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## Executive Summary

### Purpose and scope of this assessment

This Social Impact Statement has been prepared by Ethos Urban and is in relation to the staged Development Application (DA) for a subdivision of land at Redlands Road and Cemetery Road, Corowa. The DA proposes a residential subdivision of 306 lots, incorporating 6,869sqm of open space.

The subdivision will enable the release of additional residential land within the main residential area of the township. The design of the new subdivision is generally consistent with Council's site-specific development plans for this area, set out in the (then) Corowa Shire DCP 2013.

This report comprises a Social Impact Statement ('the Statement'), which is a concise form of Social Impact Assessment, the scope of which is considered appropriate for the associated DA.

The Statement provides an assessment of the potential social impacts of the proposal, both positive and negative, including recommendations for responses to optimise social benefits and mitigate identified negative impacts. It applies the suite of social impact factors specified in the NSW DPIE Social Impact Assessment Guideline 2021 as a best practice approach.

### Key findings

The proposed subdivision is on a site that has been designated for residential subdivision and development through the Corowa DCP 2013. This area is considered as appropriate for residential development, due to its suitability across a range of factors, including its accessibility to the town centre, with its range of retail, employment opportunities, social infrastructure, and services.

The primary social impacts of a residential subdivision typically relate to population growth, and the impacts of population growth on local amenity, and community needs for social infrastructure and services.

The subject DA proposes a subdivision of 306 lots, on a site that has been designed by Council for residential subdivision for 226 lots through the Corowa DCP 2013. The proposed subdivision represents a higher density therefore, with 80 additional lots to that envisaged through the DCP, equivalent to approx. 184 additional residents (based on 2.3 persons per household average for detached dwellings in the locality).

This additional population must be considered within the broader social context of the forecast declining population of Corowa between 2021 and 2036 (-660 residents, from current population). Even accounting for the additional population associated with the denser subdivision of the site, population decline – rather than growth – is forecast for the locality over the medium term.

This indicates that current pressures on social infrastructure and services will ease, while acknowledging there is currently, anecdotally, a services crunch for local medical services. Overall, the proposed development is unlikely to result in needs for increased community infrastructure and services over the estimated 10 to 15-year development timeframe, given broader forecast population decline.

The density of the proposed subdivision (11dw/ Ha) does not in and of itself mean the development will have a negative impact on local character and community. From a social perspective, smaller allotment sizes bring the potential to provide a more affordable entry point into the local market than current residential subdivisions offer. Increased housing affordability can bring positive social impacts in relation to population growth, diversity, and equity – important aspirations for regional areas, and key values set out in the Federation Community Strategic Plan.

The proposed development's potential to deliver relative housing affordability than surrounding subdivisions – aligned with smaller lot sizes – may help to arrest local population decline. This is a significant social benefit of the proposal; it has the potential to support future local social and economic sustainability and resilience, to which population decline – particularly of working-age adults – is detrimental.

This is particularly in relation to the key household types in the locality – couple families with and without children and single person households – for whom housing affordability is typically a key consideration.

## **Concluding comments**

In summary, from a social impact perspective, the proposed development represents an appropriate development type (residential) in an area that has been designated by Council for residential development on account of its accessibility to local employment opportunities, and range of social infrastructure, open space, and other facilities and services in the Corowa town centre.

The development of the site has potential to help arrest local population decline and provide relatively affordable housing options for families and older single person households in the locality.

With further consideration at the appropriate stage of development for high quality design, materials and landscape elements that connect with the surrounding scenic locality and reflect local cultural values and connection to country, along with measures to enhance the amenity of the site from an active living (pedestrian and cycling) perspective, the proposed development has the potential to make a positive contribution to the future growth and sustainable development of Corowa and the social and economic resilience of its communities.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose and scope of this assessment

This Social Impact Statement has been prepared by Ethos Urban and is in relation to the staged Development Application (DA) for a subdivision of land at Redlands Road and Cemetery Road, Corowa. The DA proposes a residential subdivision of 306 lots, incorporating 6,869sqm of open space.

The subdivision will enable the release of additional residential land within the main residential area of the township. The design of the new subdivision is generally consistent with Council's site-specific development plans for this area, set out in the (then) Corowa Shire DCP 2013.

This report comprises a Social Impact Statement ('the Statement'), which is a concise form of Social Impact Assessment, the scope of which is considered appropriate for the associated DA.

The Statement provides an assessment of the potential social impacts of the proposal, both positive and negative, including recommendations for responses to optimise social benefits and mitigate identified negative impacts.

This report sets out the following stages of research and analysis that have informed the assessment:

- Review of the current social context, including the population profile and local social infrastructure context.
- Review of the outcomes generating via community consultation that was conducted in the creation of the Federation Shire Community Strategic Plan, including the relevant goals and aspirations of the local community in the Federation Shire area, as captured by Council.
- Review of policy drivers for the DA, as expressed in applicable State and Local Government strategy.
- Analysis of social impacts of the proposed residential subdivision – with a view to its future development for housing – including positive and negative impacts.
- Recommendations to optimise community outcomes, regarding both mitigation and enhancement measures for the identified social impacts.

### 1.2 Requirement for this assessment

The subject DA has been assessed and refused by Federation Council under *Section 4.15 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979*, which requires consideration of 'the likely environmental, social or economic impacts of the development in the locality.'

While a separate social impact assessment was not a requirement for the DA submission, this Social Impact Statement has been subsequently prepared to address the social impacts of the proposal, which have been cited by Council as a contributory grounds for refusal, pursuant to s.4.15(b) of the EP&A Act.

The relevant section of the Statement of Facts and Contentions in relation to this application (2 March 2021, Part B – Contentions,) states as follows:

#### **Social & Economic Impact**

6.1 The proposed development does not adequately address (pursuant to s4.15(b)) the potential social and economic impacts as a result of the design and density of residential development proposed which is inconsistent with the site-specific controls for the Land in Appendix A to the DCP.

#### **Particulars:**

- a. The uniform style of lot layout and lot size does not meet the objectives for residential development in low density environments as contained in the Corowa DCP 2013, in particular, *to ensure residential development within a low density or rural is complementary and in harmony with the natural surrounds; and to ensure that all development takes account of the amenity of adjoining and surrounding land with respect to sunlight, views, privacy and [convenience] and safety.*
- b. The proposal fails to consider the social and economic impacts of the proposed subdivision layout which will result in linear, uniform blocks with inadequate access to quality open space.

## 2.0 Proposed development

### 2.1 Residential subdivision

The DA proposes the residential subdivision of land described as Lots 1 and 2, DP199174 and Lot 66, DP1167493 and addressed as 169-199 Redlands Road and 42-80 Cemetery Road, Corowa.

A total of 306 residential lots are proposed, along with two parcels of open space on the northern and southern parts of the site.

#### Open space provision

Of the total site area of 278,200sqm, 6,869sqm of open space is proposed to be provided.

This is delivered through two parcels of land distributed on the site:

- 3,450sqm – (approx. 3% of northern parcel)
- 3,419sqm – (approx. 2% of southern parcel)

Open space constitutes approx. 5% of the total site across both development areas.

### 2.2 Development context

The subject site is designated for residential development in the Corowa Shire DCP 2013.

- Council's plan, set out in this DCP, is for a 226-lot subdivision.
- The subject DA proposes 306 lots, representing a differential of 80 lots (or approximately 35 percent).
- In terms of population, the proposed differential of 80 lots represents a forecast population differential of 184 persons, based on the average household size of 2.3 persons for separate houses in the locality of the site (refer to **Section 4.1**).

## 3.0 Geographic context

### 3.1 Subject site and surrounds

The subject site is located within the residential growth front of Corowa in an established residential area, approximately 1.5km from Corowa's commercial centre.

The suburb of Corowa is bounded by the locality of Hopefield in the north, the Murray River in the east and south, and Redlands Road in the west.

The site comprises two land parcels – a northern development area (12.32Ha) and a southern development area (15.5Ha), shown at **Figure 1** over page.

The following descriptions are adapted from planning documentation on the proposed development.

#### Northern development area

The northern land parcel is made up of Lots 1 & 2 in DP199174 and is bordered by Redlands Road to the north, undeveloped residential zoned land to the east, Tower Street to the south and Cemetery Road to the west. It is generally rectangular in shape and is approx. 320m wide by 385m long. The total site area is 12.32 Ha.

The land is former grazing land, and currently contains no buildings or structures. A small dam exists in the north west corner of the property.

Redlands Road provides one of the main arterial roads into the Corowa township. The land located on the opposite side of Redlands Road is undeveloped, but zoned for low density residential purposes. The land to the north west of the northern site is zoned industrial and comprises a mix of industrial uses, warehouses and associated activities.



### Southern development area

The southern development area comprises Lot 66 in DP1167493 and is bordered by Barber Street to the north, established residential development to the east, land zoned for residential purposes to the south and Cemetery Road to the west.

The property is generally square in shape, except for a small portion of land that has been excised to form the T-head intersection of Barber Street and Chisnall Street at the northern edge of the property.

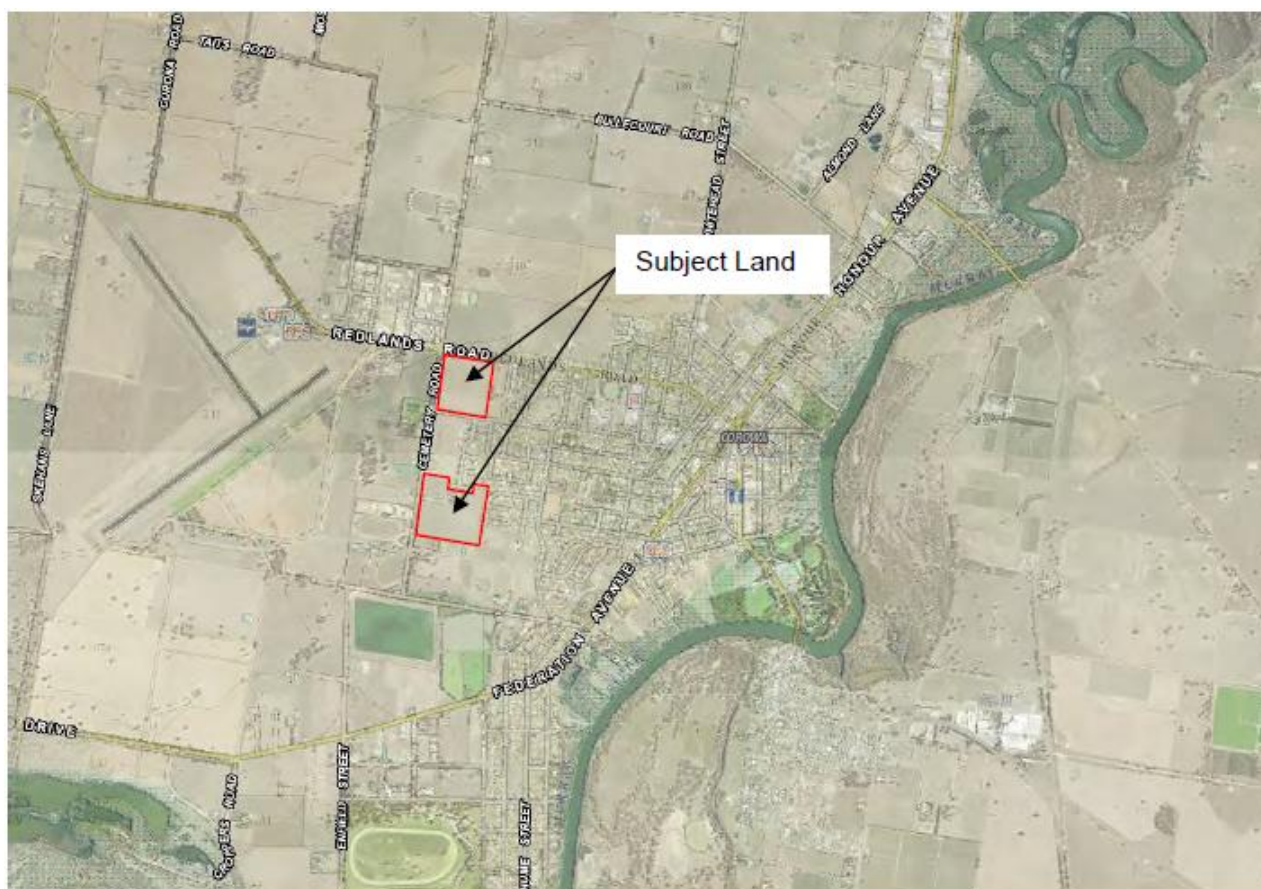
The land is approx. 400m wide by 404m long. The total site area is 15.50Ha. It is former grazing land, occupied by an existing dwelling house and associated outbuildings, structures and landscaping located towards the northern portion of the site.

The existing Corowa urban area is located to the east and south east of the site, and has been developed for residential accommodation. This land is largely characterised by detached single storey dwellings on separate residential allotments.

Further east of the Southern site is the Corowa High School, a Hospital, and the main commercial centre of the town.

To the south of the Site, the land is zoned primary production, which has largely been developed for rural lifestyle purposes comprising of residential dwellings on larger rural lots, or hobby farm properties. Further south, beyond Nixon Street, is the Respondent's Sewerage Treatment Works.

Cemetery Road adjoins the site to the west and provides the main vehicular connection between Redlands Road to the north and Nixon Street to the south. On the opposite side of this roadway is the Corowa Cemetery.



**Figure 1 Subject site and surrounds**

Source: Habitat Planning



## 4.0 Local social context

This section explores the local social context of the development, including:

- Demographic context, including current and forecast population profile;
- Social infrastructure context, including the local social infrastructure accessible to the site;
- Local social issues, trends and community perspectives; and
- Local government policy drivers for Corowa.

This social baseline analysis has been prepared to support an assessment of the social impacts of the proposed residential development.

### 4.1 Demographic profile: key community characteristics

The population profile for the suburb of Corowa is summarised in **Table 1** below. This data has been obtained from ABS 2016 data, and Forecast ID population estimates for 2020.

Data from 2016 shows that there is a predominantly older population, with the largest population cohorts comprising older people aged 60 to 69. Parents and homebuilders aged 35 to 49 also made up a substantial portion of the population, and couple family households comprised 52.3 percent of the population. Of this group, those with children equated to 20 percent, or one-fifth of the population.

It is noted that this population data is now out of date, with data from the August 2021 Census to be released next year. In this context, it is envisaged that new residential subdivisions in the locality of the subject site may shift the population mix, potentially to more couple families with children.

**Table 1 Population characteristics for the suburb of Corowa**

Population characteristic	Metric
Estimated Resident Population (2020)	5,439
Population cohorts (predominant, 2016):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 890 (16.4%)</li> <li>• 828 (15.2%)</li> <li>• 820 (15.1%)</li> <li>• 776 (14.3%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seniors (70-84)</li> <li>• Empty nesters and retirees (60-69)</li> <li>• Parents and homebuilders (35-49)</li> <li>• Older workers and pre-retirees (50-59)</li> </ul>	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 95 (1.7%)</li> </ul>
Cultural diversity: language other than English spoken at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.4%</li> </ul>
Household structure (predominant, 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 749 (32.3%)</li> <li>• 701 (30.2)</li> <li>• 464 (20%)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Couples without children</li> <li>• Lone person</li> <li>• Couples with children*</li> </ul> <p><i>*Note there has been a 1.9% decline in couples with children households 2011-2016</i></p>	
Household size (predominant, all dwellings, 2016)	2 person/ hh: 883 (39.4%)
Employment status of residents (2016)	2,215 employed, of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 58% full-time</li> <li>• 40% part-time</li> </ul>
Education: vocational level or higher (predominant, 2016)	1,122 (24.5%)

Source: Profile ID 2020/ ABS Census 2016

### Localised study area analysis – key characteristics

To further inform this social impact statement, an analysis of a smaller study area comprising SA1 Census Collection Districts (data sets) within approx. 400m of the subject site has also been undertaken.

This highlights the following key points of relevance to the analysis:

- Predominant dwelling structure: separate house – 1,634 (73% of total dwellings)
- Average household size: separate house – 2.3 persons

### 4.2 Historic and forecast population growth

Historic and forecast projection growth is shown at **Table 2** below and **Table 3** over page.

The 'Corowa Study Area' represents SA1 Census Collection Districts within 400m of the subject site – the smallest readily available geography for ABS Census data.

Projections are based on data available from NSW Government (TfNSW).

**Table 2** Historic population growth 2011 – 2021

Population	2011	2016	2021	2011 to 2021
Corowa Study Area	4,860	4,730	4,620	-240
Corowa Suburb	5,760	5,540	5,390*	-370
Federation LGA	12,510	12,450	12,540	+30
Rest of NSW	2,609,580	2,707,940	2,819,990	+210,410
<b>Growth</b>				
Corowa Study Area		-30	-20	-24
Corowa Suburb		-40	-30	-37
Federation LGA		-10	+20	+3
Rest of NSW		+19,670	+22,410	+21,041
<b>Growth rate</b>				
Corowa Study Area		-0.5%	-0.5%	-0.5%
Corowa Suburb		-0.8%	-0.5%	-0.7%
Federation LGA		-0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Rest of NSW		0.7%	0.8%	0.8%

Source: TfNSW/ Ethos Urban

**Table 2** shows that the population of the suburb of Corowa and the smaller localised Study Area defined for the project has declined slightly during 2011-2021, by approx. 0.7% and 0.5% respectively.

The population of the broader Federation Shire has meanwhile remained stable.

Population forecasts for 2021 – 2033 for the suburb of Corowa, the smaller designated Study Area, and the broader Federation Shire shown at **Table 3** over page show this trend of population decline continuing, with a forecast annual rate of decline of 0.9%, 0.9% and 0.7% respectively.

Until the 2021 Census data is released in 2022/23 this forecasting is the most accurate data to rely upon.

The forecast of population stability of the localised study area – containing the site of the DA – and the forecast of population stability for the broader Corowa suburb, has implications in terms of demands for social infrastructure and services. The forecasts show that the current demand for social infrastructure will remain stable, or decline slightly. This is explored further in **Section 4.3**.

**Table 3 Population projections 2016 – 2036**

Population	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	2021 to 2036
Corowa Study Area	4,730	4,620	4,440	4,250	4,050	-570
Corowa Suburb	5,540	5,390	5,180	4,960	4,730	-660
Federation LGA	12,450	12,540	12,160	11,740	11,280	-1,260
Rest of NSW	2,707,940	2,819,990	2,899,260	2,967,630	3,015,420	+195,430
<b>Annual growth</b>						
Corowa Study Area		-20	-40	-40	-40	-40
Corowa Suburb		-30	-40	-40	-50	-40
Federation LGA		+20	-80	-80	-90	-80
Rest of NSW		+22,410	+15,850	+13,670	+9,560	+13,030
<b>Annual growth rate</b>						
Corowa Study Area		-0.5%	-0.8%	-0.9%	-1.0%	-0.9%
Corowa Suburb		-0.5%	-0.8%	-0.9%	-0.9%	-0.9%
Federation LGA		0.1%	-0.6%	-0.7%	-0.8%	-0.7%
Rest of NSW		0.8%	0.6%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%

Source: TfNSW/ Ethos Urban

### 4.3 Local social Infrastructure context

This section provides an overview of the local social infrastructure within 800m of the site, which is equivalent to a 10–15-minute walking distance. This distance is the standard social planning catchment used for the analysis of local social infrastructure accessibility. The following categories of infrastructure have been reviewed:

- Community facilities;
- Health/aged care facilities;
- Education facilities;
- Open space/recreational facilities;
- Childcare facilities; and
- Places of worship.

Corowa, like many semi-rural areas, has social infrastructure clustered around the town. While this infrastructure is not within a standard walking catchment of the subject site, this infrastructure is accessible to the site within 1.5km. This accessibility is a factor that has influenced Council's designation of this land as suitable for residential development.

A summary of the review of local social infrastructure is provided below and shown at **Figure 2** over page.

**Community facilities:** There are no community facilities located within walking distance of the site. Most of the local social infrastructure is clustered approximately 1.5km east of the site, including three community facilities: Corowa Memorial Hall, Intereach Corowa, and Corowa RSL Club.

**Health/ aged care facilities:** There are no public health or aged care facilities located within walking distance of the site. There are two Health/ aged care facilities located within 1km of the site: Corowa District Hospital (to the east of

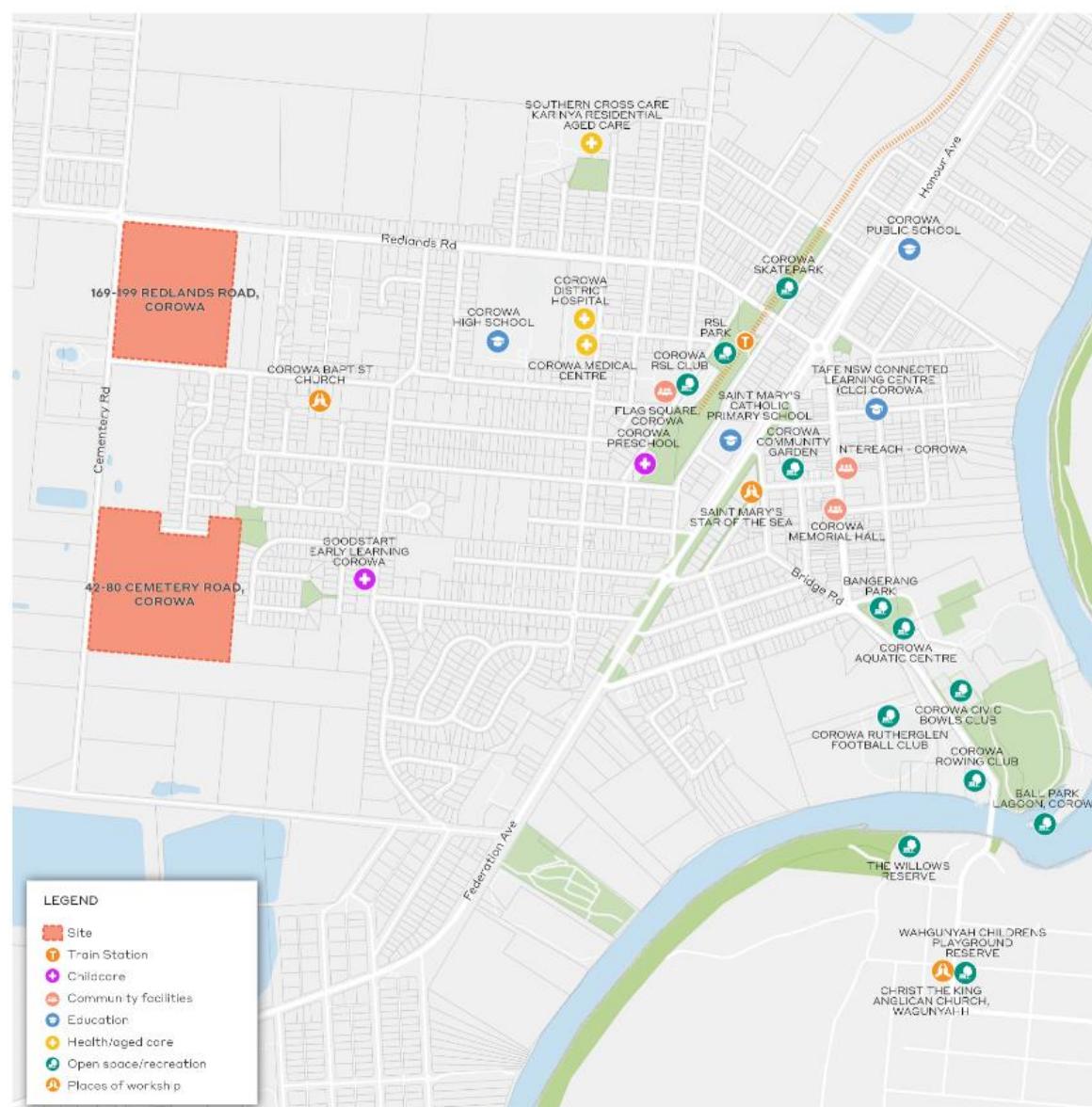
the southern site) and Southern Cross Care Karinya Residential Aged Care. Corowa Medical Centre (a private practice) is in the town, providing general medical and allied health services, along with obstetrics and palliative care. There is a team of 8 GPs, 1 Registrar, and 4 Nurses.

**Education facilities:** Corowa High School (to the east of the southern development area) is the only education facility within walking distance of the site. Other facilities of this type are clustered approximately 1.5km east of the site, including three other facilities: Corowa Public School, Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School, and TAFE NSW Corowa.

**Open space/recreational facilities:** There are no open spaces or recreational facilities located within walking distance of the site. Most of this infrastructure is clustered approximately 1.5km east of the site, including several open spaces/recreational facilities, such as Flag Square, RSL Park, Corowa Community Garden, and Corowa Skatepark.

**Childcare facilities:** There is one childcare facility located within walking distance of the site: Goodstart Early Learning Corowa.

**Places of worship:** There is one place of worship located within walking distance of the site: Corowa Baptist Church.



**Figure 2 Local social infrastructure context**

Source: Ethos Urban/ Google Maps

#### 4.4 Local community perspectives

For the purposes of this assessment, community perspectives on local issues have been scoped from reviews of the following two key sources:

- Federation Shire Community Strategic Plan (2018) – the key social planning document for Council, which has been developed through extensive community consultation and represents broad community perspectives.
- Community submissions on this proposed development – a total of 121 submissions from community members were received on this DA when it was publicly exhibited by Council. It is important to note that submissions do not necessarily represent the views of the whole community, however they constitute an important source of information on community perspectives.

##### **Federation Council Community Strategic Plan (2018-2028)**

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) represents the key overarching vision and strategy for the local area, based on broad community consultation. It is a requirement that all councils in NSW have this strategic plan.

Extensive consultation was undertaken to prepare the Plan, detailed in section 3 of the Strategic Plan:

- A statistically representative phone survey
  - The phone survey had 225 respondents, and achieved a demographically and geographically representative sample at the 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of 6.5%.
- Community workshops
  - Ten public workshops were held, as well as one youth workshop and one interagency workshop. They were attended by approximately 250 residents and stakeholders.
  - During these workshops, participants were presented with the findings of the phone survey and asked a series of questions relating to their vision for the Federation Council area.
  - Workshops were held in the following areas: Boree Creek; Coreen; Corowa; Howlong; Mulwala; Oaklands; Savernake; Urana.
- According to Council, overall, participants agreed with the survey findings, and expanded on them regarding issues unique to their area. Differences were noted between areas, with greater concerns regarding equity and the range and level of infrastructure and services in rural communities.

Participants' comments served as the basis of the vision and themes set out in the Strategic Plan.

##### **Outcomes: community vision, values, and priorities**

The Plan highlights the following community vision, values, and priorities for the Shire:

- Vision: Federation – Creating Opportunities, Celebrating Communities. Federation will be home to a community rich in spirit, thriving through the opportunities of our unique history, rural landscapes, and waterways.
- Outcomes:
  1. Built Federation: Maintained and improved infrastructure that meets the needs of residents and industry.
  2. Economic Federation: Growing, progressive and prosperous communities that build on sustainable manufacturing, agriculture and tourism, close proximity to other centres on both sides of the Murray and affordability.
  3. Natural Federation: Sustainable rural landscapes and waterways offering tranquillity and attractive recreational spaces.
  4. Social Federation: Close-knit and welcoming communities where people come together and support each other.
  5. Well-Governed Federation: Strong civic leadership and governance supporting equity across communities and effective communication with residents.

- Community values: *We value the Federation Council area for its waterways, parks and recreational opportunities, its tranquil country lifestyle, its strong community spirit, and its close proximity to other centres on both sides of the Murray.*

### Community submissions on this proposed development

A key source of relevant information on community perspectives are the submissions received during the public exhibition of the DA. Submissions were received during September and October 2020.

A total of 121 submissions were received. These have been reviewed for the purposes of this assessment. Social issues have been identified from the range of issues raised.

**Table 4** below provides a summary and categorisation of the issues raised through the submissions.

**Table 4 Summary of issues raised through public exhibition of DA for the subject development**

Issue raised in submissions	Type of impact (ecological/ economic/ traffic/ urban design/ planning social etc)
Removal of seven mature trees on the site	Ecology/ Social
Road safety and traffic impacts on existing road network	Traffic
Negative impact of subdivision layout/ lot sizes of local property values	Economic
Employment available in the locality to support new residents	Economic/ Social
Subdivision plan inconsistent with local character/ subdivision patterns	Urban Design/ Planning/ Social
Waiting time for medical services cited between 4 - 9 weeks for current residents	Social/ Planning
Solar access: frontage of some lots is less than the minimum specified in Council planning controls (15m). East west facing lots should have a wider frontage to enhance solar access.	Urban Design/ Planning
Sloane Frog: impact of development on this endangered species	Ecological
Lack of footpaths, including for school-aged residents to walk to nearby high school	Urban Design/ Social
Density: Proposed lots are a 33% increase on Council's DCP (specifies 226)	Urban Design/ Planning
Civil infrastructure: the subdivision will result in increased pressure on infrastructure systems (sewage, water, electricity)	Planning
Recreation/green spaces: 2 of the planned recreation spaces are listed as drainage sites	Urban Design/ Planning/ Social
Lack of active transport provision/ bicycle options	Urban Design/ Social
Divergence from Corowa DCP 2013	Planning
Density: 12% increase of total residences in the area	Planning/ Social



## Summary of social impacts raised

Following this analysis, the following matters raised constitute direct or indirect social impacts, which are further considered through the assessment at **Section 5** of this report.

- Loss of mature trees on the site – impacts on the local sense of place and social connections to the site.
- Waiting times for medical services – impacts of future development on population growth-driven demand for social infrastructure and services.
- Lack of footpaths/ pedestrian and cycling routes within the subdivision plan – impacts on health and wellbeing/ active lifestyles/ local amenity and liveability.
- Open space (open spaces double as draining detention basins) – access to recreation space/ amenity/ impacts on health and wellbeing/ active lifestyles/ liveability/ ecology/ connection to country.
- Increase in residences in the locality – impacts of population growth on social sustainability of locality, including community needs for social infrastructure and services/ local amenity
- Local character – impacts of the proposed subdivision on local character, and the built and natural environment.

## 4.5 Strategic policy context

The following local government policies and strategies include social drivers of relevance to this assessment.

- Federation Council Community Strategic Plan 2018-28; and
- Corowa DCP 2013 (Residential Development).

Key social drivers for development set out in these documents are as follows:

### Federation Council Community Strategic Plan 2018-28

- Creating social and economic opportunities for the Shire.
- Celebrating and fostering community spirit and “close-knit and welcoming communities”– social connectedness and cohesion.
- Acknowledging community connections to place – including the area’s predominantly rural character.
- Improving infrastructure to support social and economic development.
- Supporting population growth and “progressive and prosperous” communities that capitalise on the area’s social, economic, and environmental assets.
- Harnessing the areas scenic and natural assets to provide recreation spaces.
- Ensuring strong civic leadership to support sustainable, equitable growth.

### Corowa DCP 2013 (Residential Development)

The overall purpose of the controls in Chapter 2.0 of the DCP is “to create well-designed and liveable residential environments for current and future residents of the Shire.”

The DCP is primarily concerned with urban design and planning matters. Objectives that constitute social considerations are as follows:

- To ensure residential development within a low density or rural is complementary and in harmony with the natural surrounds.
- To ensure that all development takes account of the amenity of adjoining and surrounding land with respect to sunlight, views, privacy, convenience and safety.



## 5.0 Social Impact Assessment

### 5.1 Introduction

‘Social impacts’ generally refer to the consequences that **people** experience when a new project brings change. ‘People’ are classed as individuals, households, groups, communities, or organisations under the NSW DPIE Social Impact Assessment (‘SIA’) Guidelines (2021). These guidelines inform the following Social Impact Statement (‘The Statement’), which identifies and evaluates the predicted social impacts arising from the project, including responses to enhance positive impacts and mitigate negative impacts.

A range of established frameworks exist for the purposes of assessing social impacts. Some local governments have established their own social impact policies and guidelines. At the NSW Government level, all State Significant Developments are now required to be assessed against the provisions of the NSW DPIE SIA Guidelines, (2021). This specifies a particular approach and suite of social factors for consideration when preparing a social impact assessment, and determines which issues can be considered ‘social impact’, when reviewing the DA.

Although application of the NSW DPIE Guideline is not technically required in this case, this report has addressed the factors contained within the guideline to ensure a best practice approach to determining the social impact.

### 5.2 Social factors for assessment

The following factors create the basis for the social impact assessment contained in this report:

- **Way of life**, including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, and how they interact each day.
- **Community**, including composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, resilience, and people’s sense of place.
- **Accessibility**, including how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities, whether provided by a public, private, or not-for-profit organisation.
- **Culture**, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, practices, obligations, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places and buildings.
- **Health and wellbeing**, including 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**, including 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**, including 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.

### 5.3 Social impact assessment

The following section provides a concise social impact assessment of the proposed development, to an extent that constitutes a Social Impact Statement.

**Table 5** over page provide an assessment of the proposed subdivision (and the residential development it will enable) against each of the social factors specific in Section 5.2, considering the evidence gathered through the social baseline analysis set out in the earlier sections of this report.

#### Study area definition

The primary study area, or area of social influence for the purposes of this assessment is the locality (suburb) of Corowa. The secondary study area is the Federation Shire.

**Table 5 Assessment of social impacts of the proposed development**

**Social impact assessment issues and responses**

**Way of life, including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, and how they interact each day**

Social impacts

- No significant social impacts are envisaged to way of life in the locality of Corowa or broader Federation Shire, as it is defined here.
- The development will be integrated with existing road networks, given private vehicle use is the predominant mode of transport in the locality, as is typical for a rural/ semi-rural area.
- The proposed subdivision is in an area earmarked for residential development, as an extension to the town – and as such, has been considered as an appropriate area for residential development. This decision by Council (as per Corowa DCP 2013) had regard to future residents' access to employment, social infrastructure and services, and recreation facilities clustered in and around the town of Corowa, which is 1.5km from the site.
- As a residential development in an area of similar residential subdivisions, the development type is not expected to adversely impact on way of life – which is that of a residential locality, on the outskirts of a township.

Recommended responses: mitigation and benefits optimisation measures

- Establishing connections with the site and surrounding development will assist in integrating current and new communities, as the development establishes.
- Design considerations that enhance the permeability of the site, and pedestrian and cycling access routes – through the site to the high school, for example – can assist in making a positive contribution to local way of life.

**Community, including composition, cohesion, character, how the community functions, resilience, and people's sense of place**

Social impacts

- The current population of the suburb of Corowa (Estimated Resident Population 2021) is 5,439.
- The forecast population of the subject subdivision (once every allotment is developed) is estimated at 704 residents – which is ascertained by applying a metric of 2.3 (average household size of detached dwellings in the locality of the site) to the proposed 306 allotments/ dwellings.
- This represents a nominal increase on the current population of 13% (rounded) from 2021 to the end date of the estimated development timeframe of 10-15 years. However, it is critical to consider the subject development more appropriately in the context of broader suburb-level population forecasts, which forecast population decline overall.
- Current population forecasts for the suburb of Corowa to 2036 (developed using TfNSW data, taking into account historic population growth trends – see **Table 3**) indicate that the population of Corowa overall will *decline* slightly between 2021 to 2036 – by an estimated 660 residents (an annual population decline of 0.9% from 2021).
- Assuming these forecasts take account of known development plans (including Council's proposed 226-lot subdivision plan for the site set out in the 2013 DCP), the result of the proposed 306-lot subdivision on these forecasts is potentially +184 residents (80 lots/ dwellings differential x 2.3 average household size for separate dwellings).
- This requires an adjustment to the population forecast for the suburb of Corowa from -660 residents, to -476. Still a decline in population overall, though a slightly lesser decline – with attendant community resilience benefits.
- This analysis indicates that the development will have a beneficial social impact overall on the population of Corowa, given that population decline typically represents a negative social and economic impact in a rural/ semi-rural locality, regarding its ongoing social and economic sustainability. The proposed subdivision will result in an overall population that is still *less* than the current population, when broader population decline forecast for the suburb of Corowa is accounted for.
- In terms of community composition and character, the development is likely to attract a similar community or demographic profile to that currently living in nearby residential subdivisions.

- The relative size of lots proposed through the subject development suggests that these may be more affordable than surrounding subdivisions, which may be attractive to young families, which make up a predominant population cohort in the locality (15.1% of the population was aged 35-49, at the time of the 2016 Census, classified as “parents and homebuilders.”)
- Similarly, couples with and without children were the predominant household types in Corowa in 2016 (20% and 32.3% respectively). This was followed by lone person households (30.2%), both groups of whom may benefit from the availability of smaller and therefore potentially more affordable allotments/ dwellings in the locality.
- The proposed development has potential to cater to family households, as well as older single person households – both key demographic groups in Corowa. The development’s potential to attract families with children brings social benefits in relation to the ongoing social and economic sustainability, vibrancy and resilience of the locality and the broader Federation Shire, given this population is a key driver for local economic growth and development – including local workforce and business owners.
- In terms of people’s sense of place, a key issue raised in community submissions on the proposed development (refer to **Section 4.4**) is the perceived detrimental impact of the proposed subdivision pattern on local character and the local community’s sense of place.
- From a social perspective, community members who put forward objections to the proposed development have raised concerns that the proposed 306 lots constitutes a residential density that is not in character with surrounding subdivisions.
- For the purposes of this assessment, a dwelling lot yield analysis has been undertaken of nearby residential subdivisions, to assess comparable densities (as a proxy for character). This is provided at **Appendix A**.
- This shows the allotment sizes/ density on comparable nearby subdivisions:
  - Subject site: 12.32Ha (northern parcel) + 15.5Ha (southern parcel)/ 306 lots) – density: 11 dw/Ha
  - Comparison sites average (see **Appendix A**): density: 8 dw/Ha (rounded)
- The subject subdivision therefore comprises lots that are just under a third smaller than comparable nearby subdivisions, with a density differential of approx. 3 dw/Ha.
- From a strictly social perspective, the question is whether this issue will have an impact on local character, to the extent that it will have a detrimental social impact – regarding community composition, character and the community’s sense of place.
- From a broad social perspective, the proposed subdivision is generally consistent with the character of the locality – in that it is a residential subdivision in an area long designated for residential subdivision.
- Also, the full range of community attitudes to the development density (current and future) are not known, and cannot be accurately ascertained from 221 submissions.
- The proposed subdivision may offer access to the market to families and single person households (predominant household types in Corowa) who may face affordability constraints to buying larger sizes lots, and who may benefit from smaller allotments being available within the local market.
- Affordability and diversity in the housing market – which this development may bring – is a driver of growth, and therefore has the potential to bring a range of benefits to the Corowa community, in terms of the investment and stimulation that population growth brings, and given the negative social and economic impacts of the current trajectory of population decline.

#### Recommended responses: mitigation and benefits optimisation measures

- Optimising the benefits of the subdivision – which, with its smaller lot sizes, offers a relatively affordable entry point to the housing market than surrounding subdivisions – will involve encouraging community members to consider its potential benefits with a view to the goals for the Shire as a progressive and welcoming place, as set out in Federation Council Community Strategic Plan.
- High quality design of the built form and landscape elements will integrate the development with its surrounds, and make a positive contribution to the character of the locality. Good design and landscaping can help to ensure that the density of the development does not have a detrimental impact on local character and the community’s sense of place.

## **Accessibility, including how people access and use infrastructure, services, and facilities, whether provided by a public, private, or not-for-profit organisation**

### Social impacts

- The accessibility of the site to a wider range of social infrastructure and services to meet community needs has been established in Council's identification of this site as suited to residential subdivision. This includes open space and recreation infrastructure to service the future population of the subject site.
- While a comprehensive local social infrastructure needs assessment for Corowa and the broader Federation Shire is outside the scope of this assessment, the review undertaken to inform this assessment indicates a wide range of social infrastructure and services available in Corowa town centre. This is likely to meet current and forecast community needs, in the context of local forecast population decline (even accounting for a proposed 306-dwelling development of the subject site, which theoretically equates to 184 more persons residing on the site than envisaged through the subdivision plan set out in Council's DCP 2013).
- A current restricted availability of local medical services has been raised in community submissions. This is a matter for immediate consideration for Council and the Local Health District and associated service providers, with a view to resolving this issue for current and future communities. It is hoped this may be resolved by the time any development occurs on the subject land.
- Given forecast population decline in Corowa, this service provision issue appears to be an immediate, rather than a medium-term concern, with regard to development timeframes for the subject site.
- With regard to civil infrastructure availability to service the development – an issue raised in submissions – this is typically funded through development contributions. In this context, it is noted that a higher lot yield provides better use of infrastructure and overall reduction in development costs per lot. It has the potential to therefore contribute to delivery of a more sustainable, cost effective product, that is relatively more affordable housing.
- Ongoing maintenance costs for Council and the community, per lot, is also less in higher density developments as the same asset infrastructure costs (roads, drainage, footpaths etc) are spread over a higher population base.

### Recommended responses: mitigation and benefits optimisation measures

- Social infrastructure and services planning by Council will help to inform future provision to meet community needs, and to leverage development contributions to expand infrastructure and services (both social and civil) if required.
- It is recommended that engagement with Council assists in prioritising investment in social infrastructure and services, appropriate to the forecast future population of the subject site and in the context of broader forecast population decline in the locality.

## **Culture, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including shared beliefs, customs, practices, obligations, values and stories, and connections to Country, land, waterways, places, and buildings**

### Social impacts

- Post European settlement, the site and locality comprised grazing land; the southern development parcel is occupied by a dwelling and other buildings associated with the site's former use.
- Local community members would likely share connections to the site and broader locality's stories and values, as a formal pastoral area. The immediate locality of the site has been in transition to a residential area for some years, and established within the Corowa DCP 2013. As such, community connections to the place and its stories and values are and currently have been in transition for some time.
- The development of the subject site represents a continuation of this transition of former grazing land to residential development, in proximity to the town, representing the changing nature of Corowa's society and economy.
- Aboriginal people's connections to the site and surrounding country have not been raised in submissions, nor are they explicitly articulated in Federation Shire's Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028. There are an estimated 95 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Corowa, at the time of the 2016 Census.

- While Aboriginal people's cultural connections to the place are not well documented in local strategies and plans, it is important to recognise these would stretch back for the 60,000+ years of Aboriginal settlement, pre-European settlement of the area.
- The loss of trees on the site is likely to be an issue for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members, as has been raised by the latter in submissions on the development.
- An Aboriginal Due Diligence Assessment has been undertaken of the site (June 2021), by NGH Consulting and Ownes + Murray Land Survey. This assessment has included a search of the AHIMS database over an area centred on the Proposal Area. It found 76 Aboriginal sites recorded within the search area – including evidence of earth mounds and hearths, and no declared Aboriginal Places [of significance]. None of the previously recorded AHIMS sites are within or adjacent to the Proposal Area. This assessment concludes that “as no Aboriginal objects or areas of archaeological potential were identified within the Proposal Area it is concluded that the proposed subdivision on Redlands Road and Cemetery Road, Corowa, as assessed in this report, would not require any further Aboriginal heritage investigation and works can proceed with caution.”

#### Recommended responses: mitigation and benefits optimisation measures

- Ascertaining, documenting, and sharing both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural connections to country in the locality could be further explored by Council through the next iteration of the Community Strategic Plan, to the benefit of this and other sites. Consideration of the stories and values of all community members to Corowa and the broader Federation can be a useful tool to inform the nature of future development of the site, including design and landscape elements. This exploration would go beyond artefacts, to connections to country and living cultures.
- It is recommended that community values and connections to country be further explored and harnessed to inform the future development of the site, including, for example, landscape elements and the design of open spaces, and consideration of retention of existing native trees or the planting of replacement native trees.
- The community values and connections to country set out in the Federation Shire Community Strategic Plan can provide useful guidance to future development, which specifically celebrates the area's character and associated social and cultural histories. Dual naming with Aboriginal place names is a strategy increasingly being employed across NSW to recognise Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal histories and cultures, for example.
- It is noted that density in and of itself does not preclude a development from being sensitive to its surrounds.

### **Health and wellbeing, including 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**

#### Social impacts

- Health and wellbeing impacts are achieved through development through measures such as site greening/ landscaping, good design, access to open space along with a range of other social infrastructure and services, and features that promote healthy active lifestyles.
- In the case of residential developments in release areas such as the subject locality, this may be achieved through promoting connectivity with nearby infrastructure and services by pedestrian and cycling routes, provision of open space and landscaped elements, access to nearby employment and recreation opportunities, along with range of social infrastructure and services.

In assessing the proposed development based on these parameters, the following issues are identified:

- The site is surrounded by a mix of residential and rural development. It is located within an area that is broadly rural in nature. As such, the development of the site (to realise its strategic potential, as per its designation by Council for residential growth) brings the opportunity to provide future residents with the benefits of that green environment and natural scenic qualities – benefiting their health and wellbeing.
- The development proposes two parcels of open space on each of the northern and southern development areas. Open space constitutes approx. 5% of the total site area. This provision has been identified through some community submissions as inadequate.
- The site is readily accessible to a range of open space – including passive and active recreation opportunities – in the nearby Corowa town centre and surrounds. It is noted that Council's identification of the site as suitable for residential subdivision was based on this locality's ready proximity to the town centre (within 1.5km), including its range of social infrastructure (including open space). As such, the provision within the site needs to be considered within the context of the broader provision of open space within the broader area.
- The site's accessibility to nearby open space and recreation facilities in and around the Corowa town centre is a key consideration for the development of the subject site.

- The combined availability of open space in the broader locality of the site, coupled with the scenic natural qualities of the locality, suggest that the level of provision of open space on the subject site specifically does not represent a significant detrimental social impact in relation to local community health and wellbeing.
- Community submissions have raised the issue of lack of pedestrian and cycling routes through the site, including to the nearby Corowa High School, as a detrimental social impact of the current proposal. This is an issue that may impact health and wellbeing if it constrains potential for healthy active living for current and future residents of the site and surrounds.

Recommended responses: mitigation and benefits optimisation measures

- Consideration of the provision of design features and facilities to promote healthy active living for future residents warrant consideration through future development phases.
- The provision of high-quality open space will be key to optimising the potential of the proposed open space to be provided on the northern and southern development areas. this includes high quality landscaping and specification of native species, with respect to the surrounding landscape.
- The development has the potential to be delivered in a way that maximises the potential of the site's location in a scenic natural landscape.

**Surroundings, including 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**

Social impacts

- The impacts of the proposed development on the ecosystem, through measures such as erosion control, pollution control etc, are key matters for consideration through the construction process. Ecological impacts on local flora and fauna have been assessed separately, as is appropriate.
- It is noted that community members have raised concerns about the development's impact on the Sloane Frog species.
- The impact of the development on surroundings – from a social perspective – primarily relates to its responsiveness and sensitivity to the surrounding environment, including the natural and built environment, and its impact on these surroundings as may impact local communities (current and future).
- Several community submissions on the proposed development have raised its impact on local surroundings as a potential negative social impact, on the basis of the subdivision pattern being different from existing local subdivisions.
- The subdivision plan is denser than surrounding subdivisions – as is discussed above. Density does not preclude the development from ultimately being well designed and respectful of surroundings, including through the quality of materials and landscaping elements, and the way the construction works are undertaken.
- As per the above points, the quality of the development that is ultimately built will have the most significant impact on surroundings, regarding the ecosystem, local ecology etc. This includes the quality of landscaping and other material elements, and the process of construction.

Recommended responses: mitigation and benefits optimisation measures

- Appropriate assessment and consideration of ecological impacts of the development is a critical matter, addressed separately.
- Managing the construction impacts of development on the local environment and communities will be essential, and is expected to be addressed through a construction environmental management plan (CEMP).
- The quality of design and delivery of the development – including the quality of future built form and natural landscape elements – will ultimately determine the development's impact on the surrounding natural and built environment, and its aesthetic value and amenity.
- These matters should be prioritised through these future stages of development planning, given the scenic natural qualities of the surroundings and the high value places on these qualities by local communities, as evidenced through community submissions and in vision, values and priorities set out in Federation Council's Community Strategic Plan.

## **Livelihoods, including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business**

### Social impacts

- The development will provide for more housing to be delivered in the locality, accessible to the Corowa town centre, with its associated employment opportunities.
- The delivery of a residential subdivision in this location therefore brings opportunities for the economic as well as social growth and development of Corowa.
- Given forecast population decline in the suburb between 2021 and 2036 (-660 residents), investing in development that will support economic growth and offer the opportunity to help reverse population decline is a significant social benefit of the development.
- This is aligned with the key policy driver for the future social and economic development of the area articulated in Federation Council's Community Strategic Plan: "Supporting population growth and progressive and prosperous communities that capitalise on the area's social, economic, and environmental assets."
- The density of the subdivision proposed, which is higher than that of surrounding residential subdivisions, brings the potential for new housing at a relatively more affordable price point. This may attract young couple and family households – a key population cohort in Corowa – in turn sustaining social and economic growth, since these households typically include one or two residents in the full or part time workforce. This is an important community cohort to foster, given the high proportion of retirees in the town.
- Submissions from community members have raised concerns about the availability of local jobs to support population growth. Population growth can in fact help deliver new jobs, and catalyse the establishment of new businesses, which in turn can further drive social and economic growth and support local livelihoods.
- Restricting new development is more likely to negatively impact local livelihoods, than allowing it, particularly in the context of forecast population decline.

### Recommended responses: mitigation and benefits optimisation measures

- It is recommended that the potential of a higher density subdivision to support population growth be considered, in the context of the relatively more affordable price point it offers for home ownership, which may appeal to working couple and family households who will look to establish their lives and livelihoods locally.
- Optimising the benefits of the development with regard to local livelihoods in the suburb of Corowa and the Shire of Federation more broadly may require further consideration, to enable Council and community to be comfortable that these broader benefits outweigh community concerns about the proposed subdivision pattern and perceived impacts of higher densities on local character.
- A focus on high quality design of the built form and natural elements of the development may help mitigate these character-related concerns, and realise the potential of the site from a social and economic (livelihoods) perspective.

## **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**

### Social impacts

- The subject development application has been through a public exhibition process, with 121 submissions received.
- These submissions have raised a range of issues, relevant social issues of which have been considered through this report.
- Federation Council's determination of the planning application has also considered the issues raised through this public consultation process.
- This report delivers an assessment of social impacts and recommendations to address these, with a view to providing balanced consideration of community's concerns and their expression of these concerns through the decision-making process.

### Recommended responses: mitigation and benefits optimisation measures

- Social issues raised the community submissions on the development application have been considered throughout this report, and recommendations have been made with a view to mitigating identified negative social impacts and optimising community benefits.
- These issues will be considered through further decision making on the proposed development.



## 6.0 Concluding comments

The following key findings and recommendations have been developed through an assessment of a range of evidence and community perspectives on the proposed development, through the lens of the social factors set out in the NSW DPIE Social Impact Assessment Guideline 2021, which has been applied as a best practice approach.

The proposed subdivision is on a site that has been designated for residential subdivision and development through the Corowa DCP 2013. This area is considered as appropriate for residential development, due to its suitability across a range of factors, including its accessibility to the town centre, with its range of retail, employment opportunities, social infrastructure, and services.

The primary social impacts of a residential subdivision typically relate to population growth, and the impacts of population growth on local amenity, and community needs for social infrastructure and services.

The subject DA proposes a subdivision of 306 lots, on a site that has been designed by Council for residential subdivision for 226 lots through the Corowa DCP 2013. The proposed subdivision represents a higher density therefore, with 80 additional lots to that envisaged through the DCP, equivalent to approx. 184 additional residents (based of 2.3 persons per household average for detached dwellings in the locality).

This additional population must be considered within the broader social context of the forecast declining population of Corowa between 2021 and 2036 (-660 residents, from current population). Even accounting for the additional population associated with the denser subdivision of the site, population decline – rather than growth – is forecast for the locality over the medium term.

This indicates that current pressures on social infrastructure and services will ease, while acknowledging there is currently, anecdotally, a services crunch, with a six to eight week wait time for local medical appointments is an issue raised in community submissions on the proposal that warrants further investigation by Council with the Local Health District. Overall, the proposed development is unlikely to result in needs for increased community infrastructure and services over the estimated 10 to 15-year development timeframe, given broader population decline.

Regarding civil infrastructure (an issue also raised in community submissions), infrastructure contributions associated with the proposed development can be utilised by Council to contribute to expanding infrastructure and services to meet increased demand as required – again, in the context of forecast population decline over the next 10-15 years.

In terms of accessibility to open space and other social infrastructure, the site has long been designated by Council for residential development due to its optimum location in proximity to Corowa town centre, where a range of employment, recreation facilities, open space and other infrastructure is located. In this context, the proposed subdivision will realise the site's development potential, thereby marking a positive contribution to the social and economic sustainability of the locality and helping to arrest population decline.

A key issue raised through community submissions – the density of development and the subdivision pattern regarding surrounding local character – may be considered within this broader social context, noting that matters such as subdivision design and layout are urban design and planning matters considered under separate cover.

The density of the proposed subdivision (11dw/ Ha) does not in and of itself mean the development will have a negative impact on local character and community. From a social perspective, smaller allotment sizes bring the potential to provide a more affordable entry point into the local market than current residential subdivisions offer. Increased housing affordability can bring positive social impacts in relation to population growth, diversity, and equity – important aspirations for regional areas, and key values set out in the Federation Community Strategic Plan.

The proposed development's potential to deliver relative housing affordability than surrounding subdivisions – aligned with smaller lot sizes – may therefore help to arrest local population decline. This is a significant social

benefit of the proposal; it has the potential to support future local social and economic sustainability and resilience, to which population decline – particularly of working-age adults – is detrimental.

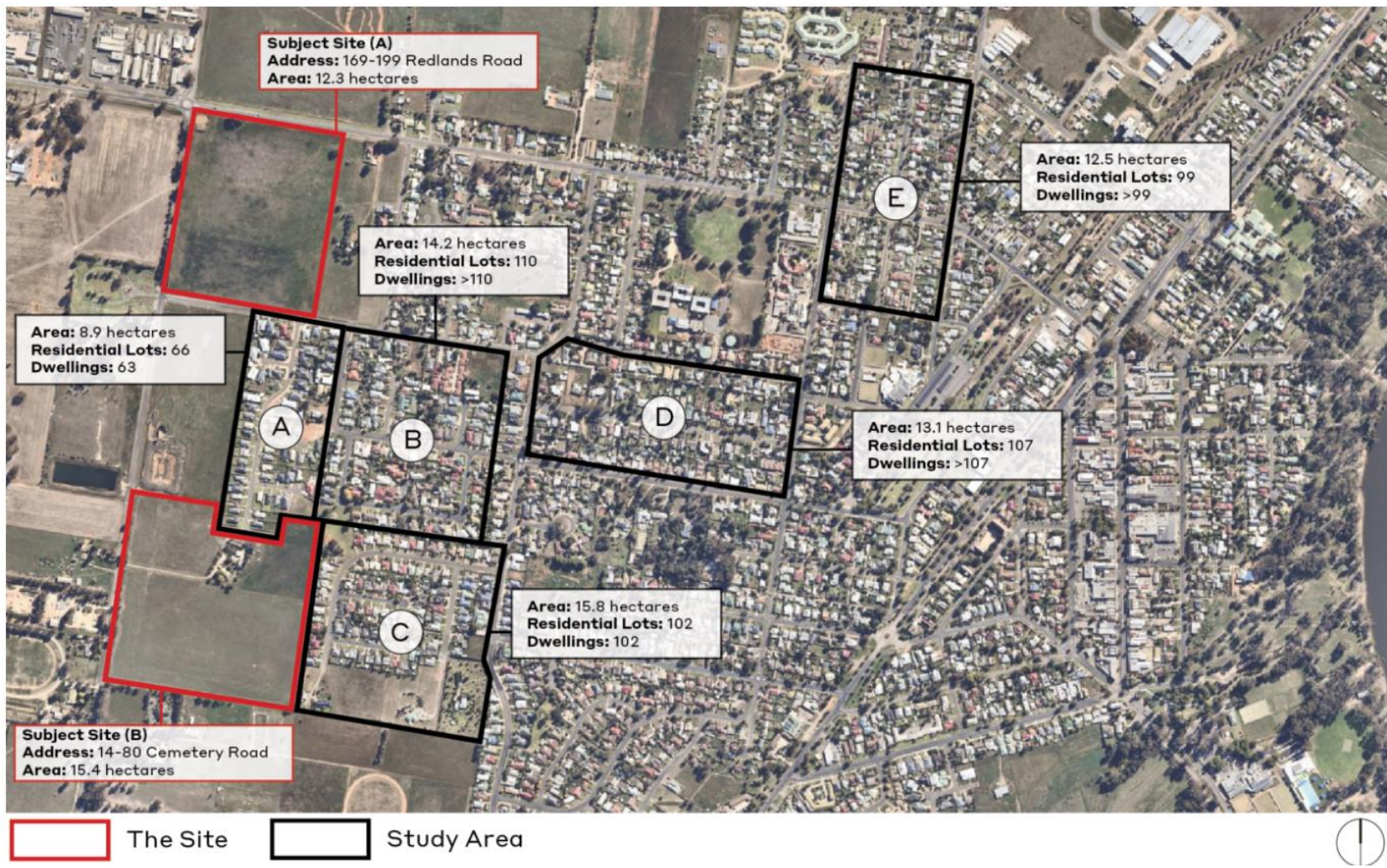
This is particularly in relation to the key household types in the locality – couple families with and without children and single person households – for whom housing affordability is typically a key consideration.

In summary, from a social impact perspective, the proposed development represents an appropriate development type (residential) in an area that has been designated by Council for residential development on account of its accessibility to local employment opportunities, and range of social infrastructure, facilities, and services in the Corowa town centre.

The development of the site has potential to help arrest local population decline and provide relatively affordable housing options for families and older single person households in the locality.

With further consideration at the appropriate stage of development for high quality design, materials and landscape elements that connect with the surrounding scenic locality and reflect local cultural values and connection to country, along with measures to enhance the amenity of the site from an active living (pedestrian and cycling) perspective, the proposed development has the potential to make a positive contribution to the future growth and sustainable development of Corowa and the social and economic resilience of its community.

Appendix A. Dwelling lot yield analysis of nearby sites



**Figure 3** Lot yield and density comparison of local subdivisions  
Source: Ethos Urban/ Google Maps