

New England REZ North Community Reference Group

Meeting 2

6 Aberbaldie Rd,
Walcha

Thursday 1 May 2025

EnergyCo

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)



Acknowledgment of Country



Energy Corporation of New South Wales acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past and present through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

1

Welcome and housekeeping

Agenda

No.	Description	Responsible
1	Acknowledgement of Country	MH
2	Welcome and housekeeping	MH
3	Review previous actions	MH
4	Around the room	MH
5	Network Operator update	JW
6	Central South Hub	JW
7	Port to REZ	MB
8	Lunch	All
9	First Nations engagement	MM
10	Engagement and sharing information	MM
11	Other project updates	JW
12	General business and questions	All
13	Next meeting	All

Review of previous actions

Overview

- ✓ An action register is provided with each meeting agenda to support accountability and transparency.
- ✓ The aim is to close out all actions by the following meeting, where possible.
- ✓ Actions will be assigned a timeframe for delivery, based on feedback from CRG members.
- ✓ Any new actions or requests received outside of meetings will be added to the register to ensure updates are shared and progress is tracked.

Maintaining an open and trusting environment is our priority, and we'll continue to provide thorough meeting notes to ensure transparency.



Network operator update



EnergyCo will issue a request for proposal (RFP) in 2025 for parties to finance, design, build, operate and maintain the New England REZ network infrastructure.

- The Network Operator will be responsible for delivering the new transmission lines and energy hubs once planning approvals are secured.
- EnergyCo will continue to oversee the project as Infrastructure Planner, ensuring it aligns with community expectations and the NSW Energy Roadmap.

Network operator procurement timeline





Existing 330kv transmission
line near Tamworth

Central south hub

The purpose of the Central South Hub is to support the efficient connection of multiple renewable energy projects in the southern part of the REZ.

- ✓ System strength and reliability
- ✓ Strategic location
- ✓ Future-proofing
- ✓ Technical and regulatory requirements
- ✓ Ongoing analysis

Transporting energy equipment to the REZ

EnergyCo has been investigating a suitable, low-impact route to enable oversize and over-mass (OSOM) movements through Muswellbrook and into the New England REZ.

- OSOM vehicles will transport equipment such as wind turbine blades and electrical transformers.
- This is referred to as the **Port to REZ** program.
- Route is being developed in stages in collaboration with Transport for NSW.
- Route planning is informed by field investigations and engagement with landowners and key stakeholders.

Early planning will ensure OSOM deliveries are safe, coordinated and aligned with construction timelines.



Oversize and over-mass vehicle transporting a wind turbine.

Port to REZ program

Key activities

- Assessing suitable route and identifying road upgrades needed to support OSOM deliveries, carrying out field investigation work
- Working with councils and Transport for NSW
- Coordinating OSOM movements to minimising disruption to communities and road users

Next steps

- Mid-2025 – confirm Muswellbrook OSOM route
- Late 2025 – confirm Tamworth OSOM route
- Late 2026 – first OSOM deliveries to New England REZ



2

Lunch

CRG purpose

- ✓ Provides a structured forum for discussion between community members, stakeholders and EnergyCo about the New England REZ network infrastructure project.
- ✓ Shares local knowledge, identifies issues, and supports positive community outcomes.
- ✓ Offers input on project planning, engagement activities, emerging risks and opportunities.
- ✓ Acts as a consultative group with input considered alongside other stakeholder and technical feedback.



First Nations engagement



Update

- Project briefings, meetings and ongoing engagement with Local Aboriginal Land Councils and First Nations representatives
- Appointment of a dedicated Employment Aboriginal Engagement Officer
- Working to establishing NE REZ First Nations guidelines with DECCEW and a First Nations Working Group
- Held two workshops in Armidale and Scone for skills and training and social infrastructure studies

First Nations engagement is a standing item on the CRG agenda to share ongoing updates and receive feedback and input.



EnergyCo pop-up at the Tamworth Country Music Festival

Engagement and sharing information



What we're doing now



Regular community information sessions and **pop-up stalls** across the region.



Dedicated **Place and Property Managers** for one-on-one engagement with landowners



Online resources including an interactive project map, visualisations, and fact sheets



Printed resources distributed to landowners in the study corridor and in local community centres



Dedicated **project phone and email and website and email updates** for project enquiries and updates



Ongoing briefings with local councils, community groups and stakeholders



Community reference groups to provide local insight and feedback

Engagement and sharing information

We want your input



What is working well?



Are there other ways we can better share information or hear from the community?



How can we ensure we're reaching the right people at the right time??

3

Other project updates

Coordinating the delivery of the REZ

EnergyCo is carrying out a range of studies to assess priority areas for the REZ and identify opportunities and benefits for the region.

- The studies focus on key areas we've heard are important to the community and will support regional growth.
- The studies are due for completion in mid-2025. Findings will be shared with communities and stakeholders to help shape local strategies and benefits.

REZ-wide studies

Priority Topic	Opportunities for workers and businesses	Housing and accommodation	Roads and transport	Community services and infrastructure	Mobile and internet connectivity
Study area	Training & Skills	Workforce Accommodation	Traffic & transport	Social Infrastructure	Telco Uplift
	Local Supply Chain			Water & Wastewater	Coordination with NSW Telco Authority
				Waste & Circular Economy	



Community benefits

We're developing a community and employment benefit program for the New England REZ to help ensure local communities share in the long-term benefits of hosting renewable energy infrastructure.

- The program will be specific to the New England REZ
- The program will focus on employment, training, social infrastructure and local business opportunities aligned to community needs.
- Community feedback gathered through engagement activities and REZ-wide studies will help shape the design and delivery of benefits.

Community benefits announcement for the Central-West Orana REZ

In March 2025, the NSW Government announced the first round of funding under EnergyCo's community and employment benefit program:

- ✓ \$40 million committed over 5 years
- ✓ \$10 million already awarded to 15 projects
- ✓ Projects include health and wellbeing facilities, local training programs, and upgrades to community infrastructure

This funding demonstrates how the scheme will be rolled out in other REZs, including for the New England REZ.



Refining the study corridor



- We are working with landowners, community members and key stakeholders to help refine the proposed study corridor for the New England REZ network infrastructure project.
- Now is the time to provide feedback. Input received during this stage will help inform the final alignment and ensure local knowledge and concerns are considered.
- We will continue to refine the study corridor up until the lodgment of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).



New England Solar Farm

Renewable Energy Zone inquiry



An inquiry has been established to inquire into and report on the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales.

- ✓ 136 submissions were received, with 18 referring to the New England REZ specifically.
- ✓ A hearing is scheduled for 13 May 2025.

You can find the submissions and more information [here](#).



EnergyCo pop-up in Tamworth

Landowner guide



The NSW Government and NSW Farmers have partnered to launch the NSW Renewable Energy and Transmission Guide.

The guide provides:

- ✓ Information for landowners considering renewable energy projects, supporting them through negotiations and agreements with renewable energy developers
- ✓ Guidance on planning, design, and delivery processes
- ✓ Clarity on the roles, rights, and responsibilities of all parties

3

General business and questions

Next meeting

- ✓ Proposed date: Week commencing 23 June or 30 June
- ✓ Location: Armidale
- ✓ Agenda items