

Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone

December 2023 Project Update

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 REZ will initially unlock up to 4.5 gigawatts (GW) of new network capacity for solar, wind and storage projects with an expected 6 GW by 2038.

Transmission infrastructure project – Environmental Impact Statement

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Central-West Orana REZ transmission infrastructure project was placed on public exhibition by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) for an extended period from September to November 2023. The EIS can be viewed on the [NSW Planning Portal](#).

The transmission network infrastructure includes transmission lines and energy hubs, which will transfer power generated by solar and wind farms to electricity consumers. This infrastructure will be critical for the successful operation of the REZ.

A range of tools and materials were developed to engage stakeholders and support the exhibition including newspaper advertisements, mail-outs, a digital summary for the EIS, interactive map, e-newsletter alerts to the project mailing list, guide to the EIS and a variety of fact sheets. These can be viewed at energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo.

Consultation activities included community engagement via eight in-person community information sessions, 12 in-person pop up displays, stakeholder briefings and neighbouring landowner meetings.

NSW government agencies and other key stakeholders were briefed via emails, phone calls, meetings and presentations to ensure they received the relevant information to make a submission. Thank you to everyone who provided feedback.

Next steps



Your feedback is now being considered and will help to inform the final design of the REZ transmission infrastructure. A report responding to the submissions will be lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment in 2024.



An amendment report is also being prepared which will document any proposed changes to the project in response to community feedback and direct landowner engagement. This is expected to be lodged with the submissions report.

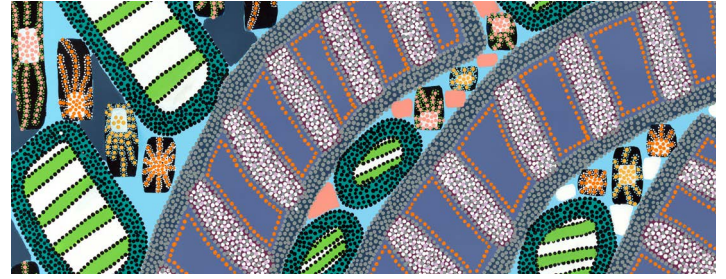
Property Acquisition Support Line

The NSW Government has a free and confidential Property Acquisition Support Line to support landowners affected by planned transmission infrastructure. If you need to talk to a qualified psychologist or social worker, please call 1300 089 551. The service is independent from EnergyCo, free and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Acknowledgement of Country

EnergyCo acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Wiradjuri, Wailwan (also known as Weilwan and Wayilwan), and Gamilaroi (also known as Gamilaraay and Kamilaroi) countries.

We pay respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations who also call the Central-West Orana home. We commit to respect the land we walk on and the communities we walk with.



Artwork: Regeneration by Josie Rose

Preferred Network Operator confirmed

ACERESZ has been confirmed as the preferred Network Operator to deliver and operate the new Central-West Orana transmission network.

The New South Wales Government has approved the Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) entering a Commitment Deed with ACERESZ, a consortium sponsored by ACCIONA, Cobra and Endeavour Energy.

Subject to regulatory and planning approvals ACERESZ will design, build, finance, operate and maintain the REZ transmission network for the next 35 years. This includes new high-capacity overhead transmission lines, energy hubs and related infrastructure.

EnergyCo thanks the other two shortlisted proponents who submitted proposals as part of the competitive tender process. More information on this is available at www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/latest-updates.



EnergyCo Chief Executive James Hay and ACERESZ Chief Executive Trevor Armstrong.

Declaration amendment

The NSW Government has amended the declaration of the Central-West Orana REZ to increase the intended network capacity of the REZ to 6 GW to give regional communities certainty about the future and support the State's future energy needs.

Any future changes to the transmission corridor to deliver the full 6 GW – including potential north-western or southern extensions – are not proposed now and will be subject to separate planning and regulatory approval processes. This will include detailed community consultation, consideration for cumulative impacts and environmental assessment under the NSW planning system.

The amendment to the REZ declaration reflects the projected size of the Central-West Orana REZ in the Network Infrastructure Strategy (NIS), which was released in May 2023. The NIS outlines options to increase the network capacity of the Central-West Orana REZ up to 4.5 GW initially under Stage 1, and up to 6 GW by 2038 under Stage 2. This will allow more renewable energy from solar, wind and storage projects to be distributed through the NSW transmission network. Read about the amendment at energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo-rez.

Coordination across the REZ

EnergyCo is coordinating the delivery of the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, which is a NSW Government priority. To achieve this, a whole-of-government approach is needed and involves inter-agency collaboration to support the implementation of the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap including the Central-West Orana REZ.

EnergyCo is working to ensure the REZ provides positive outcomes for local communities who are hosting energy infrastructure. We are also working to minimise the impacts of the project on people and the environment. We are doing this by collaborating with other government agencies, local councils and generators to develop strategies and initiatives that address impacts generated by the REZ.

EnergyCo has established a Central-West Orana REZ steering committee made up of impacted councils and other NSW Government agencies to provide input on a range of REZ-wide topics.

Key topics being investigated include workforce accommodation, training opportunities, roads and traffic management, telecommunication improvements, waste management, and a range of key community and health services.

We expect to be able to share more information about these initiatives in early 2024.



To hear from Dubbo Regional Council Mayor Matthew Dickerson go to [EnergyCo's LinkedIn page](#).

Community and Employment Benefits Program

EnergyCo is developing a Community and Employment Benefit Program which will invest hundreds of millions of dollars into regional communities, delivering tangible, long-term outcomes for locals. The REZ-wide program is expected to be established in early 2024.

Communities in the Central-West Orana REZ will receive \$128 million over the next four years to deliver community projects and employment opportunities. The types of projects that could be funded include:

-  Public infrastructure upgrades
-  Housing and accommodation
-  Training and employment programs
-  Health and education programs
-  Support for energy efficiency and local rooftop solar
-  Initiatives for First Nations people
-  Other projects, programs or services that align with the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Regulation 2021 (see Clauses 56 and 57).

EnergyCo has secured forward funding so benefits can be delivered early rather than after construction occurs. Based on engagement with councils and communities since 2022, some early initiatives are already in development. We plan to further engage with key local communities, First Nations people and councils in early 2024 to ensure this funding is allocated in a way that best meets what local communities need.

Course to fast track skills training in the REZ



EnergyCo is collaborating with TAFE NSW to deliver a 'Prepare to work in the renewable energy sector' online microskills course.

The course has been developed in response to feedback from locals that a key barrier to finding work in the renewable energy industry is a lack of awareness of the types of jobs in demand and the skills required.

Participants will gain an insight into careers available in renewable energy, an overview of REZs in NSW, and knowledge of large-scale renewable energy generation.

EnergyCo will work closely with school students and First Nations groups in the REZ to initially provide up to 500 free passes to the course in the five REZs.

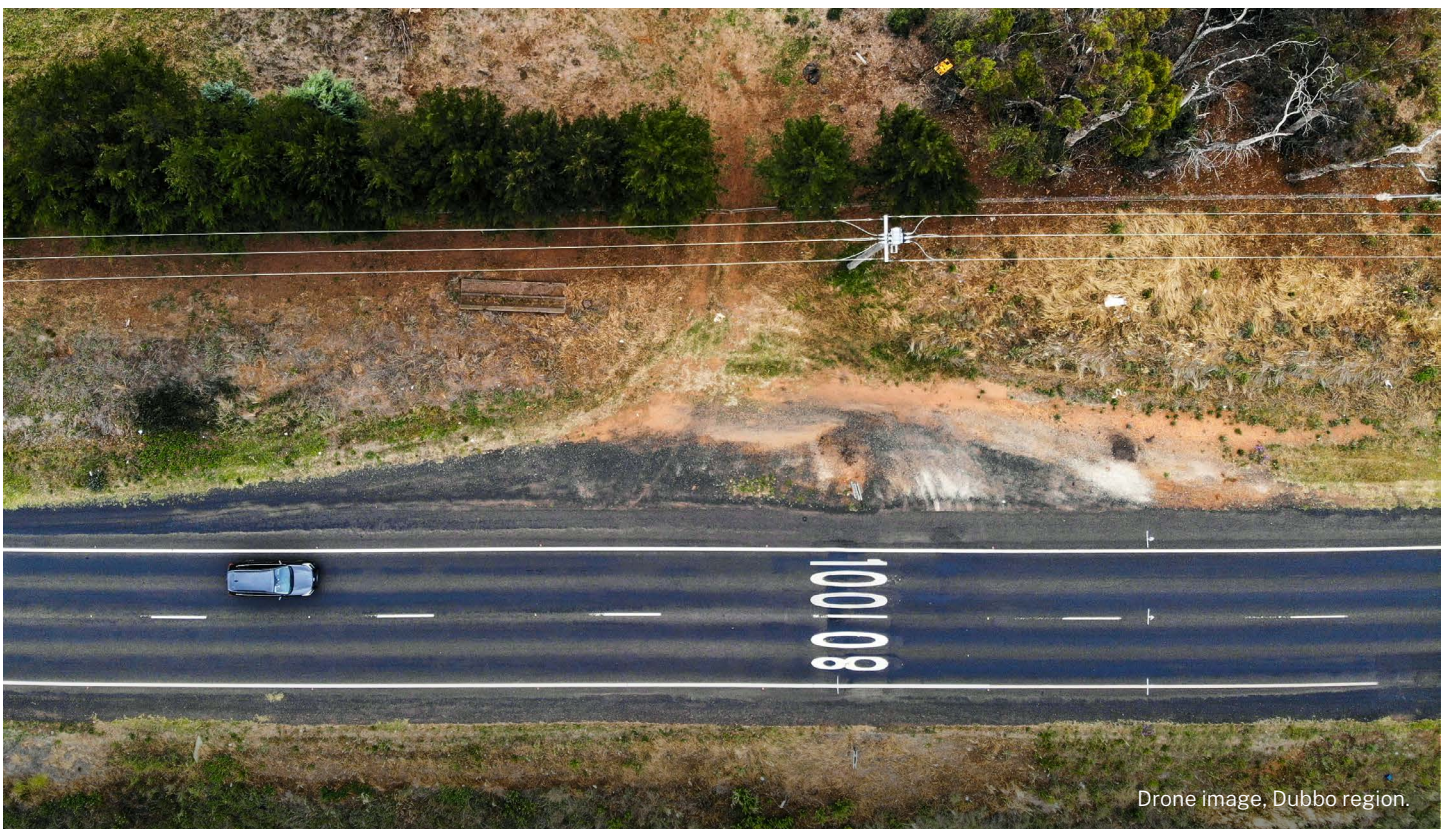
The course will be a short, self-directed online course. It is expected to open in early 2024.

This initiative builds on EnergyCo's plan to secure the education and training benefits for communities and workers in the REZ.

Access Rights tender update

AEMO Services, as the NSW Consumer Trustee opened its fourth NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap Tender seeking Long Term Energy Service Agreements for generation in October. In response to market feedback, the first tender of Central-West Orana REZ Access Rights has been delayed.

EnergyCo is continuing to work with AEMO Services to make Central-West Orana REZ Access Rights available as soon as possible. For more information go to aemo.com.au.



Engagement with First Nations communities

EnergyCo is working closely with the First Nations Working Group, with monthly meetings held since June this year. The group contributed to the recent update of the region specific First Nations Guidelines for the Central-West Orana REZ and will be consulted on the Community and Employment Benefit Program.

The Working Group is made up of organisation representatives and community members from the Central-West Orana region. The purpose is to coordinate and streamline engagement and consultation across renewable energy generation and network infrastructure projects in the Central-West Orana REZ with local Aboriginal community representatives. This is done in an efficient and respectful way, and to reduce consultation fatigue. Members achieve this through connection to their own local Community Working Groups, where they provide a voice for their communities.

First Nations Guidelines – region specific



The NSW Government has updated the Central-West Orana REZ First Nations Guidelines to support the successful implementation of First Nations engagement and participation initiatives in the REZs and ensure communities see legacy benefits from the energy transition. This includes more support and coordination from EnergyCo with the First Nations working group and First Nations communities in the REZ.

Read the updated guidelines at energy.nsw.gov.au.

First Nations Outcomes Team

EnergyCo is building a First Nations Outcomes Team, which will ensure local Aboriginal communities are better supported to reap the benefits of the renewable energy transition. Working closely with local First Nations communities is important in maximising training and employment outcomes in NSW's Renewable Energy Zones.



[Watch the video](#) about EnergyCo's First Nations Outcomes Team.



Local residents in Dubbo.

In the community

The Central-West Orana REZ project team has been out and about in the community. This has included pop-ups in Coolah, Gulgong, Dunedoo, Mudgee, Wellington, Merriwa and Cassilis, and drop-in information sessions in Wellington, Coolah, Dunedoo, Gulgong and Mudgee.



Talking with the community at an EIS drop-in information session in Dunedoo in October 2023.



Meeting with the First Nations Working Group in Dubbo in November 2023.

Left to right: Tim Stevenson (Chair of the First Nations Working Group), Helena Stanley (Dubbo Regional Council) Alivya Powell (Community and Stakeholder Senior Officer), and Tom Watt (EnergyCo's Planning and Policy Director).



Registration preparations at the Gulgong drop-in information session in October 2023.



In Mudgee discussing the EIS in October 2023.



Senior Place Manager presenting at St Johns School Dubbo in October 2023.



EnergyCo's Planning and Policy Director, Tom Watt presenting at the Orana Outlook Forum in November 2023. Image courtesy of RDA Orana.

Geotechnical investigations

To help inform the detailed design of the Central-West Orana REZ transmission project, geotechnical investigations are being carried out by Network Operator for the project, ACERREZ.

The work is being undertaken at proposed sites for Merotherie and Elong Elong energy hubs, Wollar switching station as well as the proposed 500 kV and 330 kV transmission alignments.

Most of this work will involve drilling for core samples, soil conductivity and digging test pits for the completion of our cultural heritage surveys. Any holes drilled or dug will be backfilled and the surface restored once the testing is complete.

Some of this work will be carried out through agreement on private property. It is expected the investigation work should continue through to mid 2024, weather permitting.

You can learn more about field investigation work in our fact sheet at energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo/project-documents.

Port to REZ

Delivering new high-capacity transmission infrastructure for the Central-West Orana REZ and Hunter-Central Coast REZ will require transportation of large renewable energy components, such as wind turbine components and transformers for transmission, from the Port of Newcastle.

EnergyCo is working with Transport for NSW to coordinate minor road work and transport corridor modifications along the Port to REZ route to ensure the state road network can accommodate Over Size Over Mass (OSOM) vehicle movements for the Central-West Orana REZ transmission project and major generation projects with planned connections to the REZ.

Surveying and early investigation work for the Port to REZ alignment was completed in mid 2023 to inform our planning for the road upgrades. EnergyCo is now developing the design and planning documentation together with Transport for NSW for the road upgrades, with works due to begin in late 2024.

To reduce impacts to road users, many of the largest components will be moved overnight. To assist transport planning, EnergyCo and Transport are beginning to engage with councils and stakeholders along the route and this will continue through 2024.

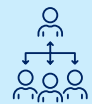
2023 engagement summary*



14 drop-in information sessions



37 pop-up events in local towns



Over **200** meetings with stakeholders



8 First Nations Working Group meetings



More than **70** interactions with local councils



Responded to nearly **400** email enquiries and **200** phone enquiries



21 project updates emailed to around **650** subscribers



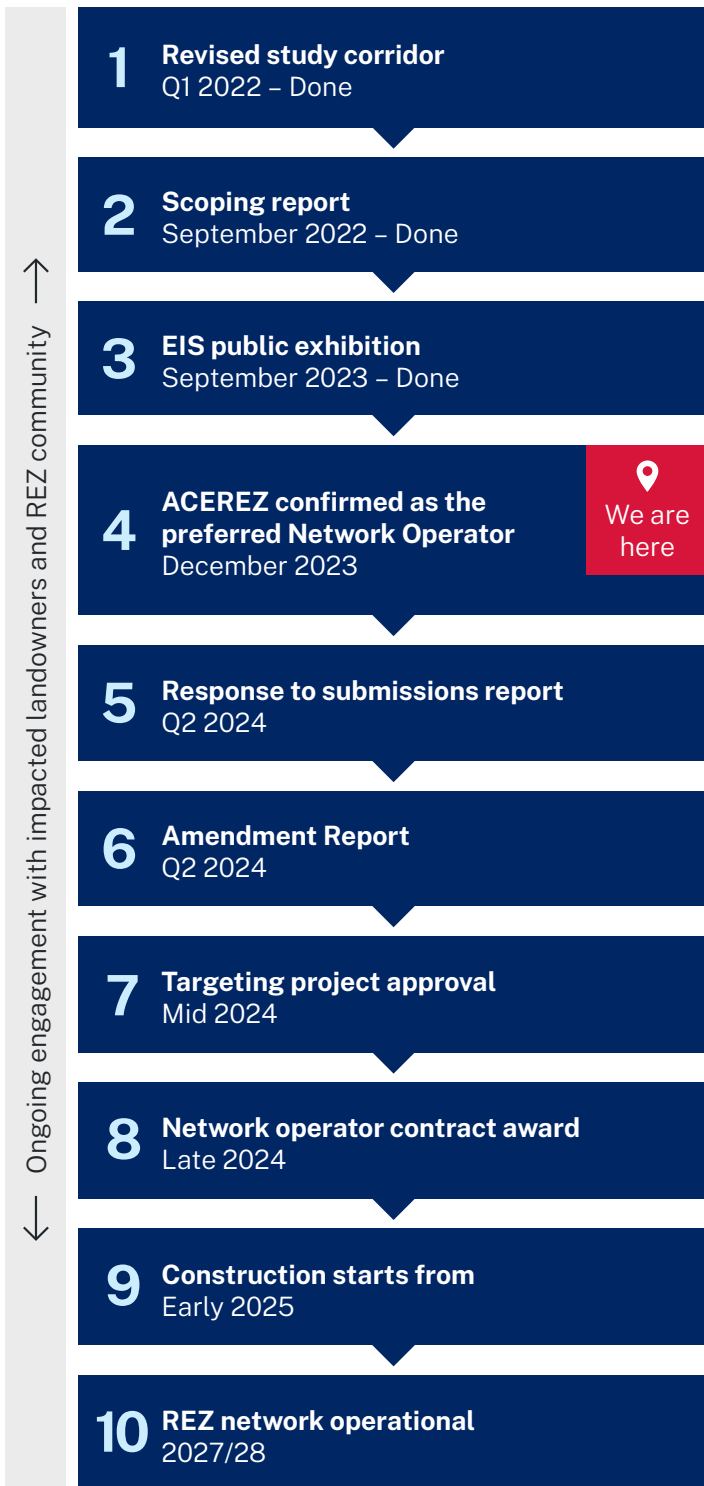
Over **25,000** website visits

*Note figures are year to date at end November 2023.



EnergyCo team members undertaking field survey along Golden Highway verge at Jerrys Plains.

Project timeline



Popping up in the REZ

Our team will be popping up in the region on a regular basis next year. Keep an eye out for them and drop in to say hello. Everyone who has registered for updates will get an email with event details.

Register for updates



Do you want to stay up to date on our latest news and announcements? Please contact us on the details below to register to details.

Holiday closedown

In line with the NSW Government's Christmas closedown period, most project activities for the Central-West Orana REZ will pause from 5pm on Friday 22 December 2023 until Sunday 7 January 2024.

There will be no field work carried out during this period. Dedicated team members will be available to progress negotiations with impacted landowners.

We will resume our activities from Monday 8 January 2024.

Contact us

✉ cwo@energyco.nsw.gov.au

☎ 1800 032 101 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

🌐 energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo

🗣️ 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 032 101**.

