

Have your say on the draft Access Scheme

New England Renewable Energy Zone

July 2026

EnergyCo is inviting feedback on a proposed Access Scheme for the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). The Access Scheme will encourage investment, coordinate the development of projects within the REZ and generate funding for community and employment benefits. Feedback is invited until 6 August 2026.

What is proposed?

Access Schemes are a key part of the NSW Government's plan to coordinate and encourage investment in renewable energy generation and storage in renewable energy zones.

EnergyCo is consulting on a proposed Access Scheme to manage how renewable energy projects connect to network infrastructure in the New England REZ.

This fact sheet describes the proposed Access Scheme's key features to help you understand what it is and how it may work in the New England REZ.

About the Draft Access Scheme Declaration

The New England REZ Draft Access Scheme Declaration is a draft version of a formal Access

Scheme Declaration that may be issued under the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020*. If the Minister for Energy decides to progress a formal Access Scheme Declaration, it will provide the legal framework that will govern the New England REZ Access Scheme, setting out how it will operate.

The draft declaration builds on community and stakeholder feedback received in August 2025 when we published the New England REZ Generation and Storage Consultation Paper for public consultation, which can be read at energyco.nsw.gov.au/industry/access-schemes/new-england-rez-access-scheme.

To provide feedback on the draft declaration, email newengland.access@energyco.nsw.gov.au with 'Your Name – New England REZ Draft Declaration' in the subject line until 6 August 2026.



White Rock solar and wind farm



New England solar farm



Existing 330 kV transmission lines near Armidale

How would the New England REZ Access Scheme work?

Projects in the New England REZ could connect to the high voltage network infrastructure in one of two ways:



Access rights regime

This requires projects to hold an access right to connect to certain parts of the network (referred to as the access rights network)



Access control mechanism

This requires projects to seek EnergyCo's consent to connect to certain other parts of the network (referred to as the access control network).

EnergyCo is proposing that projects must hold access rights to connect to the New England REZ network as well as to some of the existing transmission lines in the area.

We are proposing to apply access control on other parts of the existing network infrastructure within the New England REZ, requiring projects to gain consent from EnergyCo before they can connect.

The two mechanisms work together to ensure that EnergyCo is in control of which projects connect to the network in the REZ.

In both cases, projects need to get permission to connect to the network. The Access Scheme outlines the type of permission and requirements a project must meet to connect to a network.

Smaller projects and those connecting to lower voltage network infrastructure will not be part of the Access Scheme.

EnergyCo will work closely with renewable energy developers to plan and deliver the transmission lines that will connect solar, wind or storage projects to the network.

These connection lines will be coordinated to help ensure they are designed efficiently to minimise impact to communities and the environment.

What is an Access Scheme?

Access Schemes set out the terms and conditions for project developers to use specified network infrastructure and support better outcomes for communities, consumers and project developers.

Access Schemes can:



Specify what network infrastructure (i.e. transmission lines) the Access Scheme applies to



Set the maximum amount of electricity a project can send to the network at one time



Require projects to be awarded an access right or consent to connect to the Access Scheme network



Charge a fee to connect to the Access Scheme network



Set the duration of the Access Scheme

Investing in community and employment benefits for the region

Where an Access Scheme is in place, generation and storage projects connecting to the grid require an access right or consent to connect.

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

The New England REZ Community and Employment Benefit Program (CEPB) will invest in a range of initiatives which will deliver immediate community benefits as well as long-term outcomes for the region.

More information is available at energyco.nsw.gov.au/CEBP.



What are the benefits of an Access Scheme?

Access Schemes ensure the network operates in the best interest of consumers and delivers benefits to host communities. They can give investors more certainty and help communities understand the scale of renewable energy development in their region.

They do this by:



Supporting investment in the REZ including by making network conditions more predictable within the REZ compared to outside the REZ¹ to reduce risk for investors



Promoting efficient use of the network by coordinating the connection of new generation and storage projects to ensure the network isn't underutilised, for the benefit of consumers



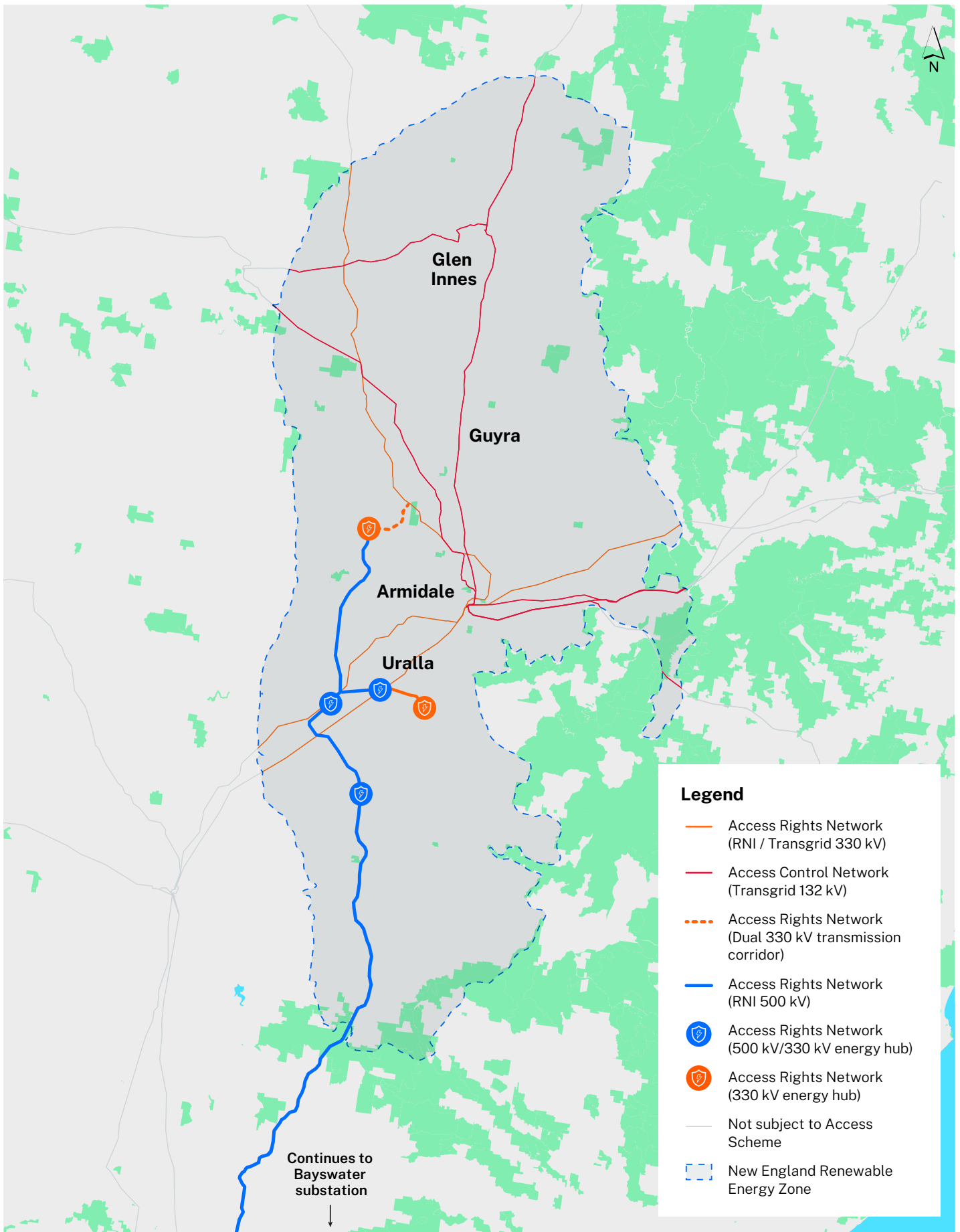
Supporting regional economic benefits by making sure developers across the REZ commit to best practice and are contributing funds to local communities



Enabling affordable electricity for NSW customers by requiring that developers contribute to REZ network infrastructure costs, as well as by helping to unlock new low-cost energy to place downward pressure on electricity prices.

¹ More predictable network conditions may include giving connecting projects more certainty of the 'curtailment' risk. Curtailment is when the amount of electricity a generator is allowed to send to the grid is restricted.

Proposed New England REZ access rights network and access control network





First transmission tower installed in the Central-West Orana REZ

Access rights regime

The access rights regime is a tool that caps the total amount of energy that renewable projects can send onto the network. Capping the number and capacity of projects on the network helps reduce risk for connecting projects by providing them with more certainty on who else is distributing energy to the grid.

Projects within the REZ which are seeking to connect to an access rights network can apply for access rights if and when they are made available.

As there is a limit on the amount of access rights available, rights may be granted via a competitive process. Successful projects are called access rights holders.

Access rights holders must sign up to commitments with EnergyCo, including agreeing to best practice behaviours when delivering their projects and engaging with the community. Once connected, projects are required to pay access fees for the full duration of the Access Scheme.

Access control mechanism

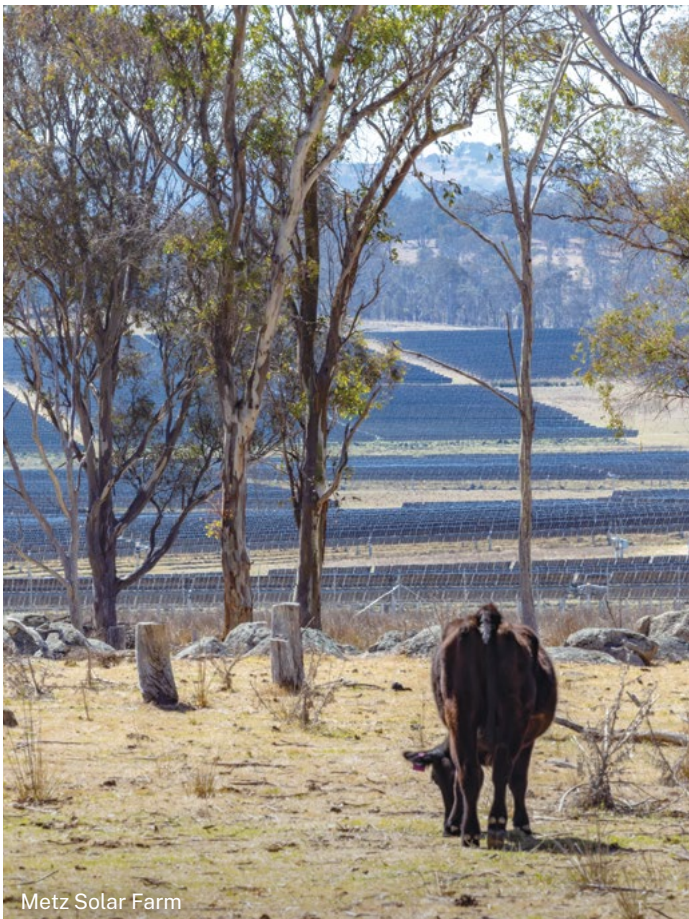
The access control mechanism is a secondary tool to control access which aims to strengthen consistency in how projects engage with and benefit local communities.

This is done by ensuring projects meet certain eligibility requirements and commitments before they are allowed to apply to connect to a network.

Unlike an access rights regime, it does not cap the amount of energy that projects can send onto the network or the total capacity of projects that can be granted consent to connect.

The access control mechanism ensures that projects connecting to the network separately to the access rights regime are still required to meet consistent expectations, particularly regarding standards for community engagement and financial contributions to EnergyCo's Community and Employment Benefit Program.

To be granted consent to connect, projects must sign up to a range of commitments, including agreeing to best practice behaviours when delivering their projects and engaging with the community. Once connected, these projects are required to pay access fees for the full duration of the Access Scheme.



Metz Solar Farm



New England solar farm

What other approvals do projects need to connect?

Projects will need to seek all necessary planning approvals to proceed to construction. This includes submitting a Development Application to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) to gain development consent from the Minister for Planning or the Independent Planning Commission.

State Significant projects (projects that are declared important to the state for economic, environmental, or social reasons) follow a comprehensive assessment process. This includes extensive community consultation and the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS).

Once an application for a State Significant project is lodged in the planning system, the Department will exhibit the project's EIS for at least 28 days.

EnergyCo is currently developing the timeline for allocating access rights in the New England REZ Access Scheme.

We expect to run the first competitive tender for access rights in Q3 2027 to allocate access rights following authorisation of the network project.

Further information on other access allocation processes will be provided later this year.

Next steps

The New England REZ Access Scheme will be informed by the feedback we receive on the draft Access Scheme declaration. If progressed, the New England REZ Access Scheme would be formally declared by the Minister for Energy and published in the NSW Government Gazette.

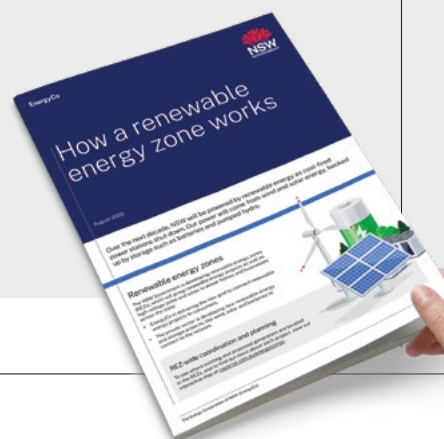
We expect the Access Scheme would be declared in late 2026.

More information

To learn more about how the New England REZ will work, including the role of the Access Scheme, you can read our 'How a renewable energy zone works' fact sheet at energyco.nsw.gov.au/he for more.



Scan the QR code to visit the website.



Why your feedback is important

Your feedback will inform the design of the Access Scheme for the New England REZ.



Guide to key terms and documents

The New England REZ *Draft Access Scheme Declaration* and *Positions Paper* specify the proposed terms and conditions for projects to connect to network infrastructure within the New England REZ and supply electricity to consumers.

Key documents

Draft declaration: The draft declaration is a draft of the final declaration that may be published in the NSW Government Gazette to legally formalise the Access Scheme.

Publishing a declaration is a requirement of the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020*, if an Access Scheme is introduced.

Positions paper: The positions paper details the policy positions in the draft declaration, explaining their rationale and outlining changes made since the New England REZ Generation and Storage Consultation Paper was released for public consultation in August 2025.

General considerations

The Access Scheme would replace 'open access' in the REZ with a coordinated approach.

By applying the Access Scheme to all high voltage networks in the REZ rather than just to new infrastructure, the New England REZ Access Scheme would capture the broadest funding for the New England REZ Community and Employment Benefit Program and require all large-scale projects to commit to the same high standards for project delivery and community engagement.

Learn how we plan our transmission infrastructure

As the Infrastructure Planner, we are carefully planning the REZ now including the access scheme to encourage and coordinate investment in the REZ while ensuring benefits of generation and storage projects are shared with communities in the region. Find out more by scanning the QR code or visiting our engagement portal at energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez.



Scan the QR code to visit our engagement portal.



Key definitions

Access rights network: This is the part of the network which is covered by an access rights regime and requires projects to apply for an access right to connect. This is proposed to include the new infrastructure being built as part of the New England REZ network infrastructure project and all existing 330 kV infrastructure located within the REZ geographic boundary.

Access control network: This is the part of the network which is covered by an access control mechanism and requires projects to receive EnergyCo's consent to connect. This is proposed to include the existing 132 kV transmission infrastructure within the REZ geographic boundary.

REZ network infrastructure: Network infrastructure includes transmission lines and energy hubs which will transfer power from the generation and storage projects to consumers. Energy hubs are a modern type of substation that act as connection points between renewable energy projects and the transmission network.



About EnergyCo

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is a statutory authority responsible for leading the delivery of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) as part of the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

EnergyCo is working closely with communities, investors and industry to deliver the state's first five REZs.

For more information about EnergyCo, visit our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au.

Contact us

For more information, please visit our website or get in touch with our team.



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Share your feedback

EnergyCo wants to hear what you think about our plans. If you have questions or want to give feedback, please get in touch with our team. You can find more information on our website by scanning the QR code or by visiting energyco.nsw.gov.au.

