at their greatest during the construction phase and would incorporate heavy machinery, construction equipment, haulage, construction vehicles and workers' vehicles on the local road networks.

The construction phase of the Project has the potential to affect road safety across the study area, primarily through an increase in heavy-vehicle movements on local and regional roads over an extended construction program, peaking around month 17. Higher traffic volumes, particularly of heavy and oversize vehicles, would increase the interaction

between construction vehicles and existing road users and place additional loads on road surfaces. These effects would be concentrated during construction and operational road safety impacts are expected to be negligible given the very low volumes of maintenance traffic generated once the Project is operating (GHD, 2025).

The Traffic Impact Assessment found that, while the proportional increase in daily traffic on the major highways would generally be modest in the order of 5-10% on the Lincoln, Eyre and Stuart highways during its peak, the safety considerations would be concentrated at the points where construction traffic enters and leaves the network. Access arrangements for the proposed Desalination Plant itself would have the greatest impact on the road network. New intersections on the Lincoln Highway and Eight Mile Creek Road would also be required for the proposed access route.

Along the transfer system corridor, the pump station and laydown sites would generate new access points onto the Eyre Highway at Lincoln Gap and onto the Stuart Highway to provide access to Kalaya and Mangata Pump Stations, the Bimba Product Water Storage, and numerous laydown, stack and substation sites. The assessment notes that most of these intersections would require some form of turn treatment to safely accommodate construction traffic.

At the northern end, access points onto the Olympic Dam Highway and Olympic Way, including at Roxby Downs, would introduce new heavy vehicle interactions. Within the townships, the proposed accommodation camp and laydown access points, including on Kloeden Street and Industry Drive in Whyalla, Press Road and Madland Street in Port Augusta, and Olympic Way at Roxby Downs. These could be expected to introduce localised increases in traffic, though the assessed proportional increases at these points would generally be small.

The Traffic Impact Assessment also noted that heavy vehicle movements over an extended period could also accelerate deterioration of existing road surfaces, with consequent safety implications, and heavy vehicle routes could raise specific considerations for drive-over structures such as culverts, particularly on Horseshoe Road.

Road safety was raised through engagement as a specific community concern, with stakeholders, including local government representatives, highlighting the potential for increased construction and heavy-vehicle traffic on local and regional roads and its implications for safety, access and congestion, particularly where it interacts with agricultural traffic, tourist movements and daily commuting routes near townships (Engagement Outcomes Report, 2026). Many of these concerns are addressed by the Traffic Impact Assessment, including recommended mitigations to address them.

In addition to heavy vehicle impacts, the locally based workforce, which is projected to be most significant for the desalination plant (around 50% local) and for indirect labour (sourced entirely locally), would also generate regular vehicle movements to and from the work sites. These workforce movements would contribute to the light-vehicle component of construction traffic on the road network and would be in addition to the heavy-vehicle movements associated with materials and equipment delivery. While the majority of the workforce would be accommodated in self-contained camps, which would reduce daily commutes, worker travel during shift changes, mobilisation and demobilisation, and by locally based and drive-in workers, would add to traffic volumes on the key access routes, particularly around the desalination plant and along the transfer system corridor during the construction peak.

It should be noted that the potential for any increased traffic from the Project is almost certain to generate increased concern and concerns about the road-safety impacts of major projects can often exceed the level of risk indicated by a traffic impact assessment. This reflects a well-recognised distinction in road safety research between perceived risk and actual risk, with perceived risk often heightened by the visibility of increased heavy vehicle activity and highlights the importance of ensuring that physical improvements to the road network should be accompanied with a robust community and stakeholder engagement and education program to help manage community perceptions about road safety. Potential opportunities to further reduce the impact of the Project on road safety through project scheduling (particularly during times of peak tourist or agricultural movements), efficient fleet management, and planning of construction work fronts to minimise heavy-vehicle travel distances and time on the road should also be investigated where practicable.

13.1.2 Potential mitigations

The outcomes of the Traffic Impact Assessment indicated that, with appropriate traffic management measures in place, the current road network would have the capacity to manage the projected increase in road traffic and would meet

appropriate road safety requirements. It is considered that the implementation of these mitigations would address the majority of community concerns about road safety. Potential mitigations would include:

- Prepare and implement Construction Traffic Management Plans in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including applicable recommendations of the Traffic Impact Assessment
- Continue engagement with road authorities, emergency services and local government regarding construction traffic impacts.

13.2 Road Network Planning

13.2.1 Assessment – construction and operations

The impact of traffic generated by the Project has the potential to complicate management of the local road network, particularly in the context of the existing pressures as discussed in Section 7.10. The local community of the Eyre Peninsula and the Far North is heavily dependent on the road network for access to essential services, business continuity, movement of ore, movement of tourists, and general community wellbeing in what is considered to be a remote environment. Together with recent road network impacts associated with the closure of the grain rail line and the post COVID-19 boom in travellers, community sensitivities to increased traffic on the arterial and local road network is heightened.

Much of the Project's footprint is located in rural and remote areas that have very large road networks under the care and control of local government or the Department of Infrastructure and Transport. The capacity of local government to manage the road asset is limited by a small ratepayer base and competing infrastructure challenges, especially when compared with larger, more urbanised councils. The location of a large project in a rural and remote area has the potential to place a greater strain on the capacity of local government than would otherwise be the case.

Whilst traffic impacts are expected to be temporary, construction of parts of the Project would take several years. A coordinated approach to road network planning together with local and state government, peak transport bodies and associations, and major projects planned for the region would mitigate much of the potential social impact.

As well as the issue of coordinating the strategic management of the road network, maintaining the road network has been raised as a significant issue by local government representatives, which collectively have a limited capacity to manage significant changes. Whilst the majority of freight would be using the arterial road network, which is managed by the State Government, there is potential for flow on impacts generated by the Project onto the local road network, which is managed by local government. There is also the potential that local residents may choose to use the local road network to avoid the main road network if it were congested (or perceived to be congested) with additional construction-related traffic.

13.2.2 Potential mitigations

Potential mitigations would include:

- Prepare and implement Construction Traffic Management Plans in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including applicable recommendations of the Traffic Impact Assessment
- Continue engagement with road authorities, emergency services and local government regarding construction traffic impacts.

13.3 Impact on Bus, Air and Sea Transport Services

13.3.1 Assessment – construction and operations

Transport services including bus services, air services, and the currently suspended Lucky Bay Ferry are important to local communities as well as tourists visiting the Eyre Peninsula and the Far North (refer Section 7.10.3). Communities are dependent on flights to access health services in Adelaide as well as to visit friends and family, for recreation and for education and work purposes. Discussions with the community and operators of Whyalla and Port Augusta airports

(Local Government) indicates that there is a high community sensitivity to transport costs, particularly the cost of flights, with the social impacts being reduced access to health and other community services, the operation of local businesses, and social isolation and loneliness. This is supported by an enquiry by the Parliament of Western Australia undertaken in 2017, which found that high costs of inter-regional travel can be a major factor for people deciding to leave regional or remote communities.

Initial construction workforce planning has been undertaken and is summarised in section 1.3. The construction workforce would include a significant fly-in fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in drive-out (DIDO) component, with the balance drawn from the local workforce. The proportion would vary by work package, from around 50% FIFO/DIDO at the desalination plant and 60% across the transfer system, to approximately 80% for the specialised marine and tunnelling works, while indirect labour would be sourced entirely locally. FIFO workers are assumed to originate from Adelaide, with interstate workers connecting through Adelaide Airport before travelling to Whyalla, Port Augusta or Olympic Dam. On this basis, the Traffic Impact Assessment (GHD, 2025) identified that construction would generate additional demand for air services, with peak rostered FIFO movements in the order of 400 workers associated with the desalination plant, 120 with the marine and tunnelling works and 100 with the transfer system, based on a two-week-on, two-week-off roster.

This additional demand has been projected to increase passengers at a bi-weekly peak on flights between Whyalla and Adelaide by around 620 workers (148%), between Adelaide and Port Augusta by around 100 workers (32%) and between Adelaide and Olympic Dam by around 100 workers (10%). The Assessment concludes that increases at Whyalla and Olympic Dam airports can be absorbed by existing flight capacity, also noting that Olympic Dam has a potential airport expansion planned. However, it is noted that Port Augusta does not currently have adequate capacity to accommodate the Project's movements, particularly for inbound flights to Port Augusta, unless more FIFO charter flights are added, which the Assessment notes could be scheduled on the same day or another day of the week.

Whilst the pricing of regular passenger flights in and out of Whyalla is managed by carriers (Qantas Link), community concern has been expressed during engagement with local residents that Project dependence on flights in and out of Whyalla could generate higher flight prices and/or impact on the availability of flights. Residents consulted were particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of several projects within the region. There is some evidence to support this concern from the experience of other projects (Parliament of Western Australia, 2017), especially where projects have negotiated block bookings/seat chartering, resulting in increased airfares and lower seat availability for the general public. As there are currently no regular passenger transport (RPT) flights operating to or from Port Augusta or Olympic Dam airports, the impact on the community's access to affordable air travel from these two locations is expected to be negligible.

An increased demand for services may be beneficial to the local community by making services more viable, increasing service regularity, and reducing the incidence of cancelled flights due to poor patronage. Airport operators indicate that current average passenger loading is estimated at 55%-65% and increasing that loading could be expected to increase profitability and reduce the likelihood of aircraft re-diversion. Increased demand could also have the potential to attract additional carriers, and open up new times and routes that would be of benefit to the community.

The capacity of airport infrastructure (terminal facilities, runway, operations, security etc) to sustain additional demand is subject to further investigations outside the scope of this report. However, given that these airports are community owned via local governments, and incorporate community equity access as key goals, it is considered that the Project could work with operators of regional airports to better understand how the Project could support infrastructure enhancements for the benefit of the Project and the local community should improvements be required to support FIFO workers. In this respect, there is an opportunity for the Project to work with the Cities of Whyalla and Port Augusta, together with the carriers, to develop an air access strategy to identify any issues with capacity and develop strategies to minimise displacement of local communities and maximise flow on opportunities associated with increased demand.

RDA Eyre Peninsula's Regional Airports Strategy (RDA Eyre Peninsula, 2025) identifies six strategic objectives for the future of the Eyre Peninsula's airports, which includes Whyalla Airport. A key focus of the Strategy is to improve operational performance, expand routes, and invest in infrastructure. Similarly, the Port Augusta Infrastructure for

Growth Strategy (RDA, 2025) highlights the opportunity for increased economic development in the Far North to provide a catalyst for the reinstatement of passenger services that ceased in 2017 (Sharp) and 2020 (Rex).

In relation to public bus services, workers are not anticipated to use these services to any great extent and any impacts to the community are therefore expected to be negligible. The impact of works affecting the road network (and thus road transport services) are addressed in Section 13.

13.3.2 Potential mitigations

Strategies to manage the potential impact on air transport include:

- Continue engagement with airport operators, airlines and relevant authorities regarding workforce travel requirements and cumulative demand.

14 Community Services

The Project would generate a temporary workforce involved in the construction of the desalination plant itself as well as the transfer system and supporting power and water storage facilities. Whilst temporary in nature, this workforce has the potential to increase demand for local community services, especially if construction coincides with other projects planned for the region, including the Whyalla Steelworks.

The primary impact of the population growth generated by a workforce is likely to be greater demand for community services, particularly if the project is successful in attracting new residents and families to the region. An increasing population may also enable new or expanded services by creating a critical mass and making them more viable. There are opportunities for the Project to play a facilitation or catalyst role in attracting new or expanded services that will serve the Project's workforce as well as the wider population.

In relation to community services, the following potential impact areas have been identified and are discussed below:

- Demand for health services
- Impact on emergency services
- Demand for education services, and
- Impact on recreation facilities.

14.1 Demand for Health and Wellbeing Services

14.1.1 Assessment – construction and operations

During engagement, representatives of local government across the project area have raised concerns about the capacity of health services to meet a growing population, particularly in the context of the cumulative impacts of major projects in the Upper Spencer Gulf. Whilst some areas are better serviced than others, the Far North and Eyre Peninsula regions are considered remote and do not have the range of services found in metropolitan areas. It is therefore heavily reliant on Adelaide, particularly for specialist and some emergency services (refer Section 7.8).

During construction, the Project will likely provide its own health services to its workforce, including potential emergency air services. Key demands on local services likely to be associated with short term initial emergency care and would be temporary in nature for the duration of construction. Collaboration with the Eyre and Far North Local Health Network during the construction and workforce planning phases of the Project would ensure that these impacts are managed with minimal impact on local communities. Given the remote nature of worksites relating to parts of the pipeline and supporting infrastructure, these discussions should also involve the RFDS.

Depending on the timing of the Project combined with other projects in the region, discussions with emergency health providers would benefit from being collaborative with any other projects that may be in construction phase at the same

time. This is most likely to occur in Whyalla due to the planned Whyalla Steelworks upgrade and the Whyalla Delivery Co-ordination Group has already been set up to this end.

Discussions with local government representatives indicated concern about competition for health practitioners, informed by existing challenges in recruiting and retaining staff across regional South Australia (refer Section 10.3). Even where the Project provides its own health services for its workforce, there is potential for it to draw on the same limited pool of practitioners, raising an equity consideration if Project workers were to have better access to care than the wider community.

There is an opportunity to investigate sharing services and resources recruited by the Project with the broader community to support more equitable health service provision. This could include staff, education and health-promotion programs, and active health initiatives that extend beyond construction into the operational phase. This consideration is particularly significant in relation to mental health. As discussed in Section 7.8.4, the wider Eyre Peninsula has been identified as a region of high mental health vulnerability and low provision of mental health services.

These conditions sharpen the equity consideration described above. Because the Project would draw on the same limited pool of health and mental health practitioners, providing dedicated services to its workforce has the potential to widen the existing gap in access between Project workers and the wider community, as distinct from the region's underlying levels of need.

There is therefore an opportunity to investigate ways of offsetting this effect, including partnering with local providers so that workforce mental health programs and resources can also benefit the wider community where practicable, either via transferable programs or shared contribution to joint resources. Measures of this kind would help ensure the Project does not inadvertently reduce the community's relative access to services, and could deliver shared value at relatively low marginal cost.

In providing mental health and wellbeing services to its own workforce, the Project would most likely draw on established workforce programs such as such as Mates in Construction, R U OK?, Beyond Blue and Heads Up. Beyond their direct benefit to workers, these arrangements could act as a catalyst for introducing skills, service providers and health professionals to the region. Working with existing local providers to build on this presence could extend services and deliver lasting benefit to the wider community, beyond the life of the Project.

In relation to the construction and operation workforce itself, there are risks that an introduced workforce could generate community wellbeing concerns due to behaviours and poor integration with local communities. Management of behaviours and introduction of initiatives and strategies that seek to integrate a working community into the resident community would be an important part of workforce planning. The reverse of this concern is that an introduced workforce can result in increased benefits to local sporting, service clubs, emergency services and recreational groups through increased membership and volunteering. Support from the project via project sponsorship, volunteer promotion amongst the workforce, collaborations with local sporting teams or groups, and programs that encourage workers to participate in local clubs and services would contribute significantly to the wider sustainability and cohesion of the local community, and the health and wellbeing of the workforce itself.

Once the Project moves into its operational phase, the workforce is expected to be reduced considerably and is not likely to create a significant drain on health services.

14.1.2 Potential mitigations

As discussed, the Project will likely establish its own medical health services and emergency services needs, thus minimising impacts on community access to services. Notwithstanding, the following mitigations would further reduce any impacts and could potentially be a catalyst for legacy improvements for the community beyond the life of the project. These could include:

- Engage with relevant health service providers and emergency services during workforce mobilisation and project planning.

- Ensure workforce health and emergency response arrangements are appropriate to the size, location and nature of the workforce.
- Investigate opportunities to support shared health, wellbeing and mental health initiatives where practical, mutually beneficial and developed in consultation with relevant service providers.

14.2 Impact on Emergency Services

14.2.1 Assessment – construction and operations

Emergency services are detailed in Section 10.1 including SA Police, SA Ambulance Service, State Emergency Service, Country Fire Service, Metropolitan Fire Service, and the Royal Flying Doctor Service. During construction of the Project, demand on emergency services would most likely arise in the event of an emergency such as an accident, incident or natural disaster. For locations within more urbanised areas such as Whyalla and Port Augusta, response capacities are likely to be higher compared with more remote locations in the Far North or Eyre Peninsula.

The Traffic Impact Assessment (GHD, 2025) identifies several construction-related factors with potential implications for emergency response. Temporary lane closures, detours and construction zones could restrict access along affected routes, with potential to affect emergency vehicle movement and response times. Increased vehicle movements, the transport of construction materials and the potential for spills, leaks or roadkill incidents could also generate localised demand for emergency response, although hazardous material volumes are expected to be low and would be managed through an Environmental Management Plan. The movement of oversize and over mass vehicles, which may require pilot and escort vehicles and occasional road closures, could also intersect with emergency access and, in some cases, policing requirements.

For the more remote worksites associated with parts of the pipeline and supporting infrastructure, the Project proposes helicopter support during construction for crew transfers and medical evacuation at the marine workfront, drawing where possible on existing regional helicopter services. This reflects the limited reach of land-based emergency services in remote areas and the corresponding reliance on aerial retrieval.

Outside of emergency response requirements, the Project may generate temporary additional demand for policing due to traffic planning requirements, road disruptions or closures, and/or transportation of oversized loads to site (refer also 13.1). In this respect, early and close collaboration with SA Police would help mitigate the potential impact associated with diverting a limited pool of police on the wider community. This will be especially important in remote and very remote areas where police resources are already limited.

Regardless of workforce location, emergency planning would be a critical component of pre-mobilisation activities, and close collaboration with emergency services would be required during the earliest phases to ensure that response protocols are in place, access protocols and channels are agreed, and services have time to develop their own response plans, including additional resources if required. Discussion of scheduling may also be necessary to mitigate potential impacts on emergency services during high-demand periods such as tourist season, harvest or bushfire season. In addition, emergency response protocols associated with incidents or accidents related to the operation of a desalination plant may need to be reviewed, potentially with additional expert advice.

14.2.2 Potential mitigations

The following mitigations could mitigate the potential impacts of the Project on local emergency services:

- Undertake emergency response planning in consultation with relevant emergency service providers.
- Maintain ongoing coordination with emergency services regarding project activities and workforce presence.

14.3 Demand for Education Services

14.3.1 Assessment – construction and operations

Childcare

Childcare is a significant barrier to workforce retention and participation and one that extends across the whole of the Eyre Peninsula and Upper Spencer Gulf. A recent report undertaken by Regional Development Australia (RDA, 2023) highlights specific needs for each township and city across the region (refer 10.2). The RDA Far North's Infrastructure for Growth Strategy (RDA Far North, 2025) also highlights childcare as a significant barrier to growth in Port Augusta.

In the short term, the Project would be unlikely to have a high demand for childcare services due to the potential use of FIFO/DIDO workers, and the on-site provision of workforce services. However, the existing lack of availability could be a barrier to attracting a permanent workforce and/or attracting construction staff who are willing to relocate closer to the Project footprint.

Data released by the ABS on *Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia* (ABS, 2023) highlights that caring for children was the most common reason women were unavailable to start a job or work more hours in a week (illness, injury, long-term health condition or disability was second). Whyalla has a high proportion of single-parent families, indicating a high demand for family support services including childcare.

Whilst the existing capacity of childcare services would be unlikely to have a major impact on the Project's ability to attract workers, access to affordable childcare is one of the key barriers to employment for the local workforce, particularly for female workers. Working with partners to help address this issue would not only significantly increase access to a potential local workforce but would deliver flow on benefits to the wider community to address unemployment, low female workforce participation rates (particularly in Whyalla) and rates of socio-economic disadvantage.

Primary and secondary education

As discussed in 10.2, the main population centres and townships are generally well serviced by primary and secondary education facilities in the context of rural and remote regions. Although the Project is not expected to generate a high level of demand for primary and secondary education due to the use of a FIFO/DIDO workforce, any increase in demand is likely to be able to be accommodated and may even improve the sustainability of local services. The existence of a range of government and non-government educational facilities provides a basis for investment in secondary education, including training pathways to work on the project, career development and support, bringing the project 'into the classroom', and encouraging local careers in emerging industries.

Tertiary education

The current levels and fields of educational attainment across the region would affect the capacity of the population to respond to employment opportunities. The provision of local jobs for local people is a key goal of the Project and it would therefore be important to ensure that educational barriers to employment are identified and addressed. In order to accurately identify future education and training needs, finer grain analysis would be required in relation to the qualifications and skills required to perform the tasks required to construct or operate the facility, together with the current levels of qualification in the community. A skills and qualifications audit would assist in the identification of gaps and opportunities for skills uplift, re-skilling, and re-training.

Of significance is the fact that almost all of those with a post-school qualification in construction, engineering and related technologies, particularly in Whyalla, are male, whilst qualifications in health, management and commerce, society and culture, and education were dominated by women. Working to identify and provide qualifications specifically tailored for women (46.3% of Whyalla's workforce) would help maximise opportunities for participation more generally as the region's industries diversify and grow.

There is a potential that the Project (combined with other projects in the region) could generate a demand for locally provided tertiary education and workforce training, particularly if a goal of the Project is to develop a local skills base. A detailed assessment of the Project's training and skills needs would be undertaken as part of an industry participation plan, required as part of the procurement process. Ongoing collaboration with local education providers and institutions would help minimise the potential impacts associated with competing with local businesses for skilled personnel and maximise investment in local skills development to the benefit of local community wellbeing.

14.3.2 Potential mitigations

In relation to education services, the following potential mitigations/optimisations would further minimise impacts:

- Support local workforce development and industry participation initiatives through procurement and workforce planning processes.
- Engage with training and education providers regarding workforce capability requirements where appropriate.
- Prepare a Local Industry Engagement Plan which details the approach to addressing targets for local and regional industry participation.

14.4 Impact on Recreation Facilities and Marine Access

14.4.1 Assessment – construction and operations

Recreational Fishing and Coastal Access

For coastal cities, townships and settlements on the Eyre Peninsula and Upper Spencer Gulf, recreational fishing activities represent a significant element of place attachment, connection and dependence. Recreational fishing in the Gulf is also a significant recreational activity for residents of the rural hinterland and visitors from outside the region.

The potential for the Project to affect recreational (and commercial) fishing has been raised consistently throughout the Project's engagement process, whether through effects on water quality or through physically limiting fishing areas via exclusion zones. The Project has worked with these groups over an extended period and has undertaken extensive modelling and research separate to this report. Potential effects on water quality, including any matters relevant to fishing and the marine environment, are addressed in the discussed in the marine environment assessment reports prepared for the EIS. The studies have concluded that the Project is expected to have negligible impact on marine water quality..

The proposed site at Mullaquana Station is private property and is therefore restricted in use to a small number of local landholders and residents. The coastal 'shack' settlements of Cowleds Landing and Murninnie Beach provide the nearest focal points for recreational activities and are located approximately 8 and 10.5kms from the site respectively. Impacts of the project on coastal access is therefore anticipated to be negligible.

The proposed new access road to the desalination plant would connect directly to the Lincoln Highway and would pass the road access to the coastal shack settlement of Cowleds Landing, which is a popular recreational holiday location with some permanent residents. Construction and, to a lesser extent, operational traffic using the new access road would pass the settlement's access, approximately 1km away, with potential for localised amenity effects such as noise, dust and increased traffic presence, particularly during the construction period. Noise from construction traffic on haul and access routes together with construction of the pipeline has the potential to affect nearby receivers during construction, including the Cowleds Landing settlement, particularly during the construction period. While the terrestrial noise assessment did not quantify haulage noise impacts on human receivers, construction traffic noise would be managed through the Construction Traffic Management Plan, including measures such as restricting engine-brake use near sensitive areas, limiting truck movements on local roads, and managing the timing of movements past sensitive receivers.

The proposed construction method for the desalination plant's intake and outfall infrastructure is tunnelling under the coastal reserve to minimise impacts to coastal access or natural features. The seabed intake and outfall structures may require a restricted area to protect them from anchoring and trawling and for public safety. The need for, and extent of, any such area would be determined through a navigation risk assessment in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including commercial fishery operators. Any restricted area is expected to be localised, with negligible impact on recreational fishing, boating or other recreational activities. It should be noted however that there would be an expectation of community consultation and possibly education for regular and irregular recreational boating owners.

The Project would make limited use of the Whyalla Marina boat-launching facility for marine construction access and, during operation, for periodic inspection and maintenance of the intake and outfall. This use would be infrequent (in the order of one vessel movement per day at most during construction, and a small number of trips per year during operation) and is not expected to materially affect recreational use of the marina or boat ramp, which accommodates over a thousand recreational vessels annually. Ongoing communication with and engagement of recreational (and commercial) fishers and boaters will be essential to ongoing support for the Project, particularly in relation to impacts on use of waters and launching facilities in the Gulf.

Recreational Facilities

Discussions with local government, together with observations, indicate significant existing pressure on coastal recreational assets arising from coastal processes and the intensity of tourist activity. These conditions have contributed to the deterioration of coastal assets such as foreshore areas, jetties and coastal trails. A construction workforce could be expected to increase use of coastal and other recreational assets, though not to the extent of normal tourist activity, and any impacts would be short term. The main areas that could generate short-term demand for recreational facilities associated with a construction workforce would be Whyalla, Port Augusta, Pimba, Woomera and Roxby Downs, together with the extended coastal stretch.

An introduced workforce could also result in increased benefits to local sporting and recreational groups through increased membership. These benefits are likely to be small but locally significant, and could be enhanced through Project sponsorship, collaborations with local sporting teams, and programs that encourage workers to participate in local clubs, contributing to the wider sustainability and cohesion of the local community and the health and wellbeing of the workforce itself.

14.4.2 Potential mitigations

In relation to managing potential impacts on recreational and marine assets, the following mitigations would assist:

- Continue engagement with users and owners of recreational assets, commercial fishers and boating stakeholders throughout construction and operation.
- Communicate marine monitoring, navigation requirements and environmental findings in a transparent and accessible manner.

15 Regional Development and Community Outcomes

15.1.1 Assessment – construction and operations

The Northern Water Project is intended to provide a new climate-resilient water supply source for industrial users in the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North. In doing so, it has the potential to support regional investment, employment opportunities and associated community benefits linked to industrial and mining development, while providing an alternative water supply source that may create opportunities for future reductions in reliance on existing water resources used by industry. These benefits would be indirect and are expected to arise through the Project's role as enabling infrastructure rather than through the direct supply of water to communities.

The Project has the potential to contribute to broader regional confidence by supporting infrastructure required for existing and future industrial activities. Potential community benefits may include increased employment opportunities, business participation, skills development and investment in regional communities. The extent of these outcomes will depend on future decisions by individual water users, market conditions and the delivery of associated industrial developments.

The Project does not alter existing water extraction entitlements, allocation limits, water resource management arrangements. Any future changes to the use of existing groundwater or other water resources would occur through separate decisions made by water users and relevant regulatory processes.

15.1.2 Potential mitigations

Potential mitigations / optimisations could include:

- Continue engagement with regional stakeholders regarding local employment, workforce development and industry participation opportunities. Where appropriate, collaborate with regional planning and development organisations.
- Clearly communicate the role of the Project as an industrial water supply initiative and distinguish potential regional benefits from direct Project commitments.

PART D: CONCLUSION

16 Summary of Key Impacts and Benefits

This report has been undertaken to identify potential impacts, both positive and negative, resulting from the Project, together with potential mitigation measures and optimisations for consideration as part of the planning, design, construction and operation of the Project.

The Project represents a significant transformation for the region. This transformation presents challenges for the local communities of the Far North, Eyre Peninsula, and Upper Spencer Gulf, which have strong connections and intergenerational identities as agricultural and fishing communities.

Regional Australia Institute (2024) acknowledges the desire for a long-term ambition for strengthening our regional communities. The Project is a potential catalyst for regionalisation acknowledging the role that regional Australia plays in ‘unlocking the potential for productivity gains across regional centres and industries’ (Regional Australia Institute, 2024).

The capacity of the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North communities to respond to regionalisation in the context of the Project is a common theme of this report, particularly in relation to infrastructure, housing, skills and training, community services and funding. The location of the Project in remote and very remote locations highlights the potential to ensure support is provided to communities making this transition via collaborative and inclusive planning processes.

Table 10 presents a summary of the key impacts and benefits discussed in this report, together with potential mitigations and optimisations.

Note that the impacts, benefits and mitigations set out here should also be read in conjunction with other environmental studies carried out for the project including the Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (Hemisphere, 2026), the Terrestrial Noise and Vibration Assessment (Resonate, 2026), the Air Quality Assessment (Jacobs, 2026) and Traffic Impact Assessment (GHD, 2026). Mitigation measures from these reports for potential visual, noise, air quality and traffic impacts have been considered but not replicated in the impact assessment sections in Part C or in the summary of mitigation measures provided in Table 10. It should also be noted that mitigation measures that may be proposed in other reports are subject to detailed design and will be confirmed in the relevant post-approval management plans.

Table 10 – Summary of Potential Impacts and Mitigations

Potential Impact or Benefit	Potential Mitigation or Optimisation Approach
Community Wellbeing	
Public perception, community confidence and cohesion	Develop and implement a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan that supports transparent communication, ongoing consultation and enquiry, issue and grievance management processes.
	Communicate local workforce, industry participation and community benefit opportunities, including the distinction between potential opportunities and confirmed commitments.
	Prepare and adopt codes of conduct, induction processes and internal behavioural management practices for Project construction workforce.
Place identity, attachment and dependence	Continue engagement with recreational users, commercial fishers, tourism stakeholders and local communities regarding Project design, construction activities and operations.
	Implement appropriate environmental management measures in accordance with approvals to address impacts to air quality, noise emissions and changes to visual amenity.
	In consultation with relevant stakeholders and community, consider opportunities for community benefit or legacy initiatives that support local amenity and community wellbeing.
Indigenous health and wellbeing	Continue engagement with Traditional Owners and deliver commitments arising from cultural heritage processes, Native Title discussions and the Indigenous Land Use Agreements.
	Prepare an Aboriginal Employment Strategy outlining how the Project will achieve opportunities for businesses, training, employment and retention of Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal People during construction and operation of the Project.
Local industry and workforce opportunities	Prepare a Tailored Industry Participation Plan addressing the approach to local industry participation during construction and operation.
	Prepare a Local Industry Engagement Plan which details the approach to addressing targets for local and regional industry participation.
Landholder impact	Continue engagement with affected landholders during detailed design, construction and operation.
	In consultation with affected landholders, prepare and implement Landholder Management Plans with the aim of capturing measures that can minimise disturbance. Where relevant, incorporate measures into construction planning and other management plans.

Potential Impact or Benefit	Potential Mitigation or Optimisation Approach
Housing and Accommodation	
Housing availability and affordability	Accommodate the majority of non-local construction workers through a combination of workforce accommodation arrangements, existing short-stay accommodation and other suitable accommodation options with the objective of minimising reliance on local residential housing stock and reducing impacts on housing availability, affordability and community access to housing.
	Develop an Accommodation Strategy in consultation with local authorities, accommodation providers, regional stakeholders and other major projects to manage workforce accommodation requirements and minimise impacts on local housing and accommodation markets.
	Collaborate through established regional coordination mechanisms, including the Whyalla Delivery Co-ordination Group, Spencer Gulf Cities and other forums, to manage cumulative housing and workforce accommodation pressures associated with major projects.
	Investigate opportunities for workforce accommodation solutions to deliver accommodation capacity or other longer-term community benefits beyond the construction phase, where practical and economically viable.
	Where practicable, maximise opportunities for locally based operational employment to support long-term community benefit and economic benefits.
Tourism accommodation availability	Develop and implement an Accommodation Strategy in consultation with local authorities, accommodation providers, regional stakeholders and other major projects to manage workforce accommodation demand and minimise impacts on tourism accommodation availability and affordability.
	Accommodate the majority of non-local construction workers through workforce accommodation arrangements, existing short-stay accommodation and other suitable accommodation options in a manner that minimises impacts on tourism accommodation availability during peak visitor periods.
	Engage with accommodation providers, tourism industry representatives and local authorities to understand seasonal demand patterns and identify measures that minimise impacts on visitors and tourism businesses.
	Monitor workforce use of tourism accommodation and, where required, adapt accommodation arrangements to minimise impacts on accommodation availability and affordability during periods of peak visitor demand.

Potential Impact or Benefit	Potential Mitigation or Optimisation Approach
	Investigate opportunities for workforce accommodation solutions to contribute to accommodation capacity or other longer-term benefits for the regional visitor economy beyond the construction phase, where practical and economically viable.
Transport and Access	
Road safety and traffic impacts	Prepare and implement Construction Traffic Management Plans in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including applicable recommendations of the Traffic Impact Assessment.
	Continue engagement with road authorities, emergency services and local government regarding construction traffic impacts.
Air services	Continue engagement with airport operators, airlines and relevant authorities regarding workforce travel requirements and cumulative demand.
Community Services	
Health and wellbeing services	Engage with relevant health service providers and emergency services during workforce mobilisation and project planning.
	Ensure workforce health and emergency response arrangements are appropriate to the size, location and nature of the workforce.
	Investigate opportunities to support shared health, wellbeing and mental health initiatives where practical, mutually beneficial and developed in consultation with relevant service providers
Emergency services	Undertake emergency response planning in consultation with relevant emergency service providers.
	Maintain ongoing coordination with emergency services regarding project activities and workforce presence.
Education and workforce development	Support local workforce development and industry participation initiatives through procurement and workforce planning processes.
	Engage with training and education providers regarding workforce capability requirements where appropriate.
Recreation and marine access	Continue engagement with users and owners of recreational assets, commercial fishers and boating stakeholders throughout construction and operation.
	Communicate marine monitoring, navigation requirements and environmental findings in a transparent and accessible manner.

Potential Impact or Benefit	Potential Mitigation or Optimisation Approach
Regional Development and Community Outcomes	
Provision of enabling infrastructure that may support regional investment, employment opportunities and associated community benefits.	Continue engagement with regional stakeholders regarding local employment, workforce development and industry participation opportunities. Where appropriate, collaborate with regional planning and development organisations.
	Clearly communicate the role of the Project as an industrial water supply initiative and distinguish potential regional benefits from direct Project commitments.

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