EnergyCo

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New England Renewable Energy Zone network infrastructure project

Community feedback report – 'have your say' on the new study area between Muswellbrook and Walcha

April 2026

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) | Fields near Glen Innes

Acknowledgement of Country

The Energy Corporation of New South Wales acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past and present through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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energyco.nsw.gov.au

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Executive summary

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is the NSW statutory authority tasked with delivering the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), a critical energy project under the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

EnergyCo is developing plans for new transmission lines, energy hubs (substations) and related infrastructure which will connect new sources of renewable energy in the New England region with the existing network at Muswellbrook. This is known as the New England REZ network infrastructure project.

From October to December 2025, we invited communities to have their say on a new study area for the 500kV transmission corridor between Muswellbrook and Walcha. The aim of the engagement period was to understand landholder and community perspectives and identify opportunities and constraints for the revised corridor, including details of existing land use and business operations.

We published a 3km-wide study area to maximise the opportunity for feedback to be considered in route planning. Feedback received is being considered in further planning for the project and will inform how the study area is narrowed to a 1km-wide corridor. EnergyCo is currently carrying out a range of assessments including technical work and field studies to support this process.

We received 481 submissions during the 'have your say' period which are detailed in section 2.

Thank you to everyone who took time to provide feedback. This input will be valuable as EnergyCo continues to develop the project. Landholder feedback helps to highlight local values so the New England REZ network infrastructure project can be planned to reduce impacts on people, farming and business operations.

1 Introduction

The New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) is a critical part of the NSW Government's plan to unlock more clean, affordable energy for everyone in NSW and boost investment and new jobs in regional NSW.

As the infrastructure planner for the New England REZ, the Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is developing plans for new high voltage transmission lines, energy hubs and other infrastructure which will connect new renewable energy generation in the New England REZ to the existing grid at Muswellbrook. This includes new dual 500kV transmission lines which will form the backbone of the network and connect to the existing grid at Bayswater Power Station near Muswellbrook.

Landholder and community feedback, along with information gathered from field investigations, has resulted in a range of refinements to the study corridor over time. Local knowledge helps to ensure that local matters, land use, and environmental, cultural, and social factors are considered when designing the transmission route.

Following more detailed assessments of the proposed transmission route, EnergyCo identified a new study area for investigation between Muswellbrook and the central south hub near Walcha which allows for safer and more efficient construction, and reduced, environmental, construction and traffic impacts compared to the previous corridor.

This report outlines EnergyCo's engagement on the new study area and addresses key topics raised in the submissions received.

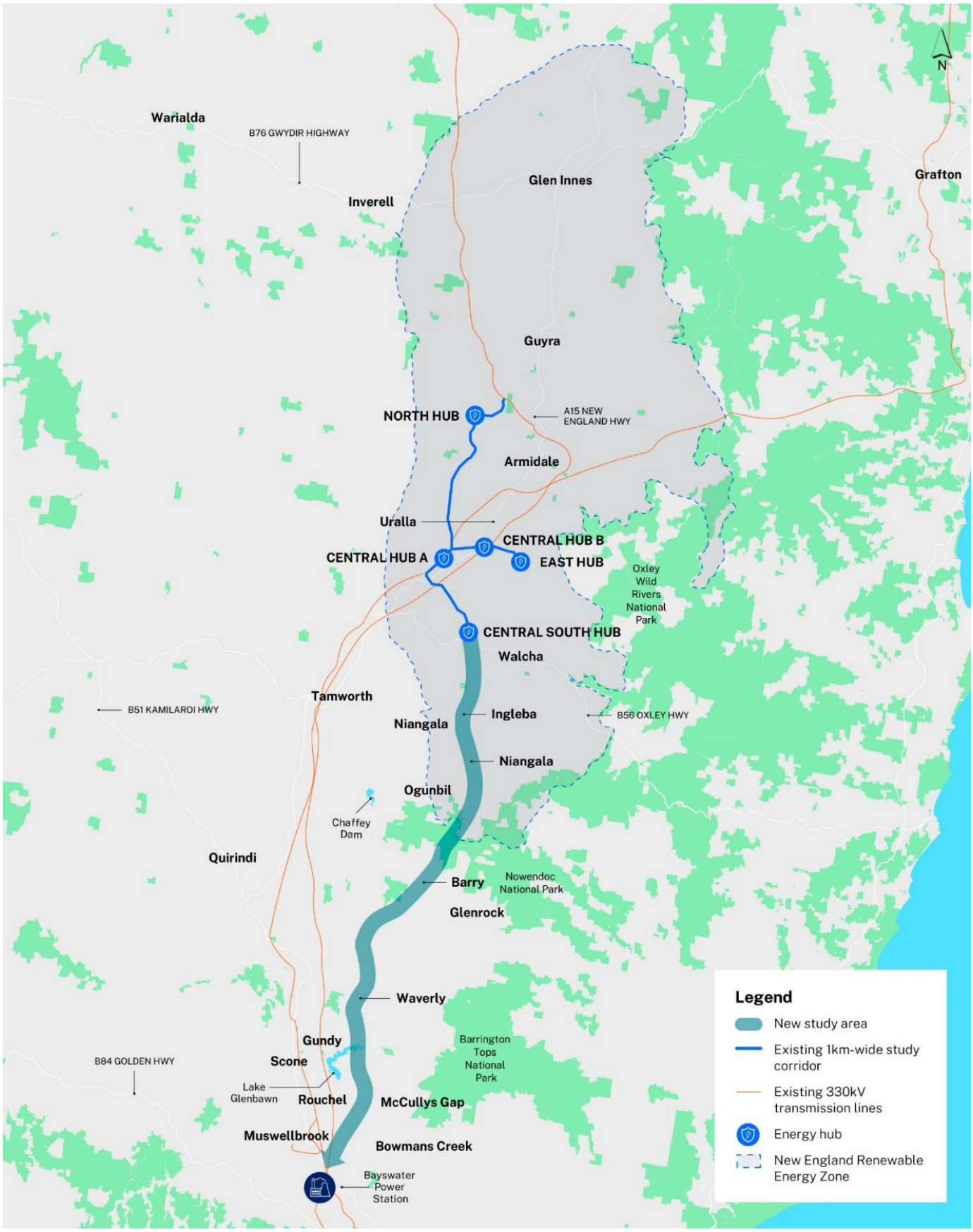


Figure 1 – Map of New England REZ new study area

1.1 Consultation period

EnergyCo initially invited feedback on the new study area through a ‘have your say’ period from Wednesday 1 October and Friday 28 November 2025.

Following requests from the community, we extended the consultation period to Friday 12 December 2025 to allow landholders, the community and key stakeholders more time to consider the changes and provide input.

1.2 How we informed

We informed landholders, communities and stakeholders of the corridor update and supporting engagement period through a range of methods detailed in the table below.

We endeavoured to contact all impacted landholders prior to the new study area being shared publicly to ensure affected landholders would receive information directly from EnergyCo. Initial contact was made via phone call and email if contact details were available, or by doorknock in instances where direct contact could not be made through other methods.

Method	Description
Media release	A media release was distributed on 1 October 2025 to journalists from the following local and regional media outlets to announce the new study area and its benefits, consultation period, publicise the community information sessions and encourage the community to provide feedback: • Armidale Express • NBN • Northern Daily Leader • Newcastle Herald • Prime 7 • ABC New England • ABC Upper Hunter • ABC Country Hour • 2TM/92.9 (Tamworth) • 2AD/FM100.3 (Armidale)
Website	The project webpage was updated on 2 October 2025 with information on the new study area including an October project update and moving to a new study area fact sheet.
Interactive map	The new study area was added to the interactive map at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne-rez-map. The map is searchable by address and is a visual tool for property owners to contextualise the corridor update as it relates to their property. The interactive map also includes key features of the New England REZ such as proposed energy hub locations, the location of generator projects in the REZ, the existing high voltage network and land boundaries.
Advertising	Print, radio and digital advertising was carried out between 13 and 28 October 2025 via the following outlets and included details of the corridor update, 'have your say' period and upcoming information sessions: • Aspley Advocate • Armidale Express • Guyra Gazette • The Hunter River Times • The Land • Northern Daily Leader • The New England Times *(online)* • 2AD and 100.3 FM (Armidale)

Method	Description
	• 2NM 98.1 AM (Hunter Valley) • 2TM 95.5 FM and 92.9 FM (Tamworth) • Power 98.1 FM (Muswellbrook)
Social media	Social media post/s via the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Facebook page reached 30,760 accounts with 72,000 impressions and 900 link clicks.
Project update newsletter	A project update newsletter was distributed to around 48,500 residences in the project area via Australia Post, commencing from 20 October 2025. A digital copy was published on the website, and a link was included in the project e-newsletter on 2 October 2025. Copies were also made available at various locations in the project area including local post offices and council chambers. The update was provided to landholders via email as part of an information pack with a tailored letter from 2 October 2025. Hard copies were posted to landholders where email addresses were not available.
E-newsletter	An e-newsletter was sent on 2 October 2025 to around 1,500 subscribed community members and stakeholders. Additional information and reminders about the community information sessions were sent on 30 October, 4 November and 18 November 2025. Further information, including reminder emails about the engagement period and to notify of the extension, was sent on 18 November and 1 December 2025. Information on the update was also included in EnergyCo's *Powering NSW* e-newsletter on 23 October and 27 November 2025.
Animation	An animation was developed to help contextualise the new study area within the region, including size and scope of the update. The animation was published on the New England REZ project website, provided to media outlets and promoted through an ad campaign on the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Facebook page.
Collateral	Collateral developed to support the corridor update engagement included: • project update newsletter • maps developed as a visual tool to help contextualise the new study area within the region including size and scope • information boards displayed at information sessions • webinar presentation • fact sheet – Moving to a new study area • fact sheet – Energy hubs Following community feedback, EnergyCo published the *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report* on 18 November 2025 to provide further details on EnergyCo's route selection work and the assessment and technical analysis that informed the decision to move to a new study area. Links to all documents are provided at appendix A.

1.3 How we engaged

We engaged with landholders, communities and stakeholders of the consultation period through the following activities:

Activity	Description
Stakeholder correspondence (phone calls, letters, emails)	Landholders, councils, MPs, industry stakeholders, community reference groups, community groups) and other key stakeholders were notified by their respective relationship manager. This included calls, letters or emails to: • 10 local councils • 9 Local Aboriginal Land Councils • 78 Registered Aboriginal Parties • 5 elected representatives • 31 government agency representatives • 16 community stakeholder interest groups • 59 industry representatives. Where new landholder contact details were unknown, letters were mailed via registered mail.
Stakeholder briefings	Briefings were held with specific stakeholders including: • 10 local councils • 3 local elected representatives' offices • 10 community and stakeholder interest groups • 2 community reference groups for the New England REZ • 6 Local Aboriginal Land Councils • 31 developers of generation and storage projects
Landholder phone calls	EnergyCo contacted landholders affected by the corridor update, including: • around 100 landholders who were in the new 3km-wide study area • around 50 existing landholders who were still within the study area but the location of the corridor has moved within their property • around 40 existing landholders unimpacted by the change (north of the central south hub and from McCullys Gap to Bayswater Power Station) • around 10 re-engaged landholders • around 100 landholders who were no longer impacted by the project
Landholder doorknocking and meetings	We endeavoured to contact all impacted landholders on 1 October 2025 prior to the new study area being shared publicly to ensure affected landholders would receive information directly from EnergyCo. Initial contact was made via phone call and email if contact details were available, or by doorknock in instances where direct contact could not be made through other methods. Landholder engagement undertaken since October 2025 includes: • around 150 landholder meetings • around 30 properties doorknocked – predominantly in the new study area where contact details were unknown.

Activity	Description
Community information sessions	12 information sessions were held across 10 local townships, including additional sessions at Timor and Nundle in response to local feedback. The sessions followed a drop-in style format to allow landholders to have individual discussions and ask questions as it related to their properties/location. Members of the New England REZ project team were available to explain the project update and answer questions. The sessions totalled over 40 hours of engagement and were attended by 845 people, including many landholders in the new study area. Members of EnergyCo's senior leadership presented at sessions in Gundy (5 November 2025) and Walcha (11 November 2025) to provide an update on the project, followed by an interactive Q&A session. A full list of the sessions is provided at appendix B.
Online webinar	An online webinar was held on 25 November 2025 and attended by 65 people. The webinar discussed some of the key findings in EnergyCo's *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report*, including how firefighting constraints and construction challenges in the previous corridor were assessed. The webinar also covered the next stage of the corridor refinement and how landholders and the community can continue to provide input as planning progresses. A recording was published to EnergyCo's YouTube account and is also available on the New England REZ project webpage.

Further detail on engagement methodology, including a full list of information sessions is included at appendix A.

2 Submissions

We received a total of 481 submissions from people and organisations. Of these submissions:

- 238 were received from people located within the project area
- 163 were received from people or organisations located elsewhere in NSW
- 35 were received from people or organisations located interstate or overseas
- 45 submissions did not include a location.

Further breakdown of submissions received is included at appendix C.

A detailed theme breakdown is included at appendix D, with references to where each sub-theme is responded to in the report. Issues raised in submissions which are out of scope for the New England REZ network infrastructure project and 'have your say' engagement are listed at appendix E.

When planning the project, there are many known constraints available publicly, from existing mapping and from satellite data. We carry out community consultation to understand individual landholder and community constraints that may not be publicly available. This is a vital step in the planning process.

All individual property constraints, opportunities and notes received during consultation are added to our Geographic Information System (GIS) for consideration as part of the design process. This feedback helps us to refine the study corridor based on what we have learned from landholders, community groups and councils.

What is a Geographic Information System?

A Geographic Information System (GIS) is a mapping tool often used in major infrastructure projects to map constraints and understand where impacts could occur before decisions are made.

Feedback we receive is added to the GIS by its geographical location. The route selection process is guided by the GIS which allows landholder and community input to be meaningfully considered alongside technical data to help identify the best possible route for the REZ transmission lines.

How EnergyCo manages privacy

EnergyCo manages personal information in line with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*. Information collected during consultation or about private property is used only for the purpose for which it was collected, such as addressing inquiries and for consideration as part of our planning for the REZ. View EnergyCo's full privacy statement here.

3 Key themes

Summary

We received a wide range of views about the new study area including many requests for further information on topics such as route selection and assessment, support for landholders and next steps. Out of 481 total submissions, 467 responses expressed strong concern about one or more key issues related to the project, the new study area or other matters.

The aim of the engagement period was to understand landholder and community perspectives, identify opportunities and constraints for the revised corridor, including details of existing land use and business operations, and to guide refinement of the 3 kilometre-wide study area to a 1 kilometre-wide corridor.

This consultation feedback report identifies the key issues raised and EnergyCo's responses. These responses tend to be a mix of those we can address now, those we intend to address through the refined 1km-wide corridor, and the balance to be addressed in the project's environmental impact statement (EIS) and/or through ongoing engagement with landowners and the community as the project continues to be developed.

We heard landowners in the new study area held concerns about the process of refining down to a 1km-wide corridor and understanding how hosting transmission lines and other REZ infrastructure would impact their day-to-day use of their property and business operations.

Many submissions expressed concern about the social and environmental impacts of hosting transmission lines. Some respondents expressed a preference for the new REZ network infrastructure to be co-located with existing transmission lines or follow existing infrastructure corridors such as the New England Highway.

Some submissions included information on constraints relating to specific properties and social infrastructure within the new study area. These details will be considered as the route is refined.

While all feedback is valuable, the route refinement process is guided by EnergyCo's planning pillars which have been used throughout the route selection process to compare and assess corridor options and refinements, as well as energisation targets. The planning pillars consider a balance of technical, economic, strategic, environmental and people.

3.1 Environment and land use

Number of submissions which raised this theme: 449

Summary of issues raised

Environmental aspects of the corridor update were raised in many submissions. Concerns included the potential impacts on flora and fauna, particularly threatened species such as local koala populations, and how environmentally sensitive areas within the new study area such as Nundle State Forest, Timor Caves and karst systems would be managed.

Bushfire management was frequently cited, with some submissions requesting detail about the extent of consultation with NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and how the project would impact aerial firefighting access and operational response. Some submissions felt the use of desktop environmental and land mapping was insufficient to adequately address the issue. Some submissions raised concern about the presence of biosecurity risks such as anthrax in the Rouchel area and the potential implications for agricultural productivity.

Many submissions raised the impact to visual amenity, perception about 'industrialisation' of the region and how this may impact the identity, rural character and overall community cohesion. This theme was often raised alongside broader apprehension about change and the cumulative effect of multiple renewable energy generation developments in the region.

Some submissions highlighted the importance of the Upper Hunter Equine Critical Industry Cluster (CIC) and were concerned about the potential impact the project would have on the equine industry. These submissions expressed strong opposition to direct property impacts and shared concern about the corridor alignment passing through land identified within the Equine CIC, citing potential risks to the industry, reputation and long-term investment confidence.

Safety-related questions were raised about biosecurity risks, soil disturbance, electrical arcing, electric and magnetic fields (EMF) and the potential impacts on people, livestock and nearby activities.

Planning pathway for the New England REZ

The New England REZ project was declared as Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) in July 2024 and therefore requires approval from the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). The project will also require approval under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), meaning it must be approved by the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water.

The scoping report is the first key step in the planning process for major projects. It provides a preliminary overview of the project and its potential impacts, but it is not a development application. Instead, it supports a request for Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) which set out what must be assessed in the environmental impact statement (EIS).

EnergyCo prepared an initial scoping report for the New England REZ network infrastructure project in July 2024. A revised scoping report was lodged with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) in December 2025 to reflect updates to the project, including the revised route for the 500kV transmission corridor between Muswellbrook and Walcha, changes to the energy hub arrangements and transmission line connections between hubs. The report also supports a request for updated SEARs.

EnergyCo is now preparing a comprehensive EIS, which is the main planning document for the project. The EIS will provide a detailed assessment of the project's potential environmental, economic and social impacts during construction and operation. It will also detail measures to avoid, mitigate and manage those impacts. The EIS is informed by field investigations, technical studies, and consultation with the landholders, the community and key stakeholders.

Once completed, the EIS will be lodged with DPHI for assessment and public exhibition in the second half of 2026, giving the community an opportunity to review the information and provide feedback.

Further information about the planning pathway for the REZ and the range of assessments which will be developed for the EIS are available on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez.

Bushfire

What we heard	EnergyCo response
How we are assessing bushfire risk Questions around how bushfire impacts are assessed, including mapping of high bushfire prone land Comparison of the previous and revised corridor in relation to bushfire risk	We recognise bushfire is a key concern for communities in the region, particularly in areas with high bushfire prone land. Bushfire risk is considered through the broader planning and environmental assessment process for the project, including risks both to and from the proposed development, its location within bushfire-prone land, potential ignition sources, infrastructure resilience, access arrangements and emergency response measures. When evaluating the corridor change, we found the revised corridor provided improved bushfire outcomes compared to the previous corridor because it:

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	• reduced aerial firefighting constraints by avoiding aerial exclusion zones at Chaffey Dam and Lake Glenbawn • reduced the amount of Category 1 bushfire land from 2,901 hectares to 1,871 hectares. The reduction in high category bushfire land is based on NSW RFS mapping at NSW Bush Fire Prone Land | Dataset | SEED. Despite these changes, we recognise the transmission corridor still traverses areas of high bushfire prone land and we are continuing to assess this to make sure bushfire risk is minimised as we refine the corridor. We are preparing a bushfire assessment for the project's environmental impact statement (EIS) which will outline detailed analysis of bushfire risk within the project area, as well as mitigation measures to manage bushfire risk during construction and operation of the project. The assessment will be informed by our ongoing consultation with NSW RFS and we welcome input from local firefighters as part of this process. Our bushfire assessment will consider the Planning for Bushfire Protection guideline (NSW RFS), which outlines the bushfire planning matters which need to be considered at various stages of the project development process. We will continue engaging with NSW RFS and other emergency service providers as we prepare our environmental assessments and through the construction delivery phase.
Risk of starting fires Fires could be ignited from operational transmission lines	All electrical infrastructure can present a risk of igniting fires. However, high voltage transmission lines like those planned for the New England REZ have the lowest bushfire risk of all power line infrastructure. Fire ignitions from electrical infrastructure are usually associated with distribution lines (particularly 22kV/33kV). Based on available reports and regulatory submissions, there are no records of a 500kV transmission line starting a fire in Australia. 330kV and 500kV transmission networks incorporate highly sophisticated protection and control systems which are continuously monitored and are capable of rapid fault detection and clearance. The system can trip in milliseconds, minimising the risk of ignition in the rare event of a conductor failing. Transmission lines are unlikely to start or be damaged by fire because: • they have a low risk of contact from trees and branches due to vegetation management in the easements • they are supported on tall towers around 60 to 70 metres high to maintain safe clearances • they have dedicated easements around 60 to 70 metres wide and include land use restrictions for safety and operational reasons • individual transmission lines (conductors) are separated by minimum clearances and are not likely to clash during weather events. While the risk is low, we still take fire risk very seriously. We are designing the network to minimise fire risk in line with our technical and safety standards as well as NSW RFS guidelines. Safety measures during construction will include managing vegetation around work sites, restrictions on works on total fire ban days, and emergency response protocols.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Operational impacts to firefighting The presence of transmission lines will increase the severity and complexity of fighting fires Aerial firefighting may be disrupted at Lake Glenbawn	It is common in Australia to have transmission lines through bushfire prone areas given the nature of our climate and landscape. In NSW, there are existing transmission lines through Category 1 bushfire land with rugged terrain, including the Blue Mountains, Snowy Mountains and New England. As outlined above, the likelihood of transmission lines starting a fire is very low. The presence of transmission lines through bushfire-prone land, including in areas of rugged and inaccessible terrain, is not expected to increase the severity or complexity of fighting fires in the region. NSW RFS has established protocols for fighting fires around transmission lines; these form part of the guidelines used by firefighting brigades for local firefighting operations. Transmission easements can provide fire breaks within vegetated areas as well as improving access for firefighting operations, as the future network operator will establish new and upgraded access tracks to the network. Aerial firefighting is commonly undertaken in the vicinity of transmission lines, including in areas of rugged terrain where accessibility is limited. Waterbombing can still take place over the lines in line with NSW RFS and CASA protocols. The proposed transmission corridor will not prevent water-scooping aircraft from using Lake Glenbawn. We have reviewed, with the NSW RFS, the flight data from aerial operations in December 2025, which used the eastern end of Lake Glenbawn for scooping operations. These operations could have occurred elsewhere in Lake Glenbawn without affecting firefighting operations. This has been confirmed by NSW RFS who is responsible for coordinating aerial firefighting activities at the dam. EnergyCo will continue to work with RFS and aerial firefighting contractors on measures to ensure pilot safety when undertaking operations in the vicinity of transmission infrastructure.
Engagement with NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) How we have worked with NSW RFS and aviation stakeholders to inform our decision to move the corridor	Engagement with NSW RFS has played an important role in our route selection and environmental assessment process to date. Feedback from NSW RFS and other firefighting stakeholders directly informed our decision to move the transmission corridor, specifically around avoiding aerial firefighting constraints at Chaffey Dam and Lake Glenbawn. Stakeholders we consulted with included: • NSW RFS State Operations Division and North Western Area Command • Specialist aviation subcontractors, Kennedy Air and Pay's Air Services • Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) • Forestry Corporation of NSW • National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Since publishing the updated corridor for consultation in October 2025, we have continued engaging with NSW RFS to inform the refinement of the 3km-wide study corridor. This included consultation in January and February 2026 to confirm the proposed alignment at Lake Glenbawn would not obstruct aerial operations for fixed wing water-scooping aircraft. We are continuing to work with NSW RFS as we prepare the bushfire assessment for the EIS and have contacted local firefighting stakeholders to invite their input.

Biodiversity

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Koalas Impact to koala populations and habitat in the transmission corridor, including Areas of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS)	Koalas are commonly found throughout the region and are a key consideration as we develop the project. Our revised corridor has reduced the mapped koala habitat in the project area, and we are working to refine this further as we develop the design and the EIS. Areas of Regional Koala Significance (ARKS) are mapped on the NSW SEED portal and are used for state-wide analysis rather than localised assessment of koala impacts. There are two ARKS in the revised corridor. Koala populations are not limited to these areas and have been recorded throughout both the previous and revised study corridor. For this reason, we rely on impact to koala habitat as our key metric when assessing potential impacts to koalas in our environmental assessments. We are carrying out detailed biodiversity studies to inform the project's biodiversity impact assessment for the EIS, which includes targeted koala surveys and thermal drone surveys. The findings of these studies will also guide how we refine down to a 250m-wide transmission corridor to be assessed in the EIS. Construction will not start until a Biodiversity Management Plan is approved by the NSW Planning Secretary. This plan will outline how impacts on koalas (and koala habitat) will be avoided and minimised, including checking our worksites for any animals that need to safely be moved away, before we start work. Areas of koala habitat to be retained will also be identified on site and no machinery, vehicles or equipment will be allowed in these areas. Once operational, koalas will be able to move freely across the easement. Impacts will be mitigated through measures such as strategic tree retention and koala refuge poles.
Clearing of native vegetation Impacts to biodiversity, threatened species and habitat as a result of vegetation clearing Introduction and spread of weeds	EnergyCo is seeking to avoid and minimise impacts to native vegetation and habitat as much as possible as we plan the REZ network infrastructure project. The revised corridor will have fewer environmental impacts as it has a smaller project disturbance area than the previous corridor and less earthworks will be required for enabling work. The revised corridor also contains around 500 hectares less native woodland and forest vegetation than the previous corridor. This means construction in the revised corridor will require less clearing of native vegetation compared to the previous corridor. The revised corridor also avoids a biodiversity offset site at Chaffey Dam. Threatened species records in the previous and revised corridors are similar, though the reduced native vegetation clearing in the revised corridor is expected to see a reduction in impacts to threated species habitat. Potential impacts on biodiversity during construction will be minimised and managed through the Biodiversity Management Plan, which is part of a broader Construction Environment Management Plan. The Biodiversity Management Plan will outline how to identify vegetation to be cleared, or retained and protected, how to check for animals in the clearing footprint, how to protect waterways and aquatic habitats, and how to minimise the introduction and spread of weeds in the construction footprint.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	While revising the corridor has helped to improve overall impacts to the environment, we recognise there will be unavoidable residual impacts as a result of building the project. We are working closely with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and special interest groups to identify areas of high biodiversity value as we refine the corridor to 1km-wide. The results of on-ground biodiversity studies are also guiding the refinement of the corridor, so that we avoid important areas of threatened species habitat where possible. We recognise many landholders care for and protect important biodiversity values on their land, such hollow-bearing trees, flowering and fruiting trees used by birds, bats and arboreal mammals, caves and rocky outcrops. We would like to understand these areas better as we refine the corridor. The EIS will include a comprehensive biodiversity assessment informed by ecological surveys, which will seek to avoid and minimise biodiversity impacts. Construction will not start until a detailed Biodiversity Management Plan is approved by the NSW Planning Secretary. Any unavoidable (residual) impacts on biodiversity will be offset through a detailed Strategic Offset Delivery Agreement (SODA) managed by DCCEEW. This is a recent initiative by the NSW Government to strengthen biodiversity conservation through amendments to its biodiversity offset scheme. As part of this initiative, DCCEEW is developing a Conservation Investment Strategy for New England REZ which will identify key priorities for protecting and restoring biodiversity values and improving connectivity and resilience in the region. Key priorities outlined in the Conservation Investment Strategy may include: • adding to conservation areas next to existing national parks • implementing pest and weed control programs • restoring degraded lands • establishing biodiversity stewardship sites in land with good quality remnant vegetation or threatened species habitat for long-term protection and management • making financial contributions towards a fund to assist landholders of existing stewardship sites. We will keep communities informed as the New England REZ Conservation Investment Strategy progresses.

Land use

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Agricultural land use How impacts to high value agricultural land were assessed and mapped Impact to Biophysical strategic agricultural land (BSAL)	NSW has around 13,000 kilometres of existing transmission lines, much of which traverses agricultural land uses. Farming can successfully co-exist with transmission lines with grazing and cropping generally able to continue within the easements once they are operational. When planning transmission routes, we aim to minimise impacts to high value agricultural land, including biophysical strategic agricultural land (BSAL), which has high quality soil and water resources capable of sustaining high levels of productivity. We consider BSAL impacts on balance against other key criteria including environmental, people, technical and economic considerations. Impact to BSAL was considered in our decision to move the corridor. The revised corridor crosses fewer areas mapped BSAL compared to the previous corridor. When assessing land use at the desktop level, we use the SEED Portal which is the NSW Government's central resource for environmental data. We used the SEED Portal to map agricultural land across the revised corridor and minimise broad impacts where possible. As we refine the corridor and complete our environmental assessments, we are undertaking more detailed analysis of agricultural land use impacts as part of the EIS. This includes seeking input from landholders and farmers on how they use their land so we can assess impacts at a localised level. An Agriculture and Soils Assessment will be carried out to assess construction and operation activities which may impact soil and agricultural operations and identify mitigation measures. The assessment will consider the project's impact on BSAL, land and soil capability.
Equine Critical Industry Cluster (CIC) Impact to equine CIC land and operations in the region, including thoroughbred studs	EnergyCo recognises the significance of the Upper Hunter region equine critical industry cluster (CIC) to the region. There are numerous examples of equine operations coexisting with transmission structures throughout NSW, including in the New England region. The revised corridor impacts more land mapped within the equine CIC, however the increase is minor. We are working closely with equine stakeholders and the Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association to gather insights on how stud properties currently operate to inform our work in refining the corridor. We are considering options within the revised corridor to mitigate impacts to the equine CIC. We will also consider the project's impact on the equine CIC through assessments for the EIS including an equine health assessment, agriculture and soils assessment, as well as an assessment on the broader impacts on the CIC.
Method for assessing land use impacts Limitations of SEED datasets, desktop environmental assessments and land mapping to assess impacts	We recognise limitations of desktop analysis and public datasets in assessing the impacts of the project. We typically rely on these early in the route investigation process to complete strategic-level analysis before undertaking field investigations and consultation with landholders. Our environmental assessments for the EIS will be informed by a detailed program of on-site investigation work and consultation to provide a comprehensive analysis of the project and its expected impacts.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Land access for field investigations and how this impacts the EIS	We encourage landholders to work with us so we can understand how they use their land to help inform this process. Accessing private property for field investigations is an important part of preparing the EIS. We aim to maximise land access within the corridor so we can complete a comprehensive assessment in the EIS, however land access is voluntary and landholders are under no obligation to permit access to EnergyCo for field investigations. Providing access for field investigations does not impact your rights under the property acquisition process. Where access is not granted to private property during the EIS development process, EnergyCo will work with our regulators to determine the appropriate assessment method to be implemented for the project. For biodiversity, this may include adopting methods such as desktop data and background research, remote surveys (which may include utilising surveys in nearby locations such as publicly accessible land as surrogates), and in some instances adopting conservative assumptions. Remote surveys are undertaken from public property and do not involve access to, or drones over, private land, unless we have permission from the landholder. We may need to prepare a revised biodiversity assessment after exhibition of the EIS to document any additional biodiversity surveys that were carried out. If the project is approved, we may also commit to conducting biodiversity surveys prior to construction to maximise the opportunity for biodiversity surveys and, if necessary, making design changes. For Aboriginal heritage, this may include using the predictive model based on landforms and known or recorded sites, and engaging with Native Title holders, our Registered Aboriginal Parties and Local Aboriginal Land Councils to develop a deeper understanding of the site types across the landscape. Similar to biodiversity, we may commit to preparing a revised Aboriginal cultural heritage report following exhibition of the EIS and conducting field investigations in some locations prior to construction commencing.

Social impact

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Social and community impacts Social impacts resulting from the project	We are carrying out a social impact assessment for the EIS to understand the characteristics and values of the local community. The assessment will identify potential social impacts that may occur as a result of the construction and operation of the project and opportunities to mitigate and manage these impacts. The assessment is informed by targeted consultation with community groups and members to understand views, perceptions and experiences, while considering a range of impacts including to people's way of life, local community, wellbeing, culture, livelihoods and surroundings. We will shortly be inviting feedback from landholders and communities in the revised corridor through an online survey. We will share more detail on how you can participate in an upcoming project update and e-newsletter. Targeted interviews will also be carried out with local community groups in the area.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	The social impact assessment will also consider the potential cumulative social change in the region and identify strategies to minimise, address or manage these impacts and opportunities. Measures to mitigate social impacts from the project may include: • landholder and property management plans developed in consultation with individual landholders hosting transmission infrastructure • workforce management plan which outlines codes of conduct for the construction workforce • industry and Aboriginal participation plan to address local skills gaps, training requirements and employment opportunities • construction communication and engagement strategy outlining how the network operator will engage with local communities • community wellbeing strategy identifying how local communities will be supported, including mental health counselling • targeted engagement forums like community reference groups and First Nations working groups to promote two-way engagement between the network operator and local communities • dedicated funding for community and employment benefit initiatives. Proposed mitigation measures will be described in the social impact assessment in the EIS. The New England REZ will bring long-term benefits to the region, supporting local business opportunities, services, infrastructure and community interests during construction and operation. Key benefits include new income streams and benefit payments for landholders, employment and training programs, community and employment benefits. The delivery of the REZ will support over 6,000 construction jobs and 2,000 ongoing operational jobs in the region. EnergyCo will sharing more about community benefits for the New England region in 2026.

Biosecurity

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Biosecurity obligations for landholders Potential impact on landholders' ability to meet biosecurity and quality assurance program requirements	We take biosecurity seriously through all phases of the project. We are currently undertaking an extensive field work program which involves working with landholders to comply with specific biosecurity requirements in line with the NSW *Biosecurity Act 2015* and any additional property-specific restrictions. The EIS will include an assessment of biosecurity risks and will outline measures to avoid, minimise and manage any biosecurity impacts during construction and operation of the project. Before construction starts, a Biosecurity Management Plan will be prepared by the network operator to manage biosecurity risks during construction and operational activities. The plan will include protocols such as cleaning vehicles, machinery, clothing and boots to remove pathogens, weed seeds and plant bodies. We welcome input from landholders on any specific biosecurity concerns so we can identify appropriate management strategies for their property. The network operator will also meet the minimum protocols set out in any property specific Biosecurity Management Plan.
Anthrax The presence of anthrax presents a biosecurity risk to farmers	Anthrax spores occur naturally in some soils in parts of Australia. Some transmission infrastructure for the REZ is proposed in the Rouchel area where historical anthrax outbreaks have been recorded. EnergyCo recognises anthrax is a human health and biosecurity concern for farmers and is committed to managing any potential risks appropriately. Anthrax is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*, which can form resistant spores that persist in soil. When an infected animal dies, spores can enter the surrounding soil as the carcass decomposes. These spores can remain in soil for extended periods. Anthrax in Australia primarily affects grazing livestock and can occur where animals are exposed to contaminated soil, including in areas where soil has been disturbed. Anthrax risk can be effectively managed through established biosecurity controls, including avoiding disturbance of known sites and/or implementing appropriate hygiene measures, exclusion zones, soil management and vaccinating livestock in known risk areas. We are taking steps to assess anthrax risk in more detail, including engaging a specialist to carry out an Anthrax Risk Assessment and Management Strategy for the EIS. When left undisturbed, anthrax spores in soil pose a low risk to both human and livestock health. While the likelihood of anthrax being encountered or spread during construction activities is very low, we are taking this risk seriously. Construction and operation of the New England REZ will be undertaken in line with expert advice and NSW Government requirements, including the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's anthrax management procedures as well as other best practice biosecurity and environmental management measures. Farming and infrastructure projects continue to operate safely in regions with historical anthrax cases, supported by established biosecurity controls. In areas with a known history of anthrax, we will take additional precautions

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	during construction. This includes working closely with landholders to develop property-specific risk management strategies and biosecurity protocols. We will implement precautionary measures to minimise anthrax risk on farms and during construction activities, such as earthworks, strict biosecurity protocols will be used to prevent exposure and manage contaminated sites safely. These may include: • avoiding disturbance of known contaminated sites, where practicable • adherence to biosecurity measures already in place on the site • minimising the movement of soil between properties • cleaning and decontaminating equipment, machinery and vehicles • implementing personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene measures • supporting landholders with livestock vaccination programs. The Anthrax Risk Assessment and Management Strategy in the EIS will provide a detailed assessment of the potential anthrax risks and proposed management measures to prevent the spread of anthrax spores and ensure the safety of landholders, livestock and workers.

Visual amenity

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Visual impact Landscape and visual amenity impacts from the transmission network	We acknowledge landholders' concerns about the visual impact of towers and lines may cause. We are considering potential visual impacts as we refine the corridor. Where possible and feasible, we are positioning the transmission lines behind ridges or outside property viewpoints, to minimise the impact to landholders. We are preparing a Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (LCVIA) for the EIS which will consider how the project may appear in the landscape. This will be informed by viewpoint photographs taken from representative locations throughout the corridor, which will be used to develop photomontages (artist impressions) of the transmission network, in line with DPHI's guidelines for transmission projects. From early March 2026, we are contacting landholders in the revised corridor to invite them to participate in the visual impact assessment process for the EIS.

Impact to human and livestock health

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Electric and magnetic fields (EMF)	Electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) are a natural part of the environment. EMF are also produced wherever electricity or electrical equipment is used. The effects of EMF from transmission lines are well researched and documented. Transmission lines produce very low frequency EMFs which

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Potential impacts to human and livestock health from EMF	are well below the international standards for human exposure, both at the edge of the transmission easement and directly below the lines and therefore is not considered a risk to human health. According to health authorities, including the World Health Organisation and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), EMFs from electrical transmission lines are not considered a risk to human health. There is no evidence that EMF emissions have a detectable effect on livestock health, milk production, fertility, behaviour or carcass quality. There are around 13,000 kilometres of existing high-voltage transmission lines in NSW, many of which already coexist with a range of agricultural operations like livestock grazing. The EIS will include an assessment of EMFs to ensure the transmission network complies with guidelines from ARPANSA and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) which sets the international standard for human exposure to magnetic fields. The assessment will model the impact of EMFs on surrounding properties, considering distances from buildings and local geographical conditions. This information will guide the project design to ensure compliance with the international standards. Further information is available in our EMF fact sheet.
Air quality Potential impacts to air quality during construction	Construction of the project will involve activities that may affect air quality, including: • dust from activities such as earthworks, rock crushing and screening, excavation, movement of soil and vehicle movements over unpaved surfaces • air emissions from diesel-powered construction vehicles and equipment. These impacts are localised and temporary. They can vary based on weather conditions. We are preparing a detailed assessment of potential air quality impacts as part of the EIS. The contractors appointed to build the project will be subject to strict requirements around air quality in accordance with the project's planning approval conditions and environmental licences. Measures to reduce air quality impacts may include: • covering dirt and rock when it is being moved • spraying water on open stockpiles and roads to keep dust down • using soil binders and dust suppressants on exposed areas • taking extra precautions in high winds or hot, dry periods • monitoring and reporting on air quality data around work sites.
Electrocution risk Potential risk of electrocution due to arcing	Electrocution from transmission lines is extremely rare. When it does occur, it is usually caused by machinery or equipment coming into direct contact with the lines. Transmission lines are supported on tall towers around 60 to 70-metres high which helps avoid contact with vegetation, machinery and vehicles passing under the lines. Arcing from transmission lines is an electrical discharge that occurs when electricity jumps through the air from a high-voltage conductor to another object (such as another conductor, the ground or nearby vegetation).

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	We take precautions when designing the network to minimise the risk of arcing. This includes maintaining vegetation clearances, using high quality insulators, installing protection systems, conducting regular inspections and applying stricter settings on high fire danger days. During construction we will implement various earthing and bonding measures to ensure the new and existing infrastructure is electrically safe.

Impact to environmentally sensitive areas

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Karst cave systems Impacts to karst cave systems, including Timor Caves	Timor Caves is a significant karst landform which supports complex groundwater systems, hydrological process and unique groups of plants and animals. We appreciate the caves are important to the community and other stakeholders including caving groups, bushwalkers and campers. The Timor Caves are listed as a heritage item of local significance. As the caves present a geotechnical risk, we are also evaluating this from a technical and constructability perspective. We are investigating alignment options that avoid impacts to Timor Caves and immediate surrounds. To support this, we are carrying out further work to understand the geotechnical conditions around the caves. We are also engaging with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Karst Management Advisory Committee and the Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society to better understand the extent and community value of the caves. Endangered species in and around the cave system are a key environmental factor we are considering, including impacts to surface vegetation and various species of cave-dwelling bats. This will be addressed in detail as part of the project's EIS including how we will best avoid and minimise impacts on the caves and associated limestone geology.
National Parks and forests Impact to National Parks and State Forests in the project area, including Nundle State Forest	We aim to avoid national parks in our planning, as guided by our environmental planning pillar and the *NSW Transmission Guideline* environment and land use principle. We have sought to avoid national parks and other reserves protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. The revised corridor avoids Ben Halls Gap National Park at Hanging Rock and Aberbaldie Nature Reserve at Walcha. It also avoids (but is adjacent to) Tomalla Nature Reserve, near Nundle State Forest. The revised corridor crosses about 11km of Nundle State Forest, north of Nundle township. We appreciate that state forests have multiple values and uses such as conservation of biodiversity and heritage, protection of water resources, and public recreation such as walking, camping and hunting, in addition to commercial timber production. We are investigating how we can minimise impacts through Nundle State Forest in consultation with Forestry Corporation of NSW, for example by seeking to position the corridor in areas of soft wood plantations rather than native hardwood.

3.2 Landholder and property impacts

Number of submissions which raised this theme: 421

Summary of issues raised

Many submissions raised concerns about the impact of the corridor update on landholders and their property interests in the revised corridor.

The uncertainty associated with the revised corridor was a primary concern of many submissions, citing the change made it difficult for landholders to plan and requesting confirmation as soon as possible as to how their properties may be impacted by the final alignment.

Other matters raised included whether compensation would be adequate and a perception that landholders may be left financially disadvantaged over the long-term. Some submissions cited future land use within transmission line easements and property values as concerns. Concerns were also raised about the property acquisition process, compulsory acquisition powers and whether any properties had already been acquired within the previous corridor.

Submissions frequently raised potential economic and productivity impacts the project may have on the region, particularly the agricultural and equine industries. Impacts to beef production were also cited, along with concern about whether day-to-day farming operations would be impacted.

Other operational and productivity impacts raised included constraints on aerial activities such as crop spraying and drone use, impacts to private airstrips and potential interference with ultra-high frequency (UHF) radio signal communications, which are widely used for short-range communication.

How we acquire land and easements

EnergyCo will acquire land and rights over land, known as easements, to access and use private land where it is needed to build and operate new electricity network infrastructure.

This new infrastructure can include land for energy hubs and easements for transmission lines and access.

If your land is impacted by acquisition:

- in most cases the acquisition will only impact part of your property
- you will be entitled to compensation for the acquisition determined in accordance with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* (Just Terms Act)
- we will work with you to seek agreement on the amount of compensation you will receive
- we assign you a dedicated acquisition manager to help you at every stage of the process.

This process and your entitlement to compensation is in accordance with the Just Terms Act.

In most cases, EnergyCo will not buy land outright. Instead, we will work with landholders to establish and acquire a transmission easement which gives EnergyCo and its agents a legal right to access and use part of the land for the project.

Where EnergyCo acquires an easement, the landholder will remain the owner of the land and can continue using the land, with some restrictions to ensure public safety and reliability of the network.

For transmission easements, we typically need:

- a wider temporary easement (around 250 metres wide) during the construction phase; and
- a narrower permanent easement (typically around 60 to 140 metres wide) which is defined once construction is finished and is to be located within the wider temporary easement.

We aim to agree on compensation for all easements (both temporary and permanent) as part of a single acquisition process. We encourage landholders to engage directly with their dedicated property manager to understand the specifics of this process and how it relates to their circumstances and property.

Further details about this process, including a range of fact sheets, are available to view on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/landowner-info.

Strategic Benefit Payments

The NSW Government is committed to creating an electricity system that is affordable, clean and reliable, under our plan – the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. Landholders who host transmission infrastructure play an essential role in this energy transition.

The Strategic Benefit Payments (SBP) Scheme ensures eligible landholders share in the benefits of this significant economic investment. Payments are made annually over a 20-year period in accordance with the Strategic Benefit Payment Guidelines (SBP Guidelines).

These payments are made in addition to and will not reduce any compensation paid to landholders for transmission easements as required under the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*. Further information is available at energyco.nsw.gov.au/sbp.

Acquisition

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Acquisition timeline When EnergyCo expects to start acquisition for transmission easements	We expect to start negotiating with landholders to acquire easements for access and transmission lines from the second half of 2026. The first formal step involves issuing an 'Opening Letter' that will confirm the details of the acquisition and a sketch plan showing the areas of land identified for temporary and permanent easements. The letter will also include information about the acquisition process and your right to your own legal and valuation advice. Our current priority is to work closely with landholders to understand how they use their land and any constraints that may exist as we refine the corridor for transmission line easements. We are currently carrying out technical and environmental assessments and engagement to refine to a 1km-wide corridor in the coming months. The 1km-wide corridor will guide the development of a more detailed alignment of about 250m wide which will form the basis for planning approvals and future property and easement acquisition. We will continue to engage with landholders and actively seek feedback on the proposed corridor and access tracks before we begin any formal acquisition process later in 2026. We have started acquiring land in some areas for energy hubs (substations) and other project facilities, or at the request of landholders. We will work with neighbouring landholders to discuss the intended use of these sites and how any impacts will be managed. In instances where multiple interests in a property are required to support the project, we will seek to administer a single acquisition process where possible.
Compulsory acquisition When EnergyCo would initiate a compulsory process for easements Concern that EnergyCo has commenced compulsory acquisition process	EnergyCo has not commenced acquisition of transmission line easements for the New England REZ. EnergyCo strongly prefers to resolve acquisitions by negotiated agreement with the landholders. The aim of the acquisition process is to reach an agreement on the amount of compensation landholders are entitled to receive for the required acquisition. We have a minimum of six months to do this before we may commence the acquisition process for landholders. This is known as an acquisition by agreement. If we do not reach an agreement by the end of the minimum six-month period, we may need to initiate the compulsory acquisition process as set out in the Just Terms Act. Compulsory acquisition a measure of last resort. At times it is necessary to allow Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) projects to proceed for the benefit of the wider community. The compulsory acquisition process can only commence following the completion of the minimum negotiation period and would run for 90 days. During this period, EnergyCo would still work to achieve a negotiated agreement.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	If an agreement is not reached by the end of the 90-day period, the required interests will be compulsorily acquired, and the amount of compensation payable will be determined by the NSW Valuer General. EnergyCo is seeking to resolve acquisitions by negotiated agreement and will work collaboratively with landholders to help achieve this outcome.
Compensation How landholders are compensated for acquisition Concern that annual payments are inadequate	Landholders are entitled to two forms of compensation if EnergyCo acquires an interest in their land for a transmission easement: • **an upfront compensation package** in accordance with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* (Just Terms Act) which typically includes the market value of the property interests to be acquired, the reimbursement of reasonable valuation and legal fees, and other types of compensation that may be applicable depending on the acquisition and the relevant circumstances of the landholder. We will work with landholders to understand impacts the project may have on their productivity, business operations and on-farm assets as we plan the route and determine the compensation payable. • **strategic benefit payments** under the Strategic Benefits Payments (SBP) Scheme, established by the NSW Government to recognise the role of landholders hosting transmission lines with a capacity of 330kV or greater. Under the scheme, landholders are paid the equivalent of $200,000 in 2022 dollars, per kilometre of eligible transmission line infrastructure hosted on their property. Payments are paid by the network operator in annual instalments over 20 years, adjusted annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. Strategic benefit payments are in addition to the upfront compensation package landholders are entitled to from EnergyCo for easement acquisition in accordance with the Just Terms Act. More information is available on EnergyCo's website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/sbp. Landholders who will be hosting access tracks would also be paid compensation.
Completed acquisitions How much land was acquired in the previous corridor	Some freehold acquisition has been completed for project infrastructure such as energy hub sites, or at the request of landholders in consideration of their personal circumstances. This includes 2 properties at Sandy Creek which are no longer in the transmission corridor. EnergyCo is currently considering the future use of these properties.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Property valuation How property valuation is determined as part of the compensation package	EnergyCo uses a qualified independent professional valuer to help inform market value compensation and the Letter of Offer EnergyCo will issue to an affected landholder. The valuer will spend time with the landholder to help understand the land value and operations. Landholders are encouraged to engage their own independent valuer and solicitor to help them consider EnergyCo's offer of compensation. EnergyCo will pay for reasonable legal and valuation fees incurred by the landholder. Valuations consider a range of factors which make up market value, including specific attributes like business operations which are unique to the property, to ensure landholders are fairly compensated for the acquisition. EnergyCo will facilitate an exchange of valuation reports to help progress negotiations between the parties. EnergyCo's team of property specialists are available to discuss the acquisition process in further detail and compensation, which will also be set out in the Opening Letters. Landholders' solicitor and valuation advisors should also be able to help landholders understand this process.

Farming and business operations

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Impact to agricultural productivity Impact to agricultural productivity in a prime agricultural area, agribusiness, high value beef production and equine rearing Grazing land and stock movements through easements	NSW has more than 13,000 kilometres of existing high-voltage transmission lines which already successfully coexist with a wide range of agricultural operations, including grazing, cropping, equine and viticulture. Transmission easements are carefully managed to maintain safety and access while allowing ongoing productive use of the land beneath and around the infrastructure. Once lines are built, farming activities like livestock grazing can continue within an easement. Some activities may be subject to restrictions for safety and operational reasons, like height restrictions for plant and equipment. We are inviting input from landholders to understand how they use their land, including details of farming and business activities, so we can plan the lines with the least impact on these operations.
Impact on private airstrips and aviation activities Some submissions queried the impact that the transmission line route will have on local airstrips Aerial activity relating to farming operations such as fixed-wing fertiliser spreading, pest control, seed broadcasting and drone work	Aerial activities can continue in the vicinity of transmission lines, as they are clearly visible from the air. Flying aircraft need to be aware of the location of transmission lines and structures and comply with Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) regulations. Consideration of aviation impacts is an input into the design of the proposed transmission infrastructure. During the design process we will seek to minimise our impacts on aviation activities. Where this is not possible, we will work with operators and impacted landholders to relocate airstrips and mitigate impacts to their existing operations. We encourage landholders who carry out aviation activities to contact us so we can understand aerial operations on their land and use of private airstrips, including weed spraying and other activities. An aviation assessment will be developed as part of the EIS and include a detailed assessment on the potential impacts to aviation safety from

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	construction and operation of the transmission network. The assessment will consider various aviation activities including air transport operations, emergency service operations, aerial baiting and fertiliser, pest and crop spraying.
European Union deforestation regulation Farmers may be unable to sell livestock in the European Union due to vegetation clearing in transmission easements	The European Union Deforestation Regulation relates to deforestation for agricultural purposes, whereas EnergyCo would be removing vegetation for the purpose of building transmission infrastructure and therefore is not expected to affect a farmer's ability to sell livestock into the European Union.
Impact to radio signal Transmission lines would disrupt ultra-high frequency (UHF) radio signals	Transmission lines can sometimes affect UHF radio, but the impact is usually minor and very localised. UHF radio typically operates around 300 MHz to 3 GHz, which is different from powerline frequencies which are around 50 Hz in Australia. Transmission lines do not directly transmit on UHF frequencies, but they can still cause interference indirectly. Impacts may include static or reduced clarity when near transmission structures (such as directly under the line). Despite the slight signal distortion, communication usually remains usable and total signal loss is rare.

Landholder impacts

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Uncertainty over property impacts Inability to plan (e.g. plans to build new homes, sell property, generational legacy) Uncertainty about potential impacts of the project / whether properties are subject to easement acquisition How long it will be before landholders have certainty over whether they are affected	We recognise the transmission corridor brings uncertainty for landholders, particularly while we are still working within a broad investigation area. We are working to confirm the final locations of transmission line easements as quickly as we can in consultation with landholders. We also recognise landholders may have plans in place for their property, such as Development Approvals. Where landholders have shared these details with us, we have included these constraints in our ongoing design development. We will work with landholders to better understand existing land uses to minimise our impacts. The acquisition process will take into account property assets, proposed developments and other considerations. We will work with landholders to bring forward the formal acquisition process under hardship grounds if this is their preference. EnergyCo has previously brought forward property acquisition in response to landholders' personal circumstance in line with our hardship policy. We encourage affected landholders to speak with their dedicated EnergyCo Property Manager about their individual circumstances to understand what options are available to them.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Mental health Stress of the project and associated mental health impacts being experienced by landholders and local communities	EnergyCo is committed to supporting landholders affected by the project and recognises the corridor refinement process is an uncertain time. We provide landholders with contact details for mental health and wellbeing support services at multiple stages throughout the process. These services operate independently of EnergyCo and provide free, confidential and 24/7 support. There are services available to directly affected landholders and their families, as well as other members of the community who may require support. Visit energyco.nsw.gov.au/landowner-info to view a full list of support services or view our mental health support for residents fact sheet.
Impact on property values Concern about decline in property values in proximity to the transmission network	Understandably, some communities have raised concerns about potential effects on property values. For landholders hosting transmission line easements, these factors are considered as part of the property valuation process for easement acquisition. Under the Just Terms Act, the property acquisition process is intended to compensate landholders for the impact on their property value due to the project. It also considers the impact to the land and operations not directly impacted by the easement. Impacted landholders will be encouraged to obtain their own independent legal and valuation advice from the commencement of an acquisition program to help them work through these matters. Reasonable costs of that advice will be reimbursed by EnergyCo. Historical data shows that property markets in Australia are resilient, with any initial hesitation typically short-lived and minimal. Broader market forces (such as supply and demand dynamics, interest rates, and access to local amenities) remain the primary drivers of property value.

3.3 Consultation

Number of submissions which raised this theme: 335

Summary of issues raised

Submissions from affected landholders indicated frustration about the timing of the new study area and felt they were not given more notice prior to the change being announced.

Many submissions raised concerns about the adequacy of consultation and transparency about decision-making and assessments undertaken. Many requested further technical information and an understanding of what the route selection process involves.

As a result of feedback received, EnergyCo released the *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report (November 2025)* to explain the assessments and evidence which underpinned the corridor update.

Feedback on our engagement

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Feedback deadline Request for additional time to provide feedback	We recognise the corridor update involves a significant amount of detail and heard the community would like more time to provide feedback and understand the new study area. As a result, we extended the 'have your say' period to provide more time to review the information provided and work with our team on constraints mapping, while balancing the needs of the project timeline as we refine the new study area to 1km-wide in early 2026. The extension means communities had 10 weeks to provide submissions in total. Direct consultation with landholders will be ongoing as the we develop the corridor. We will continue to work with landholders throughout the preparation of the project's EIS, during and after the public exhibition.
Consultation prior to publishing the revised route Landholders were not consulted prior to changing the corridor	EnergyCo published the revised corridor for consultation in October 2025. Most affected landholders were notified the day prior and this marked the start of our engagement with communities and stakeholders on the revised route. It was necessary to begin consultation after we had certainty on the need to move the route and had completed a desktop analysis of landholdings within the study area to source ownership and contact details.
Consultation with newly impacted landholders Concern about an equitable timeframe for engagement for new landholders in the revised corridor	Transmission route selection is an iterative process, with refinements made over time in response to consultation and more detailed technical and environmental assessments. We recognise the need to consult effectively with new landholders that are introduced to the corridor following these refinements. Our consultation approach for all landholders, regardless of when they are identified in the corridor, includes direct engagement over a period of at least several months (where landholders are willing to engage with us) before beginning any formal acquisition negotiations. Our engagement with landowners in the previous and revised study corridor does not focus on corridor selection as this is informed by our route selection evaluation guided by EnergyCo's planning pillars which are described further in section 3.4.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	We seek input from landholders on how they use their land and constraints that may impact a transmission easement as we refine the alignment within the corridor. We continue refining proposed easement locations even after initiating acquisition negotiations, such as refining layouts to achieve an agreed outcome. While refining the alignment, EnergyCo reviews constraints and preferences across a number of property holdings either side any one individual property to help determine the most suitable route for the transmission lines to minimise impacts to farming and other important land uses. Following the decision to revise the corridor, we extended the development timeline for the project to allow more time to complete robust assessments and engage with landholders and communities. The EIS will now be lodged in the second half of 2026. Corridor refinements can still occur after acquisition negotiations have commenced or after the EIS has been lodged for public exhibition. This helps ensure landholder feedback is considered in the final route.
Information session format Preference for public meetings instead of drop-in community information sessions	We planned a series of drop-in style community information sessions in October and November 2025 so people could speak with technical specialists, view maps and have their specific questions answered by our team. This one-on-one format was reported to be valuable by many attendees who took the opportunity to speak with our team about their property and individual circumstances, and to hear about the project as it relates to their area. In response to feedback, we adjusted the format of 2 planned sessions in Gundy and Walcha to a public meeting format with questions answered by members of EnergyCo's senior leadership team. A community information session summary was published on our website following the sessions. We also hosted a webinar in November 2025 where project representatives answered questions from the community.

3.4 Route selection, design and constructability

Number of submissions which raised this theme: 132

Summary of issues raised

EnergyCo's route selection evaluation was a key focus of feedback. Many submissions objected to the rationale for the corridor change and questioned if the new study area represented the most suitable option.

Many submissions questioned the suitability of the new study area from a constructability and safety perspective. Some people felt the original route was less intrusive and avoided concentrated rural residential areas or passed through larger grazing properties.

Concerns were raised about whether the new study area represented a previously dismissed route which was assessed in the early planning stages for the project and called for greater transparency about the decision-making process for route selection.

Some submissions advocated for alternative approaches, including co-location with existing transmission infrastructure or undergrounding, which they considered less impactful options.

Route selection and the *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report*

In line with a typical route selection process, EnergyCo has carried out more in-depth assessments and engaged with landholders over time, which has helped inform potential tower locations and access track arrangements to reach project sites.

As the design progressed from strategic planning into detailed, tower-by-tower design, several constraints were identified. To resolve the corridor challenges, we needed to make multiple refinements to the existing corridor or identify an alternative corridor solution.

We heard during the 'have your say' engagement that the community would like more detailed information on our decision to move the study corridor and the assessment work that led to identifying the revised corridor.

EnergyCo released an additional document, the *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report* which details our assessment of different corridors and technical assessments undertaken to inform the change.

To support the release of this report, EnergyCo hosted a webinar where subject matter experts presented on the detailed assessment carried out to inform the new study area, including how EnergyCo assessed firefighting constraints. The webinar also discussed the construction challenges associated with the previous corridor and why it was not suitable to be progressed. A recording of the webinar is available on the project website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez.

Assessment approach

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Assessment approach Request for greater transparency on the analysis underpinning EnergyCo's decision to move the corridor Perception that criteria like cost and convenience were favoured over community impact	We published the *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report* in November 2025 which outlines the analysis underpinning our decision to move the corridor. Our evaluation found the revised corridor allows for safer and more efficient construction and reduced environmental and road impacts. Reducing overall impacts will provide better short and long-term outcomes for the community. The report is based on an in-depth comparative assessment of the previous study corridor and the revised corridor using a multi-criteria analysis (MCA). This analysis is based on the NSW Transmission Guideline (2024) and EnergyCo's planning pillars, which have been used throughout the route selection process to compare and evaluate corridor options and refinements. The planning pillars used by EnergyCo are technical, economic, strategic, environmental and people. Our assessment found that the revised corridor would deliver a better overall outcome for the project, local communities and energy consumers when considered across all our planning pillars. The outcomes are available to view in the *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report.*

Alternative options

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Aberbaldie-Niangala travelling stock reserve (TSR) route The revised route resembles the previously dismissed TSR route	EnergyCo assessed the TSR option in 2024 following requests from the community to increase the use of public land by locating the transmission lines within the TSR. Our assessment found locating the transmission lines within the TSR provided less favourable outcomes against multiple criteria, most notably impacts to private dwellings/landholders and high biodiversity value, and it was not progressed on this basis. The findings are available in our August 2024 report. The northern end of the revised corridor is in the vicinity of the Aberbaldie-Niangala TSR (crossing it in 2 locations), however we are not seeking to locate the lines within the TSR itself. The TSR remains unsuitable for the lines, consistent with the findings of our 2024 assessment. The TSR assessment report identified that the area surrounding the TSR offers more favourable terrain, improved accessibility, and better bushfire management. The revised corridor takes advantages of these favourable conditions. The *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report* outlines how we considered the TSR in our assessment of the revised corridor.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Co-locating with existing transmission lines The route should follow existing 330kV lines	We recognise community interest in co-locating the new transmission lines with existing infrastructure to help consolidate impacts on landholders. There are two existing Transgrid transmission lines in the region between Muswellbrook and the New England REZ. Refer to appendix F for a map. The map also shows a route option following Transgrid's existing 330kV easement which was suggested in some submissions from the community. The existing Transgrid easements are only wide enough for a single 330kV transmission line (around 60m) which is not wide enough to host the new lines required for the New England REZ. The new dual 500kV lines would require an additional 140m-wide easement next to the existing easement (generally 70m wide for each 500kV line). This would increase the number of landholders and dwellings impacted by the project, particularly in more densely populated areas around the existing easements near Scone and Tamworth. EnergyCo originally sought to co-locate part of the corridor with Transgrid's existing 330kV Line 84 between Muswellbrook and Tamworth. However, following a more detailed investigation, we found that co-location of the new dual 500kV transmission lines with the existing 330kV lines would be challenging due to the terrain. Co-location would involve building new transmission towers beside live 330kV lines which presents safety and constructability risks, particularly in areas of steep terrain and challenging access. In many locations, the existing transmission lines do not have suitable access to support an adjacent tower due to the terrain and the design of the existing access tracks. Existing towers were often placed in the most optimal locations considering the challenging topography. Constructing new towers alongside them would require placement on steep hillsides or nearby peaks, making it challenging to safely move equipment to and from site, extensive earthworks and a greater environmental impact.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Western 330kV route option The corridor should follow existing lines from Muswellbrook and connect directly to central hub This option has improved terrain and accessibility compared to the proposed route Sections could be undergrounded where needed to avoid landowner impacts in developed areas	We have considered options that would follow Transgrid's existing 330kV Lines 83 and 88 easements between Muswellbrook and Tamworth, then onto central hub. The existing lines pass through developed areas around Scone and Tamworth. These regional centres have experienced significant growth since the lines were first built more than 40 years ago. This route would impact a much higher number of landholders – up to 370, compared to around 100 in the proposed corridor[1]. Significantly more dwellings (homes) would be within 250m of the transmission easement – up to 330, compared to 5 in the proposed corridor. This is a major impact. EnergyCo's proposed corridor is further away from these regional centres and passes through larger landholdings with fewer dwellings. This helps reduce the overall impact to dwellings from visual amenity, construction and other impacts. Adding two new lines next to Lines 83 and 88, as proposed in some submissions, may have areas of flatter terrain however it is not practical due to the very high landholder impact as it brings the alignment closer to townships and dwellings. This route also has some constructability concerns associated with co-locating with around 200km of existing lines. These challenges are described on the previous page of this report. Some submissions queried if undergrounding could be considered to avoid impacts to landowners and dwellings. This is not a practical solution as it would require extensive trenching of wide easements, presenting significant constructability, cost, land use and environmental constraints. Undergrounding in general is not suitable for the New England REZ for a range of factors, which are outlined later in this report. These challenges apply to undergrounding for the entire corridor or if only applied in localised contexts. We have provided a map in appendix F which shows Transgrid's existing 330kV lines which form the basis of the western 330 kV route options suggested by the community in some submissions.
New England Highway The route should follow the road reserve along the New England Highway	While the New England Highway between Muswellbrook and the REZ generally follows flatter terrain which is favourable for construction, this route presents several challenges which make it unsuitable: • the corridor would cross near, or through, various developed townships along the highway including Aberdeen, Scone, Wingen, Murrurundi, Tamworth and Bendemeer • the 140m-wide transmission easement required for twin 500kV lines cannot be accommodated wholly within the road corridor and therefore the lines would still need to cross adjacent land. A widened easement would place the alignment in proximity and affect a significantly greater number of landholders compared to the revised corridor • flatter sections of the New England Highway, such as between Tamworth and Bendemeer, already host transmission lines. This means the revised corridor would need to be located along steeper and more challenging terrain in these sections.

[1] Based on a notional 250m-wide corridor.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Upgrading existing transmission lines Existing 330kV lines should be upgraded as an alternative to building the project	The existing 330kV transmission lines that currently transfer power between Bayswater, Tamworth and Armidale, and between Armidale, Kempsey and Newcastle, are operated by Transgrid. The lines are running at near full capacity and are not suitable for the large amounts of energy to be transferred for the New England REZ. Even if the REZ operated at a reduced capacity, these lines would be insufficient. Transgrid lines 83, 84 and 88 between Bayswater and Tamworth and 85 and 86 between Tamworth and Kentucky are 330kV single circuit lines. The New England REZ network infrastructure project needs to provide 6 GW of new network capacity through the first two stages, which requires four circuits at 500 kV voltage in addition to the existing lines. EnergyCo considered whether the existing lines could be upgraded to meet the capacity requirements for the REZ however this option was excluded early in the evaluation process due to a number of constraints: • high construction impacts – the existing cannot be updated to meet the new capacity of the REZ. The existing lines would need to be taken down, easements widened and new infrastructure built. • lengthy power outages during construction – modification and construction around the existing lines would require extensive power outages. This would have a major impact on the operation of the National Energy Market (NEM) and would not be viable due to the number of outages required, along with the duration of the outages. • high impact to regional centres – some townships along the existing transmission line route (including Tamworth) have experienced significant growth since the lines were first built more than 40 years ago. Co-locating transmission lines would mean widening the easement which would increase the number of impacted landholders and dwellings close to transmission lines.
Undergrounding Transmission lines should be built underground to minimise impacts	EnergyCo is proposing overhead transmission lines for the New England REZ which provide the best overall solution when considering community, environment, economic and technical factors. The REZ has an intended network transfer capacity of 8 GW requiring twin 500kV double circuit transmission lines in an overhead configuration. Challenges associated with underground cables at this capacity include: • Construction: underground cables for high-voltage, long-distance transmission are significantly larger and heavier than overhead conductors and are more complex to install. They require large, deep trenches, resulting in substantially greater construction impacts. • Cooling and thermal management challenges: underground cables retain heat in surrounding soil, limiting natural dissipation and reducing operating capacity. Achieving the same capacity as overhead lines would require additional cables or active cooling systems, which would be costly, operationally complex and uneconomical over long distances. • Time and cost: construction would require extensive trenching and specialist installation methods to lay heavy cables without damage. Due to their large bend radii, underground cables cannot navigate terrain or avoid constraints as flexibly as overhead transmission lines.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	• Repairs and maintenance: underground cables require ongoing maintenance. Repairs require specialised skills, plant and equipment, often involving extensive excavation. Faults take significantly longer to locate and repair than overhead lines, which can prolong outages and disrupt energy supply. • Environment and land use impacts: underground transmission is unsuitable in complex or sensitive areas such as rivers, cliffs and Aboriginal heritage sites, whereas overhead lines can more readily avoid or minimise impacts. Extensive trenching disturbs soil and biodiversity and can make the land unsuitable for farming activities. These challenges apply to undergrounding for the entire corridor or if only applied in localised contexts.
Need for transmission corridor near Walcha Would the corridor still be needed in this location if the central south hub is not built	We expect the central south hub is required based on current generator interest. There are currently no confirmed projects connecting to the New England REZ transmission network because an access scheme has not yet been declared and access rights have not yet been allocated. Access rights essentially grant permission to a generation or storage project to connect to the new transmission network – this is separate and in addition to a generator obtaining its planning approval. EnergyCo is currently working on a draft access scheme declaration for the New England REZ which we expect to publish for consultation in 2026. We are in ongoing discussions with developers to understand which projects may connect to the new REZ transmission network and Transgrid's existing network. Our industry engagement to date indicates there is more than enough generator demand to fill the intended network capacity of the REZ. Transmission takes many years to plan and build – typically much longer than solar and wind projects – which is why we are developing the network ahead of generator projects. This approach helps ensure the network is energised in time to keep our energy system secure as coal-fired power stations retire. There will still be time to adjust this later once we know which projects are intending to connect to the new REZ network. We are proposing to build five new energy hubs – a type of substation – which will provide a connection point for generators in the surrounding area. The size and staging of each hub will be guided by generator demand, which will become clearer as projects are approved and awarded access rights to the network. If generator demand continues to support it, we will build central south hub. Even if central south hub were not built, we would still construct the transmission lines in the revised corridor to connect our central hubs to the existing grid at Muswellbrook. This is the preferred location for the corridor regardless of whether the central south hub is built.

Constraints in the revised corridor

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Weather conditions The corridor is at high elevation and experiences extreme weather patterns Weather conditions will make the transmission network unsafe and unreliable The project will experience cost increases and delays due to weather	Local conditions, including weather, are a key consideration in the design and construction program for the transmission project. We are designing the project in accordance with Australian standards and guidelines which consider technical requirements for various weather conditions (including snow, ice, wind, flooding and other factors). We understand areas of the New England region experience weather conditions like snow and high winds, and this is considered in relevant Australian Standards like *AS7000 - Overhead Line Design*, *AS1170.2 - Wind Actions*, and *AS1170.3 - Snow and Ice Actions*. Transmission lines are constructed and operate in other parts of Australia with significantly more extreme wind conditions, including coastal regions in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland which are categorised as 'cyclonic' areas and have design wind speeds well in excess of those recorded with the New England REZ corridor. There are also examples of transmission lines in NSW that traverse areas of higher snowfall, including the existing Snowy Hydro lines that have been operational for over 50 years. The Snowy Hydro 2.0 Transmission Connection Project and HumeLink, both under construction, also traverse the Snowy Mountains region. Standard engineering practices for high wind areas include adopting more robust structural designs to ensure the towers can withstand the environmental conditions expected over the lifecycle of the asset. Contractors will take account of local weather conditions in their construction planning and construction programs in line with best industry practice.
Terrain and elevation The revised corridor has steeper grades and greater length at a higher elevation	Complex terrain presents challenges for transmission construction, and this was a key driver in our decision to move the corridor. While the revised corridor contains some areas of complex terrain, this is significantly less than the previous corridor. The revised corridor: • has less aggregate elevation change than the previous corridor, and we expect this will improve further during detailed design • requires less work in steep terrain, including more standard tower pads, shorter and less steep access tracks and more conventional construction methods making it safer, quicker and easier to build • is more accessible and has fewer areas requiring non-conventional construction activities such as heavy-lift helicopters for tower erection. The local terrain is being considered through the design process: • transmission towers can follow ridge lines or span valleys, avoiding the steepest areas of terrain • geotechnical studies are being undertaken to understand local rock and soil conditions as a key input into the design and construction of access tracks and tower foundations • through the network operator process, we are working with contractors that are experienced at building in a range of conditions and will design the project to suit the local conditions.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	The terrain in the western corridor is generally more favourable however it is not being pursued due to the landowner and property impacts outlined in section 3.4 (page 39 – 40).
Access tracks and local roads Existing tracks are unsealed and unsuitable to support construction EnergyCo has misunderstood the accessibility of the corridor based on maps of existing tracks	Our assessment found the revised study corridor provides better access because the topography is more favourable. Compared to the previous corridor, fewer towers will need to be accessed by tracks with gradients exceeding 18% and the total length of access tracks is also shorter. Our constructability findings for the *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report* were informed by public aerial LiDAR surveys. We used this to assess where access tracks could be built for each tower pad. This provided us with a more accurate and detailed understanding of construction outcomes and potential impacts compared to earlier route investigations. The network operator will need to build new tracks or upgrade existing ones to make them suitable for construction. Engineering practices to build safe access tracks include: • avoiding very steep slopes and limiting gradients • cut and fill earthworks to create an even road surface • building a stable road base using geotextiles, compacted gravel or crushed rock • retaining walls, benching and batters to reduce slope angles and prevent slips • vegetation or hydroseeding to stabilise exposed soil • drainage infrastructure and erosion and sediment controls. The final location and number of access tracks is still to be completed, as well as the scope of potential upgrades that may be needed. Once determined, the indicative location of access tracks will be included on easement maps for landholders. Where topography and other constraints allow some flexibility, we will work with landowners on access track locations to achieve mutually beneficial arrangements. Landholders are compensated for access tracks on their land as part of the property acquisition process set out under the Just Terms Act.
Geology and ground conditions The terrain poses a risk due to basalt-based soils	Transmission towers are built through areas of varying geology across Australia and internationally. There are various proven engineering techniques available to address a wide variety of geological conditions, including basalt-based soils. Along the proposed corridor, we anticipate most tower foundations will be bored into rock underneath the top layer of soil to provide a stable base for transmission lines. In some cases, this might be replaced by other structural elements such as strand anchors. As part of our ongoing field work program, we are carrying out geotechnical investigations in the corridor so we can better understand the ground conditions in the area. The findings will be used to inform the detailed design for the network.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Local roads The local road network is unsuitable for construction Construction traffic is a safety hazard for road users	We are preparing a traffic assessment for the EIS which will identify local road improvements or upgrades that may be required to ensure the project can be built while minimising disruption and maintaining road safety. We will also work with the future network operator to identify specific local requirements to ensure the safety of road users, for example, staging oversize and over-mass vehicle movements around school bus operations.

3.5 Strategic

Number of submissions which raised this theme: 381

Summary of issues raised

Some submissions raised cumulative impacts, particularly in the context of the level of network infrastructure proposed in the vicinity of the revised corridor including energy hubs and potential for large-scale renewable energy developments. These submissions noted the pressure on regional capacity to cater for the developments and their combined effects on local roads.

A number of submissions acknowledged the role of transmission infrastructure in supporting future energy needs and the broader transition to renewable energy sources, while maintaining concerns about the location, scale and impact of the project. Some requested further information around the overall impact to project cost.

Project costs

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Cost and impact of revising the corridor Perception about increased project delivery cost being passed onto taxpayers Request for cost information including modelling assumptions	Moving the corridor to a location that is easier and safer to build will keep overall costs lower, representing better value for money for energy consumers who will ultimately pay for the project through their energy bills. Project costs are commercial in confidence while EnergyCo is in a live procurement process for the New England REZ network operator. However, the revised route provides significant cost and time saving over the previous route due to it having more favourable terrain. Our methodology for assessing cost impacts in the *Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report* followed a typical process for developing cost estimates for a project of this nature, factoring in construction costs, client costs, escalation and contingency. The underlying assumptions (e.g. inflation) used were consistent across the two corridors to ensure the comparison was like-for-like. Differences in the respective cost estimate were as a result of corridor specifics, driven by the constructability metrics published in the report. The project is subject to extensive regulatory oversight to ensure it is delivered in a cost-effective way, including by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) and AusEnergy Services Ltd (ASL), which acts as the independent Consumer Trustee under the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (EII Act). The final cost for the project will be released publicly once the AER makes its revenue determination for the project, which will occur after the preferred network operator has been appointed. The REZ network infrastructure will be financed by the future network operator with the costs to be recovered from consumers through the regulatory framework under the EII Act.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Cost of changing the route Request for breakdown of development costs spent on previous corridor	The New England REZ is in the planning phase and route refinements are a normal part of the project development process. EnergyCo has made ongoing adjustments in response to field work, consultation and technical assessments which become increasingly detailed over time. A detailed breakdown for the October 2025 corridor update is not available. Any associated costs form part of EnergyCo's overall development costs for the project. EnergyCo meets its statutory reporting obligations by publishing relevant financial and project information, including Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) cost data, in its Annual Reports. These reports are publicly available and provide transparent detail on project expenditure, delivery progress and associated costs.

REZ capacity and demand

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Generator demand Capacity and scale of the REZ network Requests to reduce the capacity of the REZ	Our industry engagement to date supports that generator demand is strong enough to justify the full capacity of the New England REZ, as well as the five proposed energy hubs. The staging of each energy hub will be guided by generator demand, which will be confirmed as projects are approved and awarded access rights to the network. New England has some of Australia's best renewable energy resources, especially wind. This is reflected in the operational projects like Sapphire and White Rock wind farms as well as a growing pipeline of projects in the planning system. There is considerable interest from renewable energy developers and projects are continuing to evolve. Studies have consistently shown transmission is the biggest barrier to renewable energy development. Transmission takes many years to plan and build – typically much longer than solar and wind projects – which is why we are developing the network before generators have received their investment and planning approvals. The Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap ensures we develop transmission and generation and storage concurrently to deliver the most cost-effective solutions for energy consumers. We are actively monitoring generator developments and taking a flexible design approach to ensure the network infrastructure aligns with actual demand. We will keep the community informed as further details become available about generator connections to the REZ.
Central south energy hub The hub is not required based on current developer demand around Walcha	There are five energy hubs (substations) proposed for the New England REZ network: central A, central B, central south, east, and north. Central hub A and B will be the largest and most important hubs in the network, connecting to nearby generators as well as Transgrid's existing network.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	Central south, north and east hubs will primarily act as connection points for nearby generation and storage projects. The size and scale of each hub will be guided by generation demand, which will become clearer once we know which projects obtain planning approval and access rights. There is currently one generation project in the public domain around central south hub (Origin Energy's Skye Ridge Wind Farm). We anticipate broader interest in the area around the hub based on current feedback from developers. Some projects are still in early planning phases, which includes discussions with potential host landholders, and are therefore not yet in the public domain. We will keep the community informed as developments are confirmed. Projects that are in the public domain are shown on our online interactive map. All projects are in the development stage and no projects planning to connect to the new infrastructure have planning approval, reached financial close or have access rights. We will continue to monitor generator activity and engage with proponents to ensure the scale and timing of the central south hub delivery reflects actual project demand.
REZ network capacity Has the capacity changed over time and has EnergyCo consulted the community on the change Difference between network and generation capacity	**Network capacity** is the maximum amount of electricity the network can safely transfer to the grid at any one time. It is different to **generation capacity**, which is the maximum amount of electricity that renewable energy projects (i.e. solar and wind) can generate at one time when operating at full capacity. We need more generation capacity than network capacity because not all generators will be operating at maximum capacity all of the time. The intended network capacity of the New England REZ was legislated in December 2020 through the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (EII Act). The former Minister for Energy declared the REZ in December 2021 via the Renewable Energy Zone (New England) Declaration Order. Both the legislation and declaration order include an intended network capacity of 8 GW. EnergyCo's public communication on the New England REZ historically refers to a maximum network capacity of 8 GW, in line with the EII Act and REZ declaration. No consultation has been carried out on a change to the network capacity as it has remained at 8 GW. EnergyCo is proposing to deliver 6 GW of network capacity through the first two stages of the REZ network infrastructure project. An additional 2 GW of network capacity may be delivered in future if needed to meet energy demand, however this would be subject to a separate planning approval process and community consultation. This would bring the total network capacity of the REZ to 8 GW in line with the declaration order. In August 2025, EnergyCo published the *New England REZ Generation and Storage Consultation Paper* for public consultation. We said the New England REZ could support around 12 GW of generation (from solar and wind) with 4 GW of storage to fill the initial 6 GW of network capacity from the REZ network infrastructure project.

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	Further detail is provided in our coordinating generation and storage projects fact sheet.
Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) forecasts AEMO modelling suggests the full capacity of the REZ is not needed	The New England REZ is legislated to deliver 8 GW transfer capacity under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. EnergyCo is focused on delivering the first 6 GW under stage 1 and 2 which aligns with the Consumer Trustee's most recent Infrastructure Investment Objectives Report (IIO). AEMO's draft 2026 Integrated System Plan (ISP) sets out the required generation, storage and network investments to meet the net zero transition by 2050 and deliver market benefits. AEMO develops a new ISP every 2 years and is currently developing the 2026 ISP. The draft ISP was published for consultation in December 2025 and references 6.5 GW of forecast generation capacity for the New England REZ. This is based on modelling for stage 1 of the REZ network infrastructure project. The draft 2026 ISP does not provide modelling for stage 2, stating that this to be evaluated under the *NSW Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (NSW), which considers the long-term financial interests of NSW electricity consumers. This is why AEMO's generation forecast in the draft ISP is lower than the EnergyCo's expected total generation capacity for the REZ. EnergyCo is working with AEMO to inform the development of the final 2026 ISP which will be published in June 2026. The Consumer Trustee ultimately authorises the project and EnergyCo will align with their assessment. The Consumer Trustee acts independently of the NSW Government in an approval role to ensure EnergyCo projects are in the long-term financial interests of NSW electricity consumers to improve the affordability, reliability, security and sustainability of electricity supply.

Cumulative impacts

What we heard	EnergyCo response
Pressure on regional capacity Capacity of the region to cater for large scale renewable energy development	EnergyCo is working across government to carefully and collaboratively plan the New England REZ. We are working with councils and other stakeholders to inform how the REZ development will be managed while maximising benefits from this significant investment into the region. To support this work, we have completed *Regional Major Infrastructure Studies* to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing the local area. The studies consider the impact of other industries within the region, including mining, in addition to electricity infrastructure. We have completed our initial investigations across five priority areas: housing and workforce accommodation, local supply chain, water and wastewater security, waste and circular economy, and jobs, training

What we heard	EnergyCo response
	and skills. These studies aim to provide a point-in-time analysis based on a 'worst case scenario' in that they assume many projects will be developed concurrently. They are not intended to provide all the answers, but they allow us to start thinking about the challenges and opportunities from the same place. The studies will guide what action is needed to enable the delivery of the REZ. In December 2025, EnergyCo invited the community to share feedback through a survey on priority topics for REZ delivery. An online survey was open until 3 April 2026 so community members could provide input on the key topics for their local area. Local insights from communities, council and stakeholders will help focus efforts where they are needed most and respond to challenges and opportunities as the project progresses. The next phase of this work involves developing a long list of enabling infrastructure initiatives in consultation with councils and government agencies. We will keep communities informed as this progresses. Later in 2026, we will establish the New England Regional Steering Committee comprising key government agencies and councils in the region. The committee will deliver whole-of-government actions to mitigate impacts in the REZ and deliver long-term legacy benefits for local communities.
Road transport Delivery of large scale renewable energy equipment to the REZ	EnergyCo is working with Transport for NSW and other road authorities to prepare for increased vehicle movements on local, regional and state roads during construction of the New England REZ network infrastructure project and renewable generation developments with planned connections to the REZ. We will assess and manage road impacts by: • carrying out road and traffic assessments to determine what road upgrades are required to deliver the network infrastructure, as part of the project's EIS • leading the Port to REZ road upgrade program which involves upgrading intersections and pinch-points between the Muswellbrook and the New England REZ to allow large renewable energy components such as wind turbine blades, tower segments and transformers, transported on oversize and over-mass (OSOM) vehicles to move safely to renewable energy projects • working with councils and Transport for NSW to coordinate any necessary upgrades to local roads, which may include sealing and widening, pullover bays, signage and intersection improvements to ensure safety and minimise disruption for road users. More information on the Port to REZ road upgrade program is available at energyco.nsw.gov.au/port2rez.

4 Next steps

All submissions received during the engagement period are being considered alongside technical, environmental, cultural heritage and planning assessments for the project.

Feedback will help inform:

- refinement of the 3km-wide study area to a 1km-wide corridor
- identification of areas where impacts should be avoided or minimised
- priorities for further investigation such as field work and assessments.

Feedback received forms an important input as EnergyCo progresses planning for the New England REZ. There will be further opportunity for input and engagement with landholders will be ongoing.

EnergyCo is considering the feedback received as we refine the study area from 3km-wide down to a 1km-wide study corridor. We have already made adjustments based on what we have learned from landholders, community groups, and councils. We will contact landholders directly before the corridor is published.

We are also working towards confirming a 250m-wide corridor for assessment in the environmental impact statement (EIS) which we expect to lodge for public exhibition with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure in the second half of 2026. The final easement will be around 140m wide, generally 70m for each 500kV line.

There will be further opportunities to have your say as the project progresses, including the exhibition of the EIS.

Share your feedback

Consultation with landholders and the community will continue as we refine the corridor throughout 2026. You will also have an opportunity to provide feedback when the project's environmental impact statement (EIS) goes on public exhibition in the second half of 2026.

EnergyCo welcomes your feedback on an ongoing basis as the project is developed.

Stay up to date with planning for the New England REZ by subscribing for email updates or by contacting us on:

Phone 1800 061 114 (toll free)

Email nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au

Visit energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez to find our latest updates, fact sheets and more

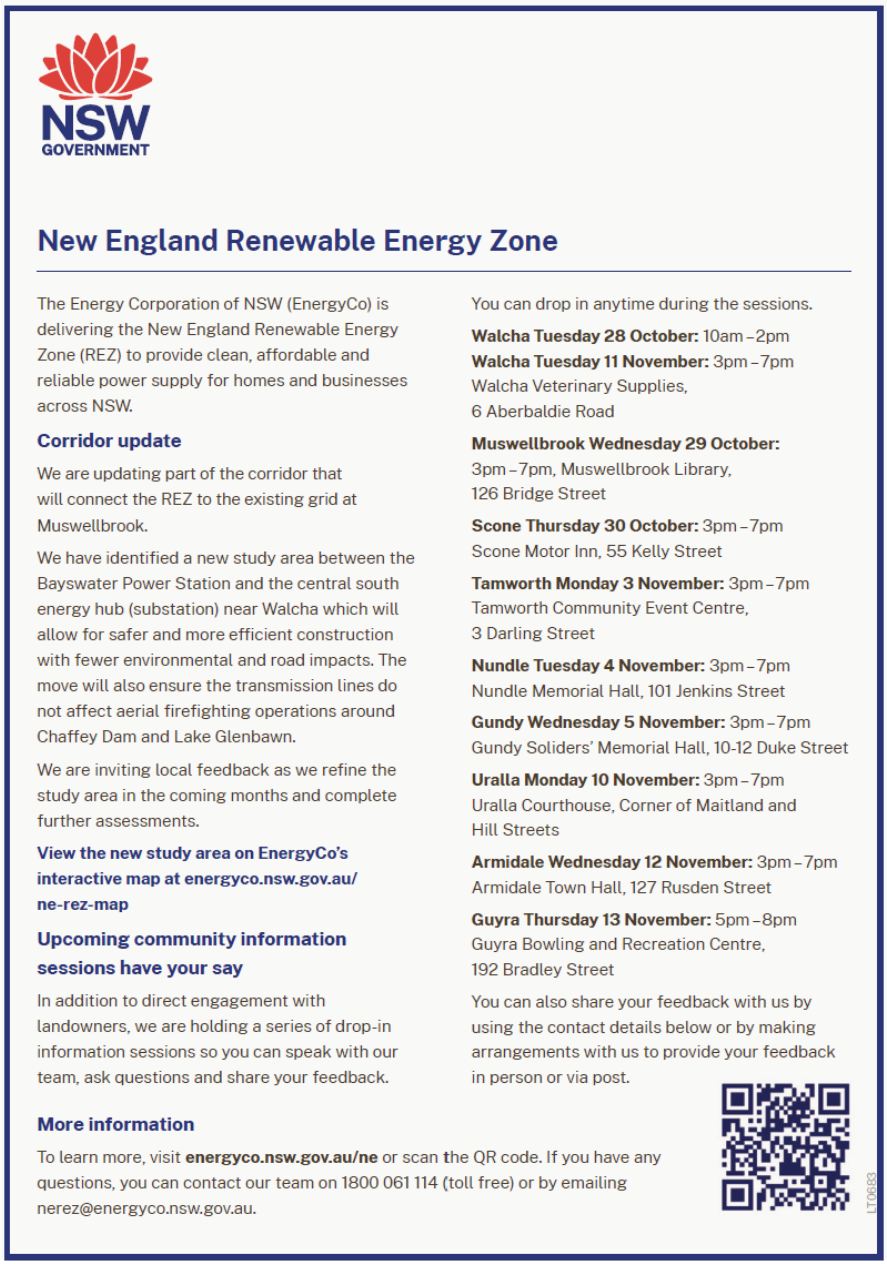
Subscribe to our e-newsletter by visiting energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez or scanning the QR code below

5 Appendices

Appendix A: Communication materials

Copies of documents to support the corridor update engagement are available to view via the following links:

- Project update newsletter
- Interactive map
- Moving to a new study area fact sheet
- Energy hubs fact sheet
- Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report – November 2025
- Revised Scoping Report – December 2025
- Webinar – November 2025
- Advertising tear sheet:



NSW GOVERNMENT

New England Renewable Energy Zone

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is delivering the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) to provide clean, affordable and reliable power supply for homes and businesses across NSW.

Corridor update

We are updating part of the corridor that will connect the REZ to the existing grid at Muswellbrook.

We have identified a new study area between the Bayswater Power Station and the central south energy hub (substation) near Walcha which will allow for safer and more efficient construction with fewer environmental and road impacts. The move will also ensure the transmission lines do not affect aerial firefighting operations around Chaffey Dam and Lake Glenbawn.

We are inviting local feedback as we refine the study area in the coming months and complete further assessments.

View the new study area on EnergyCo's interactive map at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne-rez-map

Upcoming community information sessions have your say

In addition to direct engagement with landowners, we are holding a series of drop-in information sessions so you can speak with our team, ask questions and share your feedback.

You can drop in anytime during the sessions.

Walcha Tuesday 28 October: 10am – 2pm
Walcha Tuesday 11 November: 3pm – 7pm
Walcha Veterinary Supplies,
6 Aberbaldie Road

Muswellbrook Wednesday 29 October:
3pm – 7pm, Muswellbrook Library,
126 Bridge Street

Scone Thursday 30 October: 3pm – 7pm
Scone Motor Inn, 55 Kelly Street

Tamworth Monday 3 November: 3pm – 7pm
Tamworth Community Event Centre,
3 Darling Street

Nundle Tuesday 4 November: 3pm – 7pm
Nundle Memorial Hall, 101 Jenkins Street

Gundy Wednesday 5 November: 3pm – 7pm
Gundy Soliders' Memorial Hall, 10-12 Duke Street

Uralla Monday 10 November: 3pm – 7pm
Uralla Courthouse, Corner of Maitland and Hill Streets

Armidale Wednesday 12 November: 3pm – 7pm
Armidale Town Hall, 127 Rusden Street

Guyra Thursday 13 November: 5pm – 8pm
Guyra Bowling and Recreation Centre,
192 Bradley Street

You can also share your feedback with us by using the contact details below or by making arrangements with us to provide your feedback in person or via post.

More information

To learn more, visit **energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne** or scan the QR code. If you have any questions, you can contact our team on 1800 061 114 (toll free) or by emailing nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au.

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Appendix B: Engagement methodology

How people could participate

EnergyCo invited feedback by written submission (letter or email) and made arrangements with landholders and community members to receive feedback in person or via post.

Physical feedback forms were available at community information sessions where respondents either completed the form and returned their feedback during the session or sent them to EnergyCo via email. Feedback submitted via email or letter was also received during the feedback period.

Upon request, verbal conversations to provide feedback were recorded as a submission for respondents who were unable to make a written submission.

EnergyCo accepted several submissions received after the consultation period closed.

Community information sessions held

The consultation period included 12 community information sessions across 10 local towns in the region during October and November 2025. The sessions were attended by over 840 people in total.

We met with landholders, local councils, elected representatives, community groups and other key stakeholders to answer questions and listen to feedback.

We hosted a webinar in November 2025 which was attended by 65 people. The webinar discussed key aspects of the corridor refinement process and next steps.

Location	Date and time	Attendees
Walcha Veterinary Supplies 6 Aberbaldie Road, Walcha	Tuesday 28 October, 10am – 2pm Duration: 4 hours	170
Muswellbrook Library 126 Bridge Street, Muswellbrook	Wednesday 29 October, 3pm - 7pm Duration: 4 hours	17
Scone Motor Inn 55 Kelly Street, Scone	Thursday 30 October, 3pm - 7pm Duration: 4 hours	18
Tamworth Community Event Centre 3 Darling Street, Tamworth	Monday 3 November, 3pm - 7pm Duration: 4 hours	12
Nundle Memorial Hall 101 Jenkins Street, Nundle	Tuesday 4 November, 3pm - 7pm Duration: 4 hours	6
Gundy Soldiers' Memorial Hall 10-12 Duke Street, Gundy	Wednesday 5 November, 3pm - 7pm Presentation and Q&A session from 5pm – 7pm Duration: 4 hours	158

Location	Date and time	Attendees
Nundle Memorial Hall 101 Jenkins Street, Nundle	Thursday 6 November, 10am - 12pm Duration: 2 hours	6
Timor Community Hall Waverley Road, Timor	Thursday 6 November, 5:30pm - 7pm Duration: 1.5 hours	60
Uralla Courthouse Corner of Maitland and Hill Streets, Uralla	Monday 10 November, 3pm - 7pm Duration: 4 hours	41
Walcha Central School 154E North Street, Walcha	Tuesday 11 November, 4pm - 7pm Presentation and Q&A session from 5pm – 7pm Duration: 3 hours	308
Armidale Town Hall 127 Rusden Street, Armidale	Wednesday 12 November, 3pm - 7pm Duration: 4 hours	38
Guyra Bowling and Recreation Centre 192 Bradley Street, Guyra	Thursday 13 November, 5pm - 8pm Duration: 3 hours	11

Appendix C: Submission demographics and analysis

Submission demographics

We received a total of 481 submissions from people and organisations. This included:

- 445 submissions from landholders and community members
- 2 submissions from local councils
- 1 submission from First Nations
- 2 submissions from action groups
- 2 submissions from special interest groups

How we analysed submissions

EnergyCo reviewed all submissions received during the engagement period. Issues raised in submissions were categorised by topic with consideration also given to how often they are raised, and relevance to our work in refining the study area down to a 1km-wide corridor.

Grouping submissions in this way helps us better understand the issues that matter most to our communities and stakeholders. This analysis ensures that issues raised are addressed collectively and fairly, while also ensuring equal treatment for each submission.

Submissions which contained actionable, property or industry-specific feedback were logged in the GIS.

EnergyCo has published this feedback report to provide responses to the key topics raised by the community and EnergyCo's responses, and will continue to engage directly with landholders, the community and key stakeholders as planning for the project progresses.

Feedback and concerns received in submissions have been documented and will be considered as part of ongoing project planning and decision-making.

Appendix D: Detailed theme breakdown

Expanded list of sub-themes under each key theme with cross-references to where themes are responded to in the report.

Themes and sub-themes	Section where theme is addressed
Environment and land use • Bushfire – how we are assessing bushfire risk • Bushfire – risk of starting fires • Bushfire – operational impacts to firefighting • Bushfire – engagement with NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) • Biodiversity – koalas • Biodiversity – clearing of native vegetation • Land use – agricultural land use • Land use – equine Critical Industry Cluster (CIC) • Land use – method for assessing land use impacts • Social impact – social and community impacts • Biosecurity – obligations for landholders • Biosecurity – anthrax • Visual amenity – visual impact • Impact to human and livestock health – electric and magnetic fields (EMF) • Impact to human and livestock health – air quality • Impact to human and livestock health – electrocution risk • Impact to environmentally sensitive areas – Karst cave systems • Impact to environmentally sensitive areas – National Parks and forests	Section 3.1 Pages 14 – 26
Landholder and property impacts • Acquisition – acquisition timeline • Acquisition – compulsory acquisition • Acquisition – compensation • Acquisition – completed acquisitions • Acquisition – property valuation • Farming and business operations – impact to agricultural productivity • Farming and business operations – impact on private airstrips and aviation activities • Farming and business operations – European Union deforestation regulation • Farming and business operations – impact to radio signal • Landholder impacts – uncertainty over property impacts • Landholder impacts – mental health • Landholder impacts – impact on property values	Section 3.2 Pages 27 – 33

Themes and sub-themes	Section where theme is addressed
Consultation • Consultation – feedback deadline • Consultation – consultation prior to publishing the revised route • Consultation – consultation with newly impacted landholders • Consultation – information session format	Section 3.3 Pages 34 – 35
Route selection, design and constructability • Assessment approach – assessment approach • Alternative options – Aberbaldie-Niangala travelling stock reserve (TSR) route • Alternative options – co-locating with existing transmission lines • Alternative options – western 330kV route option • Alternative options – New England Highway • Alternative options – upgrading existing transmission lines • Alternative options – undergrounding • Alternative options – need for transmission corridor near Walcha • Constraints in the revised corridor – weather conditions • Constraints in the revised corridor – terrain and elevation • Constraints in the revised corridor – access tracks and local roads • Constraints in the revised corridor – geology and ground conditions • Constraints in the revised corridor – local roads	Section 3.4 Pages 36 – 44
Strategic • Project costs – cost and impact of revising the corridor • Project costs – cost of changing the route • REZ capacity and demand – generator demand • REZ capacity and demand – central south energy hub • REZ capacity and demand – REZ network capacity • REZ capacity and demand – Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) forecasts • Cumulative impacts – pressure on regional capacity • Cumulative impacts – road transport	Section 3.5 Pages 45 – 49

Appendix E: Issues outside of scope

Issues raised that are out of scope for the New England REZ network infrastructure project and 'have your say' engagement include:

Issue raised	Why it's outside of scope
National energy policy and Net Zero targets	National energy policy settings, including Net Zero targets, are set by the Commonwealth Government and therefore are not determined by EnergyCo or through this project.
Nuclear power	Currently both NSW and Australian government legislation prohibits the construction or operation of nuclear facilities for non-research purposes. Even if it were not prohibited, developing, planning, constructing and commissioning a nuclear power station is likely to take around 15 years. Renewables are now the lowest-cost form of electricity. NSW's move to renewables will deliver value for money by supplying more affordable renewable energy into the grid and putting downward pressure on electricity bills. Transitioning to renewables will also reduce the state's vulnerability to electricity price spikes in times of high demand.
Renewable energy generation projects	As the NSW authority and infrastructure planner for the New England REZ, EnergyCo is responsible for designing the route of the new transmission lines. Developers of renewable energy projects (i.e. wind, solar and storage) are required to seek the necessary approvals to allow for the construction and operation of their projects in accordance with relevant legislation. This is includes submitting a Development Application (DA) to obtain development consent from the Minister for Planning or the Independent Planning Commission. Development of electricity generating projects, including wind and solar renewable energy projects, with a capital investment value of more than $30 million are classified as State significant development (SSD) under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021*. Generation projects that meet these criteria are required to submit DAs with the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI). Generators are also required to participate in the Consumer Trustee's competitive tender process for access rights before they can connect to the REZ transmission network.

Appendix F: Map of Transgrid's existing 330kV lines

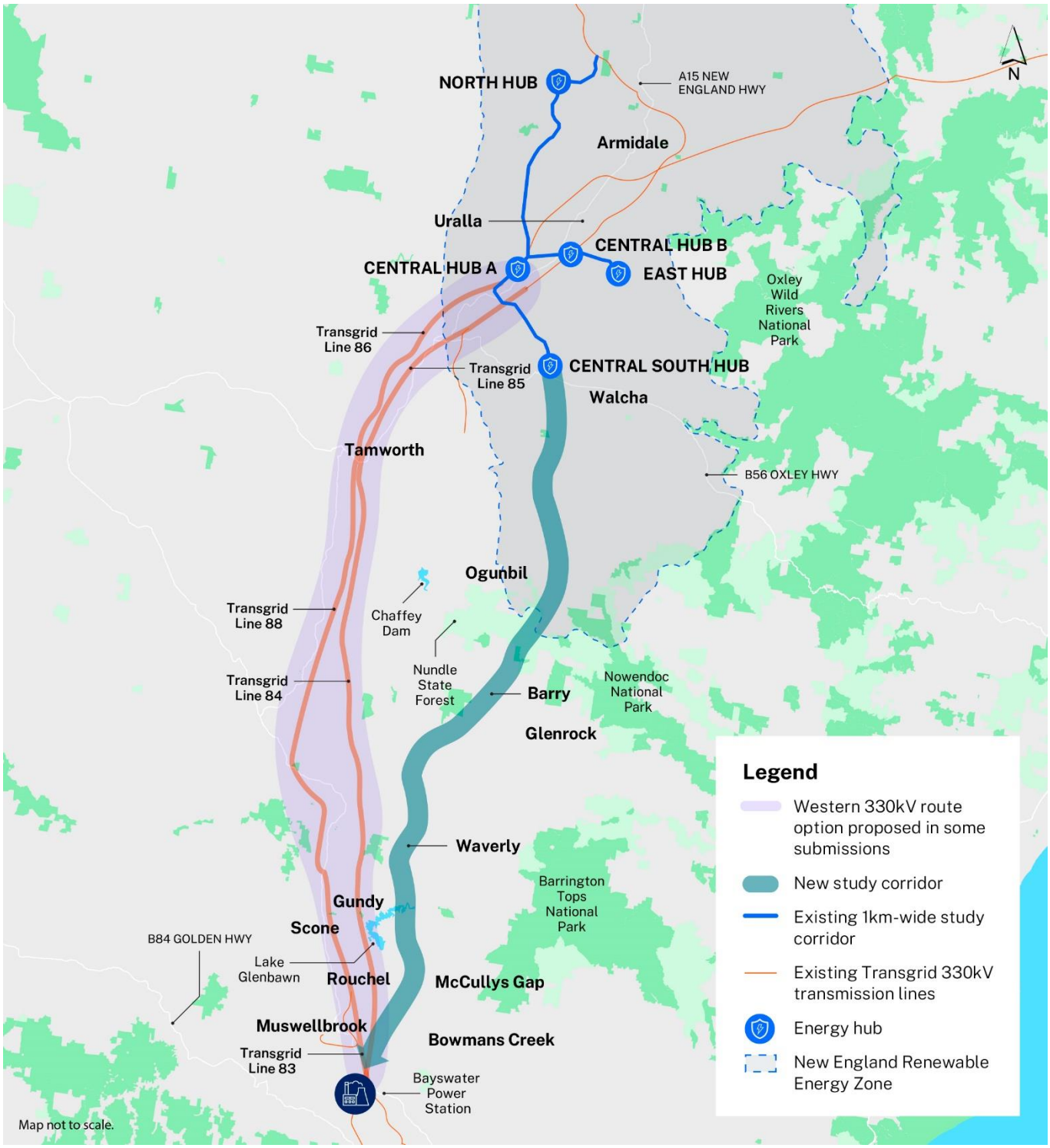

Figure 2 – Map of Transgrid's existing 330kV lines which form the basis of the western 330kV route options suggested in some submissions.