# Generator and storage consultation

## New England Renewable Energy Zone | August 2025

## General

### Q. Transfer capacity, generation capacity, network capacity, hosting capacity – aren't they all the same thing?

Transfer capacity and generation capacity are two different measures, typically both measured in gigawatts. They are used in the planning and regulation of network infrastructure.

Transfer capacity, also known as network capacity, sets how much energy can be exported from the renewable energy zone at any given time.

Generation capacity, also known as connection or hosting capacity, refers to how much solar, wind, or battery production can connect to the network.

Because wind, solar and battery projects can operate at different times of the day, the network can host a greater generation capacity but still operate within the initial network transfer capacity limit. Generation capacity can be reviewed through a headroom assessment to determine if there is more capacity for generators to connect without overloading the renewable energy zone.

### Q. What is storage capacity?

Storage capacity is the amount of stored surplus wind and solar electricity that can be delivered back into the grid when we need it. Storage capacity is measured in both units of megawatts (power) and megawatt-hours (energy).

### Q. What is headroom assessment

An assessment to check whether there is more capacity for generators to connect without overloading the system.

### Q. What types of projects will connect to the REZ network?

The New England REZ will bring together renewable energy generation and storage projects and connect them to the grid. These projects may include solar, wind, pumped hydro and battery energy storage systems (BESS).

Importantly, all developers will need to seek the necessary planning approvals and be awarded network access rights before they can connect to the REZ network.

Information about how EnergyCo is coordinating generation and storage in the New England REZ is available in our fact sheet at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne/project-documents.

# Access scheme and approvals

### Q. What is the planning approval pathway for generation and storage projects?

Projects will need to seek all necessary approvals to allow for the construction and operation of their projects in accordance with relevant legislation. This includes submitting a development application to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) to obtain planning approval from the Minister for Planning or the Independent Planning Commission (if required).

Refer to connection assets model section below for details about the planning approval pathway for the connection easement.

### Q. What is an access scheme?

An access scheme is how we plan to bring more renewable energy into the grid in a coordinated way. It is a set of rules to manage how renewable energy projects (like wind, solar and storage) connect to an area of the grid to ensure efficient use and avoid overloading.

EnergyCo is leading the process to develop an access scheme for the New England REZ. We will consult with industry and other stakeholders to develop the access scheme and will keep the community informed about the timing and next steps. All of that information will be taken to the Minister for Energy, who has the power to declare an access scheme.

More information about REZ access schemes is available in the following resources:

- EnergyCo website: energyco.nsw.gov.au/industry/access-schemes
- Consumer Trustee website: aemoservices.com.au/products/rez

### Q. Why do we need an access scheme?

An access scheme puts competitive pressure on generation and storage project developers by providing a mechanism for projects based on merit. This ensures that the best projects go ahead – not just the projects that get built first.

Successful projects pay access fees that includes funds for employment and community benefits in the region.

Access schemes are also beneficial because they:

- optimise the amount of new, low-cost generation and storage that may access the grid, and the terms of that access
- give project developers and investors greater confidence around how much electricity they can produce and sell
- support the efficient use of new network infrastructure.

## Access rights and eligibility

### Q. What are the eligibility and merit criteria for access rights?

The eligibility and merit criteria and the application processes for access rights differ from REZ to REZ.

The process eligibility and merit criteria will be outlined if an access scheme is declared for New England REZ.

The South West REZ access scheme evaluated projects against 7 merit criteria. These included:

- impact on the electricity system
- pathway to commercial operation
- organisational capacity to deliver project
- community engagement and shared benefits and land use considerations
- financial value
- commercial departures
- regional economic development.

Find out more about access rights: https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/industry/access-schemes

### Q. When will access rights be granted?

Access rights for the New England REZ are expected to be allocated in tranches. This is because the transfer capacity will increase over time, so the volume of projects that can connect to the REZ network infrastructure will also increase over time.

Further, some projects will be less advanced than others, so multiple rounds of network access right allocations are expected. EnergyCo is currently developing the timeline for this process, however we expect the first allocation process for access rights to occur as soon as practicable after an access scheme is declared.

### Q. How advanced do projects need to be to apply for access rights?

Planning approvals for projects and access rights are independent processes that developers need to carry out before their projects can proceed to construction.

Developers do not need to have access rights before submitting a scoping report or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

The process eligibility and merit criteria will be outlined if an access scheme is declared for New England REZ.

### Q. Do projects need to be wholly inside the REZ boundary to be subject to the access scheme?

Under the approach for a proposed access scheme, projects would not need to be wholly inside the REZ boundary to be subject to the access scheme. Projects that are fully or partially located inside the REZ boundary would be eligible to apply for access rights.

### Q. Would projects connecting to existing power lines in the REZ be subject to the access scheme?

The consultation paper proposes that some existing power lines in the New England REZ would be subject to the same access scheme as those connecting to the new power lines.

This means projects wanting to connect to these existing lines may need to apply for an access right, just like projects using new lines. This plan aims to treat all projects fairly.

The paper proposes options for how the access scheme applies to projects that are significantly progressed in their development.

### Q. What if a project has an existing connection or has received an offer to connect?

These projects will not need an access right or EnergyCo consent to connect. They will retain their connection.

### Q. What is the term of the access scheme?

The proposed approach in the consultation paper is that the access scheme would start when it's officially declared and last for 20 years from when the first part of the new power lines starts working.

### Q. How many projects will be awarded access rights?

The number and types of generation projects to be awarded an access right is not yet known.

A mechanism under the access scheme (the aggregate maximum capacity cap) intends to provide communities an indication on how much generation and storage development will occur in the region. This is currently being consulted on for New England REZ.

The exact number of projects isn't fixed. Instead, the scheme may set a maximum total capacity (in megawatts) that can connect in the New England REZ. This capacity could be made up of a few larger projects or a larger number of smaller ones.

Setting a capacity limit helps manage the network, avoid overload, and gives the community a clear idea of how much development to expect.

### Q. What is the cost for developers who secure access rights?

AusEnergy Services acting as the Consumer Trustee determines the fees payable by participants in an access scheme, taking into account the following principles:

- Maximise financial value for NSW electricity customers
- Recover the cost of the operation of the access scheme
- Optimal use of the existing and planned network infrastructure in the REZ.

Typically, access fees are set just before an access tender commences.

## Community engagement and social licence

### Q. Are there obligations for a project that holds an access right to consult and engage with communities?

Yes.

Developers are assessed on the quality of their approach to community engagement and need to provide evidence to demonstrate a clear understanding of any impacts of the project on the community. Including a tailored approach to minimise and offset and impacts.

Access agreements require developers to develop, construct, operate and maintain the project in accordance with a range of social license commitments, which includes best practice standards for community and First Nations engagement.

These contracted commitments align with the Renewable Energy Sector Board Plan requirements for projects delivered under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

### Q. What if the community believes a developer has not been fulfilling engagement requirements?

There are several ways to make a complaint about a renewable energy project:

- Raise concerns directly to proponents in the first instance
- Make a submission to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure through the planning process i.e. Environmental Impact Statement exhibition
- Contacting elected representatives if you are unsatisfied with how issues have been managed
- The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) is also able to assist with complaints and enquiries about new or existing wind farms, large solar farms (5 megawatts or more), energy storage sites like pumped hydro or large batteries (1 megawatt or more), and major power line projects. This is an independent role appointed by the Australian Government, reporting to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy (Federal) and guided by Terms of Reference.

## Connection assets model

### Q. What is the proposed connection assets model?

We are currently considering a model where EnergyCo will plan the layout and design of connection lines from projects to energy hubs.

EnergyCo will handle the planning, environmental approvals, and land agreements for these connections. Projects will pay for and build their own connection lines so consumers won't have to cover these costs.

This model would apply to any project with an access right, other than certain scenarios outlined in the paper.

### Q. Can individual projects choose not to be part of the model?

No. The model being considered would apply to all new projects in the REZ who are subject to the access scheme, other than under the scenarios outlined in the paper.

### Q. Where will the new easements be located?

EnergyCo is in the early stages of developing concept level designs to accommodate known and potential future projects.

We will provide projects seeking access rights with details for their proposed connection points and line routes prior to commencement of an access right application or tender process.

### Q. Will connection lines be located alongside the new power lines for New England REZ?

Connection lines may be located alongside the new power lines where practical.

However, the location and layout of each wind, solar or storage project is unique, based on land access, terrain, and environmental factors. This means the shortest or most efficient route to an energy hub might be different.

### Q. Will corridors be on land of those hosting generation infrastructure?

Wherever possible, EnergyCo aims to plan transmission corridors on land that will host generation infrastructure. This approach helps minimise the overall impact on additional landowners and the environment. However, the final corridor locations will be determined through detailed planning, consultation with landowners, and environmental assessments to ensure the best balance between operational needs and community impact.

### Q. What if I have an agreement in place with a developer to host their connection infrastructure?

If EnergyCo becomes responsible for coordinating and securing easements for connection infrastructure in the New England REZ, there may be opportunities to review or align with such easements to ensure consistency with the overall network plan.

EnergyCo encourages landowners and developers to stay in communication during this process. If you have concerns or questions about your specific agreement, it's a good idea to discuss them directly with the developer or seek independent advice.

### Q. Will strategic benefit payments apply to generator connections?

Under the connection model under consideration, EnergyCo is exploring the option of requiring generation and storage developers to make additional payments to landowners hosting connection infrastructure assets to maintain equity in outcome with those landowners hosting new power lines for New England REZ.

### Q. Who builds and operates the generator connections?

Under the proposed model the project developer is responsible for building and operating the connections, with EnergyCo coordinating route planning and easements.

The project developer could either undertake the work themselves or engage a connection service provider to build, operate and maintain the connection assets.

### Q. What types of towers will be used?

Transmission lines between energy hubs and generation projects will generally be 330kV and either single or double circuit. Each transmission line will be located within an easement, meaning that easement can continue to be used for agricultural purposes. Information about living and working near a transmission line easement is available in our fact sheet.

### Q. Will any of the connection lines be undergrounded?

Overhead transmission lines are generally preferred. This will be assessed by EnergyCo in consultation with each developer when planning and designing their connection.

### Q. Does EnergyCo have any kind of control around how each generator engages with landowners?

EnergyCo does not have direct control over how developers (such as wind, solar or storage developers) engage with landowners prior to them obtaining access rights.

However, access right agreements will require access right holders to develop, construct, operate and maintain the project in accordance with a model access right holder commitment which includes requirements to maintain positive relationships and solution-oriented engagement with communities and key stakeholders.

### Q. What are the liability and insurance implications for landowners hosting generator connection lines and does this differ from the main REZ network infrastructure easements?

In the proposed model, EnergyCo will lead the engagement with landowners and negotiate easement acquisition. This offers clearer expectations around access, maintenance responsibilities, and liability.

*Note: This information is general in nature and does not constitute legal advice. Landowners should seek independent professional advice to understand the specific terms and implications of any agreement affecting their land.*

### Q. How are decisions made about where to locate connection lines and easement corridors from renewable projects to energy hubs?

EnergyCo will carefully plan the location of connection lines by considering a range of factors. These include technical requirements to ensure a safe and reliable electricity network, environmental impacts, existing land uses, and feedback from landowners and the community.

Where possible, we aim to minimise impacts by using existing infrastructure corridors or land that already hosts generation projects. We also work closely with landowners to find routes that balance operational needs with their concerns. Final corridor locations are confirmed through detailed planning and environmental assessments before construction begins.

### Q. How long does the negotiation and approval process take if I'm hosting a transmission line that connects a generator project to an energy hub?

Easement negotiations generally begin while the planning process is underway, including during preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the connection infrastructure.

EnergyCo will engage with landowners early and work to reach agreements wherever possible before the planning application is submitted.

### Q. What rights do landowners have during and after construction of connection infrastructure?

Landowners have a number of rights both during and after construction. These will be outlined in the easement agreement or acquisition documents, which set out how the land can be accessed and used, and what activities are allowed.

During construction, landowners are entitled to notice before work begins, and to have their property treated with care and respect. Any damage to the land must be repaired, and landowners may be entitled to compensation.

After construction, landowners retain ownership of their land and can continue to use it — provided it doesn't interfere with the safe operation of the infrastructure.