

Aboriginal cultural heritage

Hunter Transmission Project

Environmental Impact Statement | Fact Sheet | September 2025

EnergyCo acknowledges the Wonnarua, Awabakal and Darkinjung peoples (from north to south) as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which the Hunter Transmission Project is located. EnergyCo pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and honours the enduring connection that First Nations communities have to Country, culture and community.

Our commitment to First Nations communities

At EnergyCo, delivering tangible benefits for First Nations people and communities is core to the organisation's purpose. Meaningful, respectful engagement underpins this approach — working with communities, landowners and First Nations people to understand local values and co-design outcomes.

EnergyCo upholds the NSW Government's First Nations Guidelines for the Energy Transition (2024), which set the standards for respectful consultation, shared decision-making and opportunities for Aboriginal communities across NSW's energy transition. These guidelines inform engagement with First Nations groups, including support for employment, business and cultural heritage outcomes.

About the project

The Hunter Transmission Project (the project) is a key part of securing NSW's energy future. It will deliver a new 110-kilometre overhead 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Bayswater (near Muswellbrook) to Olney (near Eraring), connecting into the State's 500 kV network.

This link will unlock renewable generation from the Central-West Orana and New England Renewable Energy Zones, allowing it to flow into the electricity grid where and when it is needed.

By strengthening this part of the network, the project will help keep power affordable and ensure reliable supply as coal-fired power stations retire.

Key definitions

AHIMS stands for the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System. It is a database maintained by the NSW Government (specifically Heritage NSW) that records information about known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and places in New South Wales.



Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA)

As required under the EIS process for this critical State significant infrastructure project, EnergyCo conducted an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA). This involved working closely with 48 Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), Traditional Owners, Local Aboriginal Land Councils, and Aboriginal organisations and businesses. Engagement has been ongoing since November 2023 and included briefings, site visits, participation in surveys and excavations, and interviews on cultural values.

How the project carried out the ACHA:



Desktop work – reviewing Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) records, heritage registers, archaeological reports, and local histories.



Predictive modelling – using geography, past findings, and environmental features to identify areas likely to contain heritage sites.



On-site investigation – over 1,000 km of surveys, recording over 7,700 observations.



Test excavations – focused digging in key locations to check for subsurface artefacts.



Continuous consultation – refining plans and findings with RAPs across all phases.



Example of a potential scarred tree recorded in the Corrabare State Forest during a field survey

What is an environmental impact statement?

The environmental impact statement (EIS) is a detailed report EnergyCo must prepare so government can assess whether the Hunter Transmission Project should proceed. As critical State significant infrastructure, NSW law requires an EIS to assess potential effects on the environment, communities, and the economy – and explain how negative impacts will be avoided, reduced, or managed, and how benefits will be maximised.

The EIS is placed on public exhibition so the community, government agencies, and other stakeholders can review the findings, ask questions and provide feedback. This process ensures transparency, considers all views and helps the government decide whether the project should proceed. Final approval rests with the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and the Australian Minister for the Environment and Water.



Aboriginal heritage field survey



What the project found

A total of 32 Aboriginal sites or places have been identified within the project impact area, including stone artefact scatters, rock shelters, grinding grooves, a culturally modified tree, a stone arrangement and cultural places.

In addition to these discrete sites, several broader cultural landscapes have been recorded, including the Warkworth sand system, Dora Pinnacles, Dora Creek, Flat Rock, and cultural viewlines such as those between Mount Yengo and Mount Sugarloaf.

Potential impacts

Construction of the project has the potential to create both direct and indirect impacts on items or places of Aboriginal cultural significance.

Direct impacts: physical disturbance during construction (e.g., clearing vegetation, tower and access track construction).

Indirect impacts: changes affecting the cultural value of places without physical disturbance, such as:

- altering sight lines to or from significant Aboriginal places
- vibration effects on sensitive sites

Mitigation Measures

EnergyCo has taken steps to avoid impacts on culturally sensitive items and sites. Five of the most culturally significant sites will be completely avoided. The project is continuing to refine the design to further reduce impacts on the remaining identified culturally sensitive items and sites.

The project's first priority has been to refine the alignment to avoid culturally sensitive areas wherever possible. Where impacts cannot be fully avoided, further measures will be implemented to minimise and manage them.

These include:

- locating towers and access tracks away from culturally sensitive items and sites, wherever possible
- increasing buffers around rock shelters and stone arrangements
- requiring cultural heritage awareness training for all workers
- conducting further site assessments as needed
- implementing an unexpected finds protocol for any additional sites or artefacts discovered
- salvaging, recording and mapping artefacts before disturbance occurs
- storing artefacts in consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).

The project will work with RAPs to develop an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan prior to construction commencing, guiding how heritage will be protected throughout the construction stage.

Broader community benefits

EnergyCo is planning a Community and Employment Benefit Program to deliver long-term advantages alongside major infrastructure projects. This program is subject to regulatory processes, so details may evolve. Consultation on the program design is planned to begin in 2026. Through this program, EnergyCo intends to support initiatives such as training, local infrastructure, and opportunities for First Nations communities.



Stay informed and have your say

The Hunter Transmission Project EIS is on public exhibition from 27 August to 24 September 2025. You can:

- Read the full EIS, including **Chapter 9** and Technical Report 2 for full details of the Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment, mitigation measures, and management plans on the NSW Planning Portal.
- Contact the project team at any time, including during the public exhibition period:
 - **Email:** htp@energyco.nsw.gov.au
 - **Call:** 1800 645 972 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)
 - **Visit:** energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp

Make a submission

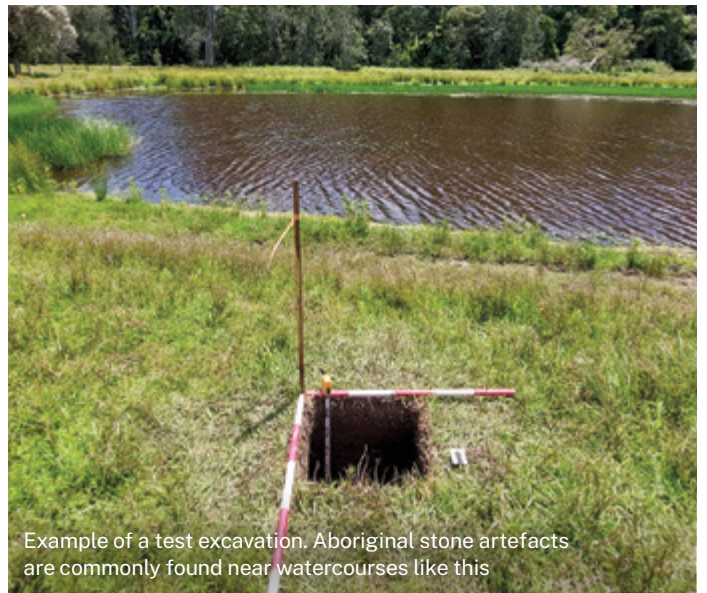
You can provide feedback on the Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) during the exhibition period.

By post

Send to: Director –Energy Assessments, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124

Your submission should include:

- Your name and address (can request to be withheld)
- Application name: Hunter Transmission Project
- Application number: SSI-70610456
- A short statement on whether you support, object, or want to comment on the proposal
- Reasons or supporting information for your views



Example of a test excavation. Aboriginal stone artefacts are commonly found near watercourses like this

Online

Visit the NSW Planning Portal at planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/have-your-say → search 'Hunter Transmission Project' → click 'Make a submission'

For more details, visit the NSW Planning Portal at planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/have-your-say

Contact us

EnergyCo is the NSW Government statutory authority responsible for delivering the HTP as a critical part of transitioning to a cleaner future under the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.



htp@energyco.nsw.gov.au



1800 645 972 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)



energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp



Scan the QR code for more information.



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