

Summary Social Impact Management Report 2024-25

Flinders Shire



Acknowledgement of Country



Powerlink acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands and waters of Queensland and in particular the lands on which we operate. We pay our respect to their Ancestors, Elders and knowledge holders and recognise their deep history and ongoing connection to Country.

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1. About this document

1.1 Purpose

This Summary Social Impact Management Report (SIMR) provides a high-level overview of Powerlink's delivery of social impact management measures for the CopperString project in Flinders Shire over the 12-month period to June 2025, following the commencement of construction of the Hughenden Workforce Accommodation Facility (WAF) in July 2024.

The report has been prepared to meet the Coordinator-General's conditions of approval for CopperString, as reflected in the *Change Report – No.1 Hughenden workers accommodation camp* released in May 2024. These conditions require annual SIMRs for each affected local government area from the start of construction. This Summary SIMR is a self-assessment on the implementation and effectiveness of commitments outlined in the approved Flinders Shire Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP), delivered by Powerlink and the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture.

This report complements more detailed internal reporting previously provided to the Coordinator-General and reflects Powerlink's commitment to transparency, regional accountability, and continuous improvement in managing social impacts.

Powerlink's commitment to communities

Powerlink is committed to building respectful, enduring relationships with the communities in which we operate. Our approach to social performance is guided by our corporate values, the Energy Charter, and our Reconciliation Action Plan.

We recognise that our infrastructure projects bring both opportunities and challenges, and we take seriously our responsibility to deliver outcomes that support community wellbeing, economic participation, and cultural heritage.

The CopperString project reflects these commitments through proactive engagement, investment in local capability, and partnerships with Traditional Owners. While this Summary SIMR fulfils a regulatory requirement, it also demonstrates our broader commitment to transparency, responsiveness, and shared value.

1.2 Related publications

This Summary SIMR should be read in conjunction with the following publicly available documents, which provide critical detail and context. This report limits duplication of their content.

Table 1: Related publications.

Publication	Date	Linkage to Summary SIMR	
Social Impact Assessment (SIA)	Nov-20	Prepared in accordance with Coordinator-General guidelines, the SIA establishes a social baseline, identifies potential social impacts and benefits of the project, and proposes mitigation measures.	
Coordinator-General's Evaluation Report	Sep-22	Confirms social impacts and sets out conditions for SIMP and SIMR development.	
Coordinator-General's Change Report – Hughenden WAF	May-24	Updates social conditions and confirms SIMP requirements for Flinders Shire.	
Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (CSEP)	Sep-24 (update)	Strategy that sets the benchmark for project-wide communication and engagement, including processes to record and report on feedback.	
Flinders Shire CSEP Implementation Plan	Jun-24	Localised engagement plan tailored to Flinders Shire stakeholders. An addendum to the project-wide CSEP.	
Social Impact Management Plan – Flinders Shire	Jun-24	Approved SIMP sets out the management measures, monitoring indicators, and desired outcomes that form the framework for this Summary SIMR.	

1.3 Structure

The following table outlines the structure of this document, providing a brief description of the purpose and focus of each section aligned with the Coordinator-General's conditions of approval.

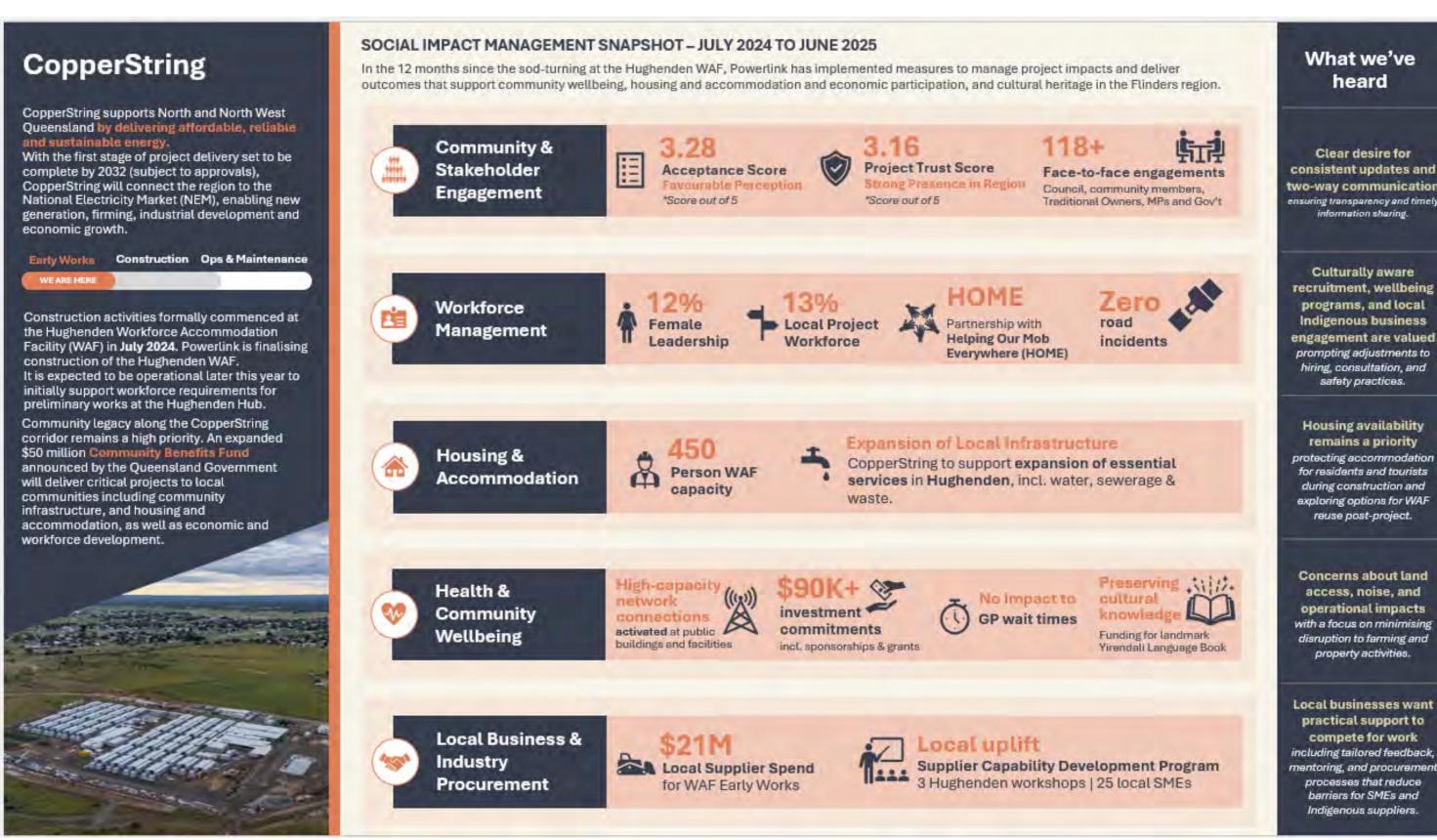
Table 2: SIMR structure

Section	Purpose
Snapshot	1-page 'Snapshot' providing a high-level overview of the project status and key social impact management activities, outcomes, and metrics for the reporting period.
Project update	Summarises construction progress and strategic and contextual changes.
Consultation and complaints	Reports on engagement activities and feedback received through formal consultation and complaints mechanisms, including how complaints were addressed.
Impact management	Summarises actions taken to manage each key social impact, with reference to the objectives and performance indicators set out in the SIMP.
Monitoring cumulative impacts	A description of management actions to address cumulative impacts across Local Government Areas (LGAs).
Legacy benefits	Status updates on agreed or proposed legacy initiatives, including partnerships with councils and community stakeholders, and outlines next steps.

Overall effectiveness and outlook

Reflects on the overall effectiveness of activities for the period and upcoming events.

2. Snapshot



Clear desire for consistent updates and two-way communication ensuring transparency and timely information sharing.

Culturally aware recruitment, wellbeing programs, and local Indigenous business engagement are valued prompting adjustments to hiring, consultation, and safety practices.

Housing availability remains a priority

protecting accommodation for residents and tourists during construction and exploring options for WAF reuse post-project.

Concerns about land access, noise, and operational impacts with a focus on minimising disruption to farming and property activities.

practical support to compete for work including tailored feedback, mentoring, and procurement processes that reduce barriers for SMEs and Indigenous suppliers.

3. Project update

3.1 Scope re-cap

CopperString supports North and North West Queensland by delivering affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. It will connect the region to the National Electricity Market (NEM), enabling new generation, firming, industrial development and economic growth.

The project will be delivered in two sections:

The Eastern Link initially involves building just under 350 kilometres (km) of 330 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Reid River near Townsville to Hughenden. This section of the project also includes the identification and construction of substation sites and workforce accommodation facilities (WAFs) near the project alignment.

For the Western Link, a \$200 million North West Energy Fund will be used to support local renewable energy generation, battery and microgrids to ensure regional energy reliability improves for communities including Richmond, Julia Creek, Cloncurry and Mount Isa. The fund will be used to partner with the private sector to invest in flexible firming solutions to reduce reliance on gas for baseload electricity consumption, while options to deliver the Western Link are developed.

The CopperString corridor intersects seven LGAs and includes the townships of Townsville, Charters Towers, Pentland, Hughenden, Richmond, Julia Creek, Cloncurry and Mount Isa.

3.2 Construction and delivery progress

Construction activities for the CopperString project formally commenced in July 2024, marked by a sod-turning event at the Hughenden WAF. This milestone triggered the start of the SIMR reporting period for Flinders Shire.

In the 12 months since construction commencement, the project has remained in the early works phase, with major construction contracts yet to be awarded. Delivery has focused on site mobilisation, infrastructure preparation, and stakeholder coordination. The UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture led early works delivery, supported by Powerlink's internal teams and local suppliers.

Table 3: Project snapshot – July 2024 to June 2025

Project element	Summary
Construction start	Early works began in June 2024 with site preparation for the Hughenden WAF, triggering the SIMR reporting period.
Delivery partners	UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture engaged for early works, including WAF construction and site mobilisation.
Key activities for the period	Construction of the Hughenden WAF; Purchase of Flinders Substation site; Commonwealth endorsement of pre-construction 'conditions compliance' documentation; Cultural heritage surveys progressed; New corridor planning undertaken for Eastern Link; Documentation lodged for related Commonwealth environmental and State land use planning approvals; 80% design reached for Flinders Substation.
Current phase	The project remains in the early works phase. Major construction contracts have not yet been awarded.

3.3 Contextual changes and strategic shifts

Since the preparation and approval of the Flinders Shire SIMP, several external factors and strategic developments have influenced the delivery environment for the project. While some occurred during the SIMR reporting period, others have emerged subsequently and are now known to be relevant to future planning and engagement. The following table summarises key developments that have shaped or are expected to shape project delivery, stakeholder expectations, and Powerlink's ongoing commitments.

Table 4: Key developments impacting project delivery

Change	Description	
Government and policy changes	The October 2024 State election and subsequent government changes impacted the planned investment decision and delivery strategy. In April 2025, the Government instigated a Queensland Investment Corporation (QIC) led strategic review. The outcomes of this review and new project priorities were flagged in the Queensland Energy Roadmap, which was released in October 2025.	
Scope and sequencing adjustments	 The Queensland Government has confirmed the following revised project parameters: Prioritise the Eastern Link based on a 330kV design, with major construction to commence in 2028 and be completed by 2032. Commence on-the-ground works at the Hughenden Hub in 2025-26 (subject to approvals) i.e. enabling site infrastructure and bulk earthworks for the Flinders Substation. Work on Western Link to begin with a \$200 million North West Energy Fund to support bespoke solution exploration at Mount Isa, Cloncurry, Julia Creek and Richmond. An expanded \$50 million Community Benefits Fund. 	
Corridor realignment	Major alignment changes were required along the Eastern Link (the 'Reid River Study Area') to address constructability, access, and operational challenges inherent in the previous corridor. This has necessitated new Commonwealth environmental approvals.	
Delivery responsibility	A new entity will be established by QIC to progress the development and delivery of the CopperString project. Under this approach, the QIC-managed entity will develop, deliver, own, operate and maintain the assets.	

4. Consultation and complaints

4.1 Consultation activities

Between July 2024 and June 2025, Powerlink and the UGL CPB Contractors JV delivered a targeted and sustained engagement program across Flinders Shire, consistent with the CSEP. The program aimed to ensure transparent communication about early works and transmission infrastructure, including approvals and timelines.

Table 5: Consultation activities

Activity Type	Description and Frequency
Community information sessions	3 public engagement opportunities in Hughenden to provide updates and receive feedback
Industry engagement	3 briefing sessions + 6 Supplier Capability Development Program workshops
Printed and digital outreach	Factsheets, project updates, posters, flyers, maps, visualisations, webpage, social media, email distribution, feedback form
Stakeholder meetings and participation in local events	More than 118 face-to-face engagements with Council, community members, MPs, Traditional Owners, and government agencies
Landholder engagement	17 landholders covering 26 parcels of land were engaged through the Landholder Relations team
Advisory groups	The CopperString Indigenous Participation Plan Working Group and participation in the Flinders Community Advisory Committee, CopperString Regional Reference Group and Northern Project Coordination Group
Council engagement	23 fortnightly operational meetings with Flinders Shire Council CEO and leadership
Community grants, investments and sponsorships	\$25,000 in grants, >\$68,000 in local initiatives and \$10,000 in event sponsorship

Engagement included regular meetings with key stakeholders – such as Yirendali Nation, local government, the Hughenden Chamber of Commerce, community groups, and businesses – alongside community information sessions, on-Country meetings, community service network meetings, supplier workshops, and sponsored events. Landholders and community members were consulted directly through face-to-face engagement and operational updates.

The CopperString Regional Reference Group supported collaboration with government and regional stakeholders, while industry engagement focused on building local and Indigenous business capability through briefings and workshops.

Industry engagement also formed a core part of the approach, with briefing sessions held for Hughenden Chamber of Commerce and business networks, and the Supplier Capability Development Program delivered along the CopperString corridor, including workshops in Hughenden, to support and build capacity among local and Indigenous businesses.

4.2 Complaints

Feedback and complaints were managed in accordance with the project's complaints process and captured via Powerlink's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platforms (Microsoft Dynamics 365 and PQ Connect) and the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture's CRM platform (Consultation Manager). Formal complaints that were received were managed in accordance with the relevant complaints processes.

4.3 Summary observations

Monitoring outcomes indicate high stakeholder awareness, growing satisfaction with engagement efforts, and evidence of strong relationships across local government, Indigenous stakeholders, and the broader Flinders Shire community.

4.3.1 Community engagement

- Strong interest in employment, training, business opportunities and social investment (including Powerlink's Community Grants Program)
- · Concerns about access, noise, and potential impacts on land and operations
- Desire for consistent updates and two-way communication.

4.3.2 Indigenous stakeholder engagement

- Cultural heritage, biodiversity, accommodation and artefact storage is central to discussions with the Yirendali Nation.
- Engagement through the Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP), frequent meetings, and the Indigenous Participation Plan Working Group.
- Requests for clarity on agreements and long-term collaboration.

4.3.3 State Government engagement

- Regular coordination with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, Office of the Coordinator-General, and other departments
- Alignment with regional planning and employment frameworks noted.

4.3.4 Local Government engagement

- Constructive, frequent engagement with Flinders Shire Council
- Regular operational meetings held fortnightly with Council
- Joint initiatives (e.g. community Christmas tree, community investment and event support) was positively received
- Mayor has publicly acknowledged Powerlink's respectful and transparent conduct.

4.3.5 Business and industry

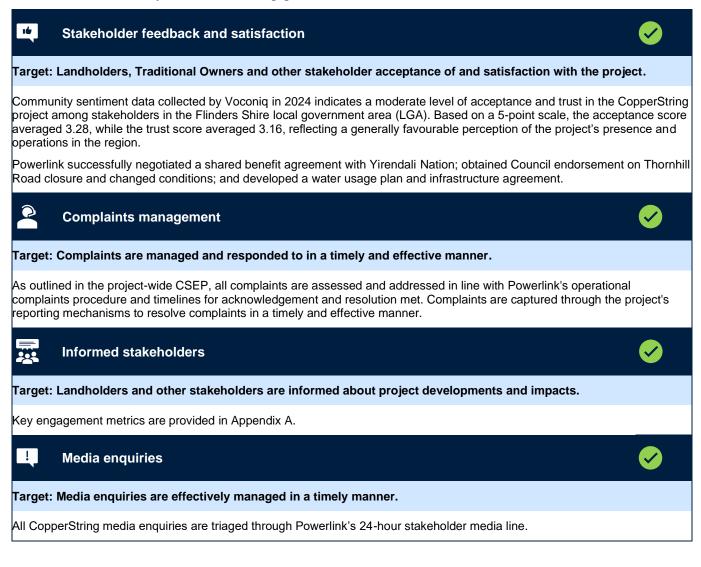
- High engagement from local businesses regarding procurement and subcontracting
- Industry events provided visibility and networking opportunities
- Feedback led to extended notification times and increased transparency in procurement processes.

5. Impact management

5.1 Community and stakeholder engagement

5.1.1 Implementation activities and achievements

Table 6: Community and stakeholder engagement measures¹



Target: Neutral/positive traditional and social media coverage.

Media monitoring

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¹ Relates to Table 9 of <u>CopperString Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) – Flinders Shire</u>

CopperString achieved a combined potential audience reach of over 107 million, reflecting the total number of potential exposures across print, online, and social media channels – an aggregated measure of impressions and interactions. CopperString had 1,366 media mentions, 70% of CopperString coverage analysed during the reporting period was balanced or trending positive.

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Proactive stakeholder feedback management



Target: Management of non-media issues.

CopperString's engagement team records all stakeholder interactions in CRM systems (Microsoft Dynamics 365 and PQ Connect) using visit notes, trip reports, and engagement entries. Issues or actions raised are resolved with relevant project team members in line with communication timeframes, then reviewed in weekly Work In Progress meetings to ensure consistency and awareness.



Engagement effectiveness and efficiency



Target: Effective engagement with landholders and other stakeholders does not result in significant delays to project delivery.

While the project experienced significant program and schedule changes throughout the reporting period, these delays were not as a result of the project engagement aspects of CopperString.

5.1.2 Effectiveness of mitigation efforts

Engagement measures have been highly effective in building trust and maintaining transparency throughout the reporting period. Initiatives such as expanded land access timeframes, tailored engagement formats, and increased regional presence have strengthened relationships with landholders and the broader community.

Digital engagement has also been strong, with the project webpage recording 2,354 sessions from 1,837 active users, and media coverage remaining balanced or positive in 70% of 1,366 mentions.

General community enquiries and complaints were managed promptly and transparently according to the project's relevant complaints and enquiries processes.

Landholder engagement practices have been streamlined by CopperString to minimise disturbance to landholders - 82 Land Access Requests were approved and successfully activated.

Emergency Response stakeholders held monthly meetings with Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Fire Department, Medical Rescue, Queensland Police Service, Hughenden Health Hub, Flinders Shire Council.

Stakeholder sentiment and direct feedback indicate growing support and understanding of the project, alongside a clear desire for continued collaboration and economic inclusion, which will remain a priority as the project progresses.

5.1.3 Emerging concerns

- Employment and economic opportunities there is strong community and business interest in jobs, training, procurement and social investment.
- Communication and engagement a broad desire for consistent updates, two-way communication and transparency exists across all stakeholder groups.
- Partnerships and collaboration communication and engagement efforts have been well received and require an emphasis on ongoing collaboration.

5.2 Workforce management

5.2.1 Implementation activities and achievements

Table 7: Workforce management measures²

Increased workforce diversity



Target: >15% of leadership positions across the project are filled by women; 5% of the construction workforce across the project is Indigenous.

12% was achieved for women in leadership positions. Monthly reporting is undertaken to ensure a focus on fostering and promoting women in leadership positions.

This report covers the project's early works phase. Construction workforce data will be included in future reports once major works commence. In the interim, Powerlink commenced working with Traditional Owners and local Indigenous employment groups during 2024 and continues to work with them to promote equal opportunity programs.



Prioritisation of providing jobs to local residents



Target: 12.5% of project workforce FTE across the project is from the local area.

13% achieved. All roles advertised for CopperString appear on the Jobs North Queensland Employment Portal. Powerlink participate in local careers expos and industry job fairs. Key workforce demographics are provided at Appendix B.



Increased employment for all under-represented groups



Target: 100% of job ads with appropriate inclusive statements included.

All Powerlink recruitment advertisements have clear statements of commitment to diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce. We provide invitation for applicants to discuss adjustment requirements directly with the hiring manager and note ourselves as Veteran Employment Supporters. Similarly, the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture promotes itself as a diversified services organisation that appreciates the diversity and richness of its people and seeks to create inclusive environments that promote talent and skills.



No anti-social behaviour from workforce



Target: 100% of Code of Conduct complaints resolved to complainant satisfaction.

The Powerlink Code of Conduct is addressed as part of the CopperString project site induction for all workers. 100% of personnel attending site have completed the site induction. 100% of complaints received were addressed in line with the Powerlink Code of Conduct.



Sufficient availability of emergency services to support Flinders Shire



Target: Quarterly meetings held with Police, Fire and Ambulance services and no issues identified.

² Relates to Table 15 of <u>CopperString Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) – Flinders Shire</u>

Emergency Response stakeholders held monthly meetings with Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Fire Department, Medical Rescue, Queensland Police Service, Hughenden Health Hub, Flinders Shire Council.



Mitigation of harmful effects of fatigue



Target: Zero road related incidents.

There were no road-related incidents in the reporting period.

A Journey Management Guideline was developed for the CopperString project for all workers to adhere to when travelling on the Flinders Highway, the guideline addresses driver fatigue, driving times and rest breaks.

Journey plans must be completed before any journey exceeding two hours of driving. These plans include taking regular breaks and checking in at least every two hours.



Mental health support for workers



Target: 95% of planned wellbeing initiatives are delivered.

Achieved. Powerlink employs a full-time Health and Wellbeing Support Officer for the CopperString project, who collaborates with Powerlink teams and contractors to coordinate and communicate health, safety and well-being initiatives.

All Powerlink staff are required to undertake Mates in Energy general awareness training as a mandatory onboarding training course and are invited to undergo further training if they are interested.

A number of initiatives have been rolled out within Powerlink and the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture has also completed several health and wellbeing webinars tailored for fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) workers that were delivered on site and through online sessions.



Safe workplace



Target: 100% of field workers with first aid training.

The CopperString Emergency Response Management Plan outlines the legislative obligations for First Aid coverage for the project. As a remote high-risk workplace a ratio of one first aider for every 10 workers is applied on site for the project. Training ratio compliant with remote high-risk workplace ratio requirements.

An onsite medical facility is incorporated into the Hughenden WAF. Paramedics will be engaged to staff the WAF when it is completed and the construction crews commence the next work program.



EAP accessible to all workers



Target: 100% of workers know about Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Powerlink have communicated to all personnel during the project induction that our EAP and support is available through Telus Health. We have implemented our EAP and other wellbeing programs.



Upholding Powerlink's zero tolerance for alcohol and drug intoxication on site



Target: Negative drug and alcohol results.

Powerlink applies the management of alcohol and other drugs through onboarding training, with the application of a procedure, random drug and alcohol testing. All workers with a breath alcohol concentration (BAC) above 0% are restricted from engaging in high-risk work including operating vehicles and mobile plant.

Instances of failed BAC tests and breached Fitness for Work policy were managed in line with the procedure.

5.2.2 Effectiveness of mitigation efforts

Workforce strategies have been effective in promoting cultural awareness, safety, and inclusion. Initiatives such as cultural awareness training, Indigenous business procurement, and tailored health and wellbeing programs have received positive feedback, with no complaints recorded during the reporting period.

The CopperString Indigenous Participation Plan Working Group has provided strategic oversight, while early results show promise in using procurement to drive Indigenous employment outcomes. Safety measures, including Journey Events Safety and Innovation (JESI) journey management tools, have significantly reduced transport-related risks.

Key highlights include the establishment of Indigenous business partnerships; participation in recruitment expos; and zero recorded workforce-related complaints.

Next steps will focus on expanding employment pathways for Traditional Owners, strengthening local Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) engagement, and continuing to promote women in leadership roles.

5.2.3 Emerging concerns

Feedback provided by Traditional Owners has indicated that further engagement with remote Indigenous service providers is necessary to improve culturally diverse employment outcomes.

5.3 Housing and accommodation

5.3.1 Implementation activities and achievements

Table 8: Housing and accommodation measures³



Maintain current levels of available housing for local people



Target: 100% of workers accommodated in the WAF.

Powerlink commenced construction on the Hughenden workforce accommodation site in July 2024. The facility will accommodate between 400 and 450 people once fully operational. The original anticipated capacity of the Hughenden WAF has been revised as a result of ongoing planning, design and workforce projections. Work at the Hughenden WAF is nearing completion with final fit out and commissioning activities progressing well.

The site is due for completion in the second half of 2025. It will support work on nearby Flinders Substation and the first stages of the transmission line, along with other project activities.



Maintain existing levels of short-term accommodation options to support tourists and visitors to the area



Target: 100% of short-term contractors and consultants accommodated in the WAF.

Throughout the reporting period the workforce responsible for building the WAF itself has not been accommodated within the facility. This is a practical and expected outcome, as the facility cannot house workers until it is complete and operational.

The short-term accommodation of these early construction workers has had minimal negative impact on Hughenden's housing and accommodation market, as the workforce numbers are relatively small, the accommodation period is limited in duration, and all workers have been housed in existing short-term accommodation options such as motels, hotels, and caravan parks within Hughenden.

As the WAF nears completion, future project workforce will transition into the facility as planned, ensuring alignment with the SIMP objectives and ongoing protection of housing and short-term accommodation locally.



Project infrastructure built for the WAF can be leveraged for use by Council in future



Target: Legacy project under consideration for water infrastructure.

The CopperString project team continues to work in close partnership with Flinders Shire Council to support the upgrade and expansion of essential water, sewerage, and waste services in Hughenden. This collaboration is advanced via regular coordination meetings with senior Council representatives and is aimed at delivering both immediate project infrastructure and lasting community value. A key outcome of this work is Powerlink's commitment to fund the augmentation of Hughenden's potable water supply as part of the Hughenden WAF, with design choices made to accommodate long-term residential growth.

³ Relates to Table 19 of the <u>CopperString Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) – Flinders Shire</u>

5.3.2 Effectiveness of mitigation efforts

The early deployment of workers to commercial short-stay accommodation prevented strain on residential housing and proactively managed and maintained availability for tourists during key seasonal periods. The construction program for the WAF has ensured there is no abrupt demand spike, and early workforce numbers were deliberately kept low to mitigate local impacts. Council and community stakeholders have acknowledged the effectiveness of this approach.

No formal complaints were received from residents or Council regarding workforce accommodation and utilisation of existing accommodation options during the reporting period. Feedback from local accommodation providers has been generally positive, noting increased occupancy and economic activity without displacing community users.

Next steps will focus on commissioning the WAF, monitoring rental market trends, and formalising discussions with Council on legacy housing opportunities, including potential reuse of WAF infrastructure for key worker accommodation.

5.3.3 Emerging concerns and insights

Stakeholder consultation with Flinders Shire Council and the Flinders Shire Advisory Committee has consistently emphasised the importance of maintaining accommodation availability for residents and tourists during the construction period.

Recent feedback highlights ongoing concern about long-term housing availability should future demand extend beyond the WAF's capacity. Stakeholders have expressed interest in understanding how WAF infrastructure could transition to community benefit post-construction, with particular focus on supporting key workers e.g., health and education professionals.

5.4 Health and community wellbeing

5.4.1 Implementation activities and achievements

Table 9: Health and community wellbeing measures4



Local health care services are sufficient to meet demand



Target: Provide onsite medical facilities within WAF including paramedic vehicle and trained paramedic. First aid trained officers will be on every shift to provide service for minor medical incidents and to act as first responders in emergencies or site accidents.

An onsite medical facility is incorporated into the WAF. Paramedics will be engaged to staff the WAF when it is completed and the construction crews commence the next major work program.

Regular meetings with the Hughenden medical facility have not identified an increase in General Practitioner (GP) wait times due to construction activities being undertaken. Similarly, regular meetings from May 2024 to May 2025 with Emergency Response stakeholders have not identified an increase in GP wait times due to construction activities being undertaken.



Workforce accidents are minimised



Target: 100% of workers have completed safety training.

A Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management Plan has been implemented and clearly outlines the requirement for all hazards, incidents, and near hits to be reported. An incident register is maintained and forms part of regular monthly reporting. An explanation of the plan forms part of the CopperString project HSE induction and includes safety training.

100% of personnel (464 workers) attending site have completed the site induction. Of these, 64 were Powerlink employees; 63 were UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture employees; and 337 were contractors.



Capacity of local infrastructure is sufficient to support local and project needs



Target: Monitored in quarterly meeting with Flinders Shire Council.

The CopperString project team continues to work in close partnership with Flinders Shire Council to support the upgrade and expansion of essential water, sewerage, and waste services in Hughenden. This collaboration is advanced via regular coordination meetings with senior Council representatives and is aimed at delivering both immediate project infrastructure and asting community value. A key outcome of this work is Powerlink's commitment to fund the augmentation of Hughenden's potable water supply as part of the Hughenden WAF, with design choices made to accommodate long-term residential growth.



Improved telecommunication services for Flinders Shire



Target: Raised in annual meetings with Queensland Capability Network (QCN).

High-capacity network connections were activated in Hughenden on 17 January 2025. Community connections completed to date include Flinders Shire Council Depot; Hughenden Hospital; Hughenden State School; Queensland Rail; and Flinders Shire Council Offices. QCN are in regular communication with Flinders Shire Council to update on progress and options.



Local community is not unduly disturbed by worker movements within town



Target: All non-resident workers will be housed in the WAF which will minimise worker movements within town.

⁴ Relates to Table 23 of the <u>CopperString Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) – Flinders Shire</u>

The WAF is still under construction and has not been commissioned or occupied this reporting period. All personnel that have been part of the construction of Hughenden WAF have been housed in short-term accommodation in Hughenden township. There have been no road-related safety incidents reported to date.



Community feels safe using local road network



Target: Zero road-related incidents due to fatigue.

Achieved. Traffic management measures have been implemented for any works being undertaken on local roads. Powerlink has also developed a Journey Management Guideline for all workers to adhere to when travelling on the Flinders Highway, the guideline addresses driver fatigue, driving times and rest breaks.



Ensure that the local community derives benefit from the project



Target: Four initiatives approved annually during construction.

14 community projects in the Flinders Shire received \$73,020 in direct funding during the period, with one project securing an additional \$20,000 commitment through to 2027-28. A summary of allocations is provided at Appendix C.



Positive relations with the local community



Target: 100% of complaints resolved to complainant satisfaction; Works notifications are issued to all impacted landholders in line with Land Access Protocol (LAP).

Zero complaints were received from landholders. During the reporting period, landholder engagement practices were streamlined by CopperString to minimise disturbance to landholders - 82 Land Access Requests were approved and successfully activated. Significant rainfall events earlier in the year led to the cancellation of many requests to comply with wet weather access provisions.



The project has a positive impact on Flinders Shire



Target: Four community events initiatives supported annually during construction.

Powerlink has a dedicated Community Relations Advisor (CRA) for the CopperString project.

A community grant round for the Flinders Shire in late 2024 resulted in \$24,500 of grant funding (up to \$5,000 per recipient) for the following groups: Hughenden Golf Club; Flinders Hack and Pony Club; Prairie Community Horse Club; Western Queensland Wildlife Rehabilitation; and Kooroorinya Ladies Day Incorporated.

Sponsorship included \$10,000 for the Hughenden Festival of Outback Skies and \$6,500 for the Hughenden Country Music Festival, both of which generate significant economic activity for the Shire.



Increased workforce participation from Flinders Shire community



Target: 12.5% of project workforce full-time equivalent (FTE) across the project is from local area.

13% achieved. A CopperString recruitment campaign was developed to target specific local (within 125km of alignment) and regional community employment access opportunities. Powerlink has partnered with Helping Our Mob Everywhere (HOME), an Aboriginal-owned life skills and employment support organisation to facilitate direct employment pathways for the project.



Workforce has a positive impact on Flinders Shire



Target: All complainants are contacted within one business day of the complaint being received to acknowledge the complaint and advise them of an estimated date of resolution and completion; Complaints are managed and responded to in a timely and effective manner (per Powerlink's defined processes).

All complaints were received and managed in accordance with the relevant complaints processes.



Workers behave in an appropriate manner in the local community



Target: 100% of complaints resolved to complainant satisfaction.

The Powerlink Code of Conduct and LAP has been implemented to ensure CopperString workers will collaborate with the community and landholders to seek to reach workable outcomes for all parties while also fostering and maintaining cooperative long-term relationships. All complaints were received and managed in accordance with the relevant complaints processes.



Anti-social behaviour does not occur and does not impact local community



Target: At least four meetings held annually with Queensland Police Service.

The CopperString project team has recently engaged with the Queensland Police Service in Hughenden as part of a regular trip to Flinders Shire. A follow up action was recorded to ensure ongoing communication is maintained. This action was noted for the next reporting period.



Community members feel safe



Target: 100% of complaints addressed to the complainants' satisfaction.

As outlined in the project-wide CSEP, all complaints are assessed and addressed in line with Powerlink's operational complaints procedure and timelines for acknowledgement and resolution met.

5.4.2 Effectiveness of mitigation efforts

Powerlink has embedded a strong culture of safety through the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management Plan and HSE Induction, which emphasise hazard reporting, cultural awareness, and accountability. No increase in demand on Hughenden's medical services has been reported, and no road-related safety incidents have occurred despite ongoing construction activity.

Partnerships with Traditional Owners have strengthened cultural recognition and environmental stewardship, while initiatives such as the Journey Management Guideline address fatigue and travel risks.

Key highlights include zero recorded road safety incidents; regular engagement with emergency services; Containers for Change initiative diverted more than 10,000 containers from landfill, raising \$1,066 for the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).

Next steps will focus on commissioning on-site paramedic services at the Hughenden WAF, maintaining engagement with emergency services, and expanding wellbeing initiatives in response to community and workforce feedback.

5.4.3 Emerging concerns

Regular engagement with Hughenden Multipurpose Health Service, Queensland Ambulance Service, Queensland Police Service and schools has helped identify and monitor emerging concerns. No significant health-related issues have emerged during consultation with the health and emergency services stakeholders this reporting period.

5.5 Local business and industry procurement

5.5.1 Implementation activities and achievements

Table 10: Local business and industry procurement measures⁵



Increased economic activity for local and regional businesses



Target: 10% local manufactured procurement (project wide).

Target: 60% Queensland manufactured procurement (project wide).

As of 30 June 2025, the project has reported \$21 million in spend with local suppliers (businesses located within 125km of the CopperString corridor). This includes \$10.87 million in the Flinders Shire alone, representing 19.84% of addressable spend. While this demonstrates positive early local engagement, formal tracking of Queensland and local manufactured procurement will commence during the major construction phase. Full tracking against this target will commence once major construction commences.



Increased economic activity for Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) across supply chains



Target: 30% supply chain SME procurement (project wide).

Full tracking against the 30% target will commence once major construction commences. In the interim, Powerlink and the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture have taken proactive steps to support SME participation. Over 600 local and regional businesses registered via the Industry Capability Network (ICN) Gateway Expression of Interest (EOI), creating a live supplier register and visibility of capability. In Flinders Shire, the Supplier Capability Development Program (SCDP) was delivered in Hughenden and well received. These businesses will be reinvited to future SCDP sessions aligned to upcoming Eastern Link work packages. These early activities are building SME readiness for future participation.



Increased economic activity for First Nations owned businesses



Target: 3% Indigenous procurement (project wide).

As of 30 June 2025, the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture has reported \$5.04 million in procurement with Indigenous businesses, representing 4.76% of addressable spend. This exceeds the Queensland Indigenous Procurement Policy (QIPP) minimum target of 3%. While full reporting under a major construction contract is not yet in effect, the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture commenced proactive reporting under the Project Delivery Launch Agreement (PDLA). Ongoing engagement and capability-building efforts continue to support Indigenous supplier participation across the corridor.



SMEs are able to derive economic benefit from the project



Target: 100% of suppliers receive feedback from the procurement process.

Target: 100% of suppliers/subcontractors are given information and guidance on how to access future development information and support.

25 Flinders Shire-based SMEs completed SCDP workshops one to three (of five) and were offered individual coaching.

0 complaints; 100% of tenderers to date have received outcome feedback from the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture.

⁵ Relates to Table 28 of the <u>CopperString 2032 Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) – Flinders Shire</u>



The Supplier Capability Development Program (SCDP) to leave a positive legacy



The SCDP was launched in Hughenden in July 2024 and includes five tailored training sessions. As of 30 June 2025, three modules have been delivered, focusing on compliance, tendering, and buyer expectations. A total of 25 Flinders-based businesses participated. These sessions are designed to support capability uplift that may contribute to future participation in project opportunities. Remaining modules are to be scheduled in line with procurement activities. While it is too early to measure changes in market share, these early capability-building activities provide a foundation for increased local and Indigenous participation over time.



Increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation within the workforce



Target: 5% of workforce is made up of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

3% of the early works workforce identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment figures are exclusive of UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture subcontractor data (which made up a proportion of Indigenous employees hired on the job with an Indigenous subcontractor business), as these figures were not available.

Powerlink commenced working with Traditional Owners and local Indigenous employment groups during 2024 and continue to work with them to promote equal opportunity programs.

5.5.2 Effectiveness of mitigation efforts

Powerlink and the UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture have delivered strong early outcomes in local supplier spend and business registration for future goods and services project opportunities. Locally delivered workshops on compliance, tendering, and buyer expectations, resulted in positive feedback with no complaints received.

Adjustments based on stakeholder input, such as aligning training with procurement timelines and providing written feedback to all tenderers, have further strengthened engagement.

5.5.3 Emerging concerns

While current initiatives have been well-received, future consultation could benefit from tailored feedback sessions or small-group mentoring, particularly to address gaps in regional capability or market readiness. These adjustments would enhance the impact of the SCDP and reinforce local supplier confidence in navigating complex procurement requirements. We will continue to actively work with our construction contractors to implement ease of procurement provisions (as noted in our Local Economic Participation Program (LEPP) that make it easier for local small businesses to do business with them. This includes practical strategies that reduce barriers to entry, ensure fairness, and demonstrate proportionality in procurement practices – e.g., request for quote versus request for a full tender submission, shorter payment term considerations etc.

CASE STUDY: Supplier Capability Development Program – Supporting Local Business

Powerlink launched a targeted Supplier Capability Development Program (SCDP) to help local businesses prepare for major project supply chains, including CopperString. The program is informed by detailed market testing and feedback and is designed to increase the visibility, compliance, and readiness of local suppliers along the CopperString corridor.

Launched in July 2024, the SCDP is delivered by capability development specialists and consists of five structured workshops per location, supported by one-on-one coaching for a duration of nine to 10 months. Workshops are available to all businesses along the CopperString corridor, with three sessions delivered in Hughenden as of the end of the Summary SIMR reporting period.

Workshop delivery in Flinders Shire to date:

- Workshop 1 Be Visible and Compliant (23 July and 24 July 2024): Focused on building high-quality capability statements, ICN Gateway profiles, and understanding WHS and compliance requirements.
- Workshop 2 Be Prepared for Tendering (3 September 2024): Covered common tender questions, policy requirements, and how to prepare core business information.
- Workshop 3 Meeting Buyer Requirements (22 October 2024): Addressed Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), modern slavery compliance, and tender costing.

These sessions help local businesses better understand buyer expectations, improve readiness to bid for contracts, and enhance networking and collaboration.

The program has been well-received, with 86% of participants reporting improved skills and knowledge, and 91% expressing willingness to attend future sessions. Participants praised the approachable facilitation, expert input, and practical resources. Feedback was collected via surveys and will guide program refinement.

The Hughenden Chamber of Commerce played a key role in workshop promotion, with most attendees hearing about sessions via email (52%), social media (20%), or word-of-mouth (16%).

This program demonstrates CopperString's commitment to creating meaningful, long-term local economic outcomes through supplier empowerment.





6. Monitoring cumulative impacts

Cumulative impacts are the combined social and economic pressures from multiple projects over time, where overlapping activities such as construction, workforce demand, and service use create amplified effects on housing, labour, community wellbeing, and essential services.

Table 11: Cumulative impact measures



Powerlink actively manages its role in cumulative impacts and benefits in each LGA



Target: Powerlink supports at least one initiative to address cumulative impacts.

Two CopperString Regional Reference Group meetings were held (29 August 2024 and 7 November 2024), focusing on community benefits, engagement, Traditional Owner relationships, employment, Indigenous participation, local procurement, leveraging regional funding, and collaboration with renewable and critical minerals projects.

Hughenden District Community Advisory Network (CAN) meetings addressed impacts on local services, particularly health, and housing for key workers.



Reduce negative cumulative effects on housing and services



Target: No stakeholder-identified material impacts.

Regular meetings with State Government and the Northern Projects Coordination Group (previously the Northern Renewables Coordination Group) including social licence and infrastructure sub-group. Members of Flinders Shire Chamber of Commerce; Mount Isa to Townsville Economic Development Zone (MITEZ) and Townsville Enterprise Limited (TEL).



Local health services remain accessible for community use



Target: No confirmed displacement of community access to services.

CopperString is represented in the Hughenden District Community Advisory Network (CAN) which supports the management and delivery of health services and engages and responds to community health planning and service delivery.



Support regional supply continuity and local employment access



Target: No formal complaints from business stakeholders.

During the reporting period, Powerlink actively contributed to regional labour market coordination efforts through regular engagement with industry proponents, local councils, and training providers. These efforts included quarterly participation in the CopperString Regional Reference Group, where workforce availability, local recruitment challenges, and competition across concurrent projects were discussed.

Labour supply mapping has informed planning for the CopperString workforce, with early identification of potential regional labour shortages and the need for targeted skills development. These insights were used to adjust recruitment timelines and inform the SCDP.

7. Legacy benefits

The Flinders SIMP identifies a range of legacy opportunities designed to manage and mitigate CopperString's impacts while creating lasting benefits for the community and environment.

Developed in collaboration with Flinders Shire Council, these opportunities are being progressed through a variety of mechanisms. The following subsections outline these pathways and provide an update on progress.

7.1 Community Legacy Investment Fund

Community legacy along the CopperString corridor remains a high priority. An expanded \$50 million Community Benefits Fund announced by the Queensland Government will deliver critical projects to local communities including community infrastructure, and housing and accommodation, as well as economic and workforce development.

Funding will be delivered through the Community Legacy Investment Framework (CLIF) to support equitable, transparent and strategic investment in regional communities impacted by the delivery of CopperString. The CLIF aims to deliver benefits generally across four investment categories:

- Legacy infrastructure (e.g. housing, community facilities)
- Strategic/enabling projects (e.g. masterplans, feasibility)
- First Nations and grass roots community investment
- Targeted local projects (e.g. skills programs, small amenity upgrades).

7.2 Progress via established SIMP mitigation measures

Several legacy opportunities have been advanced through measures previously reported in the Summary Report, including:

- Community infrastructure upgrades (refer to Table 8 and Table 9).
- Fibre optic connection along the Flinders Highway (refer to Table 9).
- SCDP (refer to Table 10 and Case Study in Section 7).

7.3 Targeted actions for remaining opportunities

Powerlink continues to progress discussions and planning for the remaining SIMP-identified legacy opportunities.

7.3.1 Semi-permanent housing

Collaborative work with Council is exploring infill blocks for housing that will serve project personnel during construction and transfer to Council ownership post-project. Investigations have focused on durability, cost efficiency, and design features that enhance worker wellbeing. Engagement has included site visits, co-contribution discussions, and planning benefits for shared value outcomes.

7.3.2 WAF reuse

Early discussions have commenced on potential reuse of the Hughenden WAF after its minimum four-year operational period. Final decisions will be made closer to project completion.

7.3.3 Cultural heritage artefacts storage area

In partnership with Yirendali Nation, a property has been secured in Hughenden for a dedicated artefact storage facility, ensuring cultural heritage preservation beyond the life of the project.

7.3.4 Hughenden Waste Facility capacity

Powerlink and our delivery partners have responded to Flinders Shire Council's concerns regarding the limited capacity of the existing Hughenden Waste Facility by implementing proactive waste management practices to reduce pressure on the local facility. This has included packaging removal at supply points, onsite waste separation, and participation in Containers for Change. Over 10,000 containers have been recycled, raising \$1,066.40 for the RFDS.

7.3.5 Hughenden Aerodrome capacity

Detailed investigations are underway to assess the viability of upgrading the Hughenden Aerodrome to support regional air transport needs. Work to date includes cost-benefit analysis, geotechnical surveys, expert aviation advice, and preliminary design development. Further consultation with Council and regional stakeholders will ensure any investment delivers long-term community benefits.

7.3.6 Water and wastewater connections

As part of the construction of the Hughenden WAF, Powerlink committed to fund the engineering and construction required to augment the town's potable water supply. The design and alignment of the upgraded infrastructure was selected to accommodate not only current project needs, but also potential future residential growth in Hughenden. Additionally, enhancements to wastewater infrastructure have been scoped to improve overall system performance and reliability. Planned works include upgrades to wastewater pump stations, including increased emergency storage capacity and new pumps to meet additional demand. A legacy improvement will also be delivered through the replacement of an ageing asbestos cement rising main.

CASE STUDY: Yirendali Language Book Initiative – Preserving Culture through Language

The Yirendali Language Book is a landmark initiative led by the Yirendali Nation to preserve and revitalise their ancestral language. Supported with funding from Powerlink as part of the CopperString project, this initiative seeks to safeguard cultural knowledge, foster intergenerational learning, and celebrate the unique identity of the Yirendali Nation.

The Yirendali Nation are the Traditional Custodians of Country in the region now known as Flinders Shire. Like many First Nations languages, Yirendali has faced the threat of extinction due to the lasting impacts of colonisation. Recognising the urgent need for cultural preservation, the development of a language book represents a major step towards reconnecting with and reclaiming this critical element of Yirendali Nation heritage.

Led by a Yirendali Nation Elder, the project aims to produce a comprehensive and accessible resource for Yirendali Nation descendants, language learners, and the broader community. The book is not only a tool for teaching but also a vessel for passing down stories, spirituality, and traditional knowledge embedded in the language.

To ensure linguistic accuracy and cultural integrity, the Yirendali Nation have engaged with academic experts, including linguist Alex Anderson from the University of New South Wales—a respected scholar of the Gudjala and Yirendali languages. While formal contracting is still being finalised, the Yirendali Nation will directly manage the initiative's delivery and payments to contributing specialists.

Powerlink continues to provide guidance and support through its Indigenous Relations team, ensuring the project is community-led and culturally appropriate.

This initiative highlights how legacy investments tied to major infrastructure projects like CopperString can deliver lasting cultural and social value. The Yirendali Language Book is more than a publication—it is a symbol of resilience, identity, and the enduring strength of culture.

CASE STUDY: Hughenden Country Universities Centre - Local Vision, Lasting Impact

The Hughenden Country Universities Centre (CUC) is a powerful example of how regional communities can drive positive change through strategic partnerships, local leadership, and a commitment to equitable education access.

Led by Flinders Shire Council and supported by Powerlink through its CopperString project, the CUC was established to address persistent barriers to tertiary education for regional Queenslanders. Officially launched in February 2025, the Centre forms part of the national Country Universities Centre network and supports the Australian Government's Regional University Study Hubs initiative.

Strategically located above the Flinders Shire Public Library, the CUC transforms existing infrastructure into a modern learning hub. It offers high-speed internet, computer access, printing facilities, quiet study areas, and face-to-face student support services—all free of charge. While currently open during standard library hours, plans for 24/7 access are underway.

The project's funding success was achieved through a mix of community advocacy and collaboration. Following Powerlink's early-stage support of \$30,000, Flinders Shire Council successfully secured \$639,000 over four years from the Australian Government. The revised proposal, backed by industry partners including Iberdrola and Kennedy Energy Park, significantly enhanced the CUC's feasibility and long-term sustainability.

A wide coalition of partners—from local schools and health services to training organisations and community groups—reflects the CUC's alignment with broader regional development goals such as youth retention, workforce participation, and social inclusion.

Flinders Shire Mayor Kate Peddle described the CUC as "a hub for connection, learning and opportunity," reinforcing its role in transforming Hughenden's education landscape.

The Hughenden CUC stands as a legacy investment that directly supports the objectives of the CopperString CLIF and national education equity policy—delivering local access to university-level study and ensuring regional students can succeed without leaving home.





8. Overall effectiveness and outlook

8.1 Summary of SIMP effectiveness

The Flinders Shire SIMP has provided a strong framework for managing CopperString's social, cultural, and economic impacts during the early works phase. Because the project has not yet entered major construction, the scale of impacts has been limited, and not all mitigation measures required full implementation during this period.

External factors outside Powerlink's control—such as the 2024 State Government elections, subsequent Machinery of Government changes, and strategic announcements—introduced some uncertainty for the project. We acknowledge that this created challenges for community confidence and planning. Similarly, extreme weather events during the reporting period required adjustments to work programs and reinforced our commitment to prioritising the needs of local communities and landholders above project timelines.

Despite these challenges, engagement outcomes, workforce initiatives, and early procurement results indicate that SIMP measures have been effective in maintaining trust, supporting local participation, and laying the foundation for long-term benefits across the following impact areas:

- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement**: Transparent engagement and tailored strategies have strengthened trust and social licence.
- Workforce Management: Inclusive recruitment and cultural awareness initiatives are delivering positive outcomes.
- Housing and Accommodation: Proactive planning has prevented housing pressure and supported local tourism.
- **Community Health and Wellbeing**: Strong safety culture and proactive engagement have maintained community confidence.
- Local Business and Industry Procurement: Early procurement spend and capability-building programs are driving regional benefits.

8.2 Looking forward

The next reporting period will see more intensive early works, bringing new opportunities and challenges:

- **Bulk earthworks and road upgrades**: Works for the Flinders Substation will commence, increasing workforce numbers and foreshadowing potential impacts on local services, traffic, and accommodation as identified in the SIMP.
- **QIC delivery transition**: Stakeholders remain central to project delivery. During this transition period Powerlink and QIC are committed to keeping stakeholders informed in a timely manner as more information comes to hand and also providing opportunities for feedback.
- **SIMP review**: The Flinders Shire SIMP is currently under review to reflect updated project staging, including prioritisation of the Eastern Link and the Hughenden Hub. This review may result in revisions to some legacy opportunities to ensure alignment with the project's evolving delivery strategy.

QIC and Powerlink are committed to working collaboratively to support a smooth transition and are conscious of the need to keep stakeholders informed as things progress.

Appendix A: Stakeholder engagement summary

Category	Activity	Count
Indigenous Relations	Face-to-face meetings	11
	Phone calls	22
	Emails	17
Project engagement	Phone calls and face-to-face meetings	56
	Enquiries and complaints via project inbox	9
	Communication tools issued (newsletters, notices, ads)	14
	Project updates issued	4
	Website updated with key information	•
Community Relations	Face-to-face meetings (community stakeholders)	56
	Phone calls	242
	Emails	342

Appendix B: Workforce demographic as at 30 June 2025

Category	Total Workforce	Percentage
Total Employees	216	100%
Local Employees	29	13%
Regional Employees	5	2%
FIFO/DIDO Employees	21	10%
Apprentices/Trainees	2	1%
Supervisory/Leadership Roles	33	15%
Permanent (part-time/full-time/fixed term) Workforce	159	74%
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples	7	3%
Women	41	19%
Other	57	26%
Total Workforce FTE	206.6	

Note: The above data includes UGL CPB Contractors Joint Venture direct engagement workforce (not inclusive of their subcontractors) and Powerlink CopperString workforce (Powerlink includes employees, labour hire, contractors).

Appendix C: Grants, investments and sponsorships (2024-25)

Group	Funding Type	Funded amount	Remarks
Hughenden Golf Club	Community Grant	\$4,750	One off
Flinders Hack and Pony Club	Community Grant	\$5,000	One off
Prairie Community Horse Club	Community Grant	\$5,000	One off
Western Queensland Wildlife Rehabilitation	Community Grant	\$4,750	One off
Kooroorinya Ladies Day Incorporated	Community Grant	\$5,000	One off
Hughenden Hospital Fundraiser	Community investment initiative	\$4,000	One off
Hughenden Railway Social Club	Community investment initiative	\$3,500	One off
St Francis Catholic College	Community investment initiative	\$4,000	One off
Flinders Shire Council	Community investment initiative	\$7,635	One off
Hughenden Seniors Week	Community investment initiative	\$2,500	One off
Country Universities Centre	Community investment initiative	\$10,000	\$30,000 over 3 years
Aged care Christmas meals	Community investment initiative	\$385	One off
Hughenden Festival of Outback Skies	Sponsorship	\$10,000	One off
Hughenden Country Music Festival	Sponsorship	\$6,500	One off

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