

Social Impact Study

Walka Water Works, NSW

22 September 2025

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the study

The Walka Water Works site is a heritage-listed area with historical significance to the local community and the broader region. Valued for its heritage-listed buildings, natural environment, and recreational opportunities, the site has experienced limited use in recent years, primarily due to land contamination.

In 2024, Maitland City Council (MCC) appointed Ramboll Group as the Principal Planning Consultant to complete detailed planning for the remediation, restoration and revitalisation of Walka Water Works. As part of this work, AAP Consulting was engaged to prepare a Social Impact Study (SIS) to support the detailed planning process.

The purpose of the SIS is to:

- Demonstrate how community engagement has helped shape the *master plan*
- Evaluate the social implications of the proposed *master plan* to remediate, restore and revitalise the site
- Provide recommendations to support sustainable and socially beneficial outcomes

This study is part of a suite of planning documentation including, but not limited to, a Conservation Management Plan, Master Plan, Plan of Management, Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment and Ecological Impact Study. These documents will contribute to the preplanning documents intended for public exhibition.

This SIS has been prepared by a suitably qualified author with reference to industry-leading practice, including the now NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Social Impact Assessment Guideline (July, 2025).

1.2 Overview of the Master Plan

The vision for the Walka Water Works site is:

Walka Water Works: The Heart of Healthy Maitland

A revitalised open space and community destination combining heritage, nature, and wellness. Walka Water Works celebrates its past while offering diverse recreational opportunities that strengthen community connections and enhance wellbeing for both residents and visitors.

Figure 1-1 shows the proposed Master Plan. This includes the following key proposals:

1. **Remediation:** remediate asbestos contaminated areas as a priority to allow safe reopening of the site
2. **Revitalised Pumphouse Complex:** with adaptive reuse for café, functions, and wellness activities
3. **Pedestrian Street & Forecourt:** a new gathering space at the heart of the site, connecting the pumphouse and reservoir

4. **South Lawn Recreation Area:** family space with picnic facilities and water play
5. **Interpretive Landscaping of Historic Filter Beds:** landscape treatment revealing former water filtration functions
6. **Nature-Based Adventure Play:** potential low-impact adventure activities
7. **Reactivated Miniature Railway:** reactivation and potential extension
8. **Upgraded Path and Trail Network:** including all-weather surfaces, signage and seating
9. **Environmental Enhancements:** including riparian restoration and habitat creation
10. **Open Areas:** Spaces for large groups to meet, socialise, and enjoy recreational activities.
11. **Main Entry:** including signage and information centre
12. **New Access Points:** new entry points improving connectivity and emergency access
13. **Morpeth to Walka Shared Pathway:** connection to dedicated cycle and pedestrian path
14. **Reconfigured Parking:** including new offsite parking area

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the proposed Master Plan staging.

Figure 1-1 Walka Water Works Master Plan



Table 1.1 Master Plan Staging

	Stage 0 Site Remediation & Repair	Stage 1 Recover Site Usage & Recreation	Stage 2 F&B & Tourism Activity	Stage 3 Expand Offering
Pumphouse Building	- Chimney stabilisation - Enhance lighting for significant facades and chimney - Video and image projections onto wall	- Access to building - Shop/Information centre with basic refreshments - Services for future café kitchen - Flexible space hire	- Main function space - Permanent café and pop-up activity space - Kitchen, dry and coolstore - Flexible wellness space on ground floor - Staircase to top floor - Amenities for café and function space	- Wellness use (e.g. onsen) on ground floor - Flexible wellness space moved to top floor - Expanded north-facing outdoor F&B space - Second outdoor F&B space for function breakout - Covered area in front of café
Wider Site	- Site remediation (asbestos). - Site services - Preliminary outdoor information point - New entry statement and lockable gate - South lawn: new turf surface and initial playspace - Implement QR codes for heritage interpretation - Initial upgrade of trail, path and passive recreation (continued throughout all stages) - Tree/weed management (continued throughout all stages)	- Renovated and upgraded amenities - Reinstate weddings (pop-up in outdoor spaces/marqueses) - Lawn area south of pumphouse with new turf surface - Light-touch improvement to street in front of pumphouse - Expansion of playspace including educational waterplay - Forecourt with sculptural installation - Reactivation of miniature railway - North lawn as a bookable space with shade and BBQ facilities - Continued tree/weed management, riparian improvements, water quality remediation	- East lawn area: new all-weather shade structures, access and lighting - Extended pedestrian street in front of pumphouse with entry statement - Interpretive landscaping around filter beds - New offsite day visitor parking area - Adventure park - Recreational enhancements supporting people living with disability - New shared access point from west - Embellish trail experience with interpretive signage	- Pumphouse: wellness use on ground floor, flexible wellness space on top floor, outdoor covered areas, and a service area - Adventure park expansion - Miniature railway expansion to Stan Parkes Memorial Grove - Sculpture/public art at Stan Parkes Memorial Grove - New overflow parking area (north) - Expansion of playspace to district-level play space - New pontoon for model yacht club - Men's shed with community garden shed - Continued tree/weed management, riparian

	Stage 0 Site Remediation & Repair	Stage 1 Recover Site Usage & Recreation	Stage 2 F&B & Tourism Activity	Stage 3 Expand Offering
	• Improve riparian areas (continued throughout all stages) • • Water quality remediation (continued throughout all stages) • New emergency access • Existing Scobies Lane as main access • Utilise the existing road for temporary parking	• Continued trail, path and passive recreation upgrades	• Connection to Morpeth to Walka shared pathway • New internal road within site (site entrance to adventure park carpark) • Community garden • Bird watching hides • Continued tree/weed management, riparian improvements, water quality remediation • Continued trail, path and passive recreation upgrades	improvements, water quality remediation

1.3 Structure of this study

The structure of this study is outlined below.

Table 1.2 Structure of this report

Chapter	Description
Chapter 1	Introduces the project and structure of this report
Chapter 2	Establishes the social baseline and social locality
Chapter 3	Provides an overview of engagement and outcomes
Chapter 4	Initial assessment of likely social impacts and benefits resulting from the masterplan
Chapter 5	Concludes the report and provides a recommendation for future project stages

2 Social locality and baseline

2.1 Project context

A detailed history of Walka Water Works (the site) is provided in the Walka Water Works Conservation Management Plan. The purpose of this section is a summary to provide context for the SIS only.

Walka Water Works is a 64.23 hectare parcel of Crown Land located approximately 2km northwest of the commercial centre of Maitland. The reserve has been reserved for the 'Preservation of Historical sites and buildings' under the Crown Lands Act 1989, the Crown Lands Legislation Amendment Act 2005 and the now the Crown Lands Management Act 2016.

Built in 1885, Walka Water Works is one of the largest and most intact 19th century industrial complexes in the Hunter Valley. The former water works provided the people of the Lower Hunter Valley with their first permanent water supply from 1887 until 1923. It was decommissioned in 1931, before being resurrected in 1951 by the Electricity Commission as a temporary power station during the post war electricity shortages.

Since 1978, the site has been decommissioned, and the power station has been dismantled. Currently, Walka Water Works remains partially closed due to asbestos contamination.

Maitland City Council was appointed the Reserve Trust Manager in August 2007 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the NSW Department of Lands.

This chapter provides the existing social context. It documents the existing social environment, conditions, and trends relevant to the site and defines characteristics of the communities within the social locality, including any vulnerable groups. The social baseline provides a point of comparison – it can be used as a reference against which to measure the impacts of any proposed changes as it develops and/or to determine the adequacy of existing facilities (Vanclay, 2015).

2.2 Social locality and area of analysis

An investigation into the social locality has been undertaken to inform this assessment. As per the SIA Guideline (DPHI, 2025), there is no prescribed meaning or fixed, predefined geographic boundary to a social locality; rather, each project's social locality is determined depending on its nature and impact.

Defining the social locality begins with understanding the nature of the proposal, the characteristics of affected communities, and how positive and negative impacts may be reasonably perceived or experienced by different people within the community. For this SIS, the social locality has been determined based on consideration of:

- The nature and scale of the **master plan** and its associated activities
- The characteristics of surrounding communities and how positive and negative impacts may be reasonably perceived or experienced by different people, including those vulnerable or marginalised

- The potentially affected built or natural features near the site that have social value or importance.

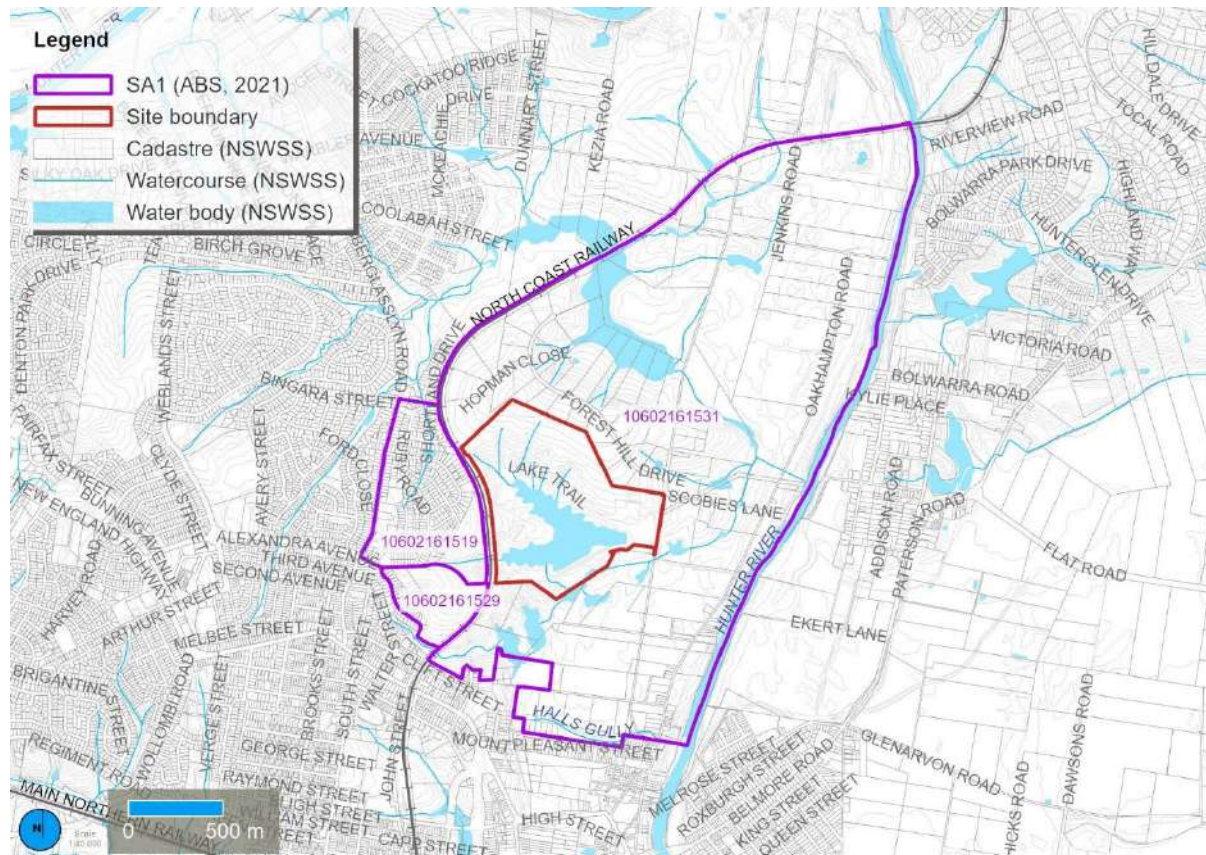
To provide statistical analysis, the primary areas of interest for this assessment are shown in Table 2.1. The Statistical Area 1 localities (SA1s) are shown in Figure 2-1.

Examining demographics at the SA1, LGA, and Rest of NSW levels offers a layered understanding of population trends. SA1s provide detailed insights into specific communities, highlighting micro-level characteristics that can inform planning, such as aging populations or cultural diversity. LGAs offer a broader context, capturing demographic patterns across neighbouring areas and helping local governments plan infrastructure and resource allocation. Comparing these data to the Rest of NSW provides a state-wide benchmark, revealing how a particular area fits into broader regional trends. Together, this multi-level analysis helps identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities, enabling more tailored interventions and long-term planning.

Table 2.1 Primary areas of interest for the purpose of statistical data collection

ABS Geography Type	ABS Code	Suburb/Localities included	Reference in this SIS
Statistical Area 1	10602161529	The area to the east-west of Walka Water Works, inclusive of Walka Grange Lifestyle Village. This SAL is adjacent to the site.	Walka Grange and surrounds
Statistical Area 1	10602161519	The area to the west of Walka Water Works and north of the above.	Rutherford SA1
Statistical Area 1	10602161531	SA1 area encompasses the Walka Water Works, Oakhampton Heights as well as those living along Oakhampton Road.	Oakhampton Heights and surrounds
Local Government Area	LGA15050	Maitland, The Local Government Area in which the site is located	Maitland LGA
State/Territory	1RNSW	The Rest of New South Wales	Rest of NSW

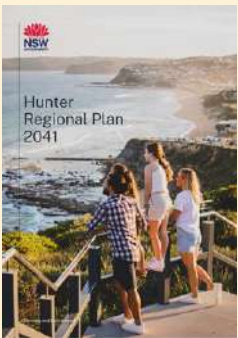
Figure 2-1 Statistical area of analysis



2.3 Understanding the strategic social context

A review of local and regional community plans has been undertaken to identify community values and aspirations in the social locality and to understand the consistency of the project with applicable strategic planning policies. Below is a summary of high-level plans relevant to this proposal, notwithstanding several other relevant guidelines and policies referenced through this SIS.

Table 2.2 Community plans and strategic planning policy

Strategic/Policy Framework	Key Objectives	Relevance to Walka Water Works Preferred Scheme
	Hunter Regional Plan 2041 The Hunter Regional Plan 2041 (HRP) is the overarching strategic planning framework for the region, published by the DPE (DPE, 2022). The Hunter region comprises ten local government areas (LGAs), including Port Stephens, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock, Maitland, Dungog, Mid-coast, Singleton, Muswellbrook and the Upper Hunter. The HRP Promotes livability, community wellbeing, and regional identity (pg. 33, 35, 82).	Supports the enhancement of community spaces and local engagement, fostering stronger community connections (pg. 9, 11, 33).

Strategic/Policy Framework	Key Objectives	Relevance to Walka Water Works Preferred Scheme
	Maitland City Council Destination Management Plan 2020-2030 MCC developed a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Maitland in consultation with the community, tourism operators, local businesses and the broader industry (pg. 2). Walka Water Works is one of five priority destination hubs identified in the Plan (pg. 6, 29, 55).	The development of the Walka Water Works Masterplan and Preferred Scheme builds on elements of this vision, particularly the intent to enhance public access, improve visitor experience, and support tourism opportunities. However, the Preferred Scheme represents a refined approach, with a greater focus on heritage conservation, environmental restoration, and inclusive, community-oriented uses.
	Maitland Local Strategic Planning Statement 2040+ The Maitland Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) creates a 20-year vision for the Maitland LGA, with a focus on community growth and sustainability (pg. 4). Through community consultation, key priorities were identified as: infrastructure, environment, employment, open space and recreational facilities, and residential growth (pg. 9). There is a strong emphasis on community engagement, cultural preservation, and equitable development (pg. 11, 32, 37, 38, 40).	The Maitland area is a hub for population increase and expansion (pg. 4). It is identified in the LSPS that economic growth and diversification is a priority, alongside environmental sustainability and developing tourist engagement (pg. 4, 19, 42, 50).

2.4 Community and social baseline

2.4.1 Regional context

The Proposal sits within the Maitland Local Government Area (LGA) in the Lower Hunter Region of New South Wales, in the traditional lands of the Wonnarua people. The LGA hosts a range of rural and residential areas and has a long history of coal mining, manufacturing, construction, agriculture (e.g., grazing and poultry), all of which are primary employment sectors.

The LGA is home to 95,957 people and between 2013 and 2023 the population increased by 22,087 people, reflecting a compound annual growth rate of 2.7% (source: REMPLAN, accessed 25 November 2024).

In terms of employment, of those participating in the labour force, 57% work full-time and 31.4% part-time. An analysis of the jobs held by the local workers in Maitland City (ABS, 2021) shows the three most popular industry sectors as follows:

- Coal mining (2,191 people or 5.1% of the population)
- Other social assistance services (912 people or 3.4% of the population)

- Hospitals (except psychiatric hospitals) (1,701 people or 3.9% of the population)

The Maitland LGA is predominately on the land of the Wonnarua Nation. Within its boundaries are many significant Aboriginal sites that provide important information about their relationship and special connection with the lands. Today, Wonnarua Nation culture is preserved through the work of numerous individuals and by the Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council.. In 2021 approximately 7.5 % of the population in Maitland was Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, compared to 3.4% of the NSW population (ABS, 2021).

Social ties between people were lower compared to NSW, with 11.1% of the Maitland LGA population participating in voluntary work through a community or organisation, compared to 13.0% in NSW. Mobility rates were stable – with over half of the population having lived in the area for at least five years (ABS, 2021).

In terms of transport, it is anticipated that connectivity to the new Western Sydney International Airport, and the expansion of Newcastle Airport, will drive new economic opportunities and increase visitors to the region. The Hunter Expressway also provides a direct route through the LGA between Maitland, the Hunter Valley and Newcastle.

Crime considerations are also an important baseline indicator when considering the potential impacts of a proposal on people. Data from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOSCAR, 2025) indicates that the ten-year crime trend is relatively stable within the Maitland LGA, with crimes such as stealing from a motor vehicle, malicious damage to property and ‘other theft’, in decline. However, crimes such as stealing from a retail store, intimidation, stalking and harassment and fraud have all increased by over 6% over the ten-year period between October 2014 and September 2024. Notably, breached appended violence order and breach bail conditions had both risen by over 8%.

This assessment has also reviewed the socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA): a suite of indexes that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has created from social and economic Census Information. Specifically, this assessment looks at the Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage (IRSD), a general socio-economic index that summarises a range of information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area. The SEIFA score for Maitland in 2021 was 983, which is at the middle to lower end of the scale and is derived from attributes such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment, jobs in relatively unskilled occupations and variables that broadly reflect disadvantage rather than measure specific aspects of disadvantage (e.g., Indigenous and Separated/Divorced). At the advantaged end of the scale, households with high incomes, high education levels, large dwellings, high numbers of motor vehicles, spare bedrooms and professional occupations contribute to a higher score.

2.4.2 Local context

The three SA1s surrounding the Walka Water Works site exhibit distinct characteristics, reflecting diverse lifestyles and demographic groups around Walka Water Works. Their unique qualities likely shape different needs for infrastructure, services, and community engagement strategies in the area.

Table 2.1 shows key population characteristics of those areas surrounding the site and is supported by comparative analysis. Supporting data sets are in Appendix 1.

Table 2.3 Key characteristics of study area

Category	Walka Grange and surrounds	Rutherford SA1	Oakhampton Heights and surrounds	Comparative Analysis (SA1s)	Comparison to Maitland LGA and NSW
Median Age	73	27	48	Distinct age profiles: Walka Grange and surrounds is a retirement-focused area with predominate land use being the Walka Grange Lifestyle Village. In contrast, Rutherford SA1 is youthful, and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds represents middle-aged stability.	Maitland LGA median age: 37; NSW median age: 39. Walka Grange and surrounds skews much older, Rutherford SA1 is much younger, and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds is higher than both.
Age Distribution	Predominantly seniors (63% aged 70+)	Younger population (54% under 30)	Balanced; skewed toward middle age	Walka Grange and surrounds caters to elderly residents, contrasting with the youthful population in Rutherford SA1 and the family-oriented demographic of Oakhampton Heights and surrounds.	Maitland has a balanced age distribution, and NSW shows a similar trend. Walka Grange and surrounds diverges sharply toward seniors, while Rutherford SA1 has more young adults.
Cultural Diversity	Low; 91% English Only. 2% Aboriginal /Torres Strait Islander	Moderate; 85% speak English only at home. Other language spoken include Punjabi, Urdu, and other languages spoken 13% Aboriginal /Torres Strait Islander	Low; 94% English only 5% Aboriginal /Torres Strait Islander	Rutherford SA1 emerges as the most culturally and linguistically diverse area due to its higher Indigenous representation and the prevalence of non-English languages spoken at home. Walka Grange and surrounds and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds are more culturally homogenous, with higher proportions of English-only speakers and fewer residents identifying as Indigenous.	Maitland is more diverse than Rest of NSW overall but less so than Rutherford SA1, an area that reflects growing diversity seen in urban NSW areas.
Median Household Income	\$803/week	\$1,840/week	\$2,349/week	Walka Grange and surrounds is a lower-income retirement community, while Oakhampton Heights and surrounds is the most affluent, and Rutherford SA1 sits between these extremes.	Maitland has a lower than average median weekly income when compared to Rest of NSW (\$1,500/week; compare to

Category	Walka Grange and surrounds	Rutherford SA1	Oakhampton Heights and surrounds	Comparative Analysis (SA1s)	Comparison to Maitland LGA and NSW
					\$1,700/week). Walka Grange and surrounds is below both averages, Rutherford SA1 aligns with Maitland, and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds exceeds both.
Employment Status	82% not in the labour force	66% in the labour force	62% in the labour force	Walka Grange and surrounds reflects a non-working senior demographic, in stark contrast to the workforce-driven communities in Rutherford SA1 and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds.	Maitland and NSW have 60% labor force participation rates. Rutherford SA1 and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds align with this.
Main Employment Industries	Health care (hospitals), retail, cleaning services	Mining, retail, social assistance	Professional roles, health care, retail	Each SA1 has distinct economic focuses: seniors' services in Walka Grange and surrounds, mining and diversity in Rutherford SA1, and professional roles in Oakhampton Heights and surrounds.	Maitland aligns with health care, retail, and mining focus, reflecting Rutherford SA1 and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds. Rest of NSW shows greater sector diversity.
Housing Tenure	32% owned outright; 52% "other" (e.g., retirement homes)	34% with mortgages; 52% rented	49% owned outright; 41% with mortgages	Housing tenure reflects community roles: retirement in Walka Grange and surrounds, rental housing in Rutherford SA1, and stable homeownership in Oakhampton Heights and surrounds.	Maitland: 70% own outright or with a mortgage. NSW: similar trend. Rutherford SA1 shows more renting, reflecting its young demographic.
Average Household Size	1.6	3.2	2.8	Household size aligns with demographics: smaller, senior households in Walka Grange and surrounds, larger family households in Oakhampton Heights and surrounds and young, diverse households in Rutherford SA1.	Maitland: 2.6; Rest of NSW: 2.5. Walka Grange and surrounds is smaller than both; Rutherford SA1 and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds exceed these averages.

Category	Walka Grange and surrounds	Rutherford SA1	Oakhampton Heights and surrounds	Comparative Analysis (SA1s)	Comparison to Maitland LGA and NSW
Housing Type	99% separate houses; small, older homes	90% separate houses; some semi-detached	100% separate houses; larger family homes (67% 4-bed)	Housing stock reflects life stages: older homes for seniors in Walka Grange and surrounds, mixed housing in Rutherford SA1, and modern family homes in Oakhampton Heights and surrounds.	Maitland and Rest of NSW predominantly feature separate houses (80%). SA1s align here, but Walka Grange and surrounds reflects older housing, while Oakhampton Heights and surrounds is more modern.
Health Characteristics	High chronic conditions (37% arthritis, 16% heart disease)	Lower health issues overall; some mental health (13%)	Balanced; fewer chronic conditions	Health data reflects population age: high health needs in Walka Grange and surrounds, relatively healthy youth in Rutherford SA1, and moderate needs in Oakhampton Heights and surrounds.	Maitland health trends are similar to Rest of NSW, with chronic issues slightly more common. Walka Grange and surrounds' health burden exceeds both averages due to its elderly population.
Education	Few with higher education	Moderate (Certificates III & IV common)	High; 18% postgraduate degrees	Walka Grange and surrounds low education aligns with its older, retired population, while Oakhampton Heights and surrounds shows professional qualifications, and Rutherford SA1 focuses on trades.	Maitland has moderate education levels, with NSW being higher overall. Rutherford SA1 reflects trades focus, while Oakhampton Heights and surrounds aligns with professional Rest of NSW areas.
Distinctive qualities	Senior, retirement-oriented	Vibrant, young, working-class, and diverse	Affluent, family-oriented, professional	Clear distinction: Walka Grange and surrounds is retirement-driven, Rutherford SA1 is younger and more diverse, and Oakhampton Heights and surrounds is more affluent and family-focused.	Maitland reflects family and workforce trends seen in Rutherford SA1 and SA1 10602161531. Walka Grange and surrounds is senior focus contrasts with Maitland and NSW averages.

2.4.3 Existing social infrastructure and networks

The community surrounding the Walka Water Works site is supported by a range of social infrastructure and networks. As shown in the Maitland City Council State of our City Report (MCC, 2022-2024, pg.21), Maitland offers a variety of social infrastructure, including green open spaces, parks, playspaces, aquatic centres, health facilities, and educational opportunities.

In terms of healthcare, the site is approximately 7 km from the New Maitland Hospital in Metford which offers a comprehensive range of services, including emergency care, maternity, surgery, and specialist clinics. Maitland Private Hospital is located about 8 km away in East Maitland, complements these services with private healthcare options such as surgery, rehabilitation, and general medical care. Additionally, the area is well-served by local medical centres and allied health providers in nearby suburbs like Rutherford and Telarah.

The Maitland region also offers a variety of educational facilities for all age groups. Several primary schools, including Telarah Public School and Rutherford Public School, are located within a short distance from Walka Water Works. Secondary education is catered to by schools such as Rutherford Technology High School and Maitland High School, while specialised options like Hunter Trade College and Maitland Christian School further enrich the educational landscape. For vocational training and adult education, the Hunter TAFE campus in Maitland provides a range of programs.

Beyond healthcare and education, the area boasts additional community and recreational amenities. Libraries in Maitland, Rutherford, and East Maitland support lifelong learning and community engagement, while parks such as Maitland Park and Max McMahon Oval and/or Norm Chapman Oval offer spaces for leisure and sports. These facilities, alongside the historical and recreational appeal of Walka Water Works itself, create a vibrant and well-connected community hub.

Transport to Walka Water Works presents a significant challenge due to limited public transport options and reliance on private vehicles. The site is most easily accessed by car, with some on-site parking available for visitors. Public transport options to Walka Water Works are minimal. The nearest train station, Telarah Station, is about 2.5 km away, but there are no direct bus or shuttle services connecting it to the site. While walking from the station might seem feasible, the route along Oakhampton Road lacks pedestrian-friendly pathways, making the journey unsafe and impractical for most visitors. Similarly, cycling access is hindered by the absence of dedicated bike lanes.

These limitations create barriers for individuals who do not drive, including young people, elderly residents, and tourists unfamiliar with the area. Schools, community groups, and larger events may also face logistical difficulties due to the lack of convenient transport links. This reduces the accessibility of Walka Water Works and potentially limits its use and appeal as a community and heritage destination.

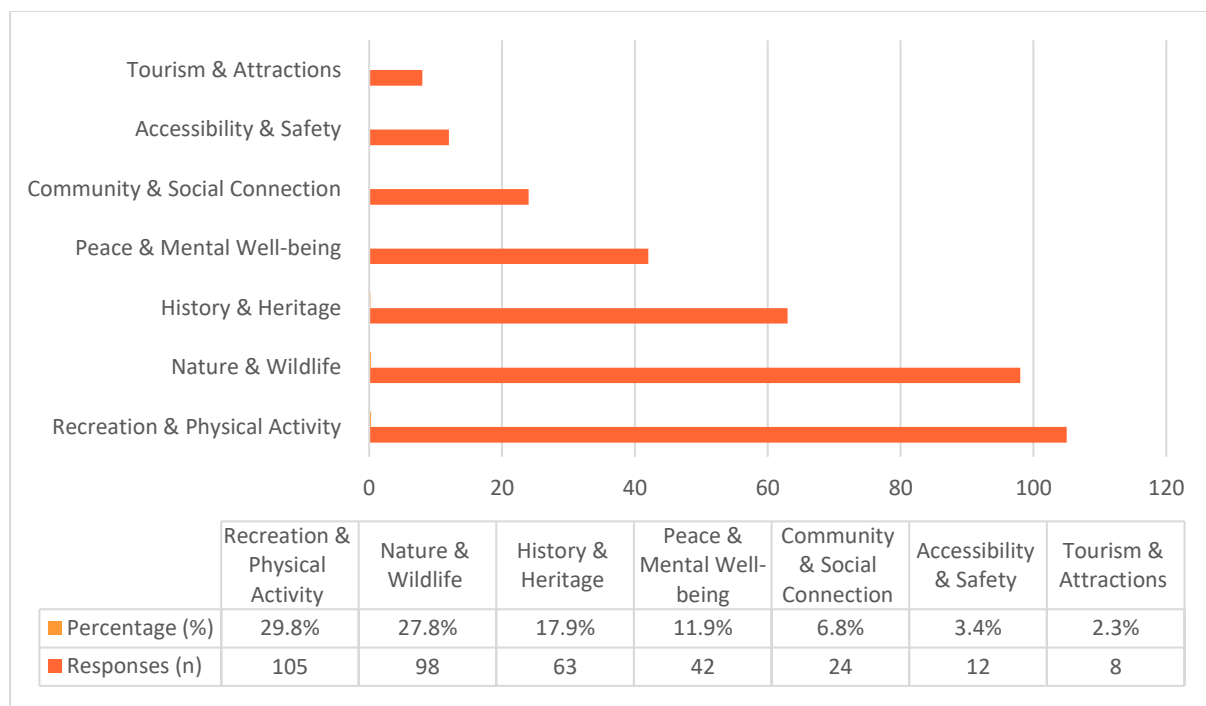
2.4.4 Community values and identity

Community engagement activities, including surveys and interviews, have provided insights into the values and identity of the local population. During the community survey, a total of 352 responses were received, highlighting a range of environmental, recreational, social, and cultural attributes. The responses were analysed and categorised into seven key themes, with the most frequently mentioned

values associated with Recreation and Physical Activity (29.8%) and Nature and Wildlife (27.8%). Many respondents emphasised the importance of the site's walking trails, open spaces, and opportunities for outdoor activities, while others valued its biodiversity and natural beauty.

Additionally, a significant proportion of responses (17.9%) recognised the site's historic and cultural significance, reinforcing its importance as a heritage location. Other valued aspects included the site's peacefulness and mental well-being benefits (11.9%), opportunities for community gatherings (6.8%), and factors related to accessibility and safety (3.4%). A smaller percentage (2.3%) referenced its tourism and visitor appeal.

The following graph provides a visual breakdown of these key themes based on the responses collected (n=352) followed by what mentions were captured in each theme.



- **Recreation and Physical Activity (29.8%):** Mentions of walking, jogging, cycling, exercise, trails, and outdoor activities. *"I love using the walking tracks every morning."*
- **Nature and Wildlife (27.8%):** Responses about flora, fauna, biodiversity, bushland, native species, and environmental value. *"It's a great place to see native wildlife and enjoy the bush."*
- **History and Heritage (17.9%):** Mentions of historic buildings, cultural significance, Aboriginal heritage, and past uses of the site. *"This area has an important historic value and should be preserved."*
- **Peace and Mental Well-being (11.9%):** Includes words like peaceful, quiet, serene, relaxation, mental health benefits. *"It's a peaceful place where I can escape from city life."*
- **Community and Social Connection (6.8%):** Mentions of family gatherings, meeting friends, social events, and public space use. *"Our family has been coming here for generations."*

- **Accessibility and Safety (3.4%):** Comments on how easy it is to access, feeling safe, being open to all people. *"It's a safe and accessible space for everyone."*
- **Tourism and Attractions (2.3%):** Mentions of visitor appeal, economic benefits, sightseeing, attracting tourists. *"A great attraction for visitors to the region."*

In addition to the above, other important values extracted from the nearby neighbour interviews (those people living closest to the site) include:

- **Peace and tranquility:** There is an appreciation for the calm, quiet environment provided by the area, with people enjoying the absence of urban noise and the ability to live in a peaceful setting.
- **Connection to nature:** Residents value the proximity to wildlife and natural spaces, which adds a unique dimension to their daily lives, creating a connection to nature that many feel is increasingly rare in suburban areas.
- **Historical and personal ties:** The long-standing family connections to the land, and the memories and history tied to it, are highly significant for many interviewees. These personal connections foster a strong sense of belonging and attachment to the area.
- **Rural and agricultural lifestyle:** For some, especially those who live on larger properties or farms, the rural lifestyle is a major draw. This includes access to open land, space for agriculture or livestock, and a lifestyle that feels less encumbered by urban restrictions.



Figure 2-2 Figure 2-3 Word cloud of words used to describe what people value during targeted interviews (source, AAP Consulting, 2024)

2.5 Opportunities and vulnerabilities for social locality

Analysing demographic profiles is essential for identifying groups that may be disproportionately affected by vulnerabilities and opportunities within a community. This understanding can inform targeted strategies that address challenges while leveraging community strengths. Based on the data collected to inform the social baseline, the following vulnerabilities and opportunities have been identified in the social locality.

2.5.1 Opportunities

- **Economic growth:** The growth of the LGA's population (2.7% annual increase) and its proximity to key transport infrastructure (Hunter Expressway and expanding airports) create opportunities for increased economic activity and job creation with the LGA. Coal mining, healthcare, and social assistance are prominent sectors, providing stable employment opportunities. Diversifying these industries can promote sustainable growth.
- **Cultural and heritage preservation:** Cultural and heritage preservation: Strong ties to the Wonnarua Nation and efforts by the Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council present an opportunity to preserve and promote Aboriginal heritage and culture. This can attract tourism and improve cultural awareness within the community.
- **Community Resilience:** Stable mobility rates, with many residents living in the area for over five years, indicate a relatively settled community, which can support strong local networks and long-term community initiatives.
- **Infrastructure and Tourism Development:** Improved transport infrastructure and proximity to major hubs could increase tourism to the area, especially with opportunities to capitalise on Maitland's rural and cultural assets.
- **Youth and Workforce Development:** Population growth offers the opportunity to invest in education, skills development, and training, particularly to address future demand in high-growth industries like healthcare, social services, and emerging renewable sectors.

2.5.2 Vulnerabilities

- **Social Ties and Volunteerism:** Lower levels of volunteerism compared to the NSW average (11.1% vs. 13.0%) may indicate weaker community engagement and social cohesion. This could reduce resilience to potential disruptions from large-scale developments or external shocks.
- **Transport Accessibility for Vulnerable Groups:** While transport infrastructure is a strength, there is limited detail on accessibility for people with mobility challenges or those living in remote areas. Without targeted improvements, certain groups may face inequitable access to opportunities.
- **Pressure on Community Infrastructure:** Rapid population growth could strain community facilities, housing, and services. Without proactive planning, this may exacerbate existing inequalities and reduce quality of life for residents.
- **Health and Social Support:** The population's reliance on healthcare and social assistance sectors highlights the need for robust health infrastructure and programs. Any strain on these systems could disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

- **Unequal Economic Benefits:** The benefits of growth and development may not be evenly distributed across the LGA. Rural and disadvantaged communities may experience fewer economic gains, further entrenching social inequalities.

3 Engagement Findings

3.1 Engagement process

During September and October 2024, Maitland City Council, in collaboration with Ramboll Group and AAP Consulting Pty Ltd, conducted community engagement activities to explore visions and ideas for the future use of the Walka Water Works site.

A key focus was to understand how the site is valued by those living closest to it. People were asked to share local knowledge about living in the local area and to discuss how they expect potential further development within the site to affect them.

The engagement techniques used to achieve the desired SIS engagement outcomes are presented in Table 3.1. Information, feedback, and insights were received from over 600 responses via five key engagement tools. Table 3.1 summarises the engagement tools and the number of active engagement participants per data collection method.

Table 3.1 Engagement opportunities

Targeted stakeholders	Purpose	Description	No. contact	No. participated
Letter to residents				
Those people living in suburbs adjacent to the site	Sharing information	A letter to introduce the project and invite people to participate in the online survey was sent to adjoining residents and a random sample across the LGA in September 2024.	555 adjoining residents and 484 random sample across the LGA 1045 visitors to the 'YourSay' site between 19 September 2024 and 31 October 2024	548 contributors to the survey
Website: https://yoursay.maitland.nsw.gov.au/walka-water-works				
Broader community in Maitland LGA	Sharing information	Information about the engagement opportunities went live on the Maitland City Council 'YourSay' website on 19 September 2024. The page provided links to FAQs, the online survey and the opportunity for people to 'drop a pin' on a map detailing any questions or concerns (referred to as the Places tool). Contact details for Council staff were also provided.	1045 visitors to the site between 19 September 2024 and 31 October 2024	n/a (inform tool)
Semi-structured interviews				

Targeted stakeholders	Purpose	Description	No. contact	No. participated
Residents near the site	Consulting to collect information and insights	People could register for a one-on-one interview with representatives from the AAP Consulting via a QR code, through verbal requests, email, or an online booking form on the project website. These interviews were targeted at those people that lived closest to the site. 11 people registered for interviews and nine semi structured interviews were complete. This included six people from Oakhampton Heights and three people from Oakhampton. One person registered twice and the other did not respond after several attempts to contact.	11	9 completed interviews
Community 'Pop-ups'				
Maitland Park Run participants Broader community of Maitland LGA	Sharing information consulting to collect information and insights	Representatives from Maitland City Council and Ramboll were available at two community pop-up events including: • Maitland River lights Festival on 12 October 2024 • Maitland Park Run on 10 October 2024.	N/a	Approx. 40 visitors spoken to
Places tool				
Residents and businesses in Maitland LGA	Consulting to collect information and insights	The Places tool is an interactive mapping tool that allows people to place pins at a specific location on a map along with comments and images. The interactive feature was available on the 'YourSay' website and a physical mapping tool using post it notes for comments was also available at the drop-in session. During the engagement period, 28 people contributed to the map, leaving 101 contributions.	1045 visitors to the site between 19 September 2024 and 31 October 2024	28 contributors
Survey and survey tool				
Residents and businesses in Maitland LGA	Consulting to collect information and insights	One online survey formed part of the data collection to inform the project. The survey coincided with the project's formal round of community engagement and was open between 2 October 2024 and	1045 visitors to the site between 19 September 2024 and 31 October 2024	548 contributors

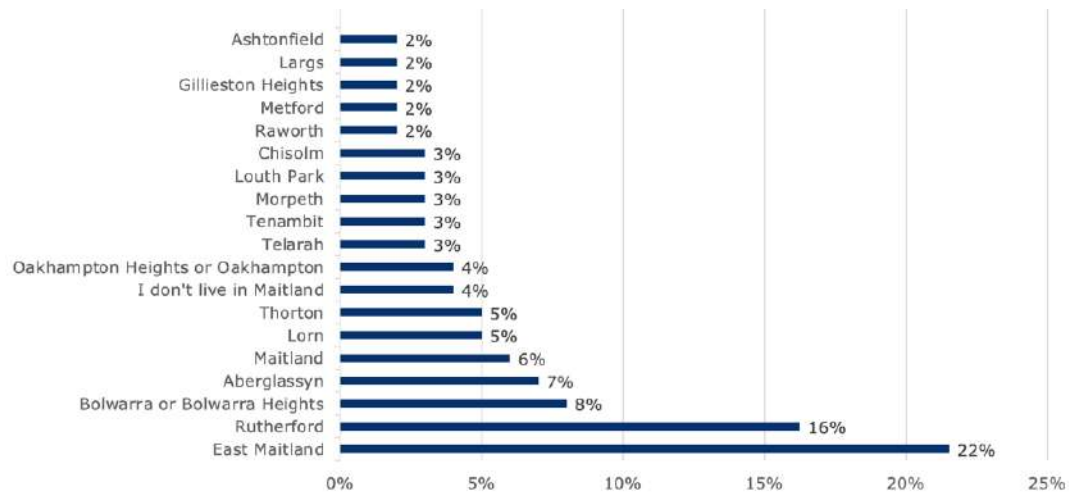
Targeted stakeholders	Purpose	Description	No. contact	No. participated
		31 October 2024. The link to the survey was included in the letter distributed to residents of Oakhampton, Oakhampton Heights, Walka Grange, Rutherford and Aberglassyn. A total of 548 individual contributors responded to the survey.		
Community liaison Group Meeting				
Community Liaison Group Members	Sharing information. Consulting to collect information and insights	The purpose of the Community Liaison Group (CLG) is one of the ways that two way communication and engagement is enabled between Council, its partners, and representatives of the Maitland community throughout the planning process for the Walka Water Works site. The CLG is comprised of up to 15 representatives of the community. An EOI was opened on 8 October 2024 to find a replacement member of the CLG following the departure of a previous member. Following this, two sessions were held with the group on 31 October 2024 and 12 December 2024. The purpose of these sessions was to provide an updated on the project, present outcomes of engagement and elements of the masterplan for comment and feedback.	15 community representatives	9 representatives on 31 October 2024 and 7 on 12 December 2024.
Total				1,182

3.2 Participant characteristics

Figure 3-1 to Figure 3-4 provide an overview of the characteristics of the 591 survey respondents. While there was some diversity in the suburbs where respondents live, there was an underrepresentation of youth compared to the age profile of the Maitland LGA, with only 3% of survey respondents under the age of 24. The engagement activities primarily targeted residents, businesses, and the broader community without explicitly focusing on youth groups, schools, or youth organisations. While the project used an online platform, younger demographics may not frequently visit council websites, and the reliance on letters for survey distribution may not have effectively reached them. Additionally, the selected community pop-up events may not have aligned with youth

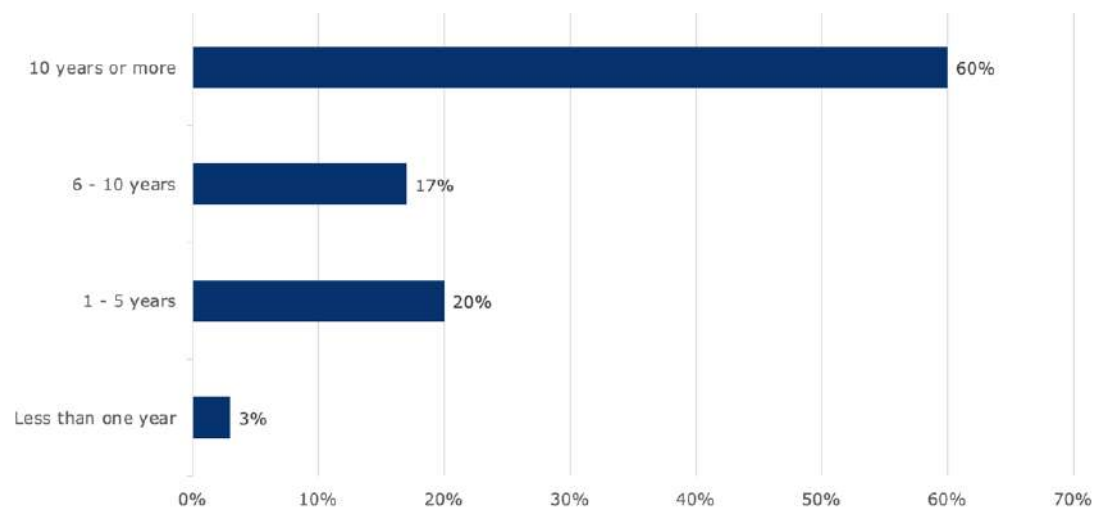
interests. Future engagement strategies could improve youth involvement by leveraging schools, youth organisations, social media campaigns, and events designed to attract younger audiences.

Figure 3-1 What suburb do you live?



Base: Total sample; Unweighted; base n = 591

Figure 3-2 How long have you lived in the area?



Base: Total sample; Unweighted; base n = 591

Figure 3-3 What is your age?

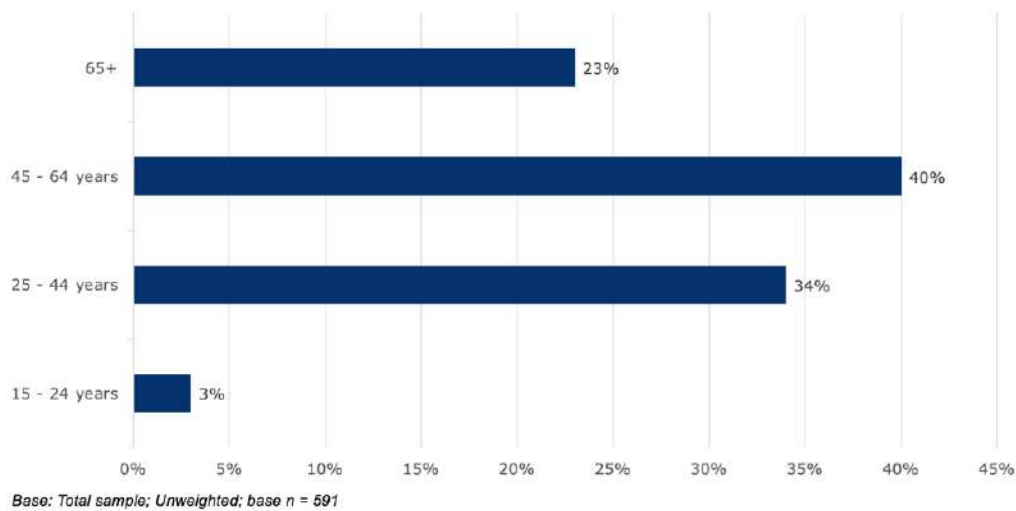
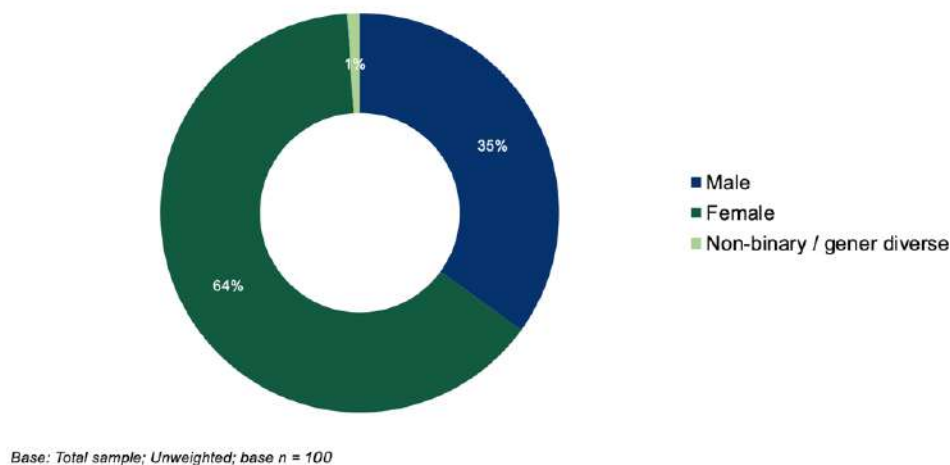


Figure 3-4 What is your gender?



3.3 Themes and sentiments

The engagement activities conducted as part of the SIS have provided valuable insights into the community's views, concerns, and aspirations regarding the Walka Water Works site. By triangulating the results from various consultation methods—including online surveys, semi-structured interviews, community pop-ups, the Places tool, and meetings with the Community Liaison Group (CLG)—a comprehensive understanding of the key themes emerged.

In aligning these findings with the NSW Social Impact Guidelines (DPHI, 2025), we have assessed how the identified themes relate to the NSW social impact categories (refer Table 3.2). These categories serve as a framework to ensure that all aspects of the community's way of life, sense of place, health and wellbeing, access to amenities, and cultural values are carefully considered and addressed.

The key themes from the community engagement and how these findings align with and inform the social impact categories is presented in Table 3.3. Following the table is a summary of these key findings. A more detailed overview of consultation outcomes is provided in Appendix 2 and can also be accessed via the Maitland City Council website. These themes reflect the diverse perspectives of the community, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges associated with the development.

It is important to note that the following highlights the key findings from the engagement process and is not an exhaustive list of all feedback received. While these themes represent the most prominent perspectives shared by the community, other findings—both positive and negative—were also gathered. These key themes are provided to offer a focused overview of community sentiment.

Table 3.2 Social impact categories (NSW DPPI, 2025)

Categories	Definition
Way of life	How people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, and how they interact each day.
Community	Community composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, and people's sense of place.
Accessibility	How people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private or not-for-profit organisation.
Culture	Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings.
Health and wellbeing	Physical and mental health especially for people vulnerable to social exclusion or substantial change, psychological stress resulting from financial or other pressures, access to open space and effects on public health.
Surroundings	Ecosystem services such as shade, pollution control, erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and aesthetic value and amenity.
Livelihoods	People's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business.
Decision-making systems	Including the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and have access to complaint, remedy and grievance mechanisms.

Table 3.3 Key themes emerging from community engagement

Key Theme	Discussion	Social Impact Category	Linkage Explanation
Heritage Preservation and Interpretation	A shared desire to maintain and interpret the heritage aspects of the site, especially the pumphouse and miniature railway.	Culture	This theme connects with the Culture category, highlighting the community's cultural connection to the site. The preservation of heritage features is seen as vital for maintaining the shared values, beliefs, and historical significance of the location, fostering a sense of identity and continuity for residents.

Key Theme	Discussion	Social Impact Category	Linkage Explanation
Recreational Use and Family-Friendly Amenities	Preference for the site to be an accessible recreational space, with family-friendly amenities and walking trails.	Way of Life	This aligns with the Way of Life category, which considers how the community interacts with its surroundings. The desire for recreational spaces reflects the community's need for areas that support outdoor activities, exercise, and leisure, contributing to a healthy and active lifestyle for all age groups.
Small-Scale Community Events	Support for small-scale events, such as weddings and family gatherings.	Community	This theme links to the Community category, which focuses on the social fabric of the area. Small-scale events are seen as opportunities to strengthen community cohesion, foster a sense of place, and encourage interaction among residents, contributing to the area's social vitality and identity – while minimising impacts to nearby neighbours.
Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Enhancement	Commitment to environmental protection, particularly the removal of invasive species and the enhancement of wildlife habitats.	Surroundings	This theme ties into the Surroundings category, which covers ecosystem services and the natural environment. The focus on environmental restoration and biodiversity enhancement emphasizes the importance of maintaining and improving the site's ecological value, which contributes to the broader goal of sustainable land management and public health. Closely linked to this is the future remediation of the site relating to asbestos.
Opposition to Over-Commercialisation	Strong opposition to over-commercialisation, with a preference for small-scale developments that complement the site's recreational and environmental values.	Way of Life Community	This finding is relevant to both the Way of Life and Community categories. The opposition to over-commercialisation indicates concerns about how large-scale developments might disrupt the existing community dynamics, alter the peaceful nature of the site, and impact the local way of life. The community's preference for small-scale, complementary developments is aimed at preserving the area's character, promoting local resilience, and maintaining the cohesion of the community.

3.3.1 Heritage preservation and interpretation

The survey findings revealed that the community has a clear and enduring attachment to the history of Walka Water Works, with a particular focus on restoring the pumphouse and including educational activities related to the site's heritage. Many respondents expressed interest in the creation of heritage-driven spaces, such as museums or interpretative exhibitions, to highlight the significance of the site's past. There was also a strong call for activities such as historical tours and workshops that would allow future generations to learn about the site's unique industrial history.

The interviews further underscored the community's pride in the area's heritage, with participants sharing personal stories that reflect the deep connection to the land and its history. Quotes such as *"Generations of family have lived here; we want that to stay that way"* (interview participant) and reflections on the peacefulness and beauty of the site suggest that the community values the historical integrity of the place as an essential part of its identity. The site is seen not just as a recreational space but as a heritage landmark that shapes the collective memory and pride of the local population.

At the community pop-ups, there was a consistent emphasis on the iconic status of the pumphouse and railway tracks, with many participants expressing a strong desire to preserve these elements for future generations. The idea of creating a museum or exhibition space to showcase the history of the site, particularly focusing on its role in the development of Maitland's water supply, was widely supported. Many respondents also suggested that the workman's cottages and other historic buildings be preserved for educational purposes, providing a tangible link to the industrial era and offering an immersive learning experience for visitors.

In addition to the call for the preservation of physical structures, there was also a desire to integrate thematic interpretations of the historical processes, such as the water treatment methods once used on-site, into the overall landscape design. Participants proposed interactive educational signage and exhibits that would enhance the visitor experience and further reinforce the historical narrative of Walka Water Works. Some specific suggestions included restoring or interpreting the former water filtration beds/tanks and creating a bird hide with educational signage.

While the community expressed broad support for preserving Walka's historical features, there was also caution about the potential impacts of over-commercialisation. Participants were concerned that large-scale developments, such as accommodation facilities, could undermine the site's historical and peaceful character, leading to a loss of the very aspects they value most. Concerns about increased traffic, environmental degradation, and the disruption of the site's historical ambiance were raised, reinforcing the community's preference for low-impact, community-oriented development that respects the site's heritage.

3.3.2 Recreational use and family-friendly amenities

Based on the community feedback and survey findings, there is clear support for the Walka Water Works site to be a family-friendly recreational space that prioritises accessibility and outdoor activities. The key themes emerging from the engagement suggest a preference for enhancing the natural environment with facilities that cater to active and passive recreation, while avoiding over-commercialisation or large-scale developments.

A recurring theme in the survey responses was the strong demand for basic public amenities, including picnic areas, shaded seating, and smaller-scale food and beverage options such as cafés, kiosks, or food trucks. Respondents emphasised the importance of creating a comfortable and accessible environment for families without introducing large-scale commercial ventures. This aligns with the community's desire for a space where they can engage in both recreational activities and relaxation, such as walking, picnicking, birdwatching and enjoying nature, without the intrusion of heavy development.

The community expressed interest in maintaining and enhancing the site's recreational offerings, with particular emphasis on active and passive pursuits like walking trails and play areas. There was also support for community-oriented events and activities, such as seasonal markets, outdoor fitness classes, yoga, and nature workshops. These suggestions reflect a shared vision for a space that encourages both physical activity and social connection, catering to people of all ages, particularly families.

Water-based activities also garnered moderate interest, with suggestions for integrating water features like fountains or kayaking hubs. While not identified as a top priority, these features were viewed by some as complementary to the site's natural character and recreational appeal. However, it is noted that future planning stages will need to explore the feasibility of water-based recreation, including an assessment of water quality and suitability for human interaction.

The strong opposition to large-scale accommodation developments, such as hotels or caravan parks, further reinforces the community's preference for preserving the peaceful, tranquil atmosphere of the site. There is concern that these types of developments could lead to over-commercialisation, increased traffic, and disruption of the site's unique character.

In terms of infrastructure, respondents highlighted the need for improvements to ensure accessibility and safety. This includes the creation of pram-friendly trails, additional parking spaces, separate paths for walking and cycling, and the installation of more water fountains, picnic and toilet facilities. There was also strong support for ensuring the site is accessible to people with mobility challenges.

3.3.3 Small-scale community events

The findings from the survey highlight a shared community desire for small-scale, community-focused events at Walka Water Works. Residents and park users expressed strong support for hosting events that align with the tranquil, nature-integrated setting that makes the area special.

Events such as seasonal markets, outdoor picnics, carols, and cultural performances were particularly favoured. There is also significant interest in educational events like guided history tours, nature workshops, and wildlife observation activities, especially those that promote environmental conservation and community engagement. These types of gatherings would allow participants to connect with the site in a meaningful way, without overwhelming its natural or historical elements.

The strong desire for community events aligns with the values expressed by residents regarding the importance of preserving Walka's natural environment. Many respondents emphasised the need for the site to retain its wildlife, historical significance, and tranquil atmosphere. The idea of introducing large-scale commercial events or developments, such as concerts, hotels, or caravan parks, was met

with strong opposition, citing concerns about traffic congestion, environmental damage, and disruption to the site's calm, nature-filled environment.

Small-scale events, however, are seen as a way to enhance community spirit without compromising the area's character. These gatherings could also be an opportunity to educate the public about the site's history, local wildlife, and the ecological importance of the area.

To support these small-scale community events, several infrastructure improvements were suggested during the engagement process. There is a clear need to upgrade the park's facilities to accommodate families and individuals with mobility challenges. This includes adding more shaded seating, improving accessibility with wider paths, and ensuring that picnic and event areas are well-maintained. In addition, improvements to basic amenities like toilets and water fountains were identified as key areas that would enhance the experience for visitors attending community gatherings.

One of the key takeaways from the engagement process is the community's desire for a balance between maintaining Walka Water Works as a peaceful, nature-based space and introducing small-scale, community-driven improvements. These events would reflect the values of the local residents, fostering a deeper sense of community connection while ensuring that the area's natural beauty and historical significance are preserved for future generations.

The feedback also suggests that small-scale events, such as family celebrations, outdoor fitness classes, and bird-watching activities, could foster a sense of inclusivity, allowing residents of all ages and backgrounds to connect with the space. By prioritising these types of events, Walka Water Works can continue to be a place of relaxation, education, and community engagement.

3.3.4 Environmental protection and biodiversity enhancement

A recurring sentiment expressed by the community is the desire to protect Walka Water Works as a natural reserve. Many residents emphasise the area's significance as a habitat for local wildlife, including a rich diversity of bird species. The community values the opportunity to engage with nature in a setting that is becoming increasingly rare in suburban areas. There is also an appreciation for the connection to the land's history, with many locals holding long-standing personal ties to the area. This deep-rooted connection fosters a strong sense of ownership and responsibility towards the conservation of the site.

The engagement findings suggest a robust support for initiatives that will enhance biodiversity and ensure the ecological balance of Walka Water Works. The thematic analysis from interviews and survey responses reveals the following key priorities for environmental protection and biodiversity enhancement:

- **Wildlife Preservation:** Protecting native species and ensuring the sustainability of habitats for birds, kangaroos, and other local wildlife is a top priority. This includes initiatives like the installation of bird hides for birdwatchers, providing nesting boxes for arboreal marsupials and birds, and enhancing turtle breeding habitats with floating islands.
- **Invasive Species Management:** Many respondents expressed concern about the presence of invasive species, such as lantana and foxes, which threaten local ecosystems. The community has

called for efforts to remove invasive weeds and restore native vegetation, particularly along walking trails and riparian zones.

- **Ecological Education and Interpretation:** The community expressed interest in enhancing educational opportunities related to the site's natural and historical significance. Suggestions include creating permanent exhibitions about the role of clean water the Hunter's development and incorporating educational signage in areas like Pelican Point to inform visitors about local wildlife and conservation efforts.

The community's commitment to preserving the site's natural features, while welcoming selective improvements to enhance its role as a community space highlights the need for a balanced approach in future developments. This feedback underscores the importance of maintaining the site's environmental, cultural, and historical heritage, while also creating spaces that foster community engagement and appreciation of its natural beauty.

3.3.5 Opposition to over-commercialisation

Community engagement reveals a strong preference for maintaining Walka Water Works as a tranquil, nature-integrated space, with significant opposition to large-scale commercial developments. While many support introducing small-scale, community-oriented activities such as educational programs, seasonal markets, and nature walks, there is a clear desire to avoid developments that could overwhelm the area's natural beauty and historical significance.

Survey participants expressed strong concerns about large-scale accommodation, such as caravan parks and hotels, fearing these could detract from the peaceful, rural atmosphere that residents cherish. Interviewees echoed similar sentiments, emphasising the need to preserve the natural environment and local heritage, with many highlighting the area's role as a quiet retreat from urban noise. The presence of wildlife, including birdlife, was especially valued, with some even referring to Walka Water Works as *"the lungs of Maitland"* (interview participant).

While there is openness to improvements that enhance local recreation, the community prioritises low-impact developments, such as better facilities, walking trails, and picnic areas, rather than commercial ventures that might bring increased traffic and environmental degradation. Participants consistently highlighted the importance of maintaining the site's environmental integrity, with suggestions for better infrastructure maintenance, such as toilets and picnic areas, to support increased community use without compromising the site's charm.

In conclusion, while there is recognition of the potential benefits of tourism and community-focused improvements, the overriding sentiment is a desire to balance progress with preservation. The community strongly opposes over-commercialisation and advocates for developments that respect and enhance the site's natural and historical assets.

3.4 How engagement outcomes have informed the master planning process to date

The engagement process has directly shaped the Walka Water Works masterplan, with community feedback influencing the vision, priorities, and specific elements of the preferred scheme.

3.4.1 Overall vision and scale of development

Community feedback has led to a significant shift in the overall vision for the site compared to the 2020 Destination Management Plan (DMP). While the DMP positioned Walka Water Works as an "iconic visitor attraction" with overnight accommodation, community concerns about over-commercialisation have redirected the masterplan to prioritize community use and passive recreation alongside a more moderate visitor offer. Accommodation plans have been removed, with the scheme now including only limited commercial elements that complement the site's character—smaller-scale café and food offerings, health and wellness spaces, and a potential adventure park/obstacle course. The masterplan's phasing approach further reflects community priorities by focusing on local recreational needs in earlier stages, with tourism-oriented features introduced only after the site's core amenities and environmental values have been secured for community enjoyment.

3.4.2 Heritage preservation and interpretation

The community's strong attachment to Walka's history and industrial heritage is reflected in the masterplan's emphasis on preservation and interpretation, including:

- Restoration of the pumphouse, chimney, and other significant heritage elements.
- Adaptive reuse of historic structures that respects their original character.
- Interpretive landscaping revealing the former filter beds and water treatment infrastructure.

3.4.3 Enhanced recreational use and family-friendly amenities

Community desire for a family-friendly recreational space with improved basic amenities is directly addressed through:

- Upgraded trails and passive recreation facilities with added seating and art installations.
- New picnic areas with shaded seating.
- Playspaces including educational water play elements.
- Renovated and upgraded amenities.
- South lawn recreation area with new turf surface.
- All-weather shade structures and gathering spaces.
- Improved accessibility features for visitors with mobility challenges.
- Areas supporting inclusive access for people with disability, including those with cognitive or sensory conditions (e.g., dementia, autism).

3.4.4 Small-scale community events

In response to community preference for small-scale, community-focused events, the masterplan includes:

- Flexible spaces for outdoor gatherings and performances.

- Infrastructure to support pop-up weddings in outdoor spaces.
- North lawn as a bookable space with shade and BBQ facilities.
- Function areas appropriately scaled for community events rather than large commercial operations.

3.4.5 Environmental protection and biodiversity enhancement

The community's strong desire to protect Walka as a natural reserve and wildlife habitat has been addressed through:

- Limited development within natural areas of the site.
- Comprehensive tree and weed management program.
- Removal of invasive species and plants that could damage structural walls.
- Improvements to riparian edges.
- Creation of bird watching hides to support wildlife observation.
- Potential water quality remediation to improve ecosystem health.
- Community garden for local engagement and environmental education.

4 Assessment of social impact

4.1 Overview

This assessment evaluates the social implications of the masterplan for the site as described in section 1.2, focusing on both the negative social impacts and recommended mitigation strategies, as well as the social benefits at each stage of development. The findings are structured by project stage to provide a clear timeline of expected changes and interventions and are informed by the research phase on the project including the social profiling, community values and engagement outcomes.

4.2 Summary of social implications

The table below outlines the key social considerations for each stage of the project:

Stage	Social Benefits	Negative Social Implications	Mitigation Strategies
Stage 0: Site Remediation & Repair	Enhanced public access and recreation. Environmental restoration and education. Heritage preservation and connection.	Continued temporary loss of access to recreation areas during remediation works Perceived health risks associated with asbestos removal Community dissatisfaction with the proposed remediation method Noise and dust from site works.	Staged access to minimise disruption; proactive community consultation; dust and noise controls; Asbestos removal following strict safety protocols.
Stage 1: Recover Site Usage & Local Recreation	Upgraded trails and recreational facilities; reintroduction of community events; enhanced inclusive public spaces.	Limited access during upgrades; potential concerns over increased use of passive spaces for events; increased traffic from renewed site activity.	Phased reopening with clear communication; designated event areas to minimize conflicts; traffic and parking strategy.
Stage 2: F&B + Tourism Activity	Economic benefits from increased local employment; activation of cultural and tourism opportunities; diverse dining and social experiences.	Risk of gentrification affecting local character; increased visitor numbers placing strain on infrastructure; concerns over accessibility and affordability of amenities.	Prioritizing local businesses and community-centric enterprises; visitor management strategies; ensuring universal design principles in all new facilities.
Stage 3: Expand Offering	Expanded recreation and leisure options; improved social inclusion with accessible adventure play areas; development of a cultural and events hub.	Increased visitor pressure on natural and cultural heritage areas; potential conflicts between tourism and community use; concerns over water quality for recreation.	Zoning strategies to balance tourism and community needs; heritage-aligned development; staged water quality improvements before introducing recreation.

4.2.1 Stage 0: site remediation and repair

Stage 0 involves remediation activities aimed at improving the site's environmental quality, addressing contamination issues, and enhancing heritage preservation. These activities can lead to multiple social benefits, such as improved public access, enhanced community pride, and stronger community cohesion.

However, Stage 0 may also introduce social challenges. It is essential to consider potential community concerns about the asbestos remediation process, tree/weed management, and changes in environmental features and access. These issues could potentially affect community trust, particularly if not properly managed through transparent communication.

Potential negative social impacts

- **Asbestos Remediation:** There may be community concerns regarding the health risks associated with asbestos removal and the safety of proposed remediation methods. Lack of engagement or clarity about the process could undermine trust in project management, leading to opposition.
- **Chimney Stabilisation:** The preservation of the chimney, while important for heritage value, may be controversial for residents with strong local ties to the site. Noise, disruption, or concerns about the heritage value could arise during stabilisation work.
- **Pathway and Tree/Weed Management:** Temporary disruptions to local access, particularly for regular users of the area (e.g., walkers, park runners, birdwatchers), may impact residents' social routines, potentially leading to frustration or reduced community support if these disruptions are not effectively managed.

Key social benefits of stage 0

- **Enhanced Public Access and Recreation:** The restoration and improvement of trails and recreational spaces can contribute to increased physical activity and social interaction, fostering better community health and well-being.
- **Environmental and Heritage Restoration:** Site enhancements, including environmental restoration and heritage preservation, will improve the local ecosystem and community pride by maintaining and restoring cultural assets.
- **Increased Site Accessibility:** The development of accessible infrastructure (e.g., parking for individuals with mobility challenges) will foster inclusivity, allowing a broader demographic to engage with the site.

4.2.2 Stage 1: recover site usage and local recreation

Stage 1 introduces new public amenities and recreation facilities that could benefit both local residents and the broader community. The construction of flexible spaces, renovation of the pumphouse, and introduction of pop-up cafés will create new opportunities for social, cultural, and recreational activities.

Nonetheless, construction and operational disruptions are likely. These need to be carefully managed to prevent community frustration. Clear communication is critical to mitigate concerns and ensure residents are well-informed about potential inconveniences.

Potential negative social impacts

- **Construction Disruptions:** The construction of new amenities and renovations may temporarily affect site access and create noise, dust, and safety concerns. Addressing these disruptions with clear communication will help minimise negative social impacts.
- **Impact of Events on Community Access:** While the introduction of wedding venues and event spaces will generate economic and social opportunities, it may also limit access to popular public spaces for local park users, creating tensions, particularly during peak times. Nearby neighbours may also have concerns about the potential for these events to negatively impact the peaceful nature of the area or have concerns for safety that introducing new people to an area to attend these functions may bring.

Key social benefits of stage 1

- **Enhanced Recreation and Community Amenities:** The inclusion of flexible spaces and a pop-up café offers diverse social and recreational opportunities for residents, fostering greater community engagement.
- **Improved Site Accessibility:** Site upgrades, including accessible entryways and parking areas, will cater to a broader range of community members, from families to individuals with mobility challenges.
- **Economic and Social Opportunities:** Local businesses and community groups can take advantage of the new spaces for events and activities, fostering social interaction and community connection.

4.2.3 Stage 2: Food and beverage, and tourism activity

Stage 2 focuses on the economic activation of the site through food and beverage offerings, tourism attractions, and additional recreational features. This phase has the potential to generate significant economic benefits, including job creation and increased local spending. It could also contribute to the site's long-term sustainability by attracting a broader audience.

However, this stage also raises concerns about commercial viability and the balance between tourism and the site's community value. Failure to attract suitable operators or over-commercialisation could reduce the site's community appeal and potentially cause tensions with local residents.

Potential negative economic and social impacts

- **Commercial Viability and Activation:** The success of Stage 2 relies on attracting suitable commercial operators. If the site is underutilised or commercial offerings fail to attract enough visitors, it may undermine the project's long-term sustainability and alienate residents who feel the site is not fulfilling its intended community role.

- **Over-commercialisation:** The balance between community space and commercial ventures must be carefully managed. Over-commercialisation could lead to a perceived loss of the site's community character, resulting in decreased support from local residents.
- **Tourism Impact on Local Infrastructure:** Increased tourism may strain local infrastructure, such as parking and transport links, leading to potential congestion and accessibility issues. Community concerns about noise and disruption may also arise during peak times, impacting the peaceful nature of the site.

Key social benefits of stage 2

- **Job Creation and Economic Growth:** The development of tourism-based businesses and services will create job opportunities and stimulate local economic activity.
- **Increased Community Engagement:** The new recreational and wellness facilities will provide inclusive opportunities for physical activity and social interaction, promoting better health outcomes and fostering a greater sense of community cohesion.
- **Cultural Value and Community Pride:** Educational offerings, such as interpretive signage, will deepen the community's connection to the site and its history, promoting local pride and environmental stewardship.

4.2.4 Stage 3: expand offering

Stage 3 presents an opportunity to further enhance the site's attractions by adding new amenities, including an Onsen (hot springs and the bathing facilities that surround them), wellness centre, and adventure park. These developments will likely appeal to both local residents and visitors, generating additional economic benefits through tourism and job creation.

However, increased commercialisation could challenge the balance between tourism and maintaining the site's community-focused character. Careful planning and management will be needed to ensure that community interests are safeguarded.

Potential negative economic and social impacts

- **Over-commercialisation and Impact on Community Character:** The introduction of high-end commercial facilities may alter the site's character. It is important to manage community expectations to avoid perceptions that the project is prioritising commercial interests over local needs.
- **Infrastructure Demand:** As demand for the site's new facilities increases, local infrastructure (e.g., roads, public transport) may need to be upgraded to accommodate visitors, ensuring that the increased foot traffic does not lead to congestion or a decline in local quality of life.

Key social benefits of stage 3

- **Economic Opportunities and Job Creation:** The expansion of commercial services will create further employment opportunities, supporting both the local workforce and regional economic growth.

- Increased Tourism and Cultural Value: The expanded offerings will enhance the site's status as a regional tourist destination, bringing in more visitors and boosting the local economy.
- Long-Term Sustainability: If managed effectively, Stage 3 can ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the site, balancing commercial, recreational, and community needs.

5 Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The Walka Water Works site holds a deep, multifaceted significance to the local community, both in terms of its historical value and its role as a cherished space for recreation. The community's attachment to the area is grounded in long-standing personal and familial ties, a desire for peace and tranquillity, and a strong connection to the natural environment. There is a shared appreciation for the site's heritage, particularly the preservation of historical features like the pumphouse and miniature railway, alongside a desire for the space to remain a peaceful, family-friendly recreational area.

The Social Impact Study for the Walka Water Works site underscores the importance of ensuring the development remains a community-centred, inclusive, and sustainable asset. It highlights both the potential benefits and risks associated with the project, particularly regarding community engagement, local character preservation, accessibility, and infrastructure demands.

Community sentiments strongly indicate opposition to over-commercialisation and large-scale developments, particularly those that could disrupt the site's tranquil and historical ambience. Residents have expressed a preference for small-scale developments, focusing on enhancing recreational opportunities and community engagement, while preserving the site's environmental and cultural values. The community's aspirations also reflect concerns about the potential strain on local infrastructure due to population growth and the need for accessibility improvements for vulnerable groups, including those with mobility challenges.

As the area undergoes further planning, it is crucial that these community values are carefully integrated into any proposed development to maintain the strong sense of identity and connection to the land that local residents hold dear.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations focus on social sustainability, community cohesion, accessibility, and inclusivity for the future stages of Walka Water Works. Community engagement outcomes and social impact principles inform these recommendations.

5.2.1 Ongoing community engagement and transparency

Community engagement findings indicate strong public interest in site planning, particularly regarding heritage preservation, remediation processes, environmental values, and site activation. Maintaining open communication and structured engagement mechanisms can support long-term social outcomes.

Structured engagement can help identify emerging concerns and opportunities early, reducing potential community dissatisfaction. It is recommended that Maitland City Council establish a structured ongoing engagement framework that includes:

- Regular CLG meetings to provide updates and gather feedback, including workshops where the CLG can directly contribute insights on specific design elements or social considerations (e.g. asbestos remediation, future use of the pumphouse). These workshops aim to involve the CLG in the planning process in a consultative capacity.
- A process for adaptive engagement, tailoring methods and focus to each project stage and the specific issues at hand, ensuring ongoing, relevant, and responsive community involvement throughout the project lifecycle
- Engagement with First Nations groups, including the Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council, to ensure Aboriginal cultural values, perspectives and custodianship are appropriately recognised. Culturally appropriate engagement approaches should be applied to support meaningful participation and reflect Aboriginal heritage and living culture in site design and interpretation.
- Targeted youth engagement to address an identified gap raised during CLG discussions. Future engagement processes should include strategies to capture the interests and ideas of younger community members, such as partnerships with local schools, youth organisations, and creative or interactive engagement methods.
- Engagement with local businesses to identify opportunities that support the local economy and strengthen ties between the site and surrounding townships. Input from the business community may inform activation strategies, local procurement opportunities, and visitor services.
- Periodic community sentiment surveys to monitor changing views on site development and use.

5.2.2 Managing social risks during site activation

As the site transitions through different development stages, changes in access, site use, and visitor numbers may have temporary and long-term social implications. It is recommended that a Social Risk and Change Management Framework be developed given that a structured approach to managing change may assist in reducing unintended negative social impacts and maintaining community confidence. This would include:

- Identify potential short-term disruptions (e.g., construction-related impacts, site access changes).
- Establish clear communication channels for addressing community concerns.
- Track longer-term changes in community sentiment, including potential shifts in local identity and site use patterns.

5.2.3 Water-based recreation and site suitability

Community feedback raised interest in water-based recreational opportunities, such as kayaking or interactive water features, as a way to enhance the site's appeal and use. While these suggestions were not a dominant theme, they represent a potential area for further investigation.

Given existing concerns about water quality and the potential risks associated with human interaction and also on aquatic wildlife, it is recommended that future planning stages explore the feasibility of water-based recreation, informed by appropriate environmental and health assessments. This would

help clarify whether such uses are viable, and ensure any future proposals align with safety, environmental, and community expectations.

5.2.4 Accessibility and social inclusion considerations

Ensuring equitable access to the site for residents, visitors, and people with mobility constraints is an important consideration for long-term social outcomes. Community feedback identified accessibility and transport limitations as potential barriers to inclusive use of the site. Maitland City Council should consider developing an Accessibility and Inclusion Plan that considers:

- Physical access improvements, ensuring pathways, seating, and facilities are designed with universal access principles.
- Affordable access measures, particularly in relation to site-based activities and events.
- Transport connections, considering how people without private vehicles will access the site.

5.2.5 Supporting community identity and social cohesion

The site's historical, environmental, and social value has been highlighted through community engagement findings. Ensuring these values are reflected in future site uses may support a sense of place and community cohesion. There is an opportunity to align site development and local identity that may support long-term community connection with the space. This could take multiple formats, including:

- On-site signage and exhibits – Informational panels, interactive displays, or augmented reality experiences.
- Guided or self-guided tours – Live or recorded audio tours incorporating local voices.
- Community-led storytelling initiatives – Oral history projects, workshops, or storytelling events.
- A podcast series – Featuring interviews with historians, community members, and cultural experts.
- Digital and multimedia content – Websites, videos, or mobile apps providing accessible storytelling.
- Collaborative art installations – Murals, sculptures, or community-driven creative expressions.

5.2.6 Monitoring social outcomes over time

Given the multi-phase nature of the project, long-term monitoring of social outcomes may help ensure the site continues to align with community needs. A structured approach to monitoring may assist in maintaining ongoing alignment between project outcomes and community expectations. This can be in the form of a Social Impact Monitoring Plan that can:

- Assess changes in community sentiment, site accessibility, and social equity over time.
- Identify emerging opportunities and challenges as visitor numbers and site uses evolve.
- Provide a basis for adaptive management, allowing future stages to respond to observed trends.

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Appendix 1: Community profile data sets

Population and family profiles, Census 2021

Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Census of Population and Housing 2021, using Tablebuilder, QuickStats and Community Profiles

* Note that some totals may not add accurately or be consistent between variables, particularly because of the manner that which the ABS randomises small cell data

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
People					
Total population	336	825	202	90,226	2,829,637
Male	40%	49%	55%	49%	49%
Female	60%	51%	45%	51%	51%
Age Structure					
Median age	73	27	48	36	43
0-9 years	3%	22%	7%	14%	12%
10-19 years	3%	18%	18%	13%	12%
20-29 years	6%	14%	8%	13%	11%
30-39 years	3%	19%	5%	14%	12%
40-49 years	1%	13%	16%	12%	12%
50-59 years	4%	8%	23%	12%	13%
60-69 years	17%	4%	8%	10%	13%
70-79 years	46%	2%	8%	7%	10%
80-89 years	17%	1%	7%	3%	5%

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
90-99 years	-	-	-	-	1%
100 years and over	-	-	-	-	0.03%
Indigenous status					
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	6	107	11	6,738	Not calculated
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander %	2%	13%	5%	7.5%	6.6%
Born in Australia					
People born in Australia	82%	83%	89%	87%	81%
Languages spoken at home					
English only spoken at home	91%	85%	94%	91%	87%
Other top languages spoken at home	-	Punjabi, Urdu, Shona, Maori, Afrikaans	Serbian	Malayalam, Punjabi, Mandarin, Tagalog, Afrikaans	Mandarin, Italian, Punjabi, Macedonian, Spanish
Level of highest education attainment (people 15yrs and over)					
Postgraduate Degree Level			-	5%	18%
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level			-	3%	
Bachelor's degree Level			-	18%	
Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level	6%	7%	7%	16%	9%
Certificates III & IV Level	20%	27%	15%	41%	21%

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
Secondary Education - Years 10 and above	29%	38%	36%	16%	30%
Certificates I & II Level	0	0	0	3%	0.1%
Secondary Education - Years 9 and below	16%	11%	7%	7%	10%
Not stated	14%	7%	7%	6%	10%
Employment Type					
Not in labour force	82%	28%	34%	32%	37%
In labour force	15%	66%	62%	64%	56%
Worked Full Time (% of labour force)	60%	55%	59%	57%	55%
Worked part-time (% of labour force)	51%	32%	22%	31%	34%
Away from work	0	5%	7%	7%	7%
Unemployed (%)	0	10%	11.5%	4.7%	4.6%
Industries of employment – top responses					
Response category no 1	Hospitals (except psychiatric hospitals) 13%	Coal mining	Hospitals (except psychiatric hospitals) 9%	Coal mining 5%	-
Response category no 2	Beef cattle farming 9%	Other social assistance services 6%	Coal Mining 4%	Other social assistance services 4%	-
Response category no 3	Supermarket and grocery stores 9%	Supermarket and grocery stores 4%	Printing 4%	Hospitals (except psychiatric hospitals) 4%	-
Response category no 4	Building and other industrial cleaning services 9%	Hairdressing and beauty services 3%	Supermarket and grocery stores 4%	Takeaway food services 3%	-

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
Response category no 5	Local government administration 9%	Aged care residential services 2%	Clothing retailing 4%	Supermarket and grocery stores 3%	-
Industries of employment					
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing				1%	5%
Mining				6%	2%
Manufacturing				7%	6%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services				1%	1%
Construction				9%	9%
Wholesale Trade				3%	2%
Retail Trade				10%	9%
Accommodation and Food Services				7%	8%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing				4%	4%
Information Media and Telecommunications				1%	0.8%
Financial and Insurance Services				2%	2%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services				1%	1%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services				5%	5%
Administrative and Support Services				4%	3%
Public Administration and Safety				6%	7%
Education and Training				8%	9%

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
Health Care and Social Assistance				16%	16%
Arts and Recreation Services				1%	1%
Other Services				4%	4%
Inadequately described/not stated				4%	4%
Occupation					
Managers	6%	8%	22%	10%	13%
Professionals	21%	7%	27%	17%	19%
Technicians and Trades Workers	17%	21%	15%	16%	15%
Community and Personal Service Workers	11%	16%	5%	13%	13%
Clerical and Administrative Workers	15%	12%	13%	13%	12%
Sales Workers	13%	10%	13%	9%	8%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	21%	8%	4%	9%	7%
Labourers	9%	15%	6%	10%	11%
Inadequately described/not stated				-	2%
Method of travel to work on Census Day					
By car as driver or passenger	55%	62%	61%	59%	65%
By public transport	0	0%	0	1%	0.9%
Worked at home	17%	13%	26%	17%	16%
Count of long-term health conditions					

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
None of the selected conditions	32%	61%	59%	59%	57%
One condition	29%	19%	27%	23%	22%
Two conditions	15%	5%	7%	8%	8%
Three or more conditions	16%	4%	2%	4%	4%
Not stated	7%	11%	5%	7%	9%
Type of long-term health conditions					
Arthritis	37%	6%	11%	10%	12%
Asthma	10%	11%	6%	11%	10%
Cancer (including remission)	13%	2%	6%	3%	4%
Dementia (including Alzheimer's)	3%	1%	0	0.7%	1%
Diabetes (excluding gestational diabetes)	14%	3%	6%	6%	5%
Heart disease (including heart attack or angina)	16%	2%	6%	4%	5%
Kidney disease	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Lung condition (including COPD or emphysema)	8%	2%	0	2%	3%
Mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)	10%	13%	9%	13%	11%
Stroke	4%	1%	0	1%	1%
Any other long-term health condition(s)	10%	8%	6%	9%	9%
No long-term health condition(s)	29%	58%	52%	55%	54%

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
Not stated	7%	11%	5%	7%	9%
Lived at same address:					
1 year ago			-	81%	79%
5 years ago			-	52%	55%
Dwelling summary*					2,829,637
Occupied private dwellings	192	245	68	32,648	n/a
Unoccupied private dwellings	12	5	0	1,744	n/a
% unoccupied dwellings	6%	2%	0	5%	11%
Average number of people per household	1.6	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.4
Dwelling structure: occupied private dwellings (excl. visitor only and other non-classifiable households)					
Separate house	99%	90%	100%	87%	82%
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc.	2%	9%	-	10%	10%
Flat or apartment	-	1%	-	2%	6%
Other dwelling	-	0	-	0.7%	1%
No of bedrooms: occupied private dwellings (excl. visitor only and other non-classifiable households)			-		
1 or less bedrooms	0	0	0	3%	5%
2 bedrooms	40%	2%	11%	12%	18%
3 bedrooms	51%	16%	21%	37%	41%

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
4 bedrooms	9%	82%	67%	48%	35%
5 or more bedrooms	-		-	-	
No. of bedrooms not stated	0	0%	0	1%	2%
Tenure type (occupied private dwellings)					
Owned outright	32%	15%	49%	28%	-
Owned with a mortgage	8%	34%	41%	39%	-
Rented	7%	52%	15%	30%	-
Other tenure type	52%	0	0	2%	-
Tenure type not stated	2%	1%	0	1%	-
Household income					
Median household weekly income	\$803	\$1,840	\$2,349	\$1,766	\$1,434
Less than \$650 total household weekly income	34%	7%	10%	15%	20%
More than \$3,000 total household weekly income	2%	16%	46%	22%	18%
Housing costs: RENT					
Median rent (weekly)	\$390	\$430	\$310	\$370	\$330
Households where rent payments are less than or equal to 30% of household income	77%	61%	60%	55%	54%
Households where rent payments are more than 30% of household income	23%	31%	30%	36%	36%

Indicator	Rutherford SA1 10602161529	Rutherford SA1 10602161519	Oakhampton / Heights SA1 10602161531	Maitland LGA	Rest of NSW
Housing costs: MORTGAGE					
Median mortgage monthly repayments	\$1,820	\$1,811	\$1,979	\$1,829	\$1,733
Households where mortgage payments are less than 30% of household income	60%	72%	75%	78%	75%
Households with mortgage payments greater than or equal to 30% of household income	47%	17%	29%	11%	13%
Household composition: Occupied private dwellings (excl. visitor only and other non-classifiable households)					
Family households	55%	83%	80%	75%	69%
Single/lone person household	45%	14%	15%	22%	28%
Group household	0	3%	5%	3%	3%
Family composition					
Couple family with no children	91%	28%	43%	37%	44%
Couple family with children	7%	49%	45%	44%	38%
One parent family	0	26%	19%	18%	17%
Other family	0	2%	0	1%	1%