

New England REZ network infrastructure project

Project update

April 2025

EnergyCo is delivering the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) network infrastructure project to provide a clean, affordable and reliable power supply for homes and businesses across NSW. The first two stages of the project are scheduled for completion by 2034 to ensure energy security across NSW as our coal-fired power stations retire.



New England Solar Farm

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Bushland near Limbri

Bushfire management

We heard from the community that there are important dams in the region used for aerial firefighting such as Glenbawn Dam near Scone and Chaffey Dam near Tamworth. We are working closely with the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) to ensure these important water sources remain accessible to all firefighting aircraft.

We will ensure the New England REZ infrastructure does not disrupt any aerial firefighting operations. Through our work with the NSW RFS and aerial firefighting providers we are reviewing real-time flight data generated during recent and historic firefighting operations, as well as understanding how dams are accessed in a variety of conditions to ensure operations can continue.

We understand aviation controls are becoming increasingly important in bushfire response and are engaging with privately owned fixed-wing aircraft operators as part of this work. We are committed to using the best available data and insights to inform our planning and will continue to collaborate with the RFS and other stakeholders to achieve the best possible outcomes for the community.

This work is ongoing and will likely result in some refinements to the transmission line alignment to ensure we don't impact aerial firefighting operations. We will share further updates as this work progresses.

Social impact assessment

Survey now open

In February 2025 we began we began engaging with key stakeholders including community groups to inform the social impact assessment for the environmental impact statement (EIS).

EnergyCo has engaged Umwelt to carry out the social impact assessment to help us further understand community concerns and opportunities to ensure our planning for the project balances project objectives with community needs and priorities.

Have your say

We are inviting the community to provide feedback via a survey to help us understand your views about the project.

This will help us to ensure we can minimise project impacts and maximise the opportunities and social benefits that will come with the renewable energy transition.

The survey takes around 20 minutes to complete and will close on Monday 9 June 2025. Thank you to everyone who has engaged with us for the social impact assessment to date.



Scan the QR code to fill out the survey.



Armidale



Oversize and over-mass vehicle transporting a wind turbine

Transporting energy equipment

EnergyCo and Transport for NSW are working together to investigate upgrades to road intersections and pinch-points to allow large components to be moved safely across the road network to renewable energy projects.

Delivering the New England REZ involves building:



renewable energy projects, such as solar farms, wind farms and battery energy storage systems



transmission lines and energy hubs to connect these projects to electricity consumers.

This requires the transportation of large components such as wind turbine blades and electrical transformers using oversize and over-mass (OSOM) vehicles.

As the Infrastructure Planner, EnergyCo is planning the delivery of road upgrades in collaboration with Transport for NSW to enable OSOM deliveries to take place safely and with minimal disruption for communities and road users.

Route planning

An OSOM route from the Port of Newcastle to Muswellbrook will operate as a common route for New England and Central-West Orana renewable energy projects.

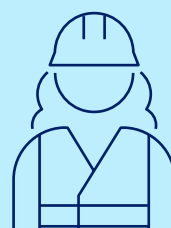
OSOM vehicles travelling to the New England REZ will detour Muswellbrook and rejoin the New England Highway before continuing north towards the New England REZ.

We are working closely with local councils, Transport for NSW and landowners as we develop the concept design for the route.

Coordinating the timing and frequency of OSOM deliveries is critical to minimising disruption for road users and communities. We are working with renewable energy project developers to manage traffic for OSOM vehicle movements during construction.

We are also supporting Transport for NSW on an operational strategy which explains how this work will be coordinated and traffic impacts managed, considering local and regional road use. The strategy will be shared with the community once the route is confirmed.

A fact sheet with further information on how the OSOM route to the New England REZ is being developed, timing and next steps is available on the project website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.



Field work in the Tamworth area

From April 2025, we will be carrying out environmental assessments, geotechnical and survey work in the Tamworth area to inform route planning and any required road upgrades.

Where investigations need to be carried out on private property, we will consult with landowners directly to arrange access. Field work will be carried out around Uralla, Walcha and Armidale later this year to identify a suitable OSOM route that minimises traffic impacts to these communities.



Field work in the project area

Field work continues into 2025

Field work is continuing across the region as we prepare the project's Environmental Impact Statement.

A range of specialist studies are ongoing to assess potential project impacts and inform our planning, including biodiversity surveys, utilities tracing and survey works. We also carried out a further round of Aboriginal heritage surveys during February and March.

This work builds on the extensive program of field work carried out in 2024 which included survey work across 7,000 hectares of land in the project area.

Investigations will continue along the preferred study corridor to help us better understand local land uses, environmental conditions and local ecology to inform project planning. The preferred study corridor can be viewed on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au.

We appreciate your cooperation while this work is carried out. For details about upcoming investigation work, visit the project website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.



Summer biodiversity survey program sightings

As part of our summer biodiversity program, ecologists have been in the field carrying out vegetation surveys and identifying threatened species and their habitats in the project area.

Ecologists are using a variety of field survey methods including targeted threatened flora and fauna surveys, spotlighting, audio recording, remote camera and thermal drone surveys.

Bait is used to attract different animals; sardines are used for carnivores, while a mix of oats, honey and peanut butter is used to attract animals in trees.

To date we have recorded 15 threatened species in the area, such as spotted-tail quolls and koalas. We have also recorded a range of commonly occurring species such as wombats, kangaroos, sugar gliders, echidnas and a range of birds.



A spotted-tail quoll photographed during biodiversity studies



A goanna photographed during biodiversity studies



Engaging with the community

Community reference groups established

EnergyCo has established two community reference groups for the New England REZ network infrastructure project which aim to provide an open forum of discussion between EnergyCo, the community and key stakeholders.

The north community reference group represents communities within the REZ boundary and the south community reference group represents communities between the REZ and Bayswater in the south, near Muswellbrook.

The community reference groups held their first meetings in January 2025 and will build on our engagement activities in the region to ensure local knowledge and perspectives are considered as we develop the project. This is part of our work to identify what is important to communities and find opportunities to provide legacy benefits.

An experienced facilitator, Margaret Harvie, has been appointed as the Independent Chair for both community reference groups. Meetings will be held quarterly, and members have been appointed for a two-year term.

We look forward to working closely with the community reference groups as we continue to develop the project.

You can find more information about the community reference groups and members on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

New England Renewable Careers Expo

In late March we participated in the first New England Renewable Energy Careers Expo in Armidale to share information about the project, EnergyCo's role as the Infrastructure Planner and expected pathways to employment and business opportunities.

The Expo is designed to promote workforce preparedness, local employment pathways and business opportunities.

The event was supported with strong interest from high school students, jobseekers and small businesses looking to get involved in the region's renewable energy transition.

The Expo is a collaborative effort between local, state and federal government as well as community organisations.

First Nations workshops

EnergyCo recently hosted First Nations workshops in Armidale and Scone to discuss skills, training, employment and social infrastructure as part of our work to maximise benefits to local communities as we plan and deliver the REZ.

The workshops were attended by 17 First Nations people from various fields including health, housing and education, government representatives and community organisations.

It was great to see a such a strong representation and we appreciate the valuable insights shared during the sessions. Key themes from feedback during the workshop will be instrumental in shaping the next steps of these initiatives to ensure First Nations initiatives are community-led, culturally appropriate and sustainable.



Community information session in Armidale

Community pop-up sessions

We hold regular community pop-up sessions across the region so you can speak to the team, ask questions and provide feedback. Upcoming events you can find us at:

Scone Horse Festival

Saturday 10 May, 9am to 3pm,
Scone Grammar School Fete & Market, Scone Grammar
School, 60 Kingdon Street, Scone

High Country Markets Uralla

Saturday 1 June, 8am to 12.30pm,
Uralla Showgrounds, 8 King Street, Uralla

We will be visiting other communities in the project area throughout the year. Visit our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne to view our upcoming engagement activities.



How do we share information with community members who don't have access to the internet?

We understand different communication methods suit different people, which is why we use multiple channels to engage with communities.

We have heard that some community members cannot access online resources, so we will continue to make printed copies of our materials available at local venues such as councils, post offices, community notice boards and other locations. This project update has been letterboxed to more than 46,000 households.

If you have ideas on where we can make materials available in your local area, please get in touch as we would like to hear your feedback.

To request a printed copy of our materials, please call us toll-free on 1800 061 114 and we will arrange for a copy to be mailed to your address.

We also have a team of place managers in the region who engage with landowners, hold regular pop-up events and attend events to chat with the community about the project and answer any questions.



Network operator update

In March 2025 we commenced the competitive tender process for parties interested in bidding to become the network operator for the New England REZ.

The tender process will run through 2025 with the formal tendering stage, known as the Request for Proposal, expected to commence later in the year.

The successful network operator will partner with EnergyCo and will design, construct, finance, operate and maintain the new transmission lines and energy hubs that will connect renewable projects in the New England REZ to NSW homes and businesses.

The network operator will play a key role in the success of the New England REZ and will be expected to have early and positive engagement with communities, First Nations people, local councils, landowners and other stakeholder groups to build long-lasting positive relationships.

We are starting the tender process now to ensure we can deliver the New England REZ on time and keep the lights on across NSW as our coal-fired power stations retire.

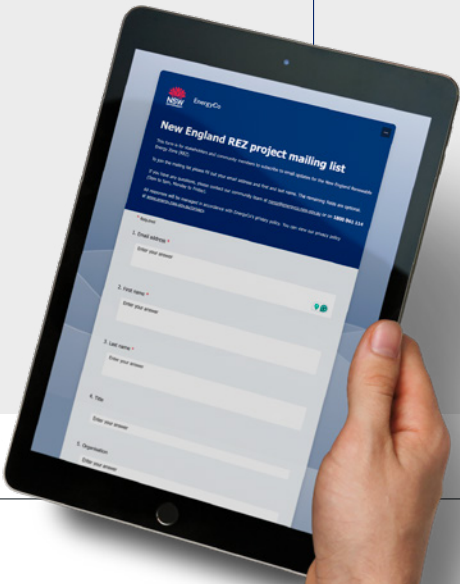
This process has been designed to continue in parallel to our ongoing work with landowners and the community, as well as our environmental investigations, as we continue to refine the REZ network infrastructure project. You can read more at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

Stay updated

If you would like to receive email updates on the latest New England REZ information and project milestones, please scan the QR code to register for the project e-newsletter.



Scan the QR code to register for project updates.



Project development timeline



About EnergyCo

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is a statutory authority responsible for leading the delivery of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) as part of the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

EnergyCo is working closely with communities, investors and industry to deliver the state's five REZs.

For more information about EnergyCo, visit our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-energyco.

Contact us

For more information about the New England REZ project, you can visit our website or contact the project team.



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1800 061 114
(9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)



energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne



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**.



Share your feedback

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.