

New England REZ North Community Reference Group

Thursday 10 September 2026

EnergyCo

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)



Acknowledgment of Country



The Energy Corporation of New South Wales acknowledges that we are meeting 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.

Agenda

Item		Responsible
1	Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country, Meeting Procedures • Housekeeping and apologies • Update on membership • Pecuniary interests • Noting of actions and Questions Register update	Margaret Harvie
2	Project updates	Damien Wilson
3	Strategic Offset Delivery Agreements / Conservations Investment Strategy	Kelly Carbery
4	REZ Declaration Amendment	Lauren Tapp
5. Break – Group and Member photography update		
6	CRG member updates	All
7	First Nations engagement update	Leanne Thompson
8	Community and Employment Benefits Program (CEBP) update	Melissa Maurer
9	General business, questions and updates	All
10	Meeting close, next regular meeting	All

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Meeting procedures



Rock art at Mt Yarrowyck

Noting of actions

Overview

- ✓ An action register is provided with each meeting agenda to support accountability and transparency.
- ✓ The aim is to close out all actions by the following meeting, where possible.
- ✓ Actions will be delivered by the following meeting unless assigned a timeframe for delivery based on feedback from CRG members.

Maintaining an open and trusting environment is our priority, and we'll continue to provide thorough meeting notes to ensure transparency.

Questions and Action Registers



Questions Register

- Created in response to member requests for greater clarity, transparency and timeliness in tracking questions and answers.
- Captures all questions taken on notice, as well as any submitted in writing for the register between meetings. Members can submit questions at any time.
- An updated Register will be circulated before each meeting (noting that inclusion of questions depends on when they are received).
- A further updated version will be distributed after each meeting, including any questions taken on notice.

Action Register

- The Actions Register records key commitments made during meetings and tracks progress against them.

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Project update

Project updates since last meeting



Community and Employment Benefits Program (CEBP)

- Engagement program – Workshops including CRG and First Nations, ‘Community Conversations’, survey



REZ Declaration Amendment

- Community and industry consultation



Draft Access Scheme

- Comment period, stakeholder webinars



Aerial survey of proposed project alignment

- Deferred from Jul to Sep



Community Needs and Priorities Survey

- Report back from Regional Major Infrastructure Studies



INSW ‘health check’ – positive outcomes



Landholder and neighbour engagement re workforce accommodation



Northern Connection deferral



Technical design refinements

- Individual properties based on landowner feedback



Continuing agency engagement on EIS

- DPHI
- CPHR



In the community

- First 9 RMOs completed
- Attendance at AgQuip, Aberdeen Highland Games, NAIDOC, Nungaroo Rangers, ‘Energy in the Pub’



Thunderbolts Inn, Uralla

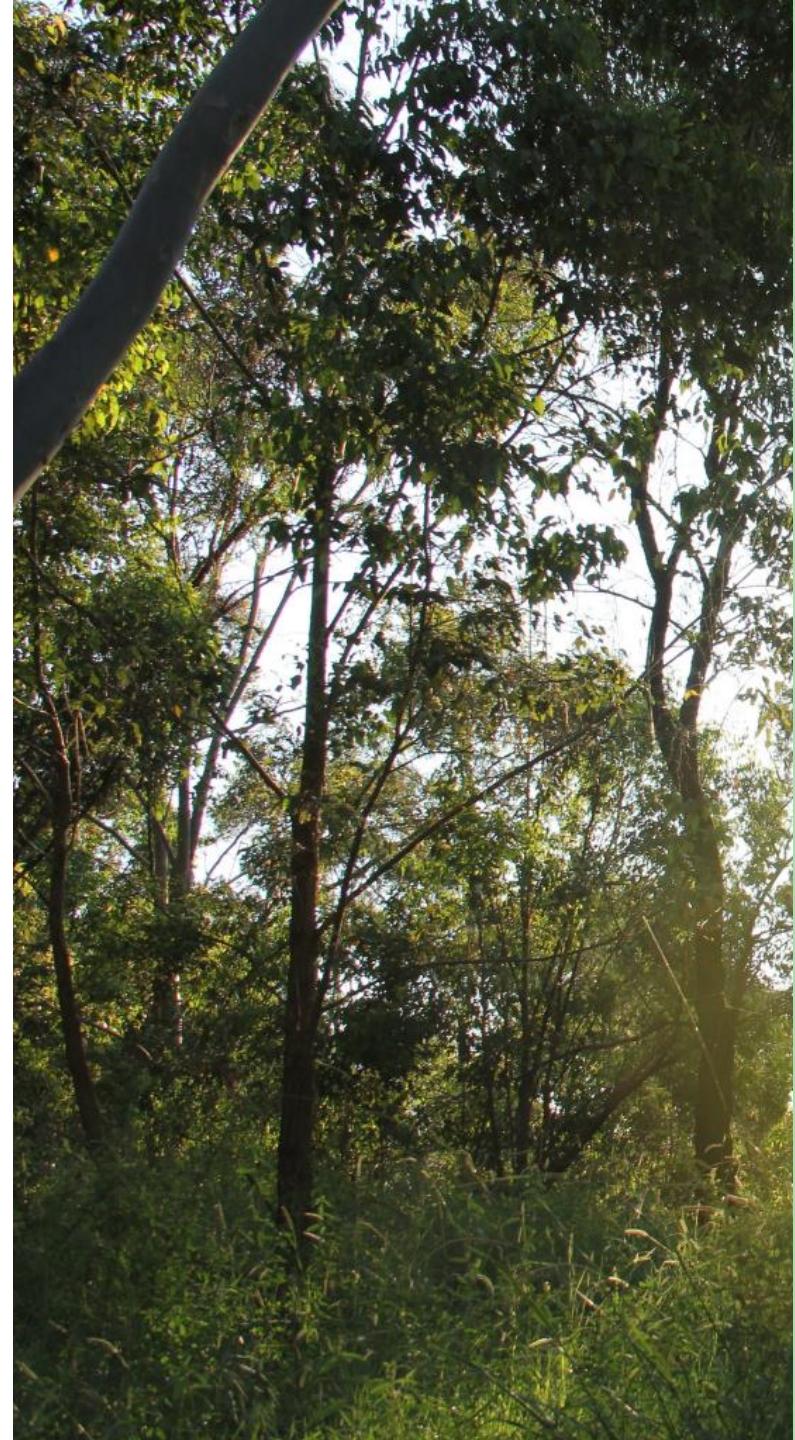
Project updates – looking ahead

- Completion and lodgment of Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)
 - Adequacy review
 - Public exhibition
 - Landholder presentations
 - Roadshows
 - Assessment processes
- Acquisition program
 - Proposed transmission easement Bayswater > Central and East Hub: 'Opening letters' + pre-acquisition meetings
 - Port to REZ Muswellbrook and Tamworth detours, hubs and camps: Proposed Acquisition Notice (PAN) stage
- Community events
 - Thunderbolts Festival (Uralla) – 24 Oct
 - Black Gully Festival (Armidale) – 7 Nov

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Strategic Offset Delivery Agreements Conservation Investment Strategy

Conservation Investment Strategies



New England Renewable Energy Zone



Over 15,000 square kilometres



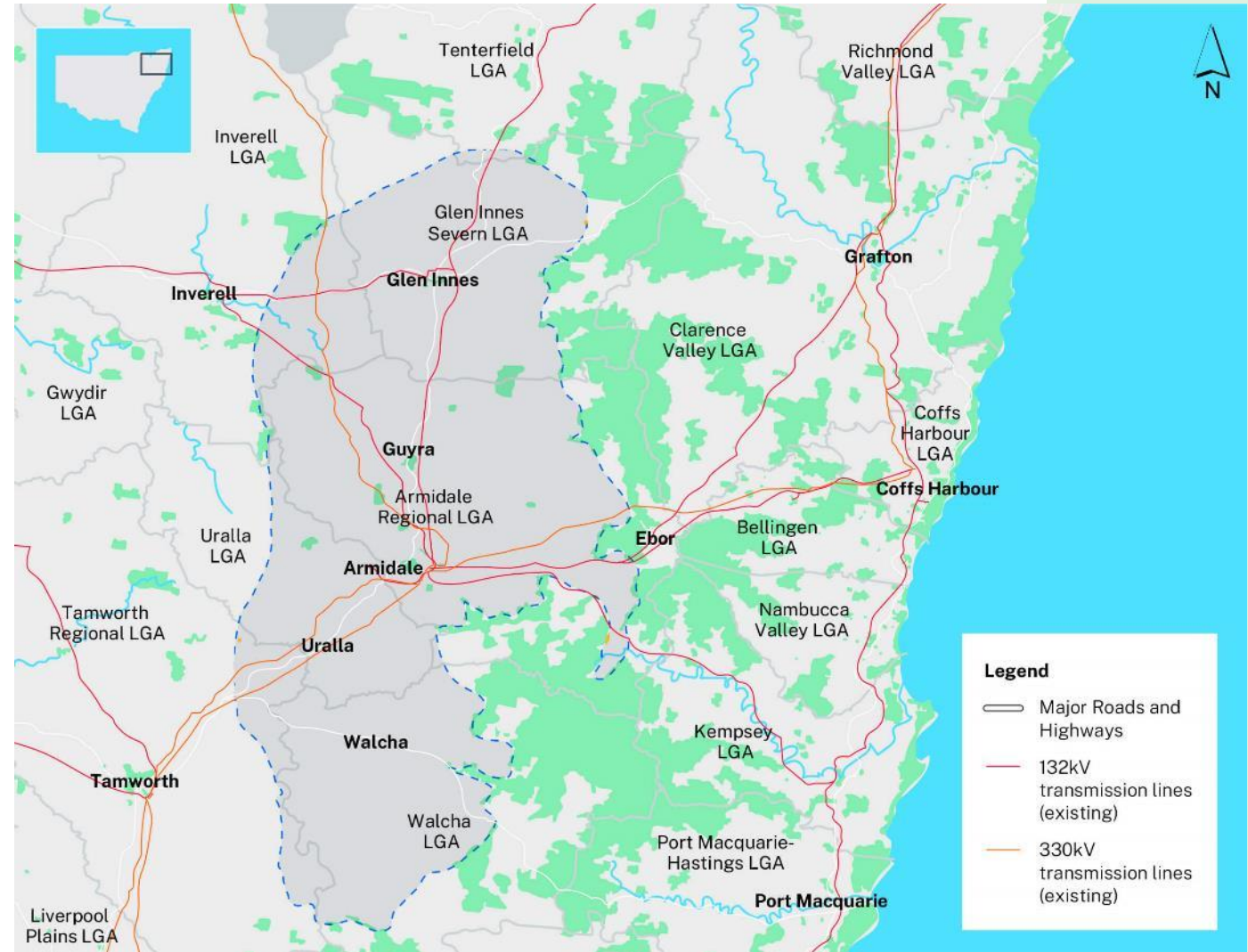
Initial 6 GW of renewable energy generation capacity delivered across two stages and about 300 km of new transmission



Significant investment in conservation in the region



A significant opportunity for large-scale integrated conservation in the region



Conservation investment strategies

- Underpin offset delivery for Strategic Offset Delivery Agreements
- Identify conservation priorities at regional level
- Guide and coordinate investment by proponents and conservation programs to optimise outcomes
- Create opportunities for partnerships with First Nations people, landholders and other local/conservation organisations



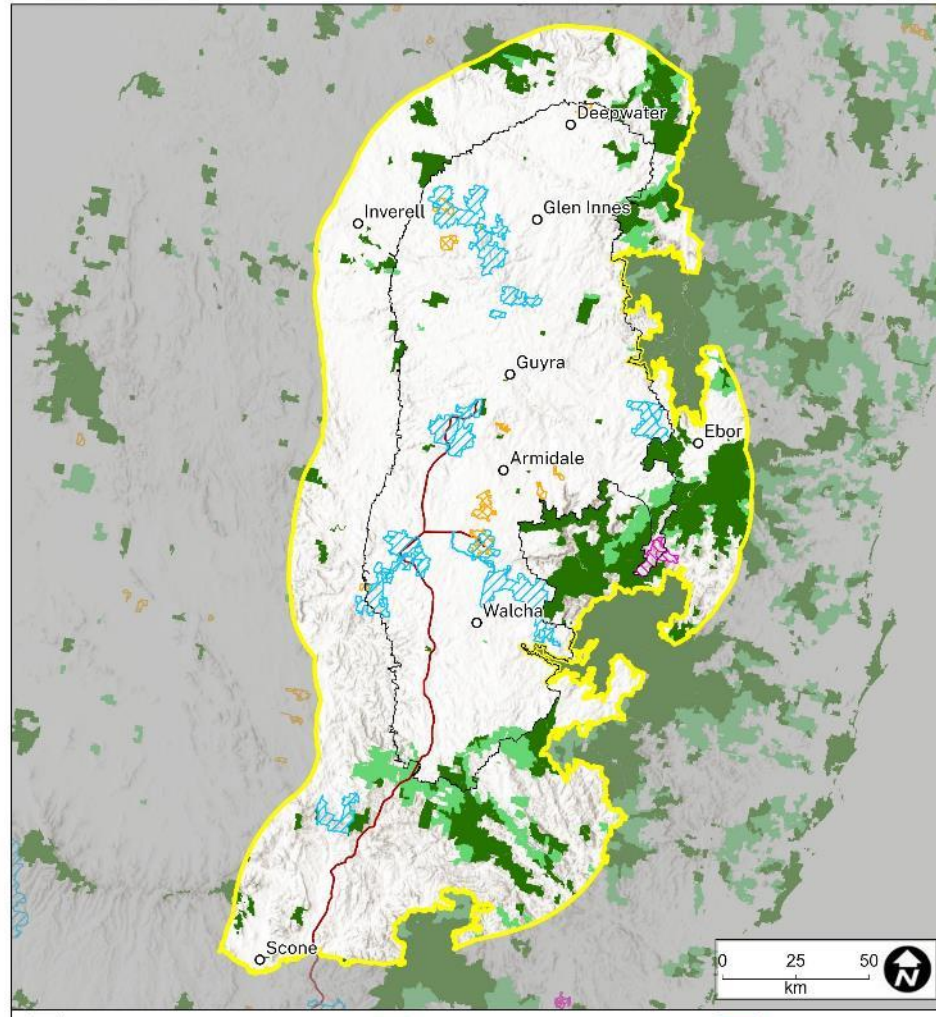
Principles and objectives

- Integrate conservation programs and priorities to optimise delivery of regional conservation outcomes
- Protect regionally significant habitat values, species and ecological communities
- Improve ecological connectivity and resilience to climate change
- Restore degraded ecosystems and habitats
- Contribute to a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected area system
- Deliver social benefits for the region



Rufous scrub-bird, *Atrichornis rufescens*, Glen Trelfo/DCCEEW

Developing the New England strategy



Significant conservation assets



Numerous National Parks along the eastern escarpment including those within the World Heritage Gondwana Rainforest



Threatened species (~285) and ecological communities (~28)



Headwaters of many east & west flowing rivers and significant upland wetlands, montane peatlands



Large intact areas of native vegetation

Threats



Dieback impacts



Feral animals & weeds

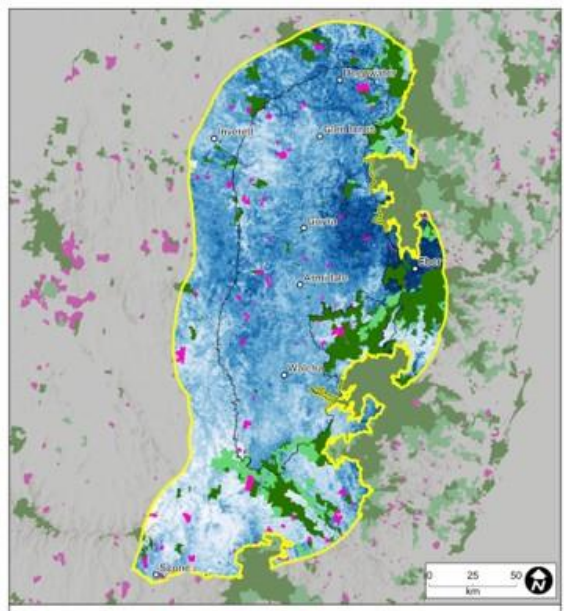


Climate change

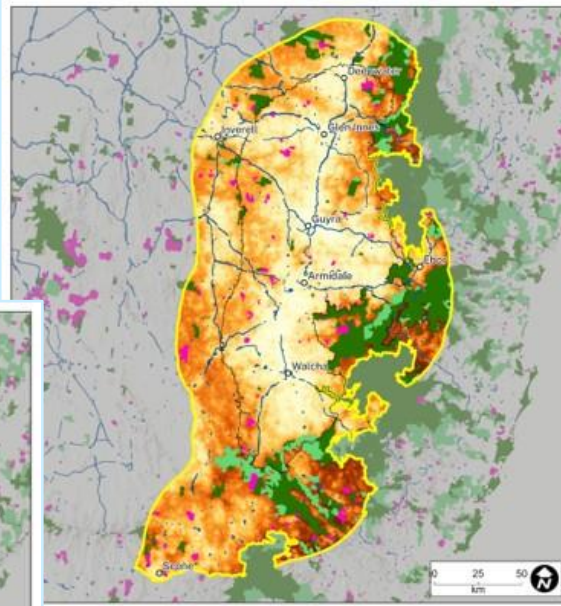
Conservation value modelling

Use environmental data sets to identify high value areas and priority species for conservation investment

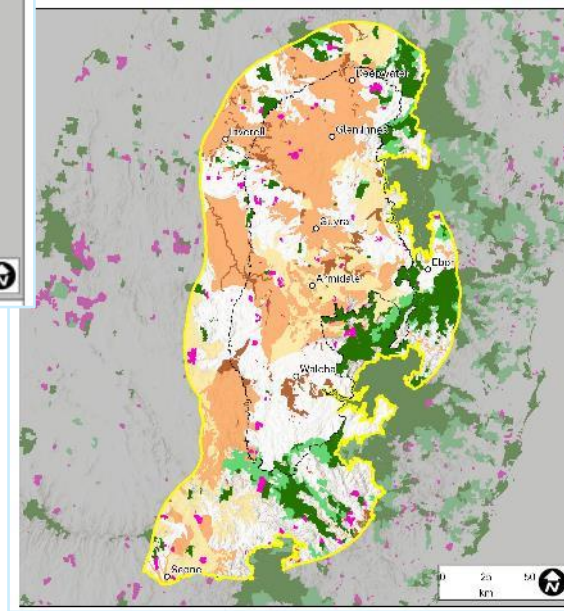
High value
habitat



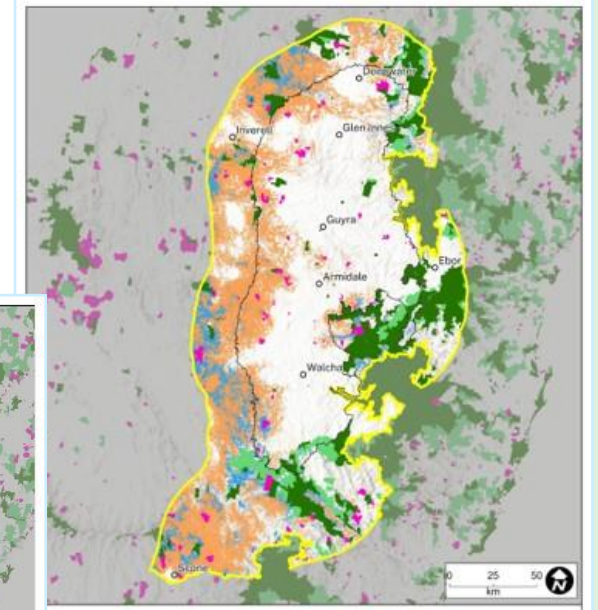
Under
reserved
landscapes



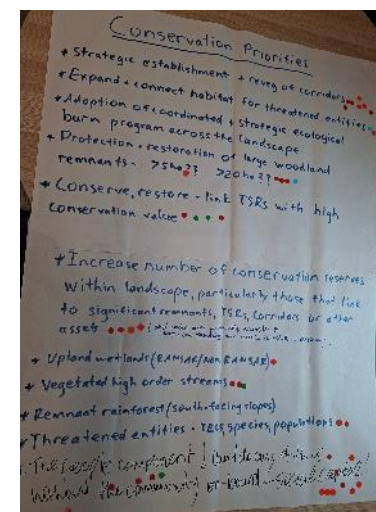
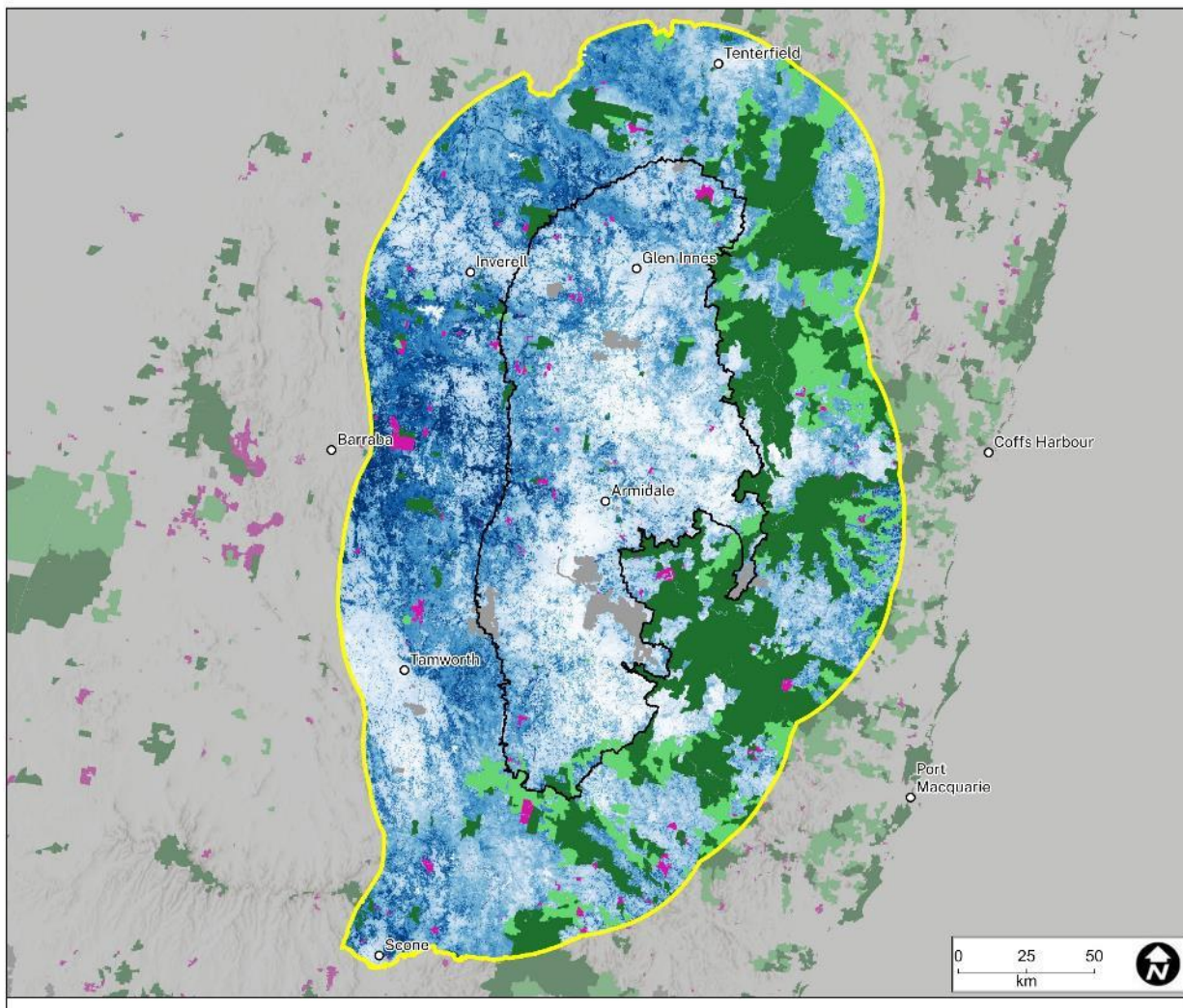
High value
connectivity



Ecological
condition



Identifying conservation priorities



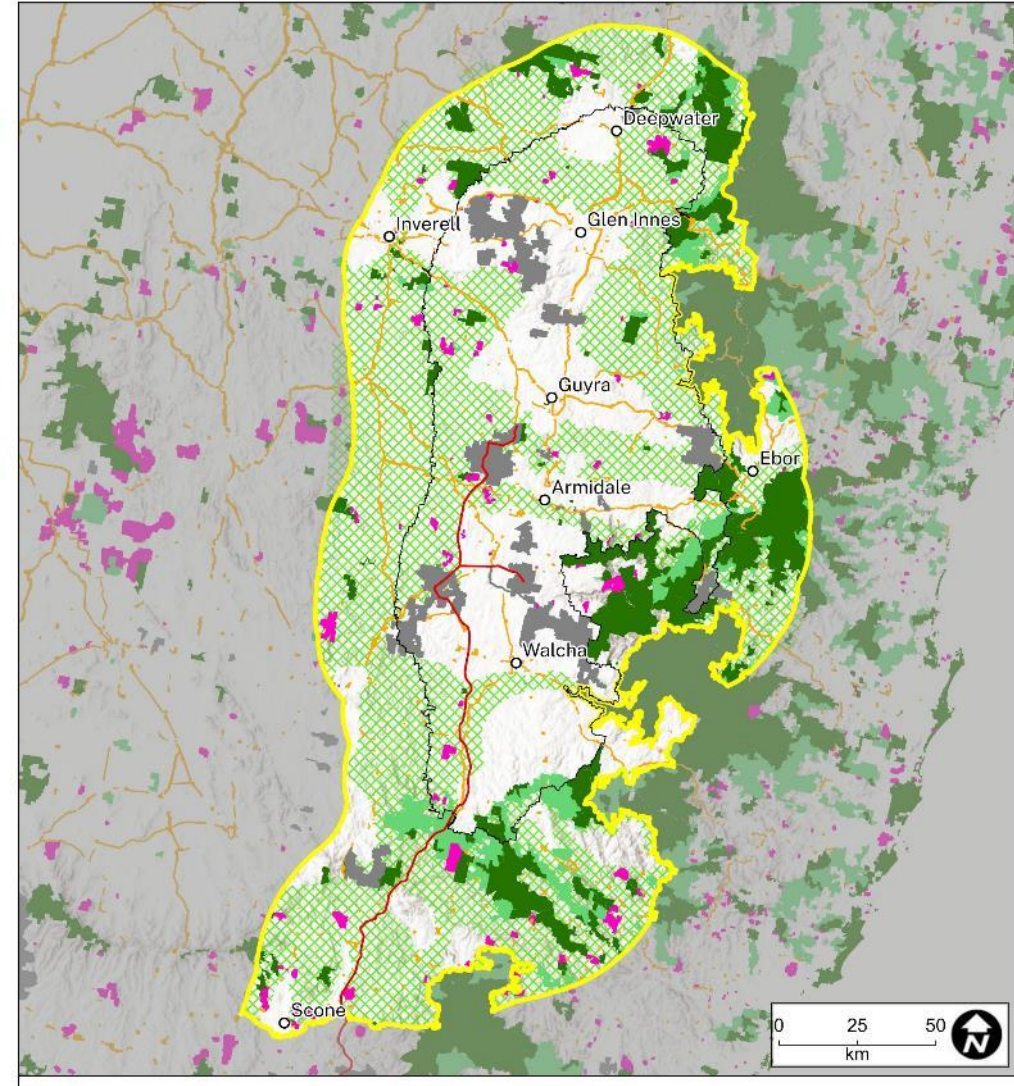
Draft New England Conservation Investment Strategy

Opportunities for priority investment, for example:

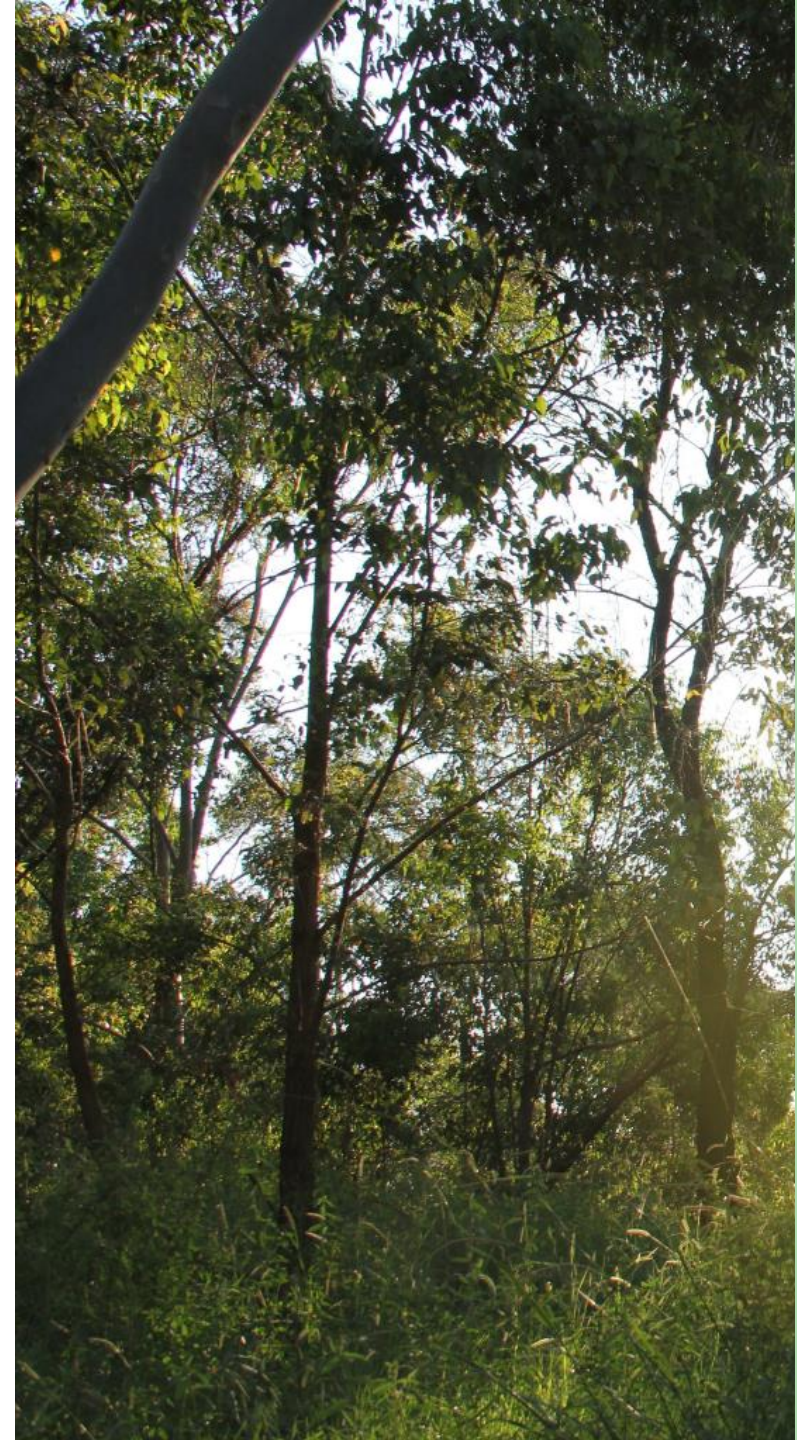
- Connect vegetation & habitat
- Protect regionally significant habitats
- Large-scale restoration effort
- Nature repair on farms
- Improve representativeness of the protected area system

Implementation could include:

- Renewable energy projects with offset obligations
- Existing conservation programs
- Landholders interested in private land conservation
- Other nature markets
- Industry and community partnerships



Strategic Offset Delivery Agreements



Strategic Offset Delivery Agreements (SODAs)

A legally binding agreement between a **renewable energy proponent** and the **Environment Agency Head** for an agreed amount of funding.

Enables the project to **meet offset obligations immediately** on signing.

Offsets are delivered by government within 3 years through:

- **retirement of biodiversity credits**
- **targeted conservation actions** aligned with regional priorities.

All delivery is consistent with the **Biodiversity Offsets Scheme** and regional **Conservation Investment Strategies**.

Offsets delivered under a SODA



No discounting

The SODA must deliver equivalent or better outcomes



Like for like

Offsets will directly benefit impacted entities



Strategic

Offsets will contribute to regional conservation priorities



Acquire land

Acquire land and establish BSAs to generate biodiversity credits



Buy credits

Buy credits from the market at competitive prices



Partnerships

Targeted recovery projects to create on-ground outcomes

Transparency in offset delivery

Register of strategic offset delivery agreements

Under clause 9.8A of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017, the department must maintain a register of strategic offset delivery agreements the Environment Agency Head has entered into, in addition to quarterly reports on progress and expenditure.

Strategic offset delivery agreements

About strategic offset delivery agreements

Notice of intention to enter into a strategic offset delivery agreement

Conservation investment strategies

Register of strategic offset delivery agreements

Agreements entered into under the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017

Central West Orana Transmission Project Strategic Offset Delivery Agreement

- Name of proponent: Energy Corporation of NSW
- Date executed: 9 September 2025
- Offset acquittal date: 30 June 2026
- [Strategic Offset Delivery Agreement](#)

Contact us

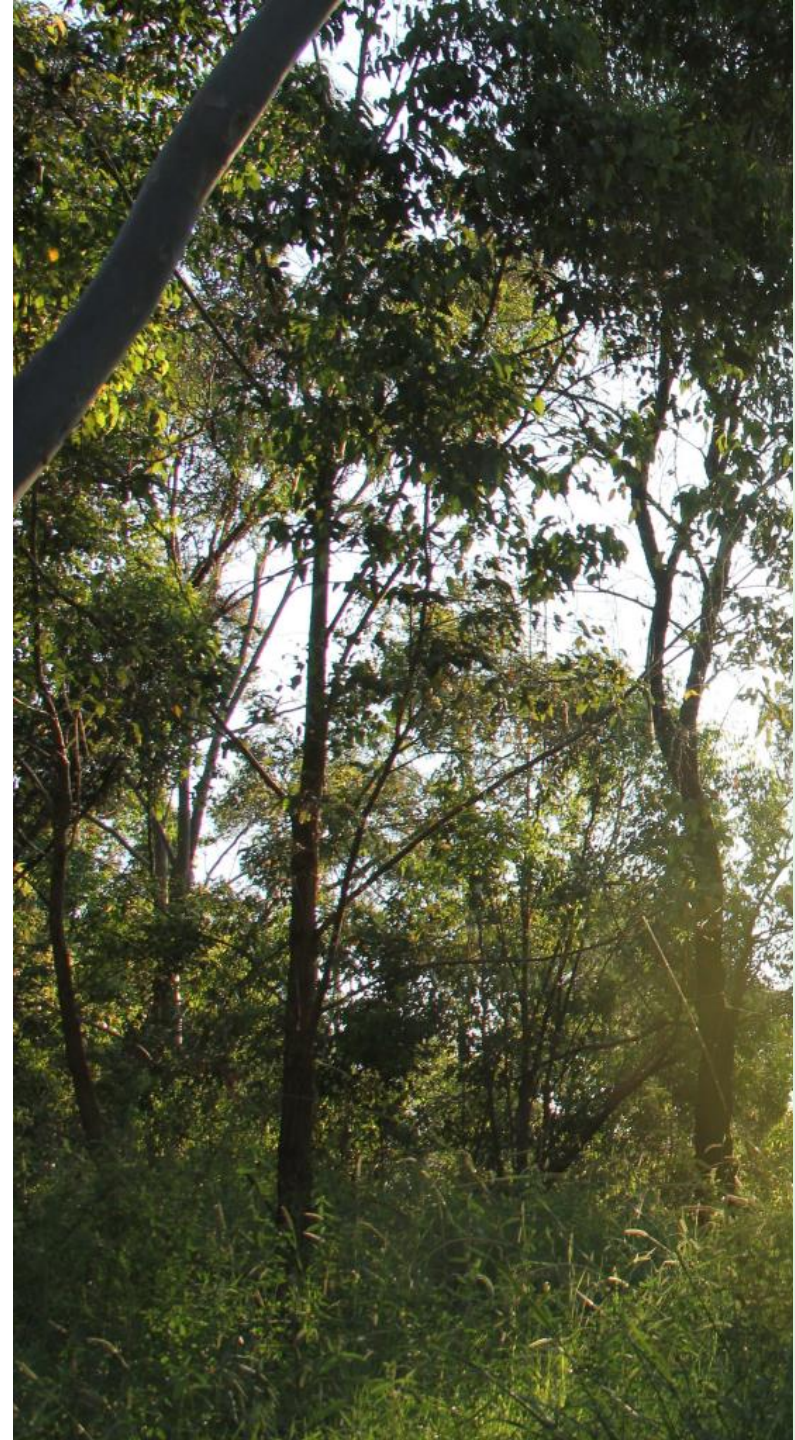
Email: Strategic.Offsets@dcceew.nsw.gov.au

Updated 23 October 2025



Planning for implementation

- New EOIs for the Stewardship Support Program
- Reviewing community input
- Reviewing credit purchase opportunities
- New partnerships to implement conservation actions
- Publication of New England strategy
- Review of Hunter strategy



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REZ Declaration Amendment

Amendment to New England REZ Declaration

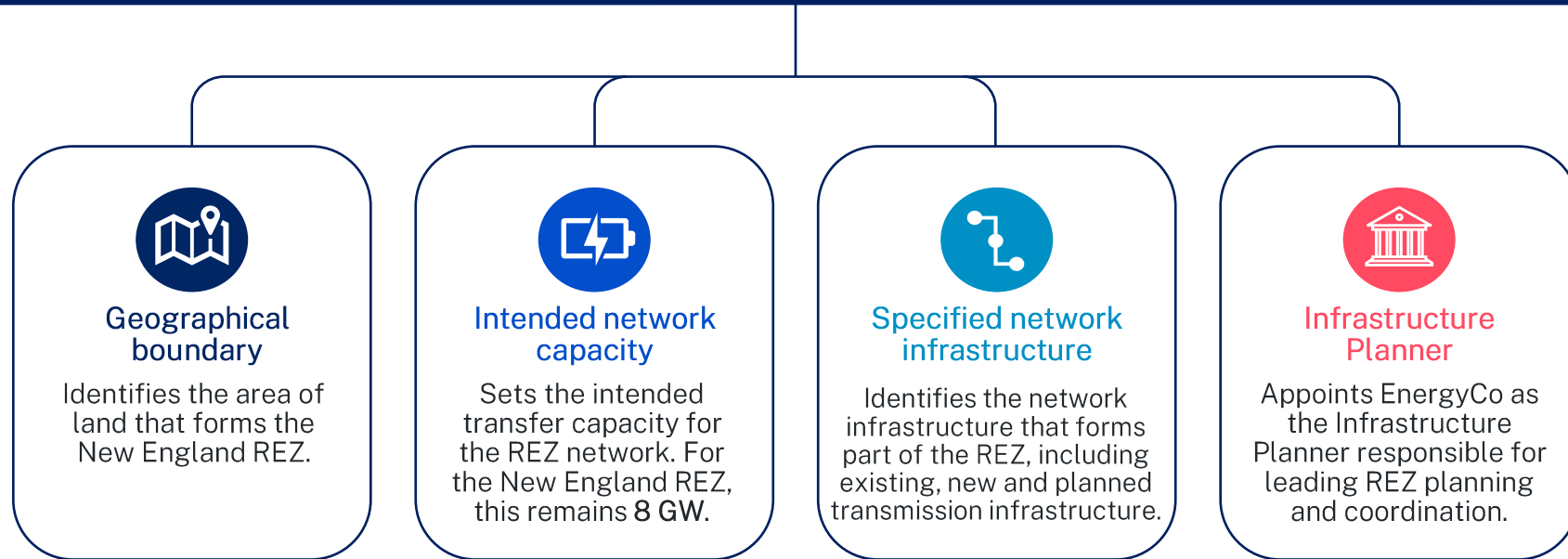
Today we will cover:

-  What the REZ Declaration is and why EnergyCo is proposing to amend it
-  What the amendment would change and what it would not change
-  What infrastructure is proposed to be specified
-  Key issues we have heard so far

Public consultation open → CRG discussion → submissions considered → recommendation to Minister

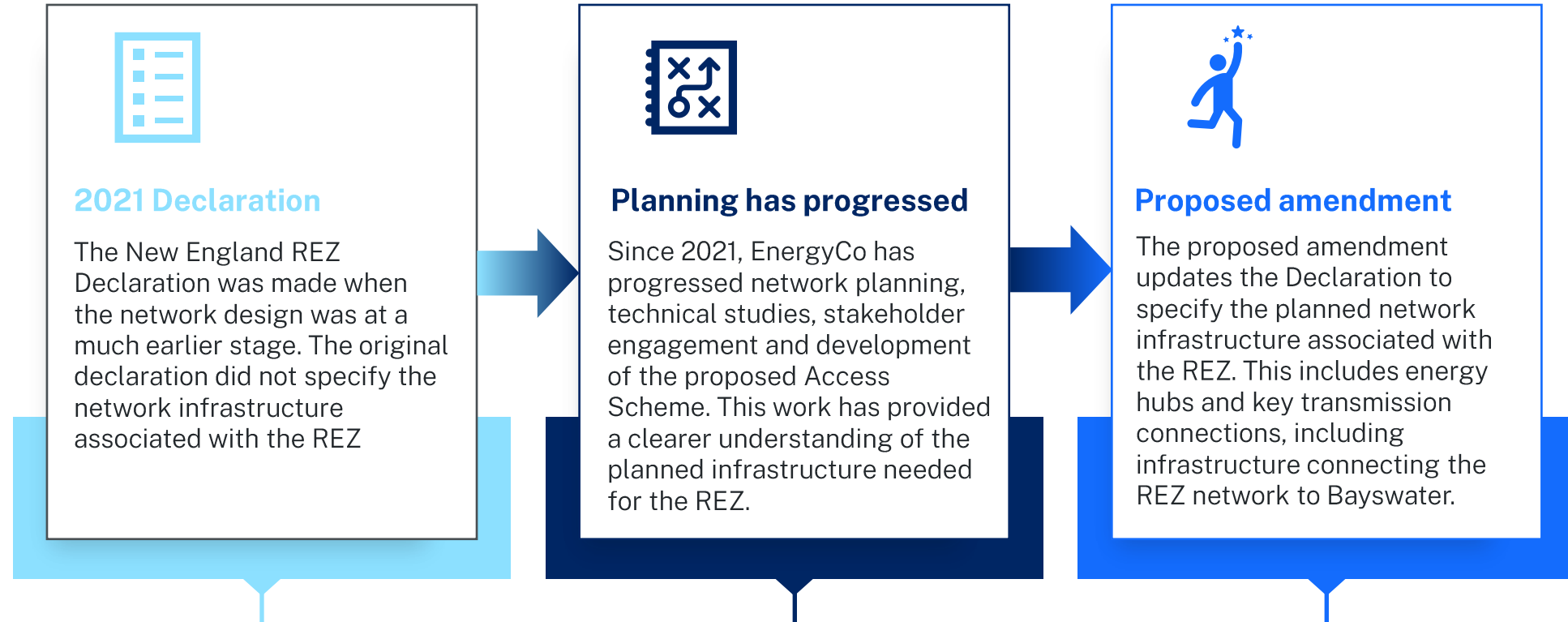
What is the REZ Declaration?

The New England REZ Declaration is the legal instrument that establishes the REZ under the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020. It sets out



EnergyCo is proposing to update the description of specified network infrastructure through this amendment. The current REZ declaration states only that the specified network infrastructure is “planned, new and existing network infrastructure in the specified geographical area”.

Why is EnergyCo proposing to amend the Declaration?



The proposed declaration amendment is needed to support the proposed Access Scheme and the Infrastructure Planner Recommendation Report (IPRR), currently under development. It does not approve construction, determine the final project scope, or settle the final design of the New England REZ network infrastructure

What infrastructure is proposed to be specified?

a) Planned and new network infrastructure intended to operate at a nominal voltage of 330 kV or 500 kV connecting:	i. Bayswater 500 kV Substation to the Central South Energy Hub, including outside the specified geographical area; ii. Bayswater South Substation to the Central A Energy Hub, including outside the specified geographical area; iii. Central South Energy Hub to the Central B Energy Hub; iv. Central A Energy Hub to Central B Energy Hub; v. Central A Energy Hub to North Energy Hub; vi. North Energy Hub to Guyra Switchyard; vii. Central B Energy Hub to East Energy Hub; or viii. Armidale 330kV/132kV Substation to Central B Energy Hub;
b) planned and new network infrastructure intended to operate at a nominal voltage of 330 kV or 500 kV at Bayswater 500 kV Substation, Bayswater South Substation, Central South Energy Hub, Central A Energy Hub, Central B Energy Hub, North Energy Hub and East Energy Hub;	
c) planned, new and existing network infrastructure operating at nominal voltages of 132 kV or 330 kV connecting:	i. two or more of Armidale 330kV/132kV Substation, Uralla 330 kV Switchyard and Tamworth 330kV/132kV Substation, including outside the specified geographical area; ii. Armidale 330kV/132kV Substation to Inverell 132kV/66kV Substation, but only the portion within the specified geographical area; iii. Armidale 330kV/132kV Substation to Kempsey 132kV/66kV/33kV Substation, but only the portion within the specified geographical area; iv. Armidale 330kV/132kV Substation to Coffs Harbour 132kV/33kV Substation, but only the portion within the specified geographical area; v. two or more of Armidale 330kV/132kV Substation, METZ SF 132 kV Switchyard and Koolkhan 132kV/66kV Substation, but only the portion within the specified geographical area; vi. Armidale 330kV/132kV Substation to the Glen Innes 132kV/66kV Substation; vii. Armidale 330kV/132kV Substation to the Sapphire 330kV/33kV Substation; viii. Sapphire 330kV/33kV Substation to Dumaresq 330kV switchyard, but only the portion within the specified geographical area; ix. Glen Innes 132kV/66kV Substation to Tenterfield 132kV/22kV Substation, but only the portion within the specified geographical area; and x. two or more of Glen Innes 132kV/66kV Substation, White Rock WF 132 kV Switchyard and Inverell 132kV/66kV Substation, but only the portion within the specified geographical area;

What infrastructure is proposed to be specified?

e) planned, new and existing network infrastructure operating at nominal voltages of 33 kV to 330 kV at Tamworth 330kV/132kV Substation, which is located outside the specified geographical area;

f) planned and new network infrastructure in the specified geographical area operating at nominal voltages of 132 kV, 330 kV or 500 kV connecting to any other network infrastructure specified in clauses 1(a) to 1(f) of this Schedule 2; and

g) to the extent not specified in clauses 1(a) to 1(f) of this Schedule 2, planned, new and existing network infrastructure in the specified geographical area.



Key questions asked so far

Concern that the amendment may lock in the project scope before the EIS	The amendment does not approve construction or finalise the project design. The EIS remains the formal process for assessing environmental and community impacts.
Questions about whether the scope can still change	The amendment describes the planned network infrastructure at a high level so the project can continue to be refined through detailed design and assessment.
Questions about the infrastructure outside the REZ boundary	The EII Act allows network infrastructure associated with a REZ to extend outside the geographical area. This includes infrastructure needed to connect the REZ network to Bayswater.
Questions about community benefits for impacted communities outside the REZ boundary	EnergyCo is considering feedback about benefits funding and will continue to work with communities on the New England Community and Employment Benefit Program.

Discussion and how to make a submission

We would welcome your feedback on:

- whether the proposed amendment is clear
- any issues EnergyCo should consider before the amendment is finalised
- how the amendment is understood by communities and stakeholders
- any further information that would assist during consultation

How to make a submission

Feedback can be provided by:

- Email
- Visiting the EnergyCo website:
<https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/new-england-rez>

The consultation period closes on Monday 14 September.

Feedback received during consultation will be considered before EnergyCo finalises its recommendation to the Minister on the proposed amendment.

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Break – Group photo

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CRG member updates



'Energy at the Pub' event in Armidale

What are you hearing from your communities?



As our CRG members, we recognise the strong position you're in to understand the thoughts and sentiments of your communities.

We'd like to take some time in this session to hear from you about:

- Community feedback and sentiment – what are you hearing from your communities?
- Parts of the project you think people don't understand and/or need more information about.
- The levels to which you think people want to be engaged and their preferences for how.
- Any other information you're happy to share with us.

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REZ - First Nations engagement



Community Employment Benefit Program



Aboriginal Outcomes representative (**Ben Kent**) and Senior Aboriginal Engagement Officer (**Leanne Thompson**) conducted face-to-face engagement with key Aboriginal stakeholders.

Discussion points:

- Project brief
- CEBP overview
- What are your community priorities?
- What communities should be the priorities?
- Funding Models
- Where to next



Community Employment Benefit Program

- Engagement undertaken identified a broad range of priorities, opportunities and concerns raised by Aboriginal stakeholders. Consistent messaging across engagement was that community priorities need to be **culturally appropriate, locally determined, accessible** and **long-term**.
- More than 20 participants emphasised funding should respond to each community's circumstances, particularly those with limited access to services, housing shortages, transport barriers and fewer employment / training opportunities.
- Stakeholders also emphasised that priorities are interconnected. Housing, health, education and community infrastructure should not be considered in isolation. Employment, skills and training were identified as pathways to housing stability, improved wellbeing, stronger families and communities, and increased community capacity.



Priorities

- Culture, language and heritage
- Health, wellbeing and social support
- Employment, training and economic opportunities
- Aboriginal elders and aged care
- Housing and homelessness
- Transport and access to services
- Community Facilities and Places for Community
- Education, Youth and Community Development
- Tourism, Land and Cultural Enterprise

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Community and Employment Benefit Program (CEBP) update



CEBP 'community conversation' - Uralla

CEBP update

- Communities are invited to provide input on the New England REZ CEBP through our online survey until 18 September 2026.
- During the 'have your say' period we have held a range of engagement activities including a webinar, community conversations, and targeted stakeholder briefings to help shape the design of the program
- We expect to finalise the program later in 2026 so we can start accepting and assessing funding applications in early 2027.
- We are aiming to start awarding funding for projects in mid-2027.

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General business, questions and updates



Munsie Bridge near Gostwyck

General business

- Consumer Trustee Overview presentation – future dedicated session.
- Environmental Impact Statement engagement overview
- Social Outcomes Risks and Opportunities Analysis update (Astrolabe work)
- National Farmers Federation Agricultural Trade Apprenticeships
- Biochar plant for Uralla
- Solar panel / battery / turbine blade recycling for Uralla
- 3D printed clay workforce accommodation

Next meeting

✓ Regular CRG meeting – Week commencing 23 Nov 2026