2. Strategic Context

2.1 Introduction

The strategic context of the Amended Project would remain largely unchanged from that of the Project as presented in the EIS. This Section presents an overview of the State and Regional Strategies, Policies and Plans considered as part of the EIS for the Project, as well as an assessment against Strategies, Policies and Plans that have come into effect or were not considered in the EIS.

In addition, Section 2.3 of the EIS addresses cumulative impacts in light of projects that were know at the time of finalisation of that document. Since that date, additional information has become available in relation to the Lake Victoria Wind Farm, proposed to be located to the south of the Mine Site. Section 2.4 presents an overview of the proposed wind farm and potential cumulative impacts.

2.2 Government Strategies, Policies and Plans

The EIS considered the following Government Strategies, Policies and Plans.

- *Threatened Species Action Plan 2022 to 2032 (Cth)*
- *Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth)*
- *Critical Minerals Strategy 2023 to 2030 (Cth)*
- *Economic Development Strategy for Regional NSW*
- *20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW*
- *NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2042*
- *Far West Regional Plan 2036*
- *Draft Far West Regional Plan 2041*
- *Western Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy 2023 Update*
- *Climate Change Policy Framework*
- *Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy 2024-2035*
- *Wentworth Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement*
- *Wentworth 2017-2027 Community Strategic Plan*
- *Wentworth Shire Development Control Plan 2011*
- *Broken Hill City Council Community Strategic Plan – "Your Broken Hill 2040"*
- *Broken Hill Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020-2040*

In summary, the Amended Project would continue to be consistent with each of the documents reviewed for the following reasons.

- The Amended Project would result in similar employment and economic contributions for a similar period, namely 3 years of construction, 18 years or mining and 5 years of mining, thereby supporting the retention of existing residents and attraction of new residents to population centres such as Wentworth, Dareton, Buronga, Gol Gol and Broken Hill as well as centres in Victoria such as Mildura and Merbein.
- The Amended Project would result in reduced disturbance of key natural or built features with a reduced magnitude of impacts.

The Amended Project is considered by the Applicant to be consistent with the overall strategic context of the Project as exhibited.

2.3 Additional Strategies, Policies and Plans Considered

During the preparation of the Amendment Report additional strategies and plans were identified that had not been addressed in the EIS. These additional strategies and plans are discussed below.

2.3.1 Regions at the Ready: Investing in Australia's Future

Regions at the Ready: Investing in Australia's Future was released June 2018 by the Commonwealth government. The report presents principles of rural development which provide the foundation for building and sustaining regional Australia, as well as providing discussion on key values and challenges faced by rural Australia. The Amended Project would be consistent with the following principles, values and elements of regional development.

Principles of Regional Development

Principles for building and sustaining regional Australia

- *The key to regional development across Australia is to facilitate and secure sustainable economic development.*

  Based on updated economic impact modelling presented in **Appendix 16** and summarised in Section 6.15 of this document, the amended Project would generate approximately $13.3 billion in economic output in NSW over the 21-year construction and mining phase of the Project. Economic output within the Wentworth LGA over the same period would be approximately $9.6 billion

  Furthermore, the Project would contribute following anticipated direct full-time equivalent employment during construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project.

  – Construction ..... approximately 480 positions

– Operations ..... approximately 240 positions

– Rehabilitation ..... approximately 40 positions

The Project would substantially support a wide range of businesses and employment throughout the Western Murray and Far West Regions.

- *Local education and training that is engaged with its community is pivotal to regional development and decentralisation.*

  The Project would provide resources for training and development opportunities for workers, with the Applicant anticipating that the required employees can be sourced primarily from within the Wentworth LGA and surrounding LGA's. This would facilitate a deep engagement with the local community and support regional development.

Regional Australia

Value of Rural and Regional Australia

- *The regions are the backbone of Australia's exports sector. The major industries of regional Australia—agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining—accounted for nearly 60 per cent of Australia's merchandise exports in 2016. Seven out of ten of Australia's top exports are primarily produced in the regions.*

  …

  Mining is not only the driver of many of Australia's regional economies, it contributes significantly to the national economy. For 2015-16, the mining industry contributed approximately $115 billion to the economy, ranking as the third highest contributing industry to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), at seven per cent. The annual growth of mining output was 6.2 per cent, representing the highest growth rate of all industries. The industry also employs 216,500 people, or around 1.7 per cent of Australia's total workforce.

  The Project would help to increase the value of NSW mineral industry through the delivery of additional mineral products, including critical minerals, as well as the continued support, utilisation and development of the supporting industries.

Elements of Regional Development

Skilled Workforce

- *Having access to strong human capital in the form of a skilled workforce is also directly related to the growth of regional communities. Conversely, the absence of a skilled workforce is one of the main constraints on regional growth.*

  …

  Regional development requires significant investment in the education and training of people within regional communities, particularly young people. Such investment will build strong skilled workforces to meet the needs of regional areas. It may also lead to better population retention outcomes.

The Project would assist to retain and attract a skilled workforce in the Western Murray and Far West Regions through direct employment and sourcing services and goods locally. In addition, the Project would permit the Applicant to employee apprentices and trainees and contribute to training programs for the local community, enabling professional and skills-based development for the local and regional workforce.

2.3.2 NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023

The *NSW Freight and Ports Plan 2018-2023* objectives are relevantly as follows.

- *Increased efficiency, connectivity and access – by improving the efficiency of existing infrastructure and ensuring greater connectivity and access along key freight routes*
- *Greater freight capacity – by maximising infrastructure investment and increasing land use capacity to accommodate growth*
- *Improved safety – by creating a safer freight supply chain involving safe networks, safe transport, safe speeds and safe people*
- *Enhanced sustainability – by developing a sustainable supply chain that delivers benefits to our environment and continued operations into the future*

The Project through the proposed upgrades to the intersections along the Transport Route - North would contribute to each of these objectives as follows.

- Upgrades to the Anabranch Mail Road and its intersections with the Site Access Road and the Silver City Highway would improve road capacity as well as access for freight vehicles, being suitable to accommodate BAB-quad (Type 2) road trains. Furthermore, additional measures such as the installation of roadside fencing, guideposts and speed, distance and warning signs would improve safety.
- Upgrades to the Patton and Comstock Streets, Comstock and Eyre Streets, and Eyre Street and Holton Drive intersections would improve road capacity as well as access for freight vehicles, being suitable to accommodate BAB-quad (Type 2) road trains. In addition, improvements and modifications to signage and pedestrian infrastructure would increase safety.
- Upgrades to the Rail Facility Access Road intersection would improve road capacity as well as access for freight vehicles, being suitable to accommodate BAB-quad (Type 2) road trains. In addition, improvements and modifications to signage and infrastructure would increase safety.

2.3.3 Far West Regional Economic Development Strategy 2023 Update

The *Far West Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update* (the 2023 Far West Strategy) identifies economic development opportunities that capitalise on the endowments and industry specialisations of the Far West Region, which includes the Broken Hill and Central Darling LGAs along with the Unincorporated Far West NSW. Relevant 2023 Far West Strategy elements include the following.

- *"Support growth in agriculture and mining by developing regional connectivity and transport logistics to better access markets.*
- *Facilitate food and metal manufacturing industry growth through development of industrial land to grow economies of scale around urban centres and sustainable energy generation and storage.*

In particular, the Project would support regional infrastructure, including Project-related upgrades to the Silver City Highway and transportation routes in Broken Hill, regional rail infrastructure and the 220kV Buronga to Broken Hill Transmission Line.

2.4 Cumulative Impacts – Lake Victoria Wind Farm

The Lake Victoria Wind Farm is a renewable energy project proposed by WestWind Energy Group (WestWind) located to the south and east of the Mine Site. That project is in the early stages of planning, with a *Scoping Report* submitted and Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARSs) issued on 22 May 2025.[1]

Figure 2.1 presents the location of the Lake Victoria Wind Farm Project Area, as well the approximate location of the proposed wind turbines. Based on information presented in the *Scoping Report*, as well as on West Wind's website[2], the Lake Victoria Wind Farm Project would comprise the following.

- A Project Area of approximately 41,669ha, from immediately south of the Mine Site to the intersection of Tooperoopna and Anabranch Mail Roads, a distance of approximately 43km.
- Up to 201 turbines with rotors of up to 200m diameter and a height of up to 280m.
- Up to 416km of access tracks and roads.
- Transmissions lines, substations and a 600MW battery energy storage system.
- Associated construction and operational infrastructure, including offices and amenities, construction site compounds, laydown and stockpile areas, batching plants, maintenance facilities and worker accommodation.

[1] https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/lake-victoria-wind-farm
[2] Lake Victoria Wind Farm - WestWind Energy

The Lake Victoria Wind Farm Project would generate up to 3,400 GWh per year of electricity.

There is no publicly available timeframe for commencement of the Project, however, the Applicant notes that SEARs were issued in May 2025 and the EIS for the Project is in preparation. As the Copi Mineral Sands Project is at a more advanced assessment stage than the Lake Victoria Wind Farm, the Applicant anticipates that the Copi Project will be approved and in construction before the wind farm.

The *Scoping Report* for the Project identifies the following potential impacts of the Project construction and operation of the wind turbines and associated infrastructure.

- Visual impacts.
- Biodiversity impacts.
- Noise and vibration impacts.
- Socio-economic impacts.
- Traffic and transport impacts.
- Historic and Aboriginal heritage impacts.
- Soil and contamination-related impacts.
- Water and hydrology-related impacts.
- Aviation risk.
- Hazards and safety-related risk.

Table 6-15 of the *Scoping Report* identifies potential cumulative impacts for the Lake Victoria Wind Farm Project, with the Copi Mineral Sands Project listed as a relevant future project. The Report identifies that construction and operation of the two projects may overlap. **Table 2.1** identifies those matters WestWind consider may result in cumulative impacts between the Projects. **Table 2.1** also presents a brief summary of the scale of impact for each Project and the Applicant's assessment of cumulative impacts. In summary, the following aspects are assessed as having a moderate to high potential for cumulative impact. **Table 2.1** identifies potential mitigation measures to address each.

- Biodiversity
- Noise and vibration
- Socio-economic

Finally the Applicant has consulted with members of WestWind's local management team and has committed to work with WestWind to minimise potential cumulative impacts and maximise synergies between the Projects, noting that the Lake Victoria Wind Farm Project is at a much less advanced stage of development than the Copi Mineral Sands Project and development of that Project may be many years in the future.

Table 2.1
Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Cumulative Impact	Scale of Impacts		Potential for Cumulative Impacts
	Lake Victoria Wind Farm Impacts[1]	Copi Mineral Sands Impacts[2]	
Landscape character and visual impacts	• **High** – 280m high turbines will be visible for a considerable distance in all directions from the Project Area	• **Low** – activities within the Mine Site will be visible from areas immediately adjacent to the Mine Site only	• **Low**
Biodiversity	• **High** – up to 1,538ha of native vegetation would be disturbed. Biodiversity offsets would be required	• **High** – approximately 3,883ha of native vegetation would be disturbed. Biodiversity offsets are proposed	• **High** – both projects would disturb native vegetation, however, the scale of the Lake Victoria Wind Farm's impacts have yet to be quantified.
Noise and vibration	• **Low - Moderate** – One residence is predicted to receive noise levels above the relevant criteria and a result of the Project alone.	• **Low** – No residences are predicted to receive noise levels above the relevant criteria as a result of the Project alone.	• **High –** It is possible that noise emissions from the Lake Victoria Wind Farm may result in exceedance of noise levels at Residence R1. As a result, the Wind Farm EIS will be required to assess impacts of that Project in consideration of proposed noise emissions associated with the Copi Mineral Sands Project. Notwithstanding, the Applicant would work with WestWind and the owners of Residence R1 to ensure that noise-related impacts are minimised to the extent practicable
Socio-economic	• **Mixed** – the Project would likely result in a range of benefits for the community. However, negative impacts are also possible, including aesthetics, competition for community resources and community anxiety.	• **Positive** – community feedback on the Project has been largely, but not universally, positive. Negative impacts include amenity impacts for near by residents, particularly the owners of Huntingfield and Sunshine Stations.	• **Moderate** – It is possible that both Projects could be in construction and operation at the same time. Cumulative impacts would be reduced through the provision of worker accommodation for each and the ability to draw on a wider pool of employees.

Table 2.1 (Cont'd)
Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Cumulative Impact	Scale of Impacts		Potential for Cumulative Impacts
	Lake Victoria Wind Farm Impacts[1]	Copi Mineral Sands Impacts[2]	
Traffic and transport	• **High** – The Project would require transportation of a significant number of over size and over mass vehicles during construction. Transportation of those components would be from the south via Renmark Road and Nulla Road.	• **Low** – once the Site Access Road has been established early during construction, transportation to and from the Mine Site would be via the Site Access Road, Anabranch Mail Road and the Silver City Highway.	• **Negligible –** Transportation operations would utilise different routes and would therefore there would be negligible cumulative impacts.
Soils and contamination	• **Low** – up to 1,538ha of surface disturbance would occur, with rehabilitation of temporary disturbance areas following construction and all areas at the end of life.	• **Low** - approximately 3,883ha of surface disturbance would occur, with progressive rehabilitation of disturbed areas throughout the life of the Project/	• **Low**
Water and hydrology	• Low – There would be no groundwater impacts and surface water impacts would be limited.	• **Moderate** – The Project would impact the Upper Aquifer, highly saline aquifer, and would extract up to 7.8Gl of water per year. Surface water impacts would be limited to internally draining catchments.	• **Low**
Historic heritage	• **Low** – Impacts to Nulla Homestead are expected to be visual only	• **Negligible** – no items of historic heritage would be impacted	• **Low**
Aboriginal heritage	• **Unknown –** no publicly available information in relation to sites of Aboriginal heritage significance is available	• **Moderate** – The Project would disturb 55 sites of Aboriginal heritage significance	• **Unknown**
Hazards and safety	• **Low – Moderate** – risks include hazardous materials, electromagnetic and electricity-related risks, blade throw and bushfire. There would be limited personnel available to respond to emergencies during operations.	• **Low –** Project-related radiation impacts would be a minimum of 10 times lower than relevant radiation-related assessment criteria. Other risks during construction and operations would be managed through on-site emergency management personnel and equipment.	• Low

Note 1: Source - Lake Victoria Wind Farm Scoping Report – After Section 6

Note 2: See Section 6

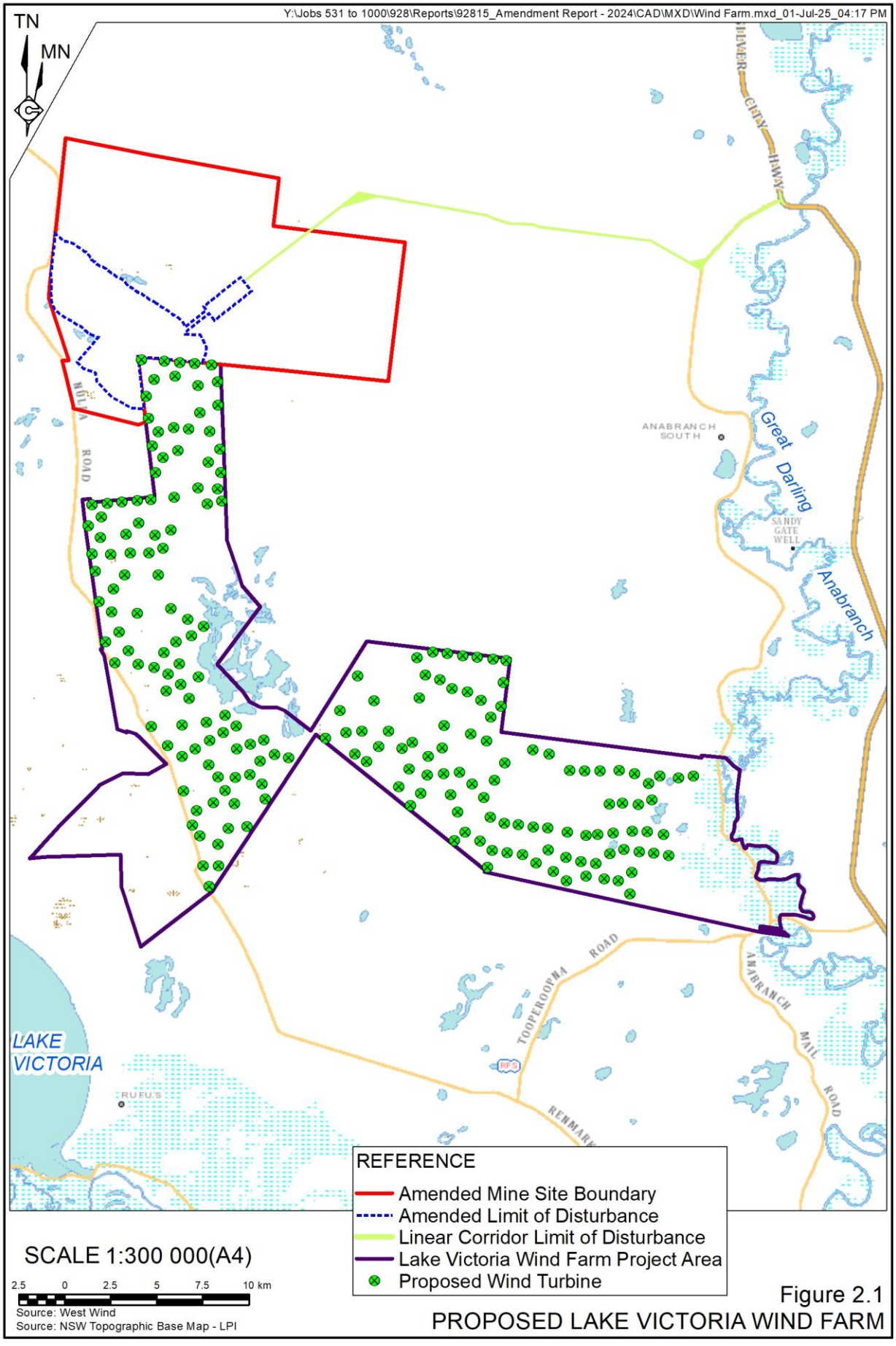

Figure 2.1
PROPOSED LAKE VICTORIA WIND FARM