

EnergyCo

Shaping the Hunter Transmission Project

May 2024



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EnergyCo is the NSW Government statutory authority responsible for delivering the Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) 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

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Cover image: HTP Aboriginal Engagement Officer Rodney Groves speaks to a community member about the project during a drop-in session at Millfield NSW in December 2023.

More information: energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp

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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 would like to respectfully acknowledge the Wonnarua, Awabakal and Darkinjung people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we deliver our project to the community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal people of these communities.

We acknowledge the work that Aboriginal people have done to maintain land and water, and 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.

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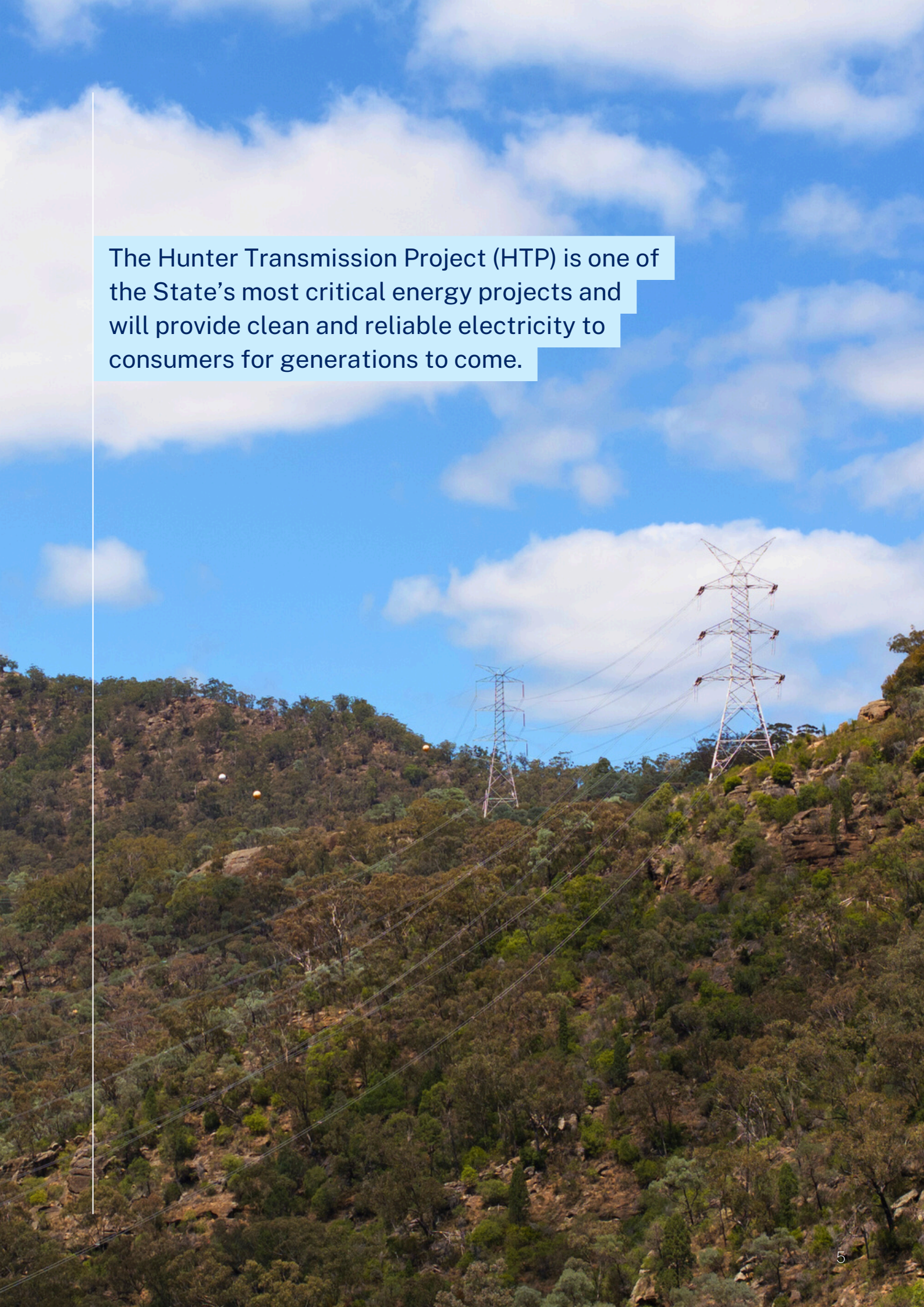
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The Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) is one of the State's most critical energy projects and will provide clean and reliable electricity to consumers for generations to come.





Foreword



James Hay
Chief Executive
Energy Corporation of NSW

Feedback from the Hunter community has helped to shape the Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) corridor and we are pleased to present a revised corridor.

To the Hunter community – thank you for your invaluable feedback on the HTP so far. The HTP is a critical energy project as NSW’s remaining coal-fired power stations close.


As part of our early engagement for this once-in-a-generation transmission infrastructure, we placed the HTP preliminary corridor on public exhibition in late 2023.

This was an opportunity for all stakeholders to offer their unique feedback and insights into where the new transmission line should be built – and the community welcomed the prospect of being involved.

The early feedback has allowed us to listen and respond to community views, suggestions and local knowledge. It has helped us shape the HTP in a way that will ultimately minimise impacts on people and the environment.

We’ve made significant changes to the HTP corridor

- Around 85% of the HTP will be on power station, mining, industrial and government land.
- The number of potentially affected private landowners in the revised corridor has been reduced from 78 (in the preliminary corridor) to less than 25.
- Moving the proposed substation from Eraring to a former timber plantation site in the Olney State Forest reduces the impacts on the Cooranbong and Martinsville communities in HTP South.



The early feedback has allowed us to listen and respond to community views, suggestions and local knowledge.

- The revised corridor steers clear of the Jilliby State Conservation Area and won't affect the popular Pines recreation area in the Olney State Forest.
- Refining the corridor through private land at Cedar Creek, Millfield and Laguna will reduce impacts on landowners in HTP Central.
- In HTP North the corridor footprint is narrower and the transmission line will run through the Hunter Valley Operations mine, minimising impacts on the Maison Dieu community.
- The HTP corridor avoids or minimises impacts in parts of the State forests that are culturally significant for the Aboriginal community and traditional owners, including scenic landscapes or sightlines.
- The corridor has been pushed further west in the Pokolbin and Corrabare State forests to reduce vegetation clearing and avoid impacts on threatened plants and animals such as the sooty owl, brush-tailed rock wallaby and scrub turpentine (a critically endangered tree).

These and other changes are described in chapter 3: [How the community has shaped the HTP so far](#).

Community views and priorities

The critical need for the HTP itself is not in question but a strong theme in the feedback we received was criticism of the preliminary corridor route.

Potentially affected private landholders told us they didn't want the transmission line built on or near their properties – understandably – and offered alternate suggestions.

Many said we should be upgrading existing transmission easements instead of creating a new easement.

This report explains why using the region's existing transmission easements isn't feasible and outlines the changes that result in more than 50 landowners being removed from the revised corridor.

It also explains why the HTP corridor is fundamentally still the best option for this critical infrastructure – because it will cause the least impacts on people as well as the environment.

The early consultation also told us that the wider regional community and local communities are concerned about protecting the Hunter Valley's environment and biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural heritage (particularly in the State forests) and scenic landscapes.

Keep in mind these issues and impacts will be addressed in detail as part of the project's environmental impact statement during 2024.

As a community member and stakeholder of the HTP, I encourage you to [stay informed and be involved](#). By continuing to work together we can ensure the HTP not only gives us energy security for our homes and businesses – but leaves a positive legacy for the Hunter community.

Introduction

The HTP involves building a new overhead 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission line around 100 kilometres long and supporting infrastructure including 2 new substations. The HTP is **critical State significant infrastructure**.

Why is the HTP critical?

As the State's ageing coal-fired power stations close, existing transmission lines lack the capacity required to transfer the electricity that will be generated in new Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) to consumers.

Both the NSW Government and Australian Government agree the HTP is urgent and must be built by 2028 to ensure energy security. This is often described as 'keeping the lights on'. It means you have reliable access to power when you need it.

Creating the 500 kV Ring

The 500 kV Ring shows how NSW's existing electricity grid is built around the coal-fired power stations at Bayswater, Eraring and Mount Piper. The ring has a missing link between Bayswater and Eraring.

The HTP will close this gap by connecting Bayswater to a new substation in the Olney State Forest, near Eraring. This ring of 500 kV transmission infrastructure will be the backbone of the State's electricity grid for generations to come.

HTP at a glance



A new overhead 500 kV double circuit transmission line of around 100 kilometres



Will connect Bayswater to Olney/Eraring



New supporting infrastructure, including 2 substations



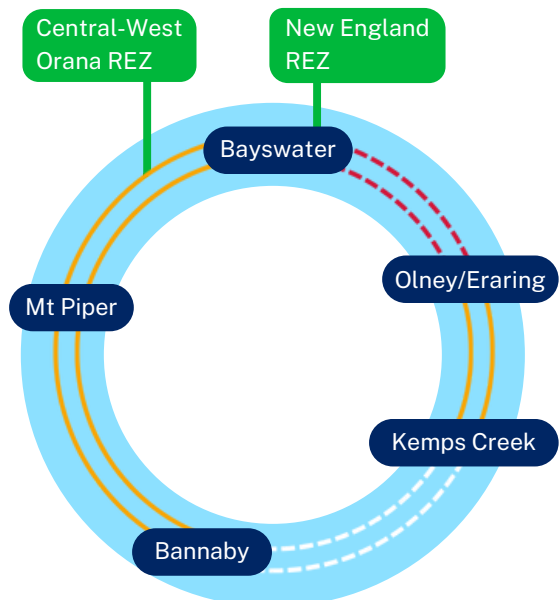
Will unlock electricity supply from the Central-West Orana and New England REZs



Urgent and must be operational by 2028



Will supply clean energy to the Hunter, Sydney and Illawarra where 80% of NSW's electricity is consumed



Legend

- Existing 500 kV transmission line
- - - Hunter Transmission Project
- - - Future Southern Ring Project



The HTP will unlock the supply of clean energy from the Central-West Orana and New England Renewable Energy Zones.

We're still in the planning stages of the HTP

During 2024 we'll undertake many more technical investigations and continue working closely with the community as we develop and refine the HTP's design, including the location of around 200 transmission towers.

The HTP's environmental impact statement (EIS) will describe in detail how we plan to minimise the impacts on people and the environment.

This includes practical concerns for the construction period such as:

- access roads (some upgrades will be needed)
- construction traffic
- temporary workers accommodation facilities
- maximising Hunter-first benefits.

EnergyCo's role is to plan and coordinate the delivery of the HTP to deliver clean, reliable and affordable energy to the households and businesses of NSW.

[Read more about EnergyCo's purpose and responsibilities](https://energyco.nsw.gov.au) on our website: energyco.nsw.gov.au

This document will describe:

- 1** How we sought community feedback on the HTP preliminary corridor
- 2** What the community told us (regionally and locally)
- 3** How community feedback has helped shape the HTP so far
- 4** Next steps including the HTP's approval process.

HTP guiding principles



Critical for energy security – clearly explain why the project is critical for energy security in the Hunter, Sydney and Illawarra



Work closely with the community – talk to affected individuals and groups, value their opinions, try to address their concerns and strike a reasonable balance between competing interests



Hunter-first – harness and build on the region's diverse economic skill base and provide opportunities for the community to share in the benefits of the project



Tread lightly – minimise the impacts of the project on the people and the environment



Act with integrity – be open, inclusive, fair, respectful and do what we say we will do



Project timeline



July 2022 to October 2023

Investigations to identify where the HTP should be located including consultation with local councils, members of parliament and government agencies



Late 2023

Seek community feedback on the HTP preliminary corridor



May 2024

Present revised corridor to the community and start environmental assessment process



During 2024

Develop detailed HTP design, assess impacts and prepare EIS



Mid 2024

Report back to the community for mid-year project update



Late 2024

Public exhibition of the EIS



Early 2025

Publish report on community feedback received on the EIS



Mid to late 2025

Ministers make final decisions



2026

Start construction



2028

Start operation

How we sought community feedback on the HTP

1

A summary of engagement on the HTP preliminary corridor

Engaging early with the community has enabled the project team to collect invaluable local knowledge that has influenced the project design.

We invited the community to be part of the vital first steps for the HTP by placing a preliminary corridor on public exhibition between 20 November 2023 and 18 December 2023.

Our objectives were to:

- involve the Hunter community early in the project planning phase
- explain why the HTP is urgently needed
- explain how the HTP preliminary corridor was chosen as the most suitable option
- seek community feedback that will help us refine the project design (primarily the transmission line route) in a way that minimises impacts and maximises benefits.

200+

people attended 6 drop-in sessions across 3 communities.

60+

meetings with a range of stakeholders including landowners, the local Aboriginal community and environment groups.

250+

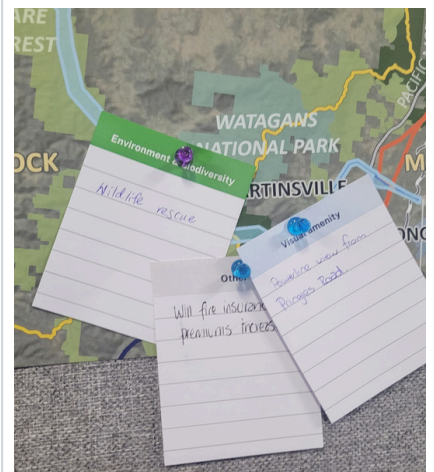
submissions received during the exhibition period.

200+

responses to emails and phone calls from a range of stakeholders.

10,000

households informed through mail-outs and letter box drops.





Early engagement

The public exhibition period in late 2023 was an additional step we took to start engaging with the community about the HTP well ahead of its detailed design and environmental assessment under the [State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines](#).

Our early engagement has been guided by a clear objective: to minimise the impacts of the HTP on people and the environment.

It created opportunities to understand issues from the community's perspective that are:

- of greatest interest or concern
- likely to cause the greatest impacts
- affect the most sensitive aspects of the environment.



During this period we engaged with hundreds of stakeholders including private landowners, traditional owners and Local Aboriginal Land Councils, local councils, environment groups, recreation groups, members of parliament, industry and business groups, and government agencies.



Community drop-in sessions were held in the areas most likely to be affected by the preliminary corridor: Singleton (HTP North), Millfield (HTP Central) and Cooranbong (HTP South).

These included 3 sessions specifically for landowners and 3 for the general community.



Copies of the [HTP Overview](#) were provided to stakeholders.

The community team also provided information to the community on request via email, phone and in-person meetings.



We published information about the HTP preliminary corridor on EnergyCo's website.

We committed to regular updates so the community could be confident it would be a source of truth for the HTP in the long term.

What the community told us

2

Community feedback at a glance

Top issues raised overall



45%

Concerns for the environment and biodiversity



34%

Route selection, especially in relation to using existing easements



26%

Impacts on New Gokula Hare Krishna community at Millfield



18%

Impacts on private land



9%

Aboriginal cultural heritage

HTP North

11 submissions received



45%

Route selection



36%

Impacts on private land



27%

Consultation



27%

Interaction with a planned solar farm at Maison Dieu

HTP Central

55 submissions received



27%

Visual amenity



27%

Impacts to wildlife and endangered species



27%

Upgrading existing transmission lines



25%

Environment and biodiversity concerns



24%

Aboriginal cultural heritage

HTP South

25 submissions received



40%

Environment and biodiversity concerns



24%

Upgrading existing transmission lines



20%

Impacts on private land



16%

Loss of habitat

A summary of feedback we received in submissions on the HTP preliminary corridor. Please note, many submissions highlighted more than one issue and a small number (less than 10%) couldn't be categorised according to location.

[Disclaimer](#) | [NSW Climate and Energy Action](#)

The HTP corridor remains the best option for the new transmission line because it will cause the least impacts on people and the environment.

Route selection

A popular theme in the feedback we received was criticism of the HTP preliminary corridor route. Many potentially affected private landholders told us they didn't want the transmission line built on or near their properties and questioned why the HTP can't be built on existing easements.

We need a new easement for the HTP because:

- the existing 330kv transmission infrastructure is an essential part of the existing NSW grid. This is the main reason it's unsuitable for the HTP. Upgrading it would take around 2 years and there would need to be many outages. There's currently no back-up transmission so this would risk energy security (a reliable supply of electricity) for consumers. It would also require more clearing of endangered valley floor vegetation than the HTP and cause greater impacts on the Pokolbin wine/tourist industry area.
- the existing 132 kV infrastructure in the region remains in use and the easements aren't big enough to accommodate a new 500 kV transmission line. To use them we'd need to clear significantly more endangered valley floor vegetation than the HTP, affect significantly more private properties and build part of the new connecting transmission line through the Sugarloaf State Conservation Area.
- we're planning ahead for future growth and it's likely we'll need a second 500 kV transmission line (HTP2) within 10 years (source: [NSW Network Infrastructure Strategy, May 2023](#)). After the HTP is built we'll have a reliable electricity supply in place for our homes and businesses and could then use the existing easement for HTP2.

For more information on the process we used to find a suitable route for the HTP visit our website energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp

Protecting the environment

The community told us they're concerned about protecting the Hunter Valley's environment and biodiversity as we build the HTP. They're also worried about impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage particularly in the State forests.

Scenic landscapes and views throughout the Hunter Valley are valued by the general community. They're also very important to the local Aboriginal community and traditional owners whose feedback was to make sure the HTP doesn't interrupt ridgelines and sightlines because these are an important part of their cultural heritage.



How community
feedback has helped
shape the HTP so far

3

The HTP corridor reflects significant changes in all 3 zones

Using the forests is a key strategy to minimise the HTP's impacts and the revised corridor includes a new substation on a former timber plantation site at Olney, near Eraring. This means the HTP will avoid direct impacts on the residential communities of Cooranbong and Martinsville with 32 landowners removed from the corridor.

The Hunter is highly constrained due to existing land uses. It's a diverse, growing region and its population is expected to reach almost a million people with more than 100,000 additional homes by 2041 (source: [Hunter Regional Plan 2041](#)).

The HTP corridor successfully avoids sensitive areas including major towns and villages, the Pokolbin wine/tourist area, the Watagans National Park, Werakata National Park and Jilliby State Conservation Area.

Changes to the HTP corridor were possible because of the community's willingness to engage and offer constructive input on the preliminary corridor – and the project team's commitment to find the best possible solution.



HTP corridor changes at a glance



The number of potentially affected private landowners in the corridor is reduced from 78 to less than 25.



Avoiding Cooranbong and Martinsville in HTP South is made possible by building a new substation on a site in the Olney State Forest that was previously used for growing commercial timber.



Refining the corridor footprint through Cedar Creek, Millfield and Laguna minimises impacts on landowners in HTP Central.



Running the transmission corridor through the Hunter Valley Operations mine narrows the corridor in HTP North and minimises impacts on the Maison Dieu community.



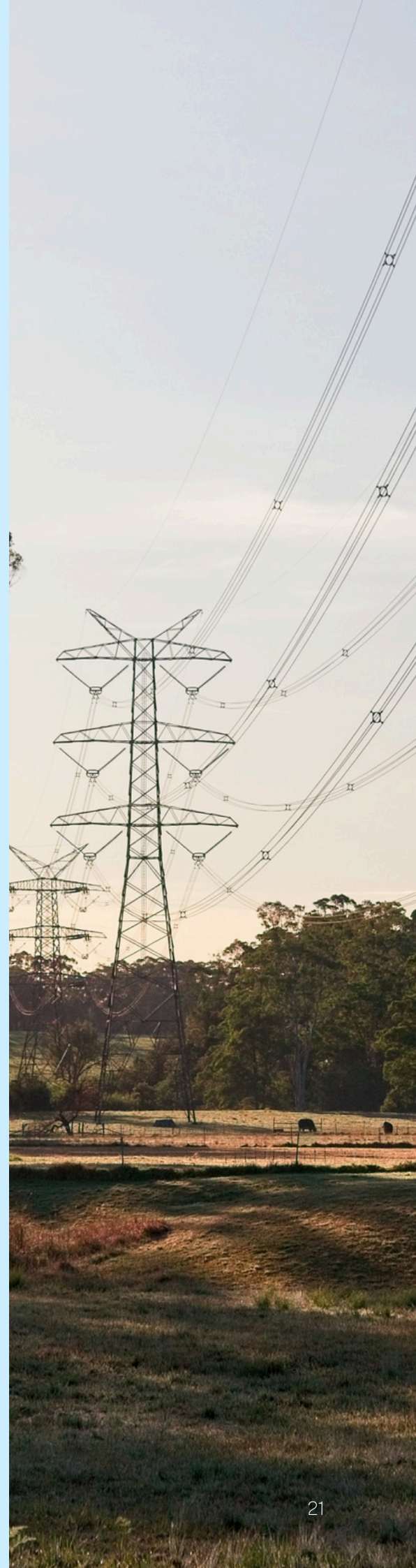
The revised corridor minimises impacts in parts of the State forests that are culturally significant for the Aboriginal community and traditional owners, including scenic landscapes or sightlines.



Moving the corridor further west in the Pokolbin and Corrabare State forests requires less vegetation clearing and avoids impacts on threatened plants and animals such as the sooty owl, brush-tailed rock wallaby and scrub turpentine (a critically endangered tree).



The revised corridor steers clear of the Jilliby State Conservation Area and other recreation areas including The Pines in the Olney State Forest.



Looking after the State forests

Most of the corridor in HTP Central and HTP South runs through State forests. These are different to national parks and are managed by the Forestry Corporation of NSW (Forestry).

Forestry is the largest manager of commercial native and plantation forests in NSW, growing enough timber each year to build a quarter of new homes in Australia (source: [Forestry Corporation of NSW website](#)).

But parts of the forests are also important for community recreation, biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage.

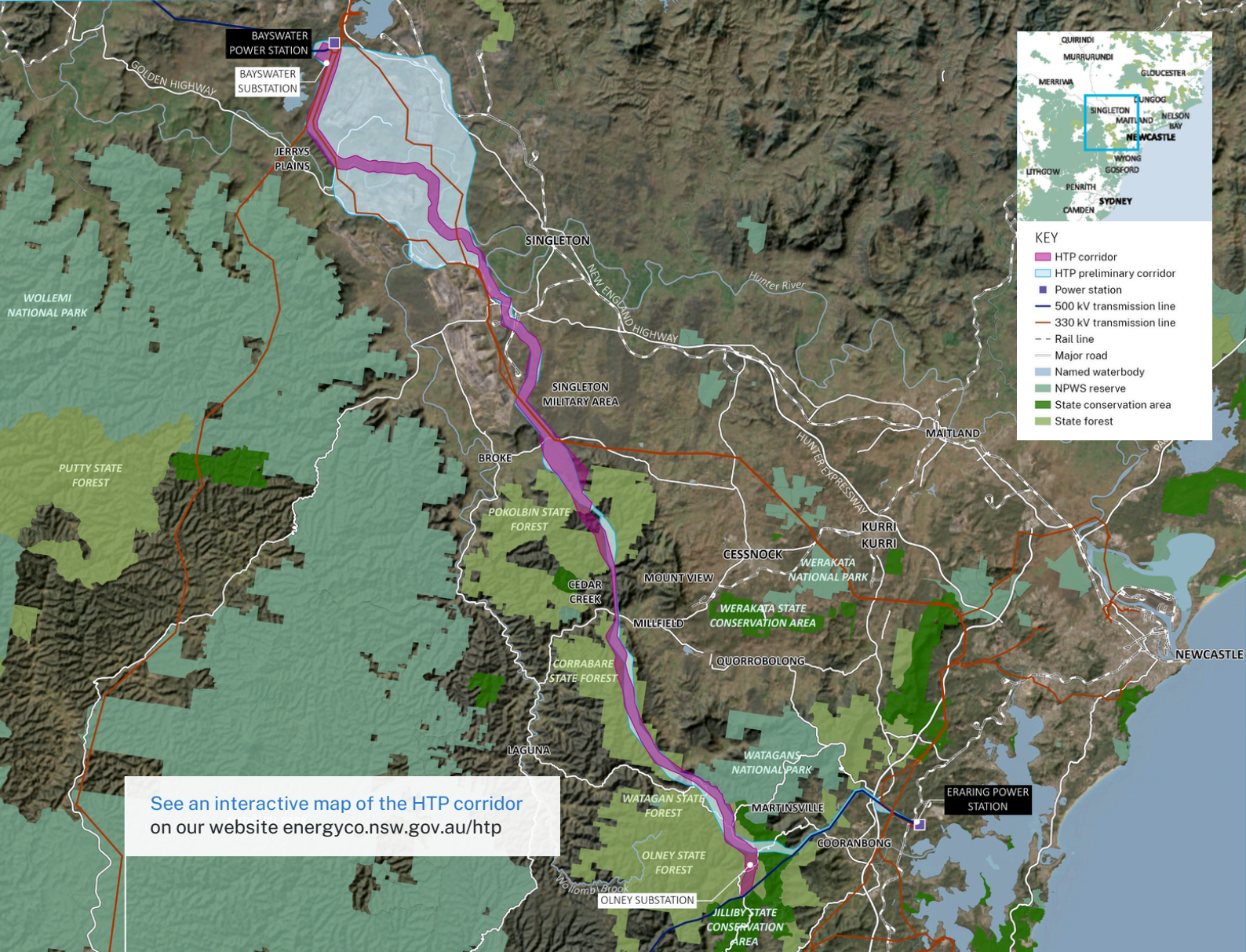
The location of the HTP corridor avoids popular recreation areas and minimises impacts on Forestry's hardwood plantations. It also maximises the use of existing Forestry management zones and infrastructure such as access tracks to reduce the project's vegetation clearing and disturbance.

While some vegetation clearing is unavoidable, the corridor is mainly dry sclerophyll forest (on ridgelines and upper slopes) and wet sclerophyll forest (within sheltered valleys). These forests are common in NSW and well represented in national parks such as the nearby Watagans National Park and Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Where possible, EnergyCo will span across steep ravines in the forest to avoid vegetation clearing in the valleys and only partially clear the rest of the transmission easement.

This will significantly reduce the project's biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage impacts.





See an interactive map of the HTP corridor on our website energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp

HTP corridor at a glance



Fastest way to deliver the HTP and maintain energy security



Over 85% of the HTP will be on power station, mining, industrial and government land



Avoids most of the Hunter community, including major towns, villages and tourist areas



No development in the Martinsville or Cooranbong communities



Refined corridor through the mining areas



Revisions to the corridor in the State forests to reduce biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural heritage and recreation impacts



Avoids Werakata National Park, Watagans National Park and Jiliby State Conservation Area



Avoids the Pokolbin wine/tourist area and other strategic agricultural land



Minimises the impacts of the HTP on scenic landscapes

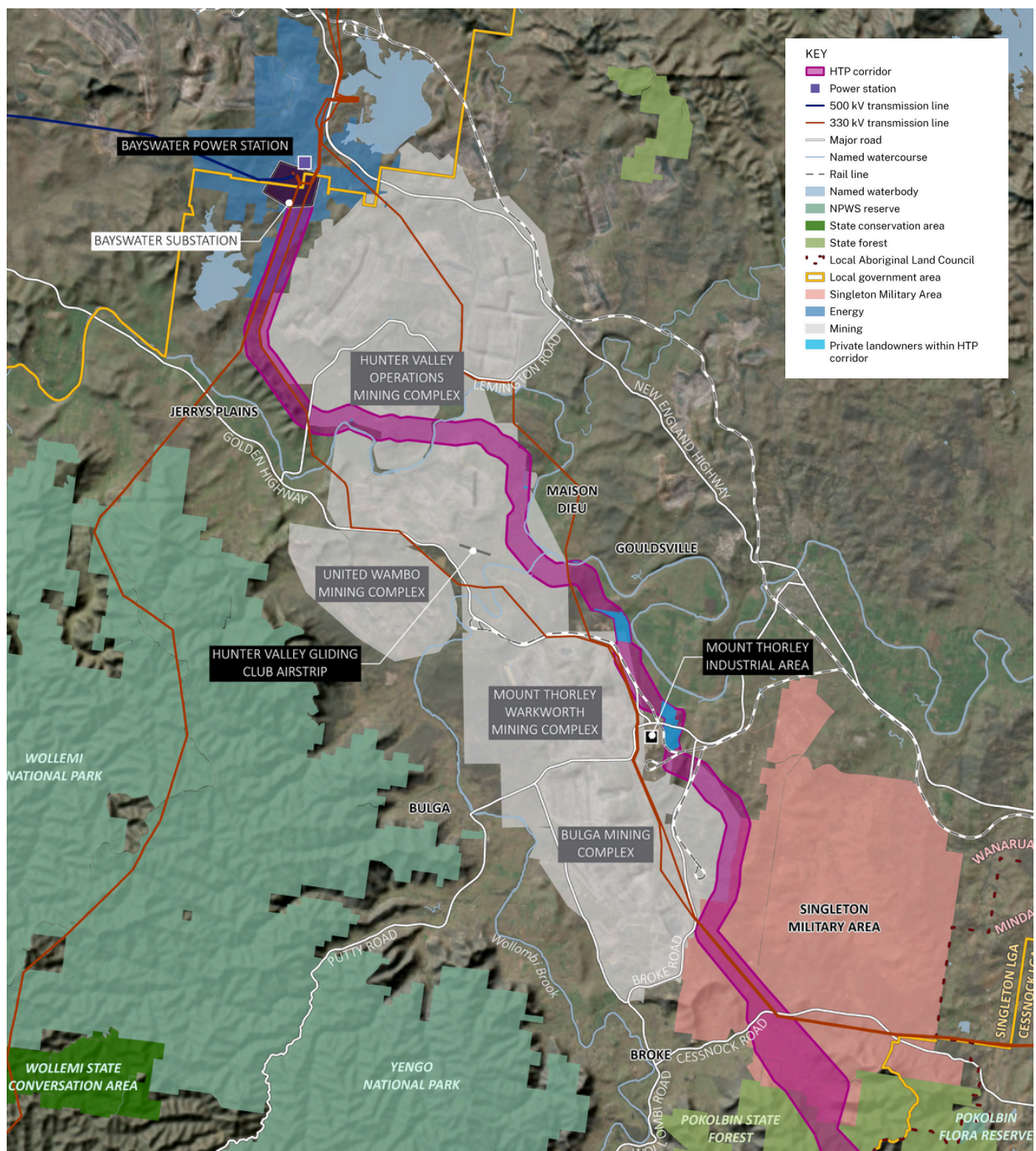


Further scope to reduce the impacts on people and the environment during preparation of the EIS

HTP North – Bayswater to Broke

A summary of changes to the HTP corridor, and how we plan to address the issues of greatest concern and interest to the community in HTP North.

- Most of the HTP North corridor runs through power station, mining, industrial and Department of Defence (Defence) land.
- The transmission line will run through the middle of the Hunter Valley Operations coal mine, minimising impacts on the Maison Dieu community.



How this was achieved

From the outset we took care to avoid the township of Singleton, visual impacts on Jerrys Plains and Broke, and areas of cultural heritage value.

Successful engagement with the mining companies to host more of the HTP through the large open cut mines around Bayswater Power Station helped to reduce the corridor footprint.

The revised corridor balances the project needs with the feedback we received from the local community as well as the mining companies, industry and Defence. Most of the corridor in HTP North runs through:

- Bayswater Power Station
- mining land including Hunter Valley Operations, Mount Thorley Warkworth and Bulga Coal
- Singleton Military Area.

A summary of impacts and issues in HTP North

These issues and impacts are described in detail in the HTP scoping report to be published on the [NSW Planning Portal](#) and [EnergyCo's website](#). They'll be addressed as part of the HTP's environmental impact statement (EIS).

People

The HTP North corridor includes less than 10 private properties. This includes several industrial properties as well as some residential and farming land. We'll work to reduce this further and negotiate to secure easements and land as quickly and sensitively as possible. We'll also keep working to minimise any impacts on the Hunter Valley Gliding Club.

Other ways the project may affect people and local communities in HTP North include:

- construction (dust, noise, vibration, traffic and water)
- operation (visual, bushfire, electric and magnetic fields and potential interference with aviation and communications).

The project's social impacts will be assessed against the [Social Impact Assessment Guideline](#) as part of the EIS.

Plants and animals

The location of the HTP North corridor avoids and minimises impacts to threatened ecological communities. In particular, it will allow us to minimise clearing of scarce valley floor vegetation such as the critically endangered Warkworth Sands Woodland and Central Hunter Valley eucalyptus forest and woodland.

Despite the Upper Hunter's mining and industrial landscape, these woodlands and other parts of HTP North feature critical habitat for threatened species such as the regent honeyeater and swift parrot.

Some of this habitat is located within the Singleton Military Area. Other parts of the military area aren't environmentally sensitive but are used for military operations. We're working closely with Defence to avoid or minimise impacts on these operations.

Engagement on threatened plants and animals will continue with key environment groups such as the National Parks Association and BirdLife Australia.

Through the EIS engagement process, this will include regular meetings to share knowledge and seek feedback on biodiversity survey results and offsets.

Aboriginal cultural heritage

HTP North has been subject to a number of previous Aboriginal cultural heritage investigations within the last decade because they were part of mining applications. As a result there is up-to-date and readily available information on cultural materials and important places for the Aboriginal community and traditional owners. Despite this, the HTP project team is undertaking additional field work investigations to avoid or minimise impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Roads and traffic

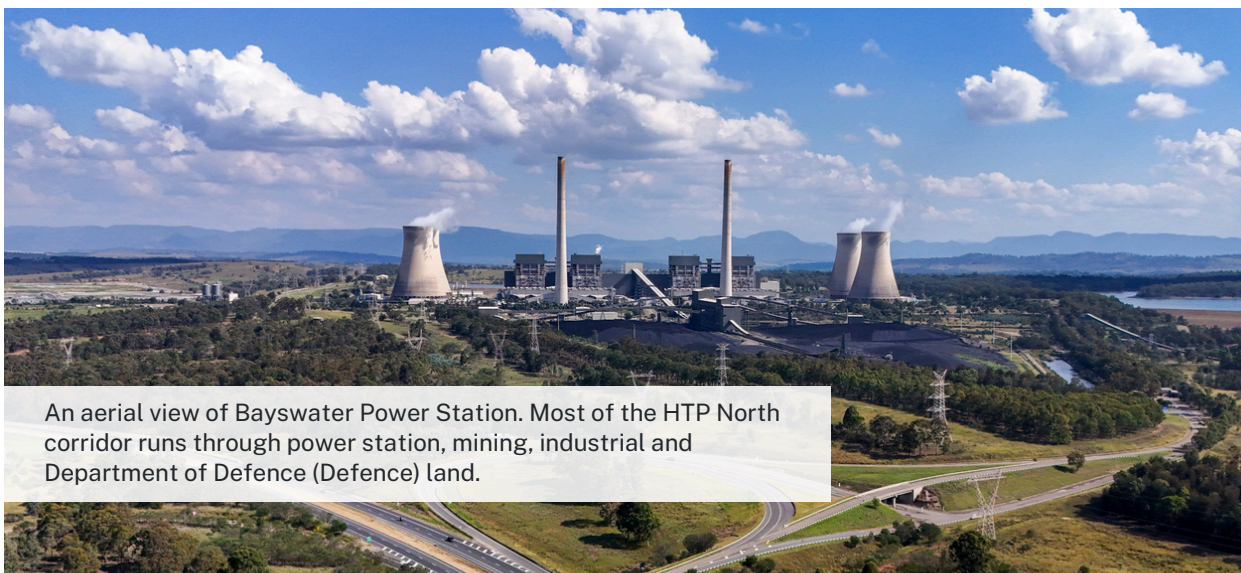
At this stage there are no significant traffic impacts expected in HTP North during the construction period with minimal use of local roads. Most traffic to build the new Bayswater substation and around 130 transmission towers will be concentrated on the New England Highway, Golden Highway and Cessnock Road/Broke Road. A traffic assessment for HTP North will be carried out as part of the EIS and as part of this we'll keep engaging with local communities and businesses, the mining companies, Singleton Council and Muswellbrook Council to plan and manage construction traffic.

Temporary workers accommodation

To accommodate the construction workforce in HTP North we anticipate building temporary accommodation facilities at existing industrial locations.

This will ensure there are no major impacts on local services, housing supply or infrastructure. After the HTP is built this accommodation will be removed.

At this stage we expect the total number of workers in HTP North to be around 300 people but this could increase following detailed studies. We'll continue engaging with Singleton and Muswellbrook councils and the community to maximise benefits to the local economy.

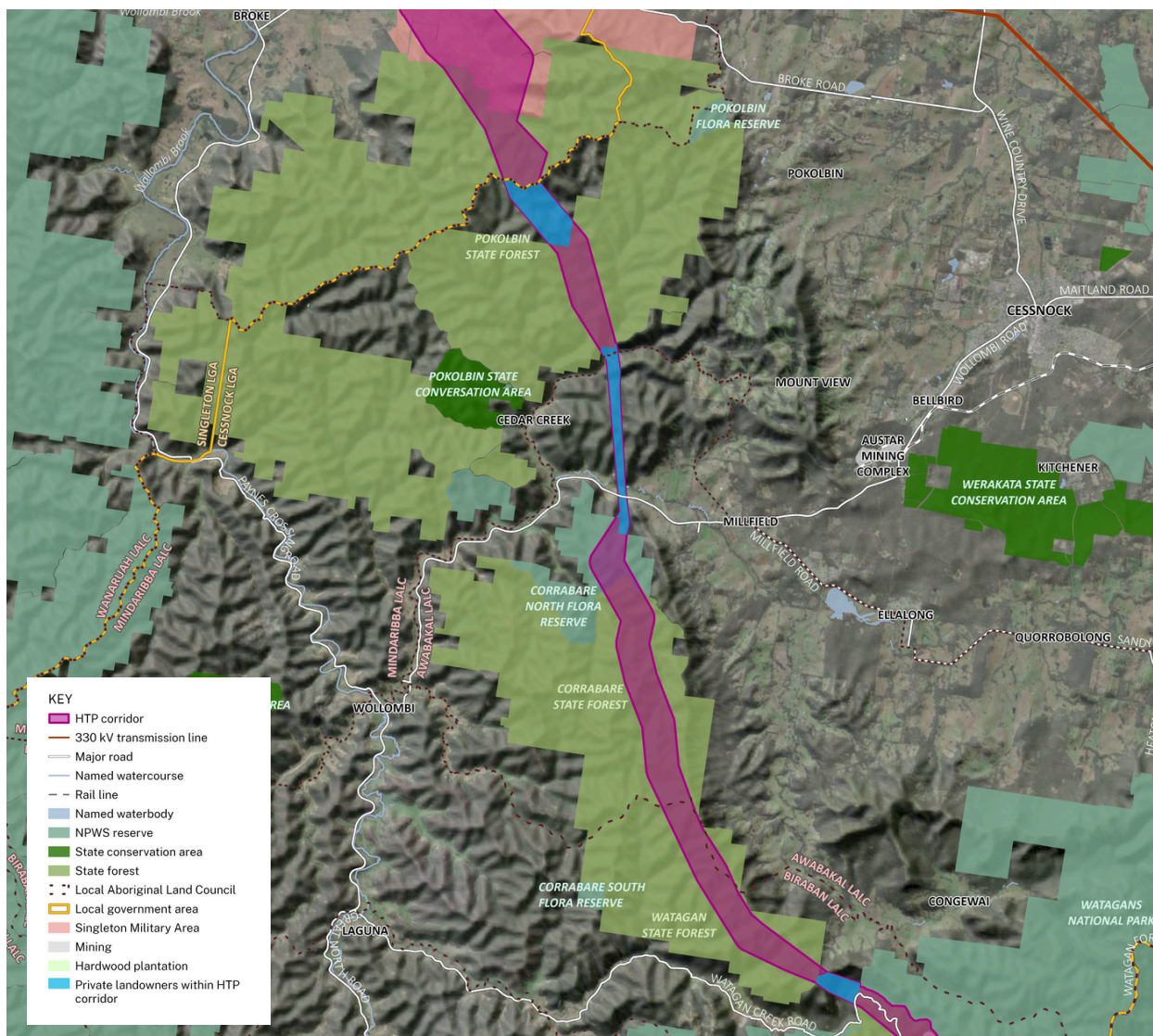


An aerial view of Bayswater Power Station. Most of the HTP North corridor runs through power station, mining, industrial and Department of Defence (Defence) land.

HTP Central – Pokolbin to Corrabare

A summary of changes to the HTP corridor, and how we plan to address the issues of greatest concern and interest to the community in HTP Central.

- Refining the transmission line corridor through private properties in Cedar Creek, Millfield and Laguna will reduce impacts on landowners.
- Pushing the corridor further west in the Pokolbin and Corrabare State forests will reduce vegetation clearing to minimise impacts on threatened plants and animals and Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- The revised corridor allows for the strategic placement of the transmission line away from the major ridgeline to protect scenic views and minimise visibility of transmission towers in areas such as Congewai.



A summary of impacts and issues in HTP Central

These issues and impacts are described in detail in the HTP scoping report to be published on the [NSW Planning Portal](#) and [EnergyCo's website](#). They'll be addressed as part of the HTP's environmental impact statement (EIS).

People

The revised corridor includes fewer landowners than the preliminary corridor but only minor changes in HTP Central were possible.

Around 15 private properties in the revised corridor at Cedar Creek, Millfield and Laguna may still be directly affected by construction of the new transmission line.

We've been engaging with these affected landowners to minimise the impacts on their land use and this will continue as we develop the HTP's detailed design during 2024. We'll also negotiate to secure easements and land as quickly and sensitively as possible.

The New Gokula Hare Krishna Community at Millfield is not in the revised corridor.

Protecting ridgelines and views is important to both the local Aboriginal community and general community in HTP Central.

Residents in the Congewai valley are particularly concerned about the visual impact of transmission towers. The HTP corridor allows for the strategic placement of towers so they are set back from the main ridgeline in a way that will minimise impacts to views.

A detailed design for the location of around 50 transmission towers in HTP Central will be developed during 2024 as part of the EIS.

We've been engaging with recreational user groups of the State forests (in both HTP Central and HTP South) because the project is likely to cause temporary disruptions to access.

Other ways the project may affect people and local communities in HTP Central include:

- construction (dust, noise, vibration, traffic and water)
- operation (visual, bushfire, electric and magnetic fields and potential interference with aviation and communications).

The project's social impacts will be assessed against the [Social Impact Assessment Guideline](#).

Plants and animals

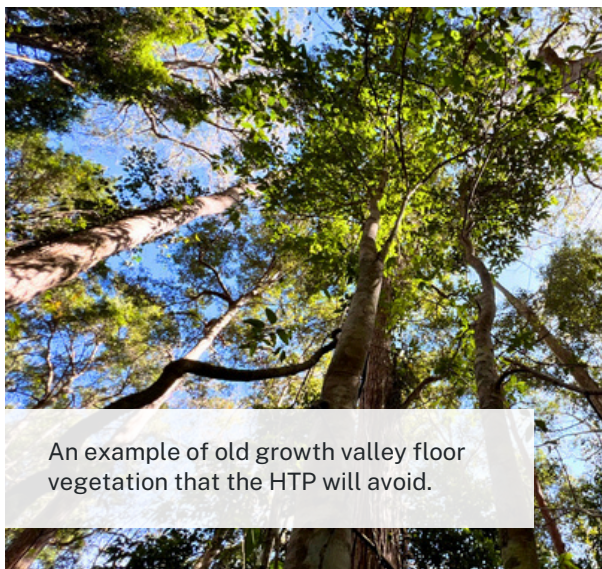
This section of the corridor runs mainly through the Pokolbin and Corrabare State forests as well as some privately owned land.

HTP Central is the most complex zone because of its geographical features. Many steep hills and ridgelines are several hundred metres high.

The revised corridor is located further west in the Pokolbin and Corrabare State forests than the preliminary corridor.

This will require less vegetation clearing to avoid and minimise impacts on threatened plants and animals such as the sooty owl, brush-tailed rock wallaby and scrub turpentine (a critically endangered tree).

We're working with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation of NSW to make sure the HTP avoids and minimises impacts on sensitive pockets of land such as the Corrabare North Flora Reserve. We're also working to minimise disruptions to Forestry operations and recreation activities in the State forests.



An example of old growth valley floor vegetation that the HTP will avoid.

Aboriginal cultural heritage

A number of important places for Aboriginal people have been identified in HTP Central during our early community consultation. Very few cultural heritage surveys have been done in this area to date, especially in the Corrabare State Forest.

For example, important Dreaming (traditional history and culture) takes place at Lizard Rock and another involves the Stone Frog Dreaming. These sites aren't within the HTP corridor and won't be affected.

The transmission line's impact on cultural sightlines (views) is another important issue for Aboriginal stakeholders in HTP Central (and HTP South). The results of visual impact assessments will be shared with the local community and feedback taken on board.

The HTP community team has a dedicated Aboriginal engagement officer. We'll continue to work closely with the Aboriginal community and traditional owners to minimise the project's impacts.



An example of a site used for commercial timber production in the Olney State Forest.

Roads and traffic

There are likely to be several road and traffic impacts in HTP Central during the construction period as materials and equipment including the transmission towers are transported into the Pokolbin and Corrabare State forests.

Local roads including Pokolbin Mountains Road, Broken Back Trail, Mount View Road and Hayes Road will be used and most will need to be upgraded.

Traffic in HTP Central may also be affected by proposed upgrades of Wollombi Road.

A traffic assessment for HTP Central will be carried out during the EIS process. As part of this we'll keep engaging with stakeholders including local communities and businesses, Cessnock Council, the Forestry Corporation of NSW and Transport for NSW to manage impacts including suitable times for truck movements to and from the forests.

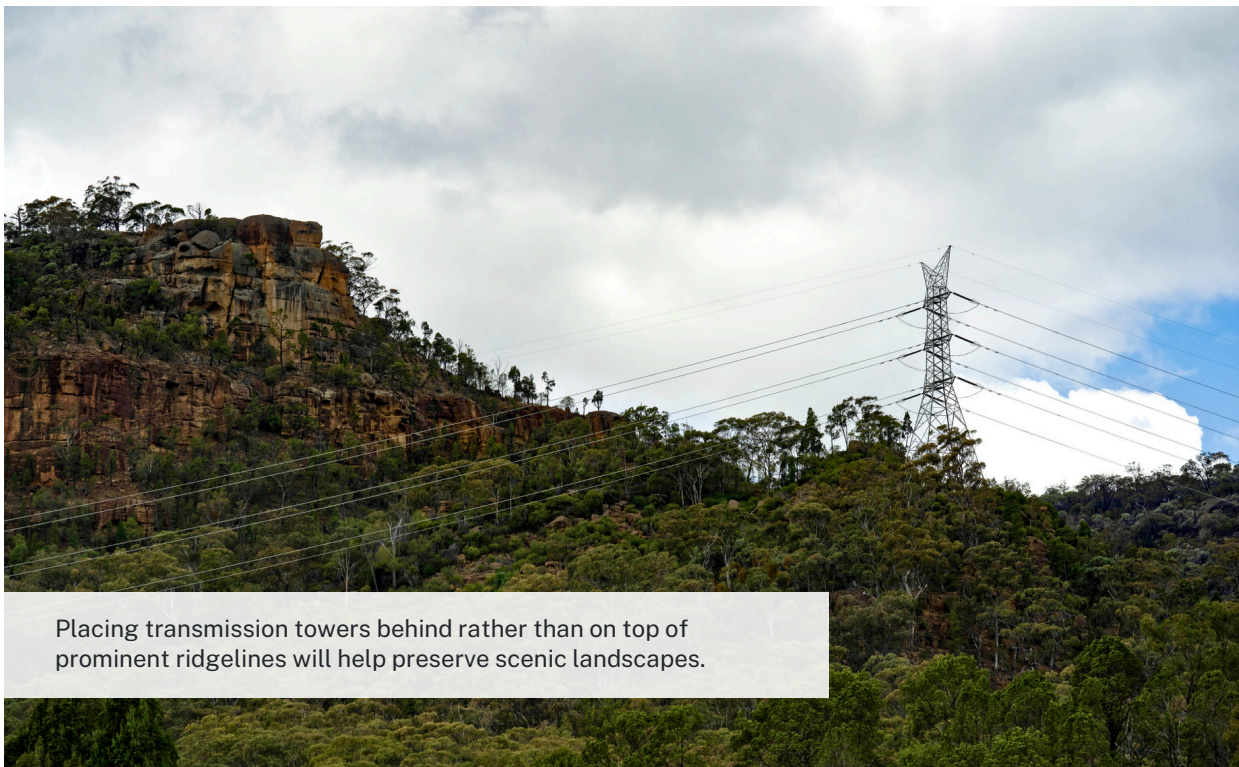
Temporary workers accommodation

To accommodate the HTP's construction workforce in HTP Central we anticipate building a temporary accommodation facility at an existing industrial location.

This will ensure there are no major impacts on local services, housing supply or infrastructure.

After the HTP is built this accommodation will be removed.

At this stage we expect the total number of workers in HTP Central to be around 150 people, but this could increase following detailed studies.

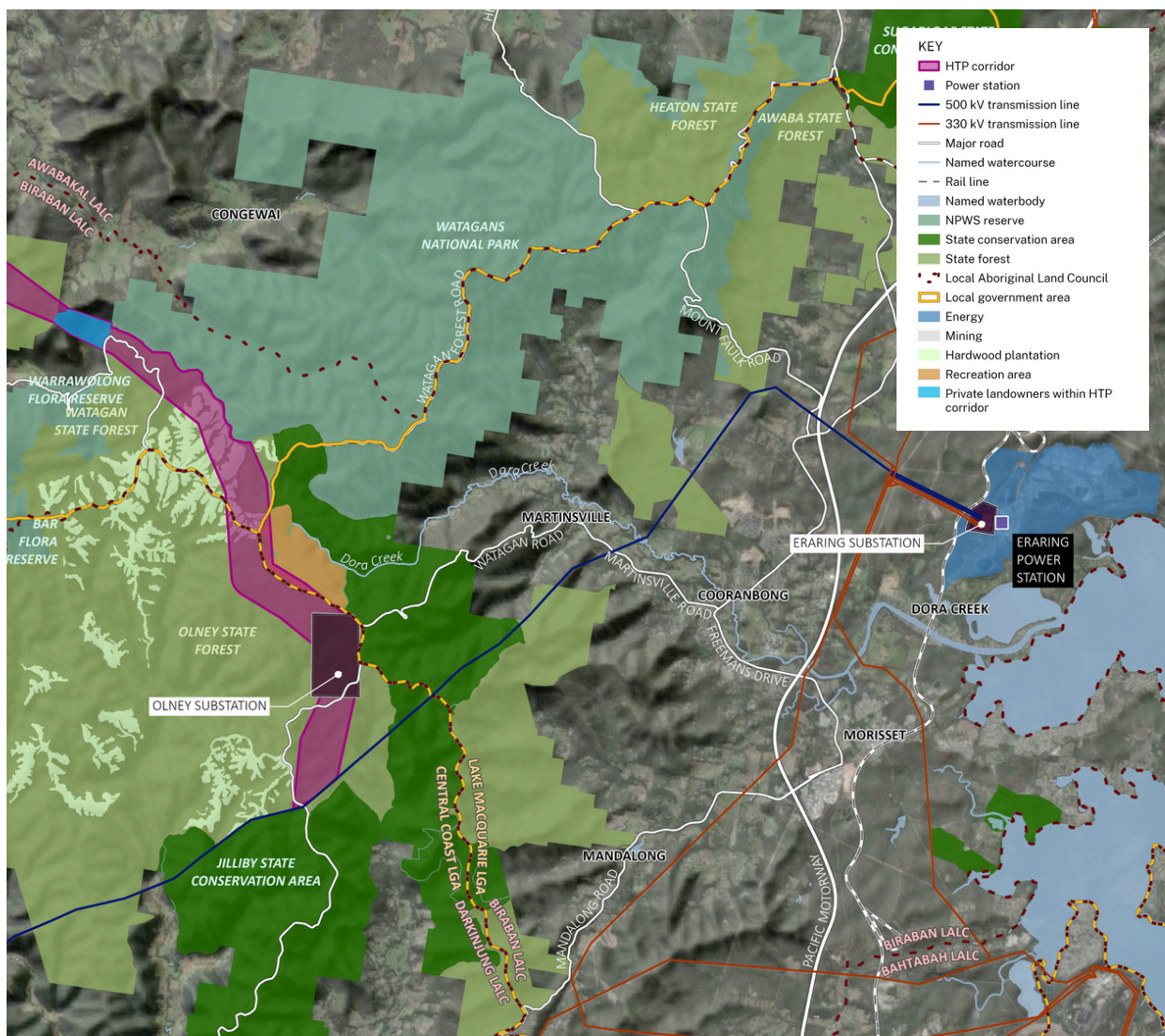


Placing transmission towers behind rather than on top of prominent ridgelines will help preserve scenic landscapes.

HTP South – Olney to Eraring

A summary of changes to the HTP corridor, and how we plan to address the issues of greatest concern and interest to the community in HTP South.

- Building a new substation on a site in the Olney State Forest (an old commercial timber plantation) makes it possible to avoid Martinsville and Cooranbong, removing 32 private landowners from the HTP South corridor.
- The new Olney substation allows the HTP to follow a more direct route to the existing 500 kV transmission line so the revised corridor is around 15 kilometres shorter.
- The revised corridor avoids major recreation areas in the State forests including The Pines.
- The new transmission line will no longer go through the Jilliby State Conservation Area. The Watagans National Park remains unaffected.



How this was achieved

The HTP preliminary corridor ran mostly through the Olney State Forest before joining and running alongside the existing 500 kV transmission line through Martinsville and Cooranbong to a new substation at Eraring.

In conjunction with the Forestry Corporation of NSW we found an alternative location for the new substation in the Olney State Forest. This removes both suburbs from the corridor.

Many parts of State forests are working landscapes used to grow commercial timber and the substation site is a former plantation. Regardless of this, earthworks will be carefully managed to minimise impacts to any sensitive habitat.

A summary of impacts and issues in HTP South

These issues and impacts are described in detail in the HTP scoping report to be published on the [NSW Planning Portal](#) and [EnergyCo's website](#). They'll be addressed as part of the HTP's environmental impact statement (EIS).

People

As well as avoiding all private land in HTP South, the new substation allows the HTP to follow a more direct route to the south. And because it's located deep in the forest, the new substation won't be seen from Martinsville or Cooranbong.

From the start we took care to avoid the Watagans National Park and Warrawolong Flora Reserve but an added benefit of the revised corridor is it eliminates the need to cross the Jiliby State Conservation Area. This will be welcome news for environment groups and recreational users.

However, the project is likely to cause temporary disruptions to access for recreational users during the construction period. This will be kept to a minimum and clearly communicated.

Other ways the project may affect people and local communities in HTP South include:

- construction (dust, noise, vibration, traffic and water)
- operation (visual, bushfire, electric and magnetic fields and potential interference with aviation and communications).

The project's social impacts will be assessed against the [Social Impact Assessment Guideline](#) in the EIS.

Plants and animals

The Watagan and Olney State forests are considered part of a chain of State forests known as ‘the Watagans’. While parts of the forest feature significant biodiversity values and are popular for recreation, other parts aren’t as sensitive or unique.

This allows us to strike a balance and minimise impacts on both the environment and people (for example, by avoiding Martinsville and Cooranbong).

The HTP South corridor will avoid and minimise impacts on pockets of unique and endangered valley floor vegetation but some clearing will be inevitable. This will be addressed in detail as part of the EIS.

Aboriginal cultural heritage

Relatively few cultural heritage surveys had been completed in HTP South before the HTP started.

A number of important places for Aboriginal people have been identified in HTP South during our early community consultation.

The forests in this part of the corridor feature grinding grooves, artefacts and culturally significant areas.

The transmission line’s impact on cultural sightlines or views is another important issue for Aboriginal stakeholders in HTP South (and HTP Central). Visual impact assessments will be carried out as part of the EIS process and the results will be shared with the local community.

The HTP community team has a dedicated Aboriginal engagement officer. We’ll continue working closely with the Aboriginal community and traditional owners to minimise impacts.



An example of grinding grooves identified in the Watagan State Forest during our early engagement on the HTP preliminary corridor.

Roads and traffic

Construction traffic in HTP South will be concentrated on Freemans Drive and Martinsville Road as materials for the new substation and around 20 transmission towers are transported into the State forests.

Using Watagans Forest Road for project traffic will need to be managed carefully because it's already used by recreational users and Forestry (for hardwood plantation operation in the Watagan State Forest).

A detailed traffic assessment for HTP South will be part of the EIS. As part of this we'll keep engaging with stakeholders including Lake Macquarie City Council, Forestry and the local community to find the best ways to manage and minimise the impacts.

Temporary workers accommodation

To accommodate the HTP's construction workforce in HTP South we anticipate building a temporary accommodation facility at a location near Freemans Drive.

This will ensure there are no major impacts on local services, housing supply or infrastructure.

After the HTP is built this accommodation will be removed.

At this stage we expect the total number of workers in HTP South to be around 200 people, but this could increase following detailed studies.



Next steps

4



We're in the planning stage of the HTP

During 2024 we'll continue engaging with the community to explain the project and assess its economic, environmental and social impacts and benefits.

We now have a revised corridor but there are many more steps ahead.

This includes the detailed design of new transmission infrastructure, which will be assessed as part of the HTP's environmental impact statement (EIS).

EnergyCo has a local HTP community team, who live and work in the Hunter region.



This document Shaping the Hunter Transmission Project has been published in conjunction with the scoping report required by the NSW Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure for [critical State significant infrastructure](#).



A scoping report is the first step in the environmental planning approval process. The department will then issue [Secretary's environmental assessment requirements \(SEARs\)](#) that we must address in the EIS.



You'll have an opportunity to provide formal feedback on the HTP's detailed design in late 2024 as part of the EIS process.



We'll report back to the community with a mid-year project update.

The HTP is a multi-billion dollar investment that will generate hundreds of jobs and boost the Hunter's economy – but that's not the only way the HTP will benefit the community.

Hunter-first benefits

The [NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap](#) recognises the critical role regional communities will play in hosting new renewable energy infrastructure to support economic growth and help NSW transition to a cleaner future. Benefit-sharing is also a key objective of the [Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 \(EII Act\)](#).

The goal of a Hunter-first benefits package is to make sure the community sees lasting, meaningful benefits in return for hosting the HTP during and after its construction.

This targeted program is under development and we look forward to sharing more information in coming months.

Hunter-first benefits will be directed at the local communities most impacted by the construction of the HTP as well as initiatives to benefit the broader region.

We're engaging with the HTP's 3 main local government areas (Singleton, Cessnock and Lake Macquarie) as well as Aboriginal service providers, peak regional business groups, education and training providers, and recreational user groups of the State forests.

The Hunter-first benefits will be in addition to other initiatives to increase income and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal groups under the [First Nations Guidelines](#).

Benefit sharing at a glance



Funding for strategic initiatives to directly benefit local communities affected by the HTP



Strategic benefit payments (\$200,000 per kilometre) for private landowners hosting transmission infrastructure on top of regular compensation



At least 1.5% of contract value to go towards increased income and job opportunities for local Aboriginal communities



Maximising the employment of locals and the purchase of local goods and services



Creating education and training for the community to participate in the transition to renewable energy



Delivering strategic offsets to enhance biodiversity values of the Hunter

How to stay informed



Scan this QR code with your mobile phone camera



Use this link to visit our website
energyco.nsw.gov.au/http



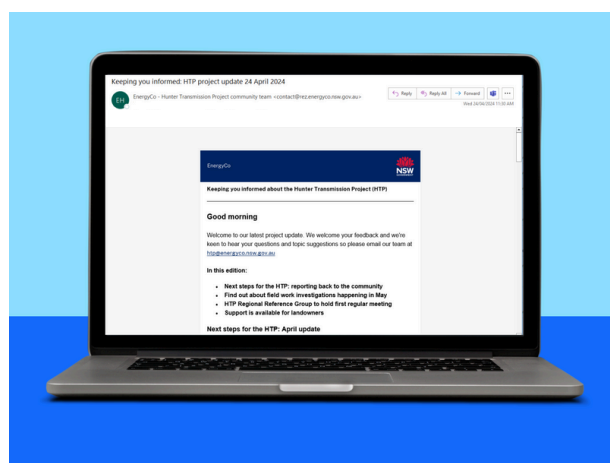
Email the HTP community team
htp@energyco.nsw.gov.au



Phone the HTP community team
1800 645 972

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 645 972.

The best way to stay informed about the HTP is to sign up for our regular newsletter updates. These feature project updates and notifications, fact sheets, explainer videos and frequently asked questions.



A Regional Reference Group (RRG) for the HTP led by Independent Chair Bob Pynsent will facilitate collaborative discussions between EnergyCo and the Hunter community on crucial aspects of the project.

The group held its first meeting in February 2024 and has 9 members including the mayors of Singleton, Cessnock and Lake Macquarie City councils.

You can contact the RRG by email:
bob.htprrg@gmail.com

Please visit our website for more information about the RRG including a full list of members.

Appendices



Appendix 1: Strategic importance and approvals process

Both the NSW Government and the Australian Government recognise the strategic importance of the HTP and want it to be built as quickly as possible.

The HTP:

- is an urgent NSW Actionable Project under the [Australian Energy Market Operator's 2022 Integrated System Plan](#) for the transition of the National Electricity Market to renewable energy over the next 20 years
- will receive part of the \$4.7 billion allocated to the NSW Government to modernise the electricity grid under Australian Government's [Rewiring the Nation program](#)
- is a 'Deliver Now' project under the [Network Infrastructure Strategy for NSW](#) to support the delivery of the [Roadmap](#)
- is classified as a priority transmission infrastructure project (PTIP) under the NSW Government [Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 \(EII Act\)](#) because it is essential for energy security and avoiding breaches of the [NSW Energy Security Target](#).

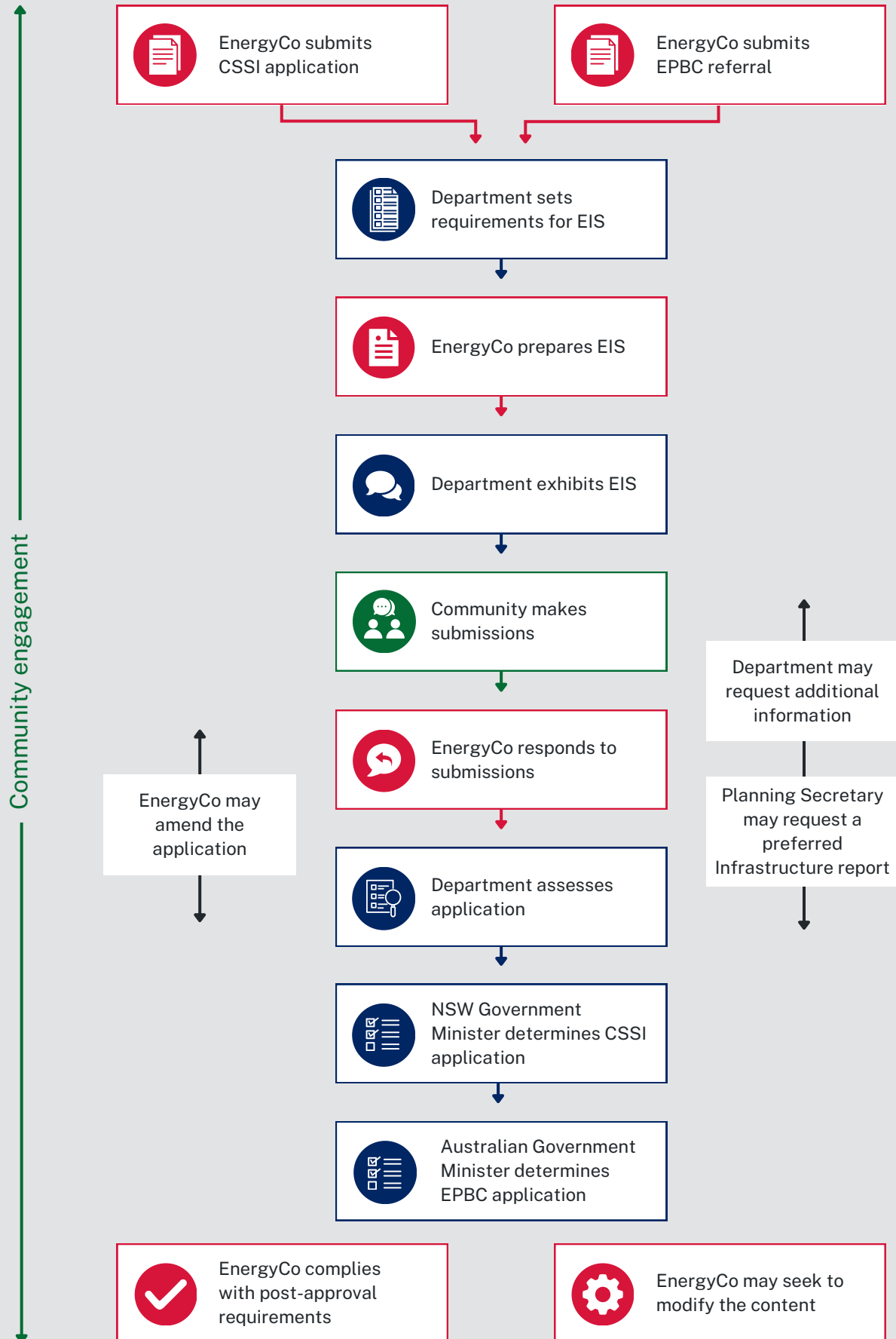
This means the NSW Minister for Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Heritage is responsible for appointing a network operator to deliver the project under the EII Act and ensuring the HTP is in the best interests of electricity consumers.

From an environmental approvals perspective:

- the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has decided the HTP is essential to the State for economic, social and environmental reasons and has declared it critical State significant infrastructure under the [Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 \(EP&A Act\)](#)
- the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water is likely to declare the HTP a controlled action under the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 \(EPBC Act\)](#) because it may have a significant impact on [matters of national environmental significance \(MNES\)](#).

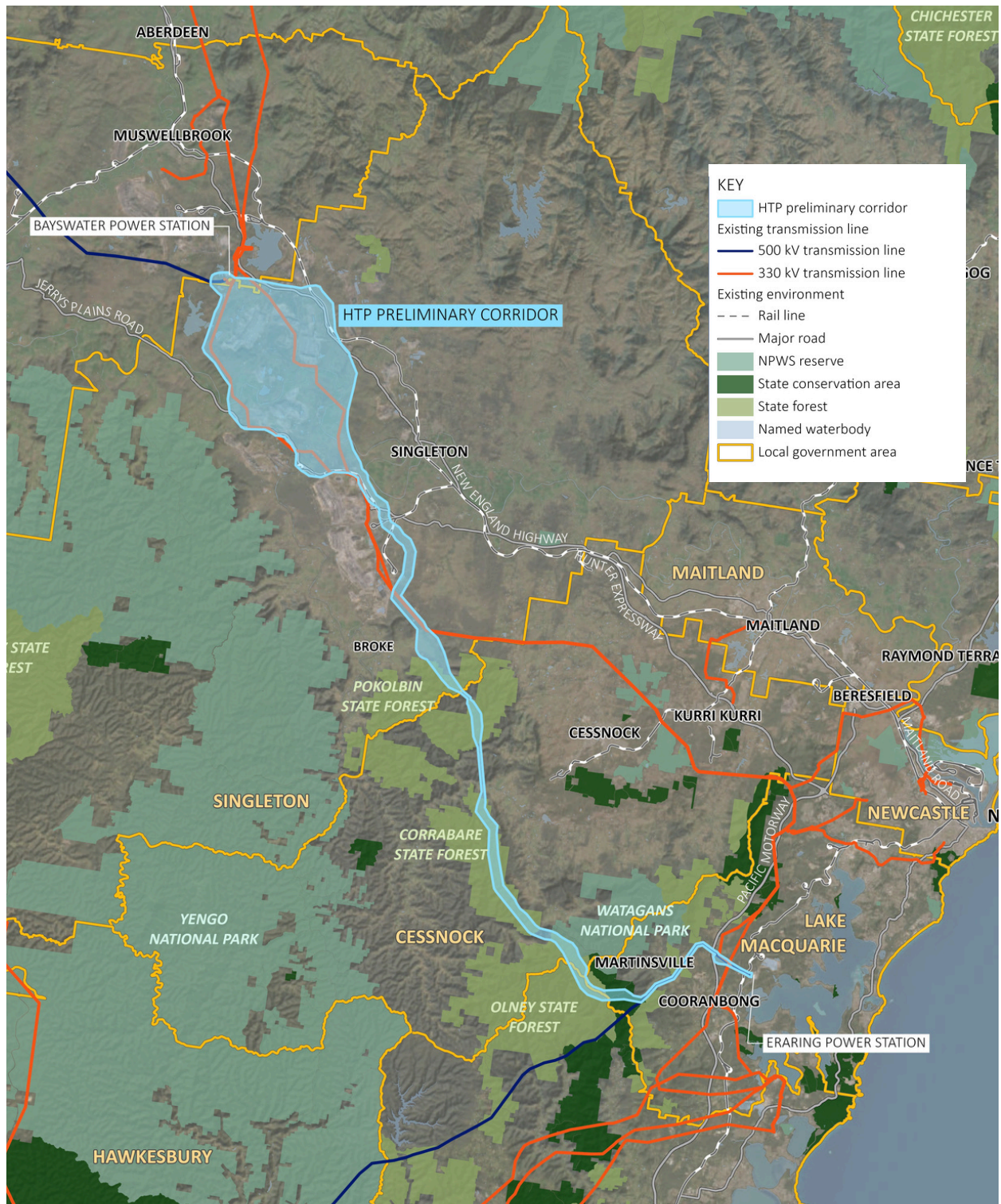
This means the HTP needs the approval of both ministers before it can go ahead. Under the existing [bilateral agreement](#), the NSW Government will co-ordinate a detailed assessment of the impacts of the HTP under both the EP&A Act and EPBC Act in a single, integrated approvals process that includes extensive community consultation before both ministers make a final decision (see figure on next page).

Critical State significant infrastructure assessment process



Appendix 2: Map of the HTP preliminary corridor

The HTP preliminary corridor as published in November 2023. At the time of writing this has been replaced by a revised corridor (the HTP corridor).



energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp

