

Your guide to the environmental impact statement

New England Renewable Energy Zone network
infrastructure project

October 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of Australia, and the oldest continuing culture in human history.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal people. We acknowledge the work that Aboriginal people have done to maintain land and water.

We will show respect through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to engage with the Aboriginal community to ensure local priorities and values inform and influence decision making.

We reflect on the continuing impact of government policies and practices and recognise our responsibility to work together, with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities towards improved economic, social and cultural outcomes.

Published by Energy Corporation of New South Wales (EnergyCo). EnergyCo is the NSW Government statutory authority responsible for delivering the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) network infrastructure project as a critical part of transitioning to a cleaner future under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. You can read more about EnergyCo on our website: energyco.nsw.gov.au

Document title: Your guide to the environmental impact statement

First published: October 2026

Cover image: Transmission easement with managed vegetation.

Copyright and disclaimer

© State of New South Wales through the Energy Corporation of New South Wales. Information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and is subject to change.

For more information, please visit energy.nsw.gov.au/copyright

Contents

Guide to the EIS	4
New England REZ network infrastructure project map	5
Our assessments	6
Biodiversity	7
Heritage	10
Social impact	12
Landscape and visual	13
Land use, property and agriculture	14
Traffic and transport	16
Noise and vibration	17
Hazards and risks	19
Water	21
Other EIS assessments	23
– Cumulative impacts	23
– Economic	23
– Air quality	23
– Greenhouse gas and climate change	24
– Contamination	24
– Waste management	24
Next steps	25
How to make a submission on the EIS	26

Guide to the EIS

The environmental impact statement (EIS) for the New England REZ network infrastructure project is now on public exhibition. The EIS outlines the potential environmental and social impacts associated with constructing and operating the project.



Biodiversity surveys with the Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation (CPHR) group

About this document

We know people are busy, so we developed this guide to help you navigate the key information contained in the full EIS.

Inside, you will find more information about the EIS assessments and potential impacts during construction and operation, and where to find more detail in the EIS sections and technical papers.

While this guide aims to help you understand the EIS, it is important to note that the full EIS is available on the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) planning portal at planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects by searching application number SSI-74175972.

Please make your submission to DPHI directly using the NSW Planning Portal. We have provided guidance in this document to help you make your submission to DPHI.

Visit EnergyCo's engagement portal at energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez to learn more, access EIS materials, explore interactive maps and videos, and find details of upcoming information sessions in your area. Use this guide to learn about:



Our assessments



Next steps



How to make a submission

New England REZ network infrastructure project



The map shown represents the project features at the time of the environmental impact statement public exhibition (October 2026).

Our assessments

The EIS assesses the potential environmental and social impacts of the New England REZ network infrastructure project and outlines measures to avoid, minimise and manage any impacts to the community and environment.

The EIS was prepared in line with DPHI's guidelines and legislative requirements to ensure it provides a robust assessment of the project.

Consultation and engagement has been carried out with the community and stakeholders during the design development process and environmental assessment to ensure key potential impacts have been identified at an early stage, and where possible, avoided, or appropriate mitigation measures developed.



Biodiversity

The New England and Upper Hunter regions are home to a diverse range of native plants, wildlife and habitats across their forests, woodlands, rivers and farmland. We are committed to reducing the project's impact by carefully planning our work and protecting local species and habitats.

The biodiversity assessment in the EIS identifies the plants, animals and habitats present in the project area, how they may be affected, and what will be done to avoid and reduce those impacts.

How we surveyed the corridor

From 2023 to 2026, we carried out seasonal biodiversity surveys using the NSW Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM).

This included vegetation mapping, flora and fauna surveys, habitat assessments and targeted searches using survey methods like remote cameras, acoustic recorders and thermal drones.

After the corridor was updated in October 2025, some previously surveyed areas fell outside the project boundary, but the data collected still helps us understand biodiversity across the wider region.

Since late 2025, we have continued surveys across the current project area of 10,928 hectares (the area that will contain the REZ transmission project).

About 54 per cent of this area has been surveyed so far. Some areas remain unsurveyed due to access limitations, but work is ongoing where access is available.

Where surveys could not be completed due to access restrictions, we have assumed the native vegetation is in optimum condition, and that all threatened species that are predicted to occur in that vegetation are present.

The combination of field surveys, expert inputs, and precautionary and remote assessment methods has enabled a comprehensive assessment of biodiversity values across the entire project area.

We will update our studies as we access more land and complete further surveys. This will help make sure our planning reflects the most up-to-date information.

We will also work with the network operator to further reduce biodiversity impacts as part of the detailed design process.

How we avoid, minimise and offset impacts

We avoid and minimise biodiversity impacts first before considering how to offset any remaining impacts, as required by the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.



Avoid

Avoidance is the most effective way to protect biodiversity. This involves selecting route options and locating infrastructure away from sensitive habitats and species.

We balanced this against impacts to landholders, communities and technical considerations. We sought to avoid impacts to biodiversity by:

- using cleared land instead of forested areas where we could
- locating infrastructure away from known locations of threatened plants and animal habitats
- moving the route away from sensitive cave systems at Timor, which are home to threatened species like bats.

Opportunities to avoid impacts would also be adopted during design and construction phases of the project, including minor adjustments to locations of transmission towers (micro siting) to minimise clearing and further reduce impacts to biodiversity.



Minimise

Where impacts cannot be fully avoided, we look at how we can minimise them.

This includes measures like locating infrastructure in already disturbed areas, preserving habitat corridors, and implementing controls to protect waterways and retained vegetation.



Offset

Habitats and ecosystems within the region will be protected and restored to offset biodiversity impacts in accordance with legislative requirements.

Vegetation removal

We take the impact of our work seriously. We will make every effort to further reduce impacts on vegetation and protect fauna and flora during construction.



No national parks or nature reserves are impacted by the project



Less than a third of the project footprint involves native vegetation removal – around 3,203 hectares



Of the native vegetation to be removed, around 42 per cent is forest and woodland while the rest is grassland

Minimising vegetation removal is a key consideration during construction.

As much as possible, we are looking to locate construction compounds and construction access tracks in places where we do not need to remove trees.

This could include locating new infrastructure on already cleared and disturbed areas, using or upgrading existing access tracks to reduce the need for new access tracks and disturbance, or ‘micro siting’ infrastructure within approved impact assessment areas to further avoid and minimise impacts.



Koala identified during a remote camera survey

Managing biodiversity impacts

Before construction starts, a biodiversity management plan will be prepared outlining how biodiversity impacts will be managed during the construction and operation phases.

Measures will include:



Clearing controls like no-go zones, pre-clearing surveys, fauna spotters on site and protocols for safely relocating wildlife found in the work area



Supervision of clearing activities by an ecologist to help manage any animals that are found



Inductions, toolbox talks and targeted training on biodiversity protocols for project personnel



Choosing temporary construction locations (such as laydown areas) that avoid sensitive habitats and species, including waterways



Habitat protection and restoration measures



Weed and pest management, and biosecurity controls



Independent audits and inspections to confirm appropriate measures are in place and effective



Erosion and sediment controls

Protecting koalas and other wildlife

We recognise the strong community connection to koalas and the importance of protecting koalas and other wildlife.

The EIS identifies around 1,373 hectares of koala habitat would be impacted by the project. Of this, 604 hectares is forest and woodland while 768 hectares is scattered trees, mostly in farmland.

Impacts on koala habitat will be offset, and we expect to see an extensive area of habitat restoration delivered.

We are looking at ways to ensure animals, including koalas, move across the transmission corridor safely. This may include retaining trees in some places, providing koala refuge poles, glider poles, rope bridges and keeping important habitat features like hollow logs and rocks on the ground for smaller animals.

We are working to keep smaller trees and vegetation where we can in the transmission easement. A connectivity strategy will be prepared that identifies where habitat linkages are, and how we will encourage animals to continue to move through the transmission easement to those habitat linkages.

Investment in protecting and restoring nature

When an infrastructure project impacts native plants, animals or habitats, NSW laws require these impacts to be offset by gains that benefit those same species and ecosystems.

This means conserving and enhancing biodiversity in other locations so that, overall, there is no net loss.

EnergyCo will meet its biodiversity offset obligations for the project through a strategic offset delivery agreement (SODA) with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

Offsets will align with DCCEEW's Conservation Investment Strategies for the New England and Hunter regions which identify landscape-level priorities for biodiversity protection, habitat connectivity and long-term conservation outcomes.

Under the SODA, it's expected that at least 4,000 hectares of koala habitat will be protected and restored.



Biodiversity stewardship opportunities for landholders

Landholders can take part in offset opportunities by establishing biodiversity stewardship sites and generating biodiversity credits. Every stewardship agreement contributes to a broader network of protected and restored habitat across NSW, creating a lasting environmental legacy alongside renewable energy development.

For the Central-West Orana REZ transmission project, more than 15,000 hectares of land is being protected and restored through biodiversity stewardship agreements. These agreements permanently integrate conservation into land management, including habitat restoration and pest and weed control.

If you are a landholder in the project area and would like to learn more, you can contact supplyfund@environment.nsw.gov.au.



Read more

- EIS Section 7: Biodiversity
- EIS Section 25: Environmental Management and Mitigation Measures
- Technical Report 1: Biodiversity Development Assessment Report



Gostwyck Chapel near Uralla

Heritage

The New England and Upper Hunter regions have a diverse cultural heritage. We are committed to protecting heritage items, so they remain respected and safeguarded for generations to come.

Aboriginal heritage

The EIS includes an Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment informed by consultation with Aboriginal people, desktop research and field studies.

We have engaged with local Aboriginal people throughout development of our design and assessments. This input has been invaluable to the development of our management measures.



Heritage studies in progress

Our assessment identified more than 200 Aboriginal heritage items and sites across the project area, mostly open stone artefacts and some potentially culturally modified trees, stone quarry sites and a rock shelter.

Through consultation with local Aboriginal knowledge holders, we identified that all identified places of cultural significance fall outside the project footprint.

Aboriginal knowledge holders have identified 2 Songlines that may be crossed by the project. EnergyCo is continuing discussions with knowledge holders to better understand the cultural significance of these Songlines.

Before construction starts, an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan will be developed in consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties and Heritage NSW. This will outline how Aboriginal cultural heritage will be protected before, during and after construction.



Gostwyck Chapel near Uralla

Historical heritage

The EIS includes a historical heritage impact assessment informed by historical research, field survey and stakeholder consultation.

We have actively considered impact to potential heritage items through the development of the project.

We have avoided or minimised impacts to listed and potential heritage items, including:



Avoiding the State-listed Ardglenn Railway Tunnel



Maximising distance to the locally significant Warrane Homestead



Moving the corridor further away from the Timor Caves geological site (a local heritage item) and Barry Station

The EIS historical heritage assessment found no World, Commonwealth or National heritage listed items within the project area.

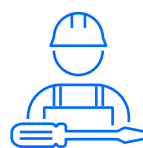
Before construction starts, a historical heritage management plan will be prepared which will set out mitigation and management measures and establish protocols for managing heritage finds.

Consultation with Heritage NSW will be ongoing through delivery.



Managing impacts

Measures will include:



Construction and operational controls like training for workers on cultural awareness and supervision by Registered Aboriginal Parties during excavation or clearing



Protection and avoidance measures like no-go zones and exclusion areas



Procedures for managing unexpected heritage finds



Long-term monitoring and compliance procedures.

Read more

- EIS Section 8: Aboriginal heritage
- EIS Section 9: Historical heritage
- Technical Report 2: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment
- Technical Report 3: Historical Heritage Impact Assessment

Social impact

We understand the project will have an impact on communities in the region. EnergyCo is committed to understanding local priorities and working with communities to manage any impacts and deliver lasting benefits.

The EIS includes a social impact assessment which found the project will bring both benefits and challenges for communities across the New England and Upper Hunter regions.

Community feedback highlighted strong attachment to rural lifestyles, landscape character and community cohesion, alongside concerns about fairness, wellbeing, housing pressures and changes to land use. Engagement showed mixed attitudes, including recognition of the importance of the energy transition, but also worry about local impacts, especially for directly affected landholders.

The assessment included:

46

face-to-face, phone and online interviews

600+

responses to a computer assisted telephone interview survey (CATI)

622

respondents to 2 online surveys in 2025 and 2026



Community information session in Uralla



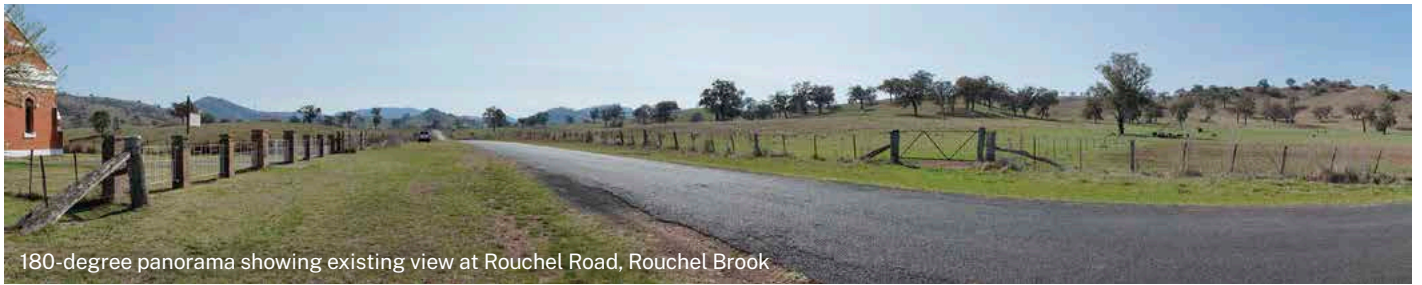
Community information session in Uralla

Proposed mitigation measures include a social impact management plan, community wellbeing strategy, workforce management plan and further engagement to minimise impacts and support positive social outcomes. Management plans will be developed before construction starts.

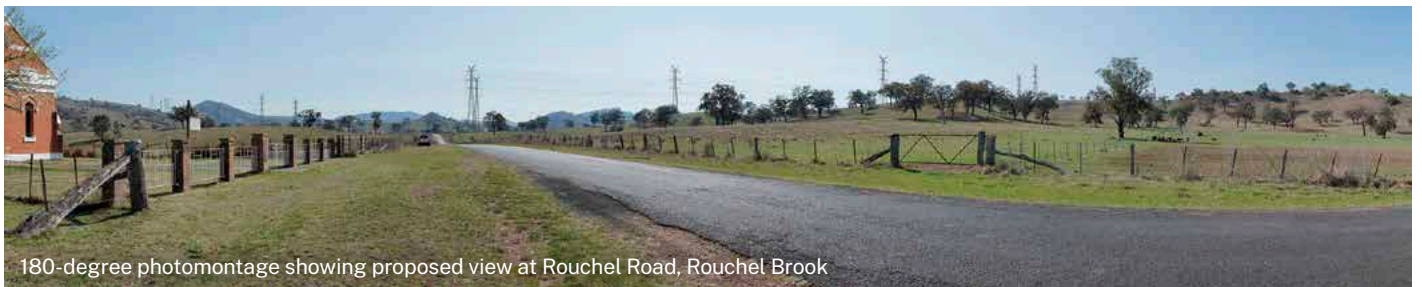
These measures will work alongside broader strategies and initiative across the REZs, including the Community and Employment Benefit Program and Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme which aim to ensure landholders and communities directly share in the benefits of this investment in the region.

Read more

- EIS Section 10: Social
- Technical Report 4: Social Impact Assessment



180-degree panorama showing existing view at Rouchel Road, Rouchel Brook



180-degree photomontage showing proposed view at Rouchel Road, Rouchel Brook

Landscape and visual

We recognise that the rural character and scenic landscapes of the New England and Upper Hunter regions are highly valued by local communities. Due to the large scale of the project, there will be some impact to the local landscape and visual amenity, and we are committed to minimising these where possible in consultation with landholders.

To understand how the project may influence local views and the broader landscape, we carried out a landscape character and visual impact assessment for the EIS which examines potential changes to the region's outlook and amenity.

The assessment identified 10 'landscape character zones' in the project area, ranging from mining and industrial areas to pastoral plains to forestry plantations and areas of more densely vegetated ranges and ridges.

Three of these zones were found to have a moderate visual impact from the project, while 7 had a low or very low visual impact.

We looked at impacts to individual receivers (dwellings or locations that may experience a view of the project) to understand their level of visual impact. The assessment identified 100 receivers hosting transmission easements on their land, as well as 57 non-easement affected receivers. We also assessed impacts to 10 public viewpoints near the project area.

The assessment identifies potential locations for vegetation screening at 9 receivers to reduce visual impacts. Planting layouts would be developed in consultation with landholders, taking into account the property, relevant viewpoints, available space, existing features and suitable vegetation.

EnergyCo will continue refining the project design to reduce visual impacts on the most affected receivers wherever practicable. This includes reviewing tower locations, heights and spacing, and making use of natural landforms and existing vegetation to help screen views.

Read more

- EIS Section 11: Landscape and visual
- Technical Report 5: Landscape Character and Visual Impact

Land use, property and agriculture

The New England and Upper Hunter regions support a diverse mix of land uses and industries, including grazing, equine enterprises, mining, cropping, forestry and rural lifestyle properties. We recognise how important these activities are to local livelihoods and the long-term productivity of the region. EnergyCo is committed to working respectfully with landholders and carefully planning our activities to minimise impacts wherever possible.

EnergyCo has developed the transmission corridor to avoid or minimise potential impacts to land use and property where practical and balanced against technical, environmental and economic considerations. However, we acknowledge there will be property and land use impacts from the project.

The EIS assesses land use and property by examining how the project interacts with existing rural activities across the New England and Upper Hunter regions.



Grazing near transmission lines



Existing transmission lines near Uralla

Our assessments found:

- within the broader project area of around 10,928 hectares, around 89% of land is agricultural, with grazing accounting for 86% and cropping around 3%
- construction and operation may temporarily restrict or change land uses, including through construction easements, access tracks and the placement of transmission towers
- construction may place short-term restrictions on grazing and cropping, with land generally restored after work is complete
- the total reduction in agricultural production value during construction is minor, equating to approximately 0.1% of total agricultural output across affected local government areas
- the project's 471 hectare operational footprint includes 438 hectares of agricultural land, with an annual production loss of about 0.02% of total agricultural output across the affected local government areas
- operational impacts are limited to the small permanent footprint of towers, hubs, access tracks and the Nemingha maintenance facility near Tamworth, with most agricultural activities able to continue within easements.

Work will not be continuous within the whole corridor during construction. At each tower location, construction may take only a few months depending on site conditions and weather. Our assessment found that land use impacts from the project would not be significant at a regional scale.

Managing equine impacts

The project has been designed to minimise impacts on equine land uses within the Upper Hunter Equine Critical Industry Cluster (CIC). While not all mapped CIC land could be avoided, the corridor largely avoids horse studs, paddocks and key facilities. The EIS equine health assessment found impacts would generally be localised and temporary, with no significant effects expected on horse health, welfare or breeding.

Consultation with equine stakeholders will continue so we can further minimise the impacts of our work. We will coordinate activities with equine landholders and business owners, including avoiding sensitive periods where possible.

Anthrax and biosecurity

We recognise anthrax is a serious biosecurity concern for farmers. We are working with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and anthrax specialists to assess and manage any potential risks.

Anthrax is a naturally occurring bacterial disease that primarily affects grazing livestock. The bacteria can form hardy spores that may survive in soil for many years in some areas of Australia.

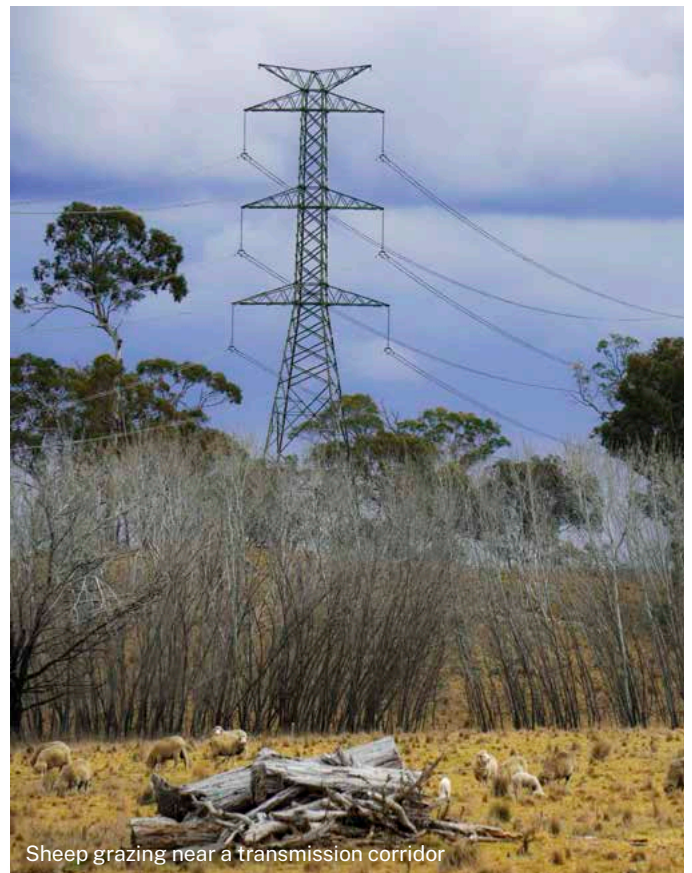
While anthrax is generally rare in the Hunter Valley, a significant outbreak in livestock occurred near Rouchel in 2007-2008. Comprehensive investigations are being undertaken to understand site-specific conditions and identify appropriate management measures. Based on the assessments completed to date, the overall likelihood of anthrax transmission associated with the project is considered low. Strict biosecurity, soil management and livestock management measures will be implemented during construction to minimise risk.

Biosecurity controls will be outlined in a biosecurity management plan which will be implemented during construction to minimise the risk of the spread of disease, pests or weeds. We will work closely with landholders, DPIRD and specialist advisors to develop property-specific risk management strategies. Agricultural activities continue safely in areas with a history of anthrax, supported by established biosecurity controls, and similar measures will be applied during construction.

Read our anthrax fact sheet for more information at energyco.nsw.gov.au/our-projects/new-england-rez/documents-resources.



Horses in the New England high country



Sheep grazing near a transmission corridor

Read more

- EIS Section 12: Land use and property
- Technical Report 6: Agriculture Impact Assessment
- Technical Report 20: Anthrax Assessment
- Technical Report 21: Equine Health Assessment

Traffic and transport

Roads and traffic impacts are an important part of our planning the New England REZ, ensuring it can be delivered safely, efficiently and with minimal disruption to local communities and road users.

The EIS traffic and transport assessment considers the potential impact of the project on the road network, including road capacity and efficiency, road condition, road safety, intersections and oversize overmass vehicle (OSOM) routes, and recommends a range of mitigation and management measures.

The assessment found the project will temporarily increase vehicle movements during construction, but impacts will generally be localised, short-term and manageable.

Peak workforce demand is expected in late 2030, when several work areas are active at the same time. During this period, the main construction workforce is estimated at about 1,400 people, generating roughly 1,200 light-vehicle and 600 heavy-vehicle movements each day across the various sites.

Traffic activity would be concentrated around workforce accommodation camps, energy hubs and key transport corridors including the New England Highway.

To ensure safe vehicle movements during construction, some traffic changes and road work will be required:



Temporary traffic controls like reduced speeds, signage and line marking



Permanent traffic changes like turning lanes, road widening and sealing



New driveways, access roads and intersections to construction compounds and workforce accommodation camps.

Once operational, traffic volumes will be low, generally limited to routine maintenance and inspections.



OSOM movement of a wind turbine blade



OSOM movement for a wind turbine mast



Construction work along the Golden Highway near Cassilis

Read more

- EIS Section 14: Traffic and transport
- Technical paper 7: Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment

Noise and vibration

We acknowledge that noise and vibration are important concerns for the community, and we are committed to carefully managing and minimising these impacts throughout construction and operation.

We have completed a detailed noise and vibration assessment to understand what you may experience during construction and operation of the New England REZ network infrastructure project. This assessment identified where noise or vibration levels may change, the likely extent of those impacts and how they will be managed.

The EIS provides a conservative assessment of potential noise impacts. It assumes the loudest equipment is operating at the closest distances (within the work site boundary) to homes or sensitive receivers. This is to ensure the predicted noise levels reflect the upper end of what could occur, not the typical day-to-day levels.

What is noise and vibration?

Noise is generally defined as unwanted sound. Sound levels can vary greatly depending on the number, distance and intensity of noise sources as well as ambient weather and environmental conditions.

Vibration can be caused by activities such as excavation, rock and concrete breaking, heavy machinery, piling and soil compaction. The intensity of vibration can vary depending on the ground condition and distance from the activity.



Existing substation near Armidale



Existing substation in the New England REZ

During construction

Noise and vibration will occur progressively throughout construction, and noise levels will change as work progresses and different activities are carried out. Earthwork (including blasting) and helicopter operations are expected to be the noisiest activities during construction. There may also be temporary noise impacts from other sources, such as construction plant and equipment and construction vehicles travelling to and from work sites.

A noise and vibration management plan will be prepared before construction starts outlining how impacts will be managed. Measures will include:

- monitoring to ensure noise and vibration stay within acceptable levels
- the noisiest activities will be scheduled during standard work hours wherever possible
- if night work is required, louder tasks will be done earlier in the evening
- noise-intensive work will be limited to set construction hours, avoiding early mornings and late afternoons
- respite periods will be provided during high-noise or high-vibration activities
- temporary noise screens may be installed near stationary or long-term noise sources
- machinery will be operated in ways that reduce noise and vibration, such as avoiding steel-on-steel contact and minimising material drops
- traffic movements will be limited to daytime hours where possible
- simultaneous noise-generating activities will be minimised in any one area, including energy hub sites
- nearby landholders and residents will be consulted before work begins, including information on planned mitigation measures.

During operation

Once the project is operational, noise and vibration impacts are expected to be minimal. Potential impacts may be caused by:

- ‘corona noise’ from transmission lines
- noise from energy hubs and switching station equipment such as fan units or circuit breaker switches.

Once the detailed design is complete, the network operator will prepare an operational noise review to confirm expected noise levels and identify any mitigation that may be needed. This review will include detailed modelling and noise monitoring to understand noise at nearby properties.

If noise levels at nearby properties exceed the allowable limits, mitigation measures may be considered.

These could include reducing noise at the source within energy hubs and switching stations or providing at-property treatments to improve noise insulation for affected homes.

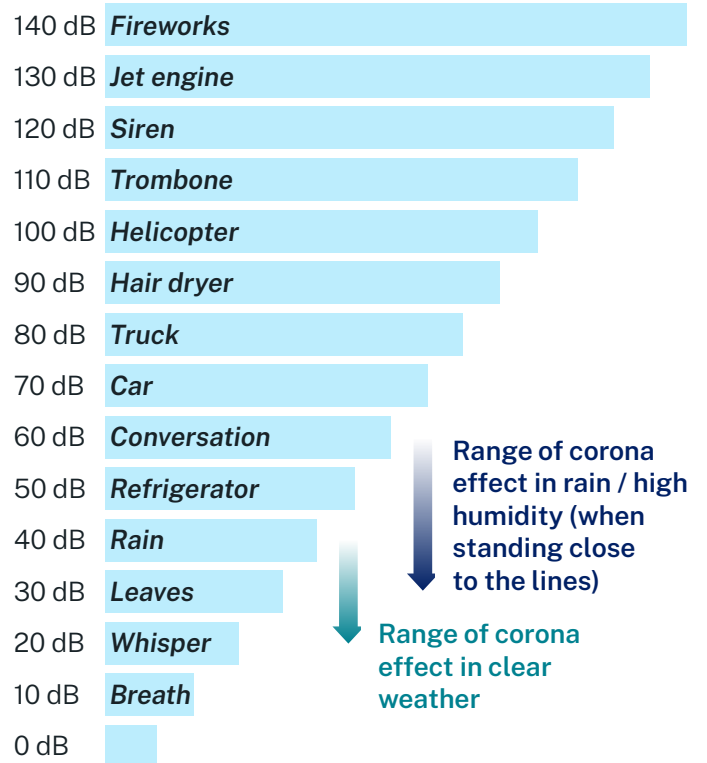
What is corona noise?

Corona noise is usually described as a crackling or hissing sound and is most noticeable during wet, misty or humid conditions. The sound is created by electricity interacting with the air around the transmission lines. It would typically only be noticeable near the transmission lines and only in certain weather conditions.

During dry conditions, transmission line noise is barely able to be heard by most people.



Comparing the corona effect with everyday sounds on the decibel scale



Read more

- EIS Section 16: Noise and vibration
- Technical Report 9: Noise and Vibration Assessment



Transmission easement with managed vegetation

Hazards and risks

Hazards and risk are an important consideration in our planning. We are committed to making sure the New England REZ transmission network is safe for the community, the environment and our workers.

The EIS includes an assessment of potential hazards and risks for the project during operation, including aviation, bushfire, electric and magnetic fields (EMF) and telecommunication. The EIS considers potential impacts because the project and identifies practical measures to avoid, minimise or manage any impacts.

Aviation

The EIS aviation impact assessment looks at potential impacts to aviation, including certified and uncertified aerodromes, aerial firefighting and aerial agricultural activities.

Aviation impacts were considered throughout the corridor selection and design process. The corridor was realigned to minimise aerial firefighting impacts at Chaffey Dam and Lake Glenbawn, ensuring water-scooping activities can continue safely.

Several private or uncertified airstrips used for agriculture may be affected by the project and we will continue working directly with landholders and aerial operators to manage any impacts. This could include adjusting or relocating an airstrip, supporting alternative aerial application arrangements, or other solutions agreed with the owners.

Bushfire

We understand the region is prone to bushfires and this is a serious concern for communities. High voltage transmission lines (330 kV and 500 kV) are very unlikely to cause bushfires. Existing high voltage lines in the Hunter Valley, New England and across Australia have operated for decades without bushfire ignition.

The EIS found the project is not expected to increase bushfire risk to nearby communities. Construction and operation of the project would have no meaningful impact on bushfire public safety risk.

The network infrastructure will be designed and maintained to strict industry standards, meaning the project will not increase bushfire risk or affect firefighting, emergency access or evacuation routes. In some areas, new access tracks may improve emergency access.

During construction, accidental fire risks will be managed through controls such as hot work procedures and on-site firefighting equipment.

Fighting fires around transmission lines

NSW Rural Fire Service has established protocols for fighting fires around transmission lines, both from the ground and in the air. When arriving at any incident, crews conduct a dynamic risk assessment and develop an appropriate strategy, considering all factors both natural and manmade. Resources, including aircraft, are then deployed in the most effective manner to combat that fire.

Fires near energy infrastructure may require a different approach because of potential electrical hazards, but this does not stop firefighters or pilots from responding. Every fire is different and crews adapt their tactics to suit the circumstances.

Aerial firefighting at Lake Glenbawn

The EIS found the transmission corridor will not prevent aerial firefighting operations at Lake Glenbawn. We understand how important protecting these operations is for communities in the Upper Hunter.

The transmission corridor crosses about 1 kilometre of the lake's upstream eastern area. North-south flight paths are unaffected, and east-west water-scooping remains feasible because there is ample space at the western end of the lake and adequate clearance over the transmission line when landing or taking off from the east.

A peer review of the EIS aviation impact assessment was completed by an independent aviation specialist which confirms our findings.

EnergyCo consulted NSW Rural Fire Service to develop the EIS and will keep working with them to minimise firefighting impacts as the project progresses.



Lake Glenbawn

Electric and magnetic fields

Electric and magnetic fields (EMF) are simply invisible forces created whenever electricity flows. They are a normal part of everyday life, coming from things like powerlines, household wiring, appliances and even phone chargers.

For transmission lines, EMF levels drop quickly with distance and remain well below the safe public exposure limits set by international health authorities.

The EIS confirms the project will comply with safe public exposure limits. The design follows prudent avoidance principles, maximising distance between transmission lines and homes.

An equine health assessment found EMF and electromagnetic interference will not affect horse health or behaviour.

Scientific evidence also shows no increased health risks for livestock from low frequency EMF associated with transmission lines. The presence of transmission lines would not affect carcasses or meat quality, or the ability of farmers to sell carcasses and livestock.

Telecommunication

Project infrastructure is expected to have minimal interaction with mobile networks, the nbn and GPS, which operate at much higher frequencies than transmission lines.

Some radio interference may occur under specific weather conditions, but impacts are not expected in the UHF band.

Read more

- EIS Section 17: Hazards and risks
- Technical Report 10: Preliminary Risk Screening
- Technical Report 11: Aviation Impact Assessment
- Technical Report 12: Bushfire Risk Assessment
- Technical Report 13: Electro and Magnetic Field Study (including Telecommunications)



Macdonald River near Wootbrook

Water

We understand water security and avoiding impacts to local water supply are serious issues for communities and councils in the region.

Project water needs are managed according to the NSW water management framework which prioritises essential human needs during dry conditions, including town water supply and stock and domestic water uses. Industrial uses, like construction water for the project, are lower priority and can only be used when water is available under the rules of the relevant water sharing plan.

The EIS includes assessments of surface water, flooding and groundwater impacts and identifies measures to avoid and manage any potential impacts during construction and operation. This includes looking at how the project may affect water quality, waterways, groundwater resources, flooding behaviour, water availability and existing water users.

The EIS does not assess water requirements required for renewable energy projects (like solar and wind) planned for the REZ, as each individual project is responsible for assessing its own impacts in its respective EIS.

Surface water

The EIS includes a surface water and flooding assessment which looks at how the project might affect water quality, local creeks and rivers, water flows, water availability and flooding during construction and operation. The assessment included detailed modelling, estimates of how much water the project will need, and consideration of climate variability and future climate change.



Uralla



Macdonald River near Woolbrook

Construction is expected to use around 2,040 megalitres (ML) of non-potable water and 360 ML of potable water over 6 years. This demand would generally be spread across several catchments and water sharing plan areas and represents only a small portion of available water.

Our priority is to capture and store rainwater and reuse treated wastewater where possible. We would then look at entering into agreements with willing landholders, before considering surface and groundwater sources.

Potential impacts to surface water during construction mainly relate to erosion, sediment runoff, disturbance of waterways, changes to drainage, wastewater management and water sourcing. These impacts will be managed through erosion and sediment controls, water quality measures, wastewater systems and careful design to protect watercourses and maintain natural flows.

With these measures in place, any impacts on water quality, waterways and flow regimes are expected to be minor, temporary and localised.

Flooding

Flood modelling shows that any flooding impacts from the project would be small and limited to areas right next to the infrastructure. Because the transmission line mostly follows higher ground, it avoids most flood-prone land. Where structures are in flood areas, any changes to flood levels or flow paths would be minor and would not affect wider flood behaviour.

Energy hubs are generally located outside regional flood zones, and modelling shows they won't cause off-site flooding impacts.

Climate change modelling found that future increases in flood levels would still be minor and manageable through drainage design.

Groundwater

A groundwater impact assessment found that construction could cause small, localised changes to groundwater levels, flows and quality, especially where groundwater is used for construction water.

The project is not expected to cause long-term impacts to groundwater at local or regional levels.

Any groundwater extraction would be carefully managed to avoid impacts on other users and sensitive environments through a groundwater management plan, which includes monitoring, tracking extraction volumes and managing any potential effects.

Read more

- EIS Section 18: Surface water and flooding
- EIS Section 19: Groundwater
- Technical Report 14: Surface Water Assessment
- Technical Report 15: Flooding Assessment
- Technical Report 16: Groundwater Assessment
- New England REZ regional water demand update (October 2026)

Other EIS assessments

Cumulative impacts

Read more: EIS Section 24

A cumulative impact assessment was completed in line with DPHI guidelines, looking at how this project's impacts combine with other future developments in the New England and Upper Hunter regions. It considered approved projects, projects yet to start, and those currently under assessment, including energy developments, mining and transport upgrades across multiple local government areas.

Because some of these projects may be built at the same time, the assessment examined how overlapping construction periods could contribute to broader cumulative environmental, social and economic impacts. Cumulative impacts will be managed by working closely with other project proponents and stakeholders to coordinate construction timeframes and manage overlapping activities. Cumulative impacts will also be considered in construction planning and sequencing to further minimise regional effects.

EnergyCo acknowledges that this assessment cannot yet include all future generation and infrastructure projects in the New England REZ as many are still in early planning. As those projects progress, each will need to complete its own cumulative impact assessment. To address REZ-wide challenges in a coordinated way, EnergyCo is also working with government agencies and councils to deliver broader strategic initiatives, including upgrades to regional infrastructure such as roads, water, wastewater, waste and housing.



Community information session in Uralla

Economic

Read more: EIS Section 15

An economic impact assessment was undertaken to identify potential impacts on agricultural economic productivity and effects on regional economic activity.

The assessment found the project would generate significant regional economic activity during its six-year construction period, while creating temporary localised impacts on agricultural and forestry productivity where construction occupies currently productive land.

These short-term impacts would be managed through mitigation measures such as property-specific management plans and agreements with landholders.

Air quality

Read more: EIS Section 20

The air quality impact assessment found that the main air quality concern during construction would be dust from activities such as vegetation clearing, earthworks, vehicle movements and exposed surfaces.

Management measures will be outlined in an air quality management plan before construction starts and will include:

- regular watering of work areas and trucks to suppress dust
- stabilising exposed areas using water, polymers or other suppressants
- limiting vehicle speeds on unsealed roads
- scheduling high dust activities during favourable weather
- monitoring and compliance checks.

With the proposed mitigation and management measures in place, residual dust impacts are expected to be minor and not significant for surrounding communities. Once operational, the project is not anticipated to cause adverse air quality impacts.

Greenhouse gas and climate change

Read more: EIS Section 21

The greenhouse gas and climate change assessment found most greenhouse gas emissions from the project would occur during construction, mainly from diesel use and vegetation clearing.

Operational emissions would be low.

By enabling renewable energy from the New England REZ to connect to the NEM, the project is expected to significantly support NSW's decarbonisation.

It could avoid around 17 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year by displacing coal-fired generation – equivalent to about 16% of NSW's annual emissions – helping both the NSW and Australian Governments meet their emissions reduction targets.

Contamination

Read more: EIS Section 22

A contamination assessment was carried out to identify any potential soil contamination and other ground-disturbance risks, such as unexploded ordnance, naturally occurring asbestos, acid sulfate soils and salinity, that may affect construction or operation of the project.

The assessment found several areas of environmental concern (AEC), particularly around the ash dams at the Bayswater and Liddell power stations, and locations with naturally occurring asbestos near Barry and Hanging Rock.

Where construction intersects with these areas, human and ecological risks would be avoided where possible through detailed design or minimised through targeted environmental investigations and the use of appropriate construction and environmental controls.

These requirements will be set out in the project's construction environmental management plan.



Waste management

Read more: EIS Section 23

Construction would generate several key waste streams, including vegetation from clearing, spoil from excavations, concrete waste, wastewater and general waste from construction activities and workforce accommodation camps.

Only small volumes of waste would be produced during operations.

All waste would be managed under a waste management plan that applies circular economy principles and the waste hierarchy, prioritising avoidance, reduction, reuse and recycling before disposal.

EnergyCo is consulting with councils, waste providers and other stakeholders to identify suitable facilities, haulage routes and destinations for each waste stream.

Read more

- Technical Report 17: Air Quality Impact Assessment
- Technical Report 18: Greenhouse Gas Assessment
- Technical Report 19: Contamination Assessment

Next steps

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) has placed the EIS on public exhibition for at least 28 days. We encourage you to review the EIS and have your say by making a submission to DPHI during the public exhibition period.



Community information session in Armidale

Once the exhibition period closes, all submissions will be considered as part of the planning assessment process. EnergyCo will prepare a submissions report that responds to the issues and feedback raised by the community, landholders, councils, government agencies and other stakeholders.

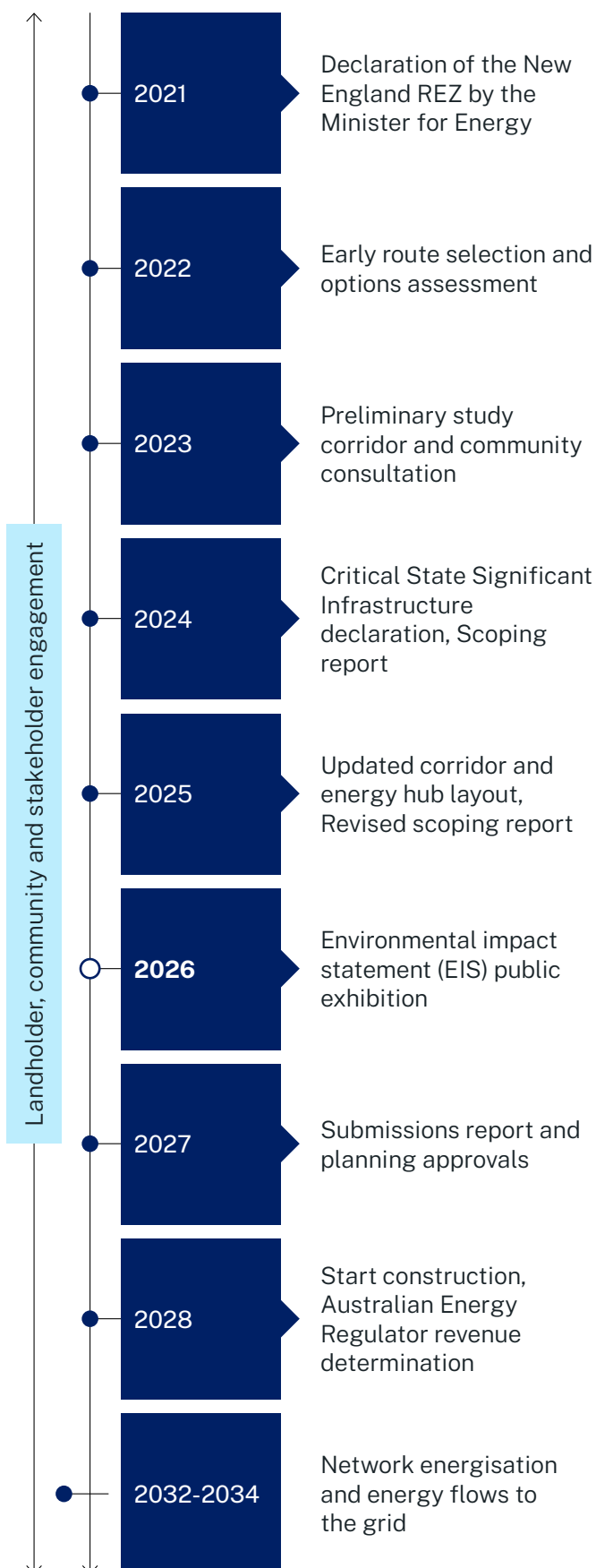
This report will be made publicly available and will be considered alongside the EIS by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces when determining the project.

If approved, the New England REZ network infrastructure project will be constructed and operated in accordance with the commitments outlined in the EIS and any conditions of approval.

As the project progresses, there may be opportunities to further refine elements of the design, construction approach and environmental management measures. Community feedback received during the exhibition, ongoing technical assessments and detailed planning undertaken by the future network operator may all contribute to these refinements.

As a result, some aspects of the project may change as detailed design is completed before construction begins. Any changes will be assessed to ensure they remain consistent with the impacts assessed in the EIS and relevant planning approval requirements. Where further approvals are required, the appropriate planning processes will be followed, including opportunities for community input where applicable.

Project development timeline



How to make a submission on the EIS

You can provide feedback to DPHI on the New England Renewable Energy Zone Network Infrastructure Project (EIS) during the exhibition period. DPHI requires submissions to be made online using the NSW Planning Portal.

If you need help accessing the portal online, please get in touch with our team or visit an information session.

Have your say online

You can make an online submission during October and November. To have your say:

- **Visit:** the NSW Planning Portal at planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/have-your-say
- **Search:** 'New England Renewable Energy Zone' (SSI -74175972)
- **Click:** 'Make a submission'

Before making your submission, please read DPHI's Privacy Statement at planning.nsw.gov.au/privacy or phone 1300 305 695 for a copy. DPHI will publish your submission on its website in accordance with their Privacy Statement.

Contact us

 nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au

 1800 061 114 (toll free)

 energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez



Scan the QR code for more information.

If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** and ask them to call us on **1800 061 114**.



Community information session in Uralla



Armidale



EnergyCo pop-up in Tamworth



Industry briefing



New England Solar Farm near Armidale

