

Land use, property and agriculture

Central-West Orana REZ transmission project

September 2023

EnergyCo is delivering the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) to provide a clean, affordable and reliable power supply for energy consumers across NSW. The Central-West Orana REZ transmission project will involve the construction of new transmission lines, energy hubs, switching stations and related infrastructure. The new REZ network infrastructure will enable renewable energy from solar, wind and storage projects to be distributed to energy consumers across the State via the existing NSW transmission network.



Grazing land between Merotherie and Gulgong.

Overview

EnergyCo understands the importance of agricultural activities to the livelihoods of communities in the Central-West Orana region and the NSW economy. The Central-West Orana REZ transmission project has been designed to minimise impacts on existing land uses wherever possible. This includes locating the project alignment within areas of already disturbed land, such as mining and industrial land and adjacent to existing transmission line easements.

This fact sheet addresses potential impacts of the project on land use in the Central-West Orana region and EnergyCo's measures to minimise impacts and ensure existing land use activities are supported throughout the delivery of the REZ.

For more information on how agriculture, property and land use will be managed for the Central-West Orana REZ, view **Chapter 7: Land use and property** and **Chapter 8: Agriculture** of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) via EnergyCo's website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo.

Primary land uses in Central-West Orana region



Land use in the Central-West Orana region

Primary land uses in the region are displayed in the graphic above. Secondary land uses include mining operations and land occupied by protected areas such as National Parks and State Conservation Areas.

Land ownership in the region is mostly freehold, in addition to areas of Crown land including road reserves, rail corridors, travelling stock reserves, state forests and NSW National Parks and Wildlife estate.

Minimising land use and property impacts

The REZ transmission project has been designed to avoid or minimise potential land use and property impacts. This has included locating the project alignment next to existing transmission line easements or in areas that allow current land use activities to continue, where possible. The project has also been designed to maximise the use of already disturbed land, such as mining land and industrial land.

The location of transmission infrastructure for the project has been informed by landowner feedback wherever possible.

Land use during construction and operation



The total construction area for the REZ transmission project covers around **3,675 hectares** of agricultural land. Around **1,885 hectares** of this agricultural land is expected to be directly affected during construction.



Once operational, around **855 hectares** of agricultural land would be directly impacted by the footprint of project infrastructure and required access tracks. The remainder of the operational area would be about **1,600 hectares** and include transmission line easements, where land would continue to be able to be used for grazing and other agricultural activities, subject to some restrictions.

Future land use

The Central-West Orana region has a long history of agricultural and mining activities. While these land uses will continue to dominate, the region is expected to experience a growth in energy related land use from the energy transition. EnergyCo is committed to supporting existing land use practices and minimising environmental and social impacts throughout the development of the Central-West Orana REZ while providing opportunities for growth in new industries as outlined in the Central-West and Orana Regional Plan 2041 (DPE, 2022).

For more details you can view the Plan online at planning.nsw.gov.au.

Mitigation measures during construction

To help minimise and mitigate impacts to local land uses, EnergyCo and the Network Operator will:

-  Work closely with landowners before and during construction to minimise impacts to their operations.
-  Develop individual Property Management Plans in consultation with host landowners prior to construction.
-  Continue to consult with mining operators, utility providers, Local Land Services, the Forestry Corporation of NSW and other relevant stakeholders as part of the detailed design process, as well as prior to and during construction activities.
-  Complete pre-condition assessments of properties located within the construction area to determine the existing condition of assets, infrastructure and the general condition of the land.
-  Prepare a biosecurity management plan covering inspection, cleaning, clearing activities and controls for identified biosecurity risks.

Agriculture

Most agricultural operations in the Central-West Orana region involve the production of livestock (sheep and cattle), with cropping operations focused in areas of higher quality soils. The grazing of cattle and calves has been identified as the most valuable agricultural commodity for the region.

Temporary impacts during construction

Temporary restrictions may need to be placed on the movement of landowners, workers, livestock, and equipment within and across the construction area, which may limit cropping and aerial agricultural operations, removal of vegetation (as shade or shelter), and changes to farm infrastructure such as fencing and dams for a duration of time throughout the construction phase of the project. These impacts would be managed through the development of property management plans in consultation with host landowners.

Once the REZ network is operational

During operation of the project, agricultural activities within easements (outside of transmission tower footprints) can generally continue, with some restrictions to certain activities such as cropping and horticulture. Infrastructure on private property such as sheds, fencing, dams and access tracks may require adjustments around infrastructure and this would be carried out in consultation with the landowner. The appointed Network Operator will consult with affected landowners on a case-by-case basis to establish property management plans for agricultural activities to continue to be carried out.

For more information, please view the living and working around transmission line easements fact sheet on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo.



Wellington solar farm.

Supporting the agricultural industry in NSW

EnergyCo recognises community concern about potential impacts to the agricultural sector from renewable energy developments in the REZs. This issue extends more broadly beyond the impacts of the REZ transmission project.

In March 2022, the NSW Government announced a cross-agency taskforce to support the NSW Agriculture Commissioner in a review of the policy framework for managing issues and opportunities arising from the expected growth in the renewable energy and agricultural sectors in NSW. The Commissioner released an issues paper for public consultation in April 2022 to inform the review.

The Commissioner's final report was released in November 2022 and includes 29 recommendations to the NSW Government and the renewable energy sector. A number of the recommendations refer to the REZs and how communities are consulted through the project development process.

The NSW Government released its response to the review in March 2023. The response reaffirms the government's commitment to accommodating a range of land use priorities alongside renewable energy development and recognises the driving role that the agriculture industry plays in the economy. It includes direct responses to each of the recommendations made by the Commissioner and lists actions carried out to date by the NSW Government to proactively deal with the issues addressed in the review.

Further information is available to view on the Department of Primary Industries website at dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/lup/nsw-agriculture-commissioner.

About EnergyCo

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is a statutory authority responsible for leading the delivery of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) under the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. For more information, visit our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-energyco.

Contact Us

For more information about the Central-West Orana REZ project, you can visit our website or contact the project team:

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🗣️ 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**.

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.

