

Agenda

Hunter Central Coast Regional Reference Group – Extraordinary Meeting

Monday, 16 March 2026

12pm – 2:30pm

Venue: Microsoft Teams

Attendees

| Online | Apology | Name | Represents |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bob Pynsent (BP) | Independent Chair |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sue Moore (SM) | Mayor Singleton Council |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Daniel Watton (DW) | Mayor Cessnock City Council |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Adam Schultz (AS) | Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | John Sullivan (JFS) | Singleton community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Phillip O'Neill (PO) | Cessnock community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Diane Crosdale (DCR) | Lake Macquarie community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Craig Anderson (CA) | Regional Environment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Samantha Martin- Williams (SMW) | Regional Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Ashley Williams (AW) | Regional Aboriginal Rep |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Jeffrey Drayton (JD) | Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amanda Wetzel (AW) | Newcastle Community |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Darren Clarke (DC) | RRG Secretariat |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sam Harding (SH) | RRG Secretariat |

Visitors

| | NAME | POSITION |
|--------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Online | Robin Ward (RW) | Manager Planning, EnergyCo |

DC delivered an Acknowledgement of Country.

Apologies as per the above.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION BRIEFING

Presented by Robin Ward

- DC – Provided background to why the meeting was called and what will be covered in the meeting which included how HTP have looked to minimise impacts since EIS submission, reduction of impacts to the Littlejohn's Tree Frog and impacts to biodiversity prior to offsets occurring.
- DC – Explained that EnergyCo liaised with agency colleagues in Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation (DCCEEW), who manage the regional Conservation Investment Strategies and delivery of offsets under a Strategic Offset Delivery Agreement to attend the meeting. DCCEEW advised it would be more appropriate to engage with the RRG once there is greater certainty, notably a SODA is executed, a determination on the EIS has been made and there is greater certainty on the offsetting obligations for Hunter Transmission Project.
- CA – Noted his disappointment in DCCEEW not attending the meeting.
- AW – Raised concerns about how offsets are being secured and managed and how other types of developments struggle to compete.
- RW – Acknowledged that biodiversity is a key issue on HTP. Noted that frogs were identified as the highest priority avoidance issue with seven important frog species in the southern part of the alignment.
- RW – HTP have engaged with University of Newcastle frog experts to understand more about the species and adopted recommendations from recognised frog experts.

- RW – HTP project is avoiding all but two of University of Newcastle’s artificial frog breeding ponds with the project installing additional breeding ponds post construction.
- RW – University of Newcastle has provided a program of conservation actions to be delivered which is in addition to conservation actions proposed in the offsets and SODA.
- RW – Noted since the EIS, the HTP project impacted area in the southern 10km of the alignment where frog habitat is present has been reduced by approximately 15 hectares.
- AW – Touched on her earlier concern and noted that development agencies are unable to have the same partnering treatment EnergyCo has and raised concerns around inequitable treatment
- RW – Noted it was a request from the Minister to partner with Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation (CPHR). Acknowledged industry have raised similar concerns. It was also noted that EnergyCo has an MOU with CPHR to ensure CPHR have sufficient resources to undertake assessment and provide advice to support efficient assessment of the EIS and agreed principles for application of the Biodiversity Assessment Methodology for a project of this complexity.
- DC – Noted it is difficult to replicate this model (NSW Government agency proponent model) with private proponents, particularly with respect to probity.
- AW – Noted it would be good to if CPHR could leverage any learnings, what worked, what didn’t to help industry refine their approach.
- CA – Questioned what would happen in the instance of non-compliance and if it was possible for an independent third party to manage non-compliant clearing processes.
- RW – EnergyCo has internal compliance protocols and where there are any non-compliances, they will be raised. The Department of Planning’s compliance framework also applies as it is a CSSI project. Noted that the project has a lot of sensitive clearing areas. Will need to confirm but believes there will be an EnergyCo Rep/independent certifier that will look at clearing pre and post construction as well as footprint impacts pre and post construction.
- DC raised CA’s concern from the February RRG regarding the disconnect between biodiversity impacts and offset delivery.
- CA – Noted the Central West Orana (CWO) SODA, which had a deadline date of nine months, post the signing of the SODA when it is usually three years under a SODA.

- RW – Explained the June 2026 timeframe of the CWO SODA was because the SODA was entered into after approval had been received. Noted the timeframe for delivery of offsets under the CWO SODA may be sought to be extended.
- DC –SODA regulatory framework allows up to three years for offsets to be delivered, confirming there will likely be impacts to biodiversity values before offsets are delivered in some circumstances.
- CA – Noted that the HTP EIS has been exhibited and therefore DCCEEW know the worst-case scenarios. The community want information now and once again noted his disappointment with DCCEEW not attending the meeting.
- PO – Queried if it was possible to hold a public briefing on biodiversity issues.
- DC – Would need to take offline and speak to the HTP project team. Acknowledged that there are fact sheets available on the HTP website and multiple webinars that have been delivered and planned for interested community members on the EIS.
- BP – Acknowledged the community angst around these issues.