



**EnergyCo**

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is part of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)



# New England Renewable Energy Zone

Woolomin community information session

Facilitated by Mat Morris, Community  
Engagement Manager

14 May 2024

# Agenda



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- 1 About EnergyCo and the New England Renewable Energy Zone
  - 2 Our team
  - 3 The New England REZ transmission project
  - 4 Revised study corridor: What we heard
  - 5 Key topics from the community: Route selection, agriculture, bushfire management and next steps for engagement
  - 6 Questions
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# About EnergyCo

The **Energy Corporation of NSW** (EnergyCo) is a statutory authority re-established in line with legislative functions under the *Energy and Utilities Administration Act 1987* and the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020*.

EnergyCo is leading the design, delivery and coordination of **NSW Renewable Energy Zones** (REZs) and other electricity infrastructure in a way that benefits consumers, investors and regional communities. EnergyCo's role is to:



Coordinate **\$32 billion** of investment in REZs to deliver at least **12 GW** of renewable energy by 2030.



Lead the declaration, coordination and delivery of the state's **first five REZs** in NSW.



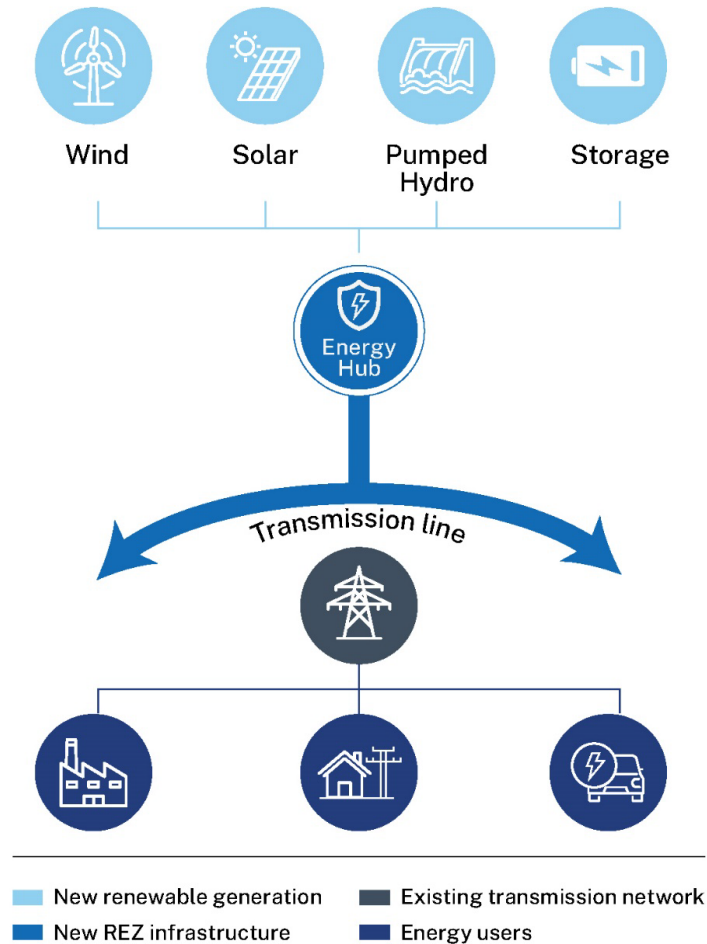
Design and deliver **transmission** network infrastructure projects for REZs.



Work with communities, industry and other stakeholders

Learn more about EnergyCo at [www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-energyco](http://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-energyco)

# The New England Renewable Energy Zone



The New England REZ was declared in December 2021 with an intended network transfer capacity of **8 GW**. It covers an area of **15,000 km<sup>2</sup>** centred around Armidale and Tamworth.

The REZ will play a pivotal role in delivering **clean, reliable and affordable energy** to NSW electricity consumers under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

The first two stages of the REZ are scheduled for completion by **2033** ensure energy security across NSW as coal-fired power stations retire.

# EnergyCo: Our team



EnergyCo Chief Executive  
*James Hay*

Executive Director, Planning and  
Communities  
*Ash Albury*

New England Regional Director  
*Alexandra Hall*

Chief Project Officer  
*Mark Westbrook*

Executive Project Director,  
New England REZ  
*Doug Parris*

Wider executive leadership team  
[energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-  
energyco/our-leadership](https://energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-energyco/our-leadership)

## New England REZ project team

Planning and  
environment

Communication  
and engagement

Place  
Managers

Property

Property  
Managers

REZ  
Coordination

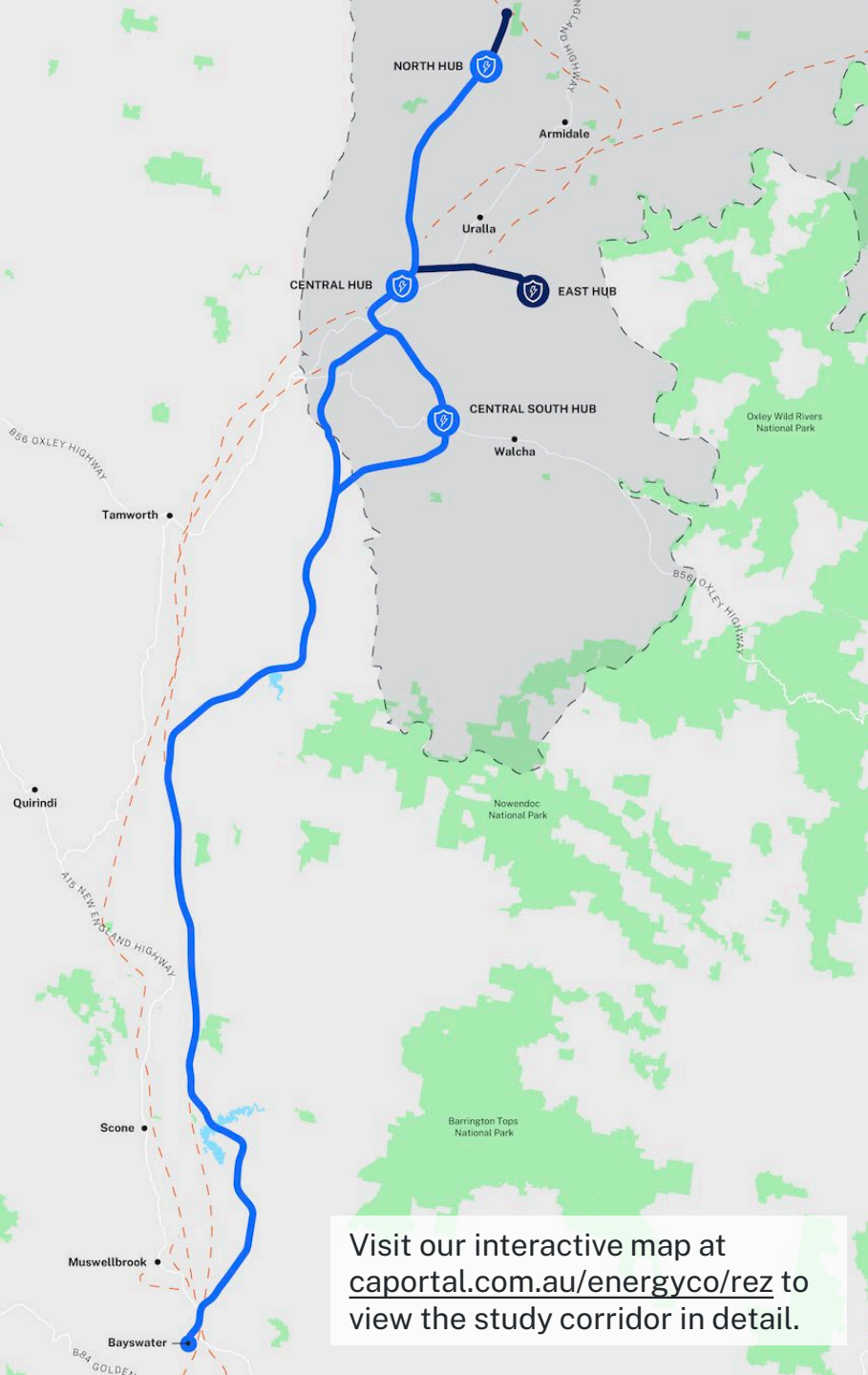
Regulatory

Transaction

Commercial

Technical





# New England REZ transmission project



## Development timeline

Q4 2021	New England REZ declaration
2022	Detailed technical studies
Q2 2023	Preliminary study corridor
Q1 2024	Revised study corridor
Q2 2024	Scoping report and preferred study corridor
2024/2025	Environmental Impact Statement preparation
H2 2025	Environmental Impact Statement public exhibition
2026	Submissions report and planning approval

Ongoing landowner, community and stakeholder consultation

# Revised study corridor: What we heard from communities

We held three information sessions in March 2024 which were attended by 160 people. We are continuing to engage directly with landowners in the study corridor to better understand opportunities and constraints for the transmission route.

Key topics raised included:

- how the study corridor for the transmission project was developed
- impacts to agricultural activities from transmission lines
- bushfire and emergency management
- next steps for engagement and feedback, including the scoping report

We've provided information on these topics in our presentation.



# Key topics



# How we assess route options

EnergyCo assesses route options and energy hub locations against five key planning pillars:



**People** – Benefits and impacts on people’s wellbeing, amenity and quality of life



**Environment** – Impacts to natural and cultural environments



**Economic** – Cost of the option and its impacts on key industries



**Strategic** – Consistency with the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap



**Technical** – Technical efficiency and reliability of the option in meeting electricity demand



Aerial view of Uralla

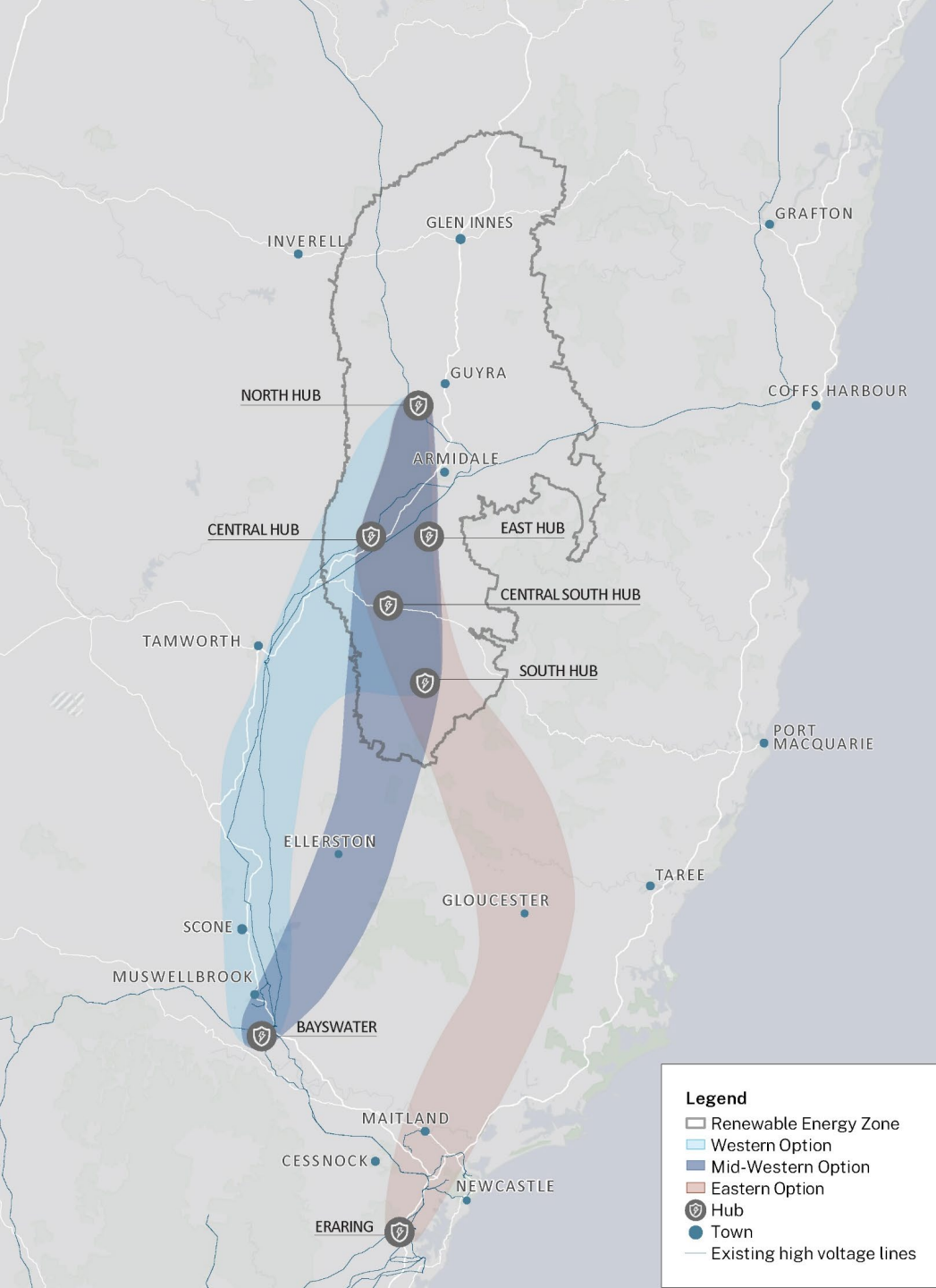
# How we determined the preliminary study corridor

Six preliminary corridors were initially identified, with three options considered for further assessment to connect the New England REZ to the existing transmission network in the Hunter.

The **western option** was preferred as it provided the best overall solution when all factors were balanced and considered.

For more information on the corridor selection process:

- View the [December 2023 project update](#)
- The scoping report will be released shortly which includes a detailed description of how the route options were assessed against EnergyCo's planning principles.



# Alternative suggestions from the community

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## Upgrading existing lines

- This was considered in the early options development process but does not meet the capacity requirements for the transmission project
- It was determined that a bulk corridor, including two 500 kV double circuit transmission lines, would best achieve the required transfer capacity for the REZ

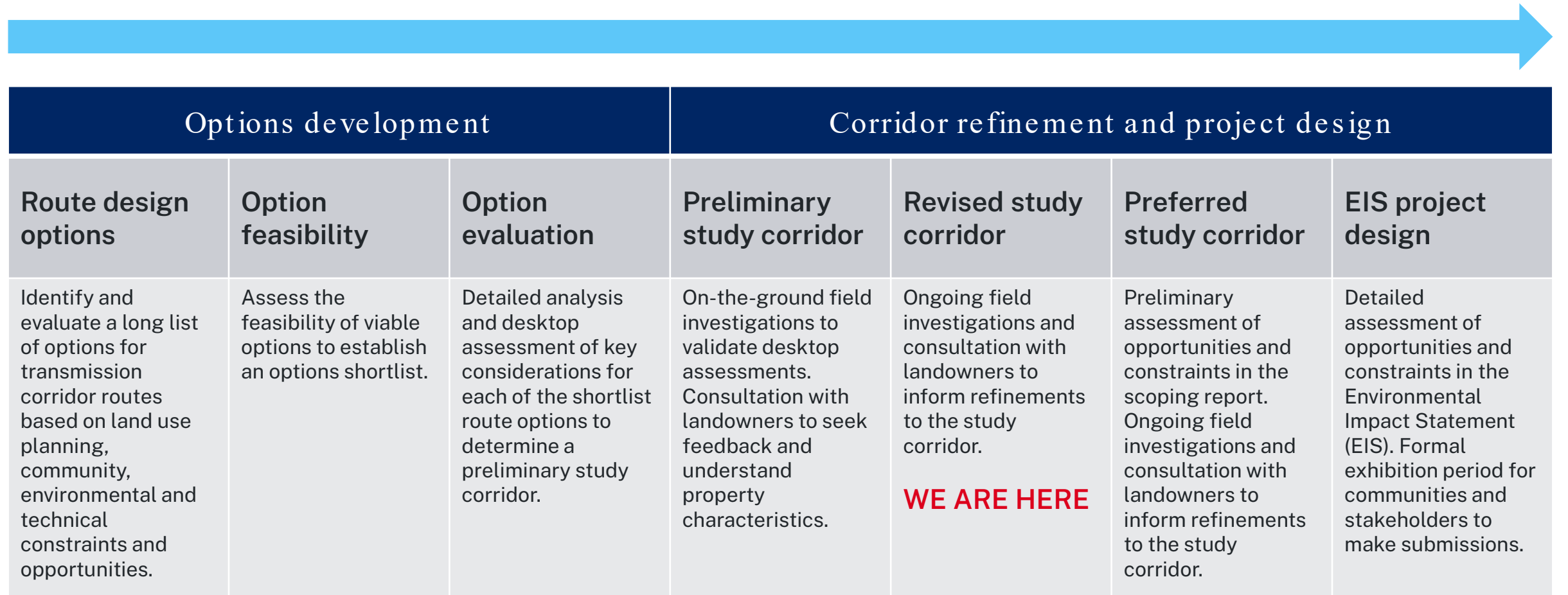
## Undergrounding

- Overhead lines are proposed because they avoid the significant constraints of underground lines
- The limitations of undergrounding have been addressed as part of a Legislative Council inquiry: [Feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

## Public land and travelling stock routes

- The revised corridor uses 20 km of public land
- Travelling stock routes are not preferred for the transmission route due to high biodiversity and community value
- These factors were considered along with EnergyCo's planning principles when assessing the corridor options

# What does the corridor selection process involve?







# Agriculture and transmission lines

Minimising impacts to high value agricultural land and farming activities is a key priority as we plan the REZ transmission project.

Once operational, agricultural practices can generally continue in the vicinity of transmission lines with some precautions for safety and operational reasons.

We will develop individual property plans in consultation with landowners which will outline measures to minimise and avoid impacts to farming and business operations.



# Permitted activities in an easement

Our fact sheet on [living and working near transmission lines](#) provides further details.

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**Cropping** up to 30m from the base of a transmission structure



**Livestock grazing** can continue as normal under transmission lines



**Pipes** up to 20m from the base of a transmission structure if plastic or earthenware or 30m if conductive such as metal pipes.



**Fencing** if it is earthed and isolated and not touching a transmission structure



**Irrigation** if it is low to the ground (i.e. streams not directed at transmission lines)



**Farm vehicles/machinery** up to a height of 4.3m to maintain safety clearances



**Ploughing** up to 20m from the base of a transmission structure to protect earthing

# How we assess and manage bushfire risk



## During the design process

- We consider the history of bushfires, the density and type of vegetation, topography, access constraints and other factors that may affect bushfire risk when planning the transmission route. We also consider how bushfires may behave when designing transmission lines and related infrastructure.
- Transmission projects are designed and managed in line with the *Electricity Supply Act 1995* and Electricity Supply (Safety and Network Management) Regulation 2014 which requires the network operator to take all reasonable steps to make the network safe.



## Working with emergency services

- EnergyCo and transmission network operators engage with emergency service providers such as the NSW Rural Fire Service during the planning, construction and operation of transmission networks. Measures to protect people, property and the environment from bushfires are developed in line with NSW Rural Fire Service guidelines.
- Firefighters are trained on the control measures for fighting fires near transmission lines. NSW fire authorities have policies and operational procedures in place for working around transmission lines, including aerial firefighting.



## Bushfire hazard and impact assessment

- Where a transmission line corridor crosses bushfire prone land, the project's environmental impact statement (EIS) assesses the bushfire risk and describes measures to avoid, minimise and manage these risks.

# How we assess and manage bushfire risk



## Asset protection zones

- Cleared areas are provided around transmission line infrastructure, construction compounds and other project infrastructure to improve their resilience to potential bushfire impacts.



## Inspections and maintenance

- Transmission lines, energy hubs and switching stations are regularly inspected and maintained to minimise the risk of fires starting due to failures or incidents.
- Vegetation is trimmed to maintain clearances in asset protection zones and easements in line with national standards.



## Emergency protocols

- Transmission projects have comprehensive emergency management and evacuation plans for construction and operation. These include procedures or restrictions for high fire danger periods, fuel storage, smoking areas, hot work, vehicle movements and other activities.



## Firefighting protocols

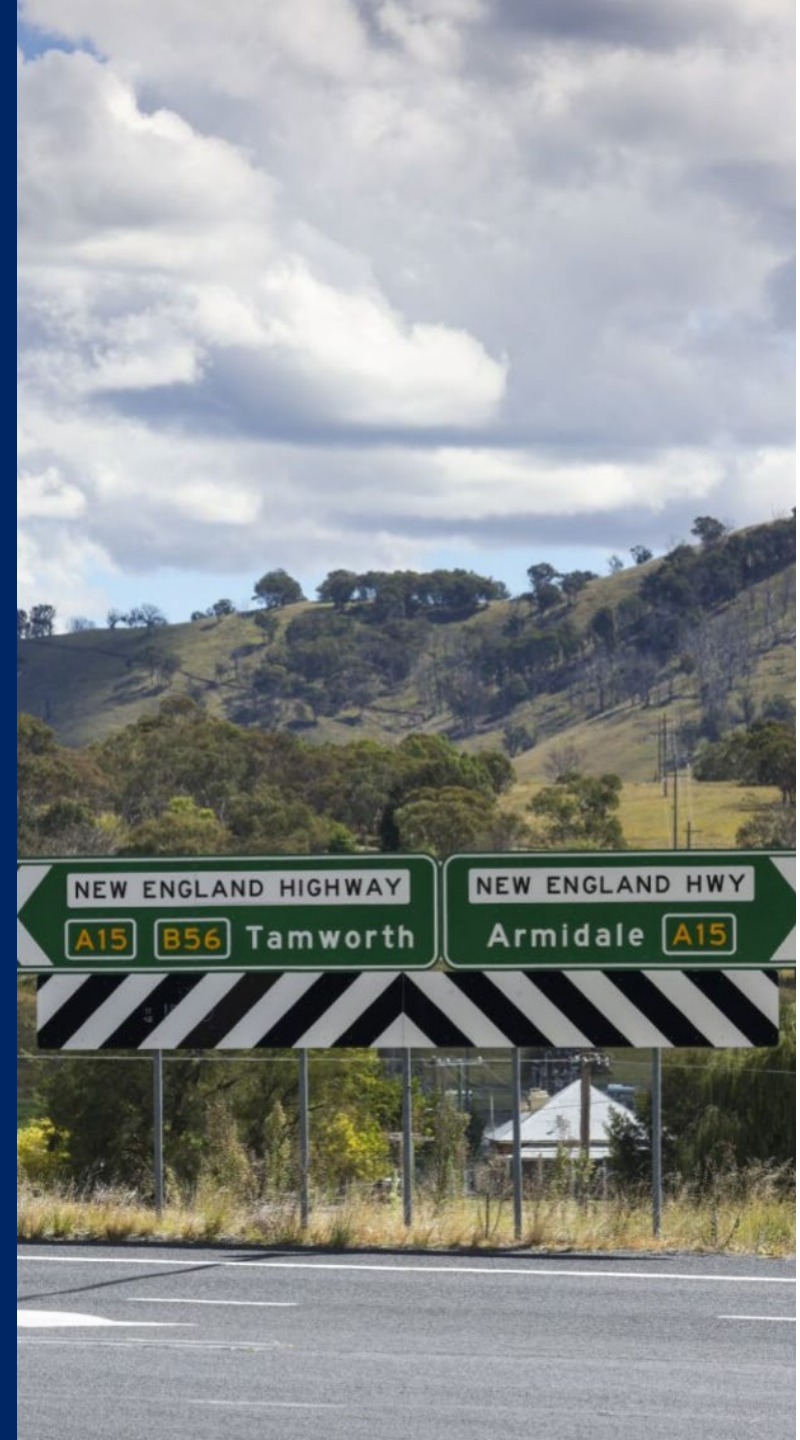
- Project infrastructure and facilities are designed to provide safe access for firefighting operations in line with standards set by the NSW Rural Fire Service.
- Site offices and facilities have appropriate equipment in case of fire and are built to be resilient to bushfire impacts.



## Further opportunities for landowner and community feedback

- Ongoing direct engagement with landowners and communities to inform the transmission route
- Community information sessions to support the scoping report release – **June/July 2024**
- First Nations community meetings – **June/July 2024**
- Social impact assessment consultation – **Q3/Q4 2024**
- Community reference group expressions of interest – **Q3 2024**
- Consultation to inform the community and employment benefit program for New England REZ – **Q4 2024**
- Public exhibition of the environmental impact statement – **Second half of 2025**

# Questions





# Further information

# How regional communities will share in the benefits of the REZs



The Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap and the REZs will deliver a range of benefits for communities in NSW.



**Hundreds of millions of dollars for community and employment benefits** in the REZs for local communities that are hosting renewable energy infrastructure.



**New income streams** for landowners from lease payments for hosting renewable energy infrastructure, including wind and solar projects.



Additional **landowner payments of \$200,000** per kilometre of new transmission lines hosted, subject to Consumer Price Index (CPI) and paid out in annual instalments for a period of 20 years.



Employment and training programs to promote job opportunities and the use of local content, goods and services.



The REZs will help contain electricity costs and improve the reliability of energy supply for communities across NSW.

# Working with communities and stakeholders

EnergyCo is engaging with landowners, communities and stakeholders to inform various aspects of the REZ.

In the coming months, we will:

- begin a regular program of pop-ups at local events and towns to increase our face-to-face engagement in local communities
- establish a project office in Armidale to support our ongoing work in the region

We are working closely with local councils, MPs, government agencies and organisations to coordinate the delivery of the REZ.

Read more at [energyco.nsw.gov.au/community/coordinating-delivery-renewable-energy-zones](https://energyco.nsw.gov.au/community/coordinating-delivery-renewable-energy-zones)





# Field investigations and land access

EnergyCo is carrying out field investigation work in the REZ transmission project area to help refine the study corridor and inform the environmental studies needed to assess the project. This work includes ecological surveys, heritage surveys, visual assessments and geotechnical investigations and will take place throughout 2024.



## Why does EnergyCo need access to my land for field work?

- Field investigation work helps us carry out a robust technical and environmental assessment of the study corridor and identify potential interactions with property and business activities.
- It allows us to work with landowners to understand farming operations, details of sensitive flora and fauna or the locations of existing dwellings, sheds and other structural features.
- Information gathered from field work helps us achieve better outcomes for landowners, communities and the environment when planning and designing the transmission route.
- We will always seek permission before accessing private property for field work.
- We will comply with all biosecurity requirements outlined in NSW legislation and regulations, as well as any additional requirements outlined in land access agreements with individual landowners.

# Support for landowners



We understand that potential property impacts from the REZ transmission project can be stressful. EnergyCo takes the wellbeing and mental health of landowners and affected parties seriously.

- Landowners have been provided a dedicated Property Manager and Place Manager to act as dedicated points of contact for property impacts and other matters.
- The NSW Government has engaged an independent service provider to deliver a free and confidential Property Acquisition Support Line.
- This service is available to property owners, their families, tenants, commercial property and business owners, and employees directly affected by acquisition and other EnergyCo property discussions such as access agreements.
- You can call the Property Acquisition Support Line on **1300 089 551** and talk to qualified psychologists and social workers 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- More information is available online at [energyco.nsw.gov.au/community/support-landowners](https://energyco.nsw.gov.au/community/support-landowners).
- For community members whose property is not directly impacted, resources are available [service.nsw.gov.au/guide/mental-wellbeing-resources](https://service.nsw.gov.au/guide/mental-wellbeing-resources).





# For more information



Visit our website at [energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne](https://energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne) to find our latest project updates, fact sheets, maps and more. We have an interactive map at [caportal.com.au/energyco/rez](https://caportal.com.au/energyco/rez) so you can view the REZ and transmission corridor in detail.

## Get in touch with our team



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[energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne](https://energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne)