

New England REZ Community Reference Group

Meeting 1

January 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.

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Welcome

Agenda

No.	Description	Responsible
1	Acknowledgement of Country	MH
2	Welcome and housekeeping	MH
3	Introductions and declarations	MH
4	Apologies	MH
5	Governance and administration	MH
6	Terms of Reference	EnergyCo
7	Project Overview	EnergyCo
8	First Nations engagement	EnergyCo
9	Food and refreshments	All
10	Questions and general business	All
11	Next meeting	All

CRG purpose and objectives

The role of the community reference group is to provide an open forum for discussion between community representatives, key stakeholders and EnergyCo about the New England REZ network infrastructure project.

North CRG: To represent communities within the New England REZ boundary

South CRG: to represent communities between the REZ boundary and the southern end of the corridor at Bayswater near Muswellbrook

Objectives

- ✓ Establish good working relationships and promote information-sharing
- ✓ Provide members with visibility of the project and enable information sharing via community networks
- ✓ Keep members informed about project activities, key milestones and opportunities to provide feedback
- ✓ Provide an avenue to seek community and stakeholder input on project matters
- ✓ Allow members to seek information from EnergyCo and provide feedback



Armidale

Governance and administration

- ✓ Meeting frequency, times and location
- ✓ Attendance
- ✓ Roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Meeting agendas
- ✓ Meeting notes
- ✓ Publishing member contact details

Declaration of interests

All members must declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests to protect the integrity of the group and its members.

Declarations will be made at the start of each meeting and included in the meeting notes.



Terms of Reference

Number of participants

- Up to seven local community members and/or representatives from community or stakeholder groups
- Elected representative(s) of relevant local council(s) and Local Aboriginal Land Councils (up to one from each)
- No more than 50% of members with direct landholder interests that could result in future financial gains or losses

Declarations of interest

It should be noted that a pecuniary interest is an interest a person has in a matter because of a reasonable likelihood or expectation of appreciable financial gain or loss to the person. Money does not have to change hands for there to be a pecuniary interest.

Standards of behaviour

As per the code of conduct, during meetings members are expected to:

- Show respect to fellow members and avoid unconstructive, threatening, or disorderly behaviour
- Refrain from conduct that could cause undue offense or embarrassment
- Follow good meeting practices, including accepting direction from the Chair
- Speak succinctly and ensure all members have an opportunity to be heard without interruption
- Consider all relevant information and viewpoints
- Maintain the confidentiality of any information shared within the group, with prior notice when confidentiality applies.



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New England REZ

The NSW energy transition

The Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (the Roadmap) is a legislated plan to transform the NSW energy system into one that is affordable, clean and reliable.

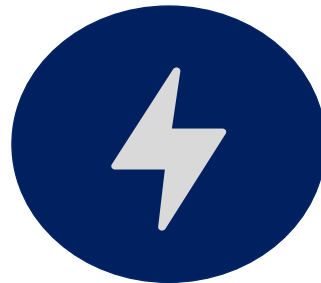
The Roadmap is enabled by the **Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 (EII Act)** and focuses on transforming NSW's energy infrastructure through delivery of new transmission infrastructure, renewable energy generation, long duration storage, and firming.

Renewable energy zones

Renewable Energy Zones are modern day power stations combining generation, storage, transmission and system strength in a geographic area.



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 to **maintain community support** and **maximise benefits for regional communities**.

Overview

The New England REZ is a critical energy project for NSW that will provide clean and reliable electricity to consumers for generations to come.

Key features	
Capacity	8 GW ultimate network capacity (2.4 GW Stage 1 + 3.6 GW Stage 2)
First power	Stage 1 2032, Stage 2 2034
Scale	15,495 km ² (Area), 350km (Corridor Length)

New England REZ need and key benefits



Support the NSW government's strategy to deliver affordable, reliable and clean electricity for homes and businesses in NSW



Facilitate more than \$24 billion in private sector investment by 2035, supporting over 6,000 construction jobs and 2,000 ongoing operational jobs¹



Provide for 8 GW of new transmission network capacity in the New England region

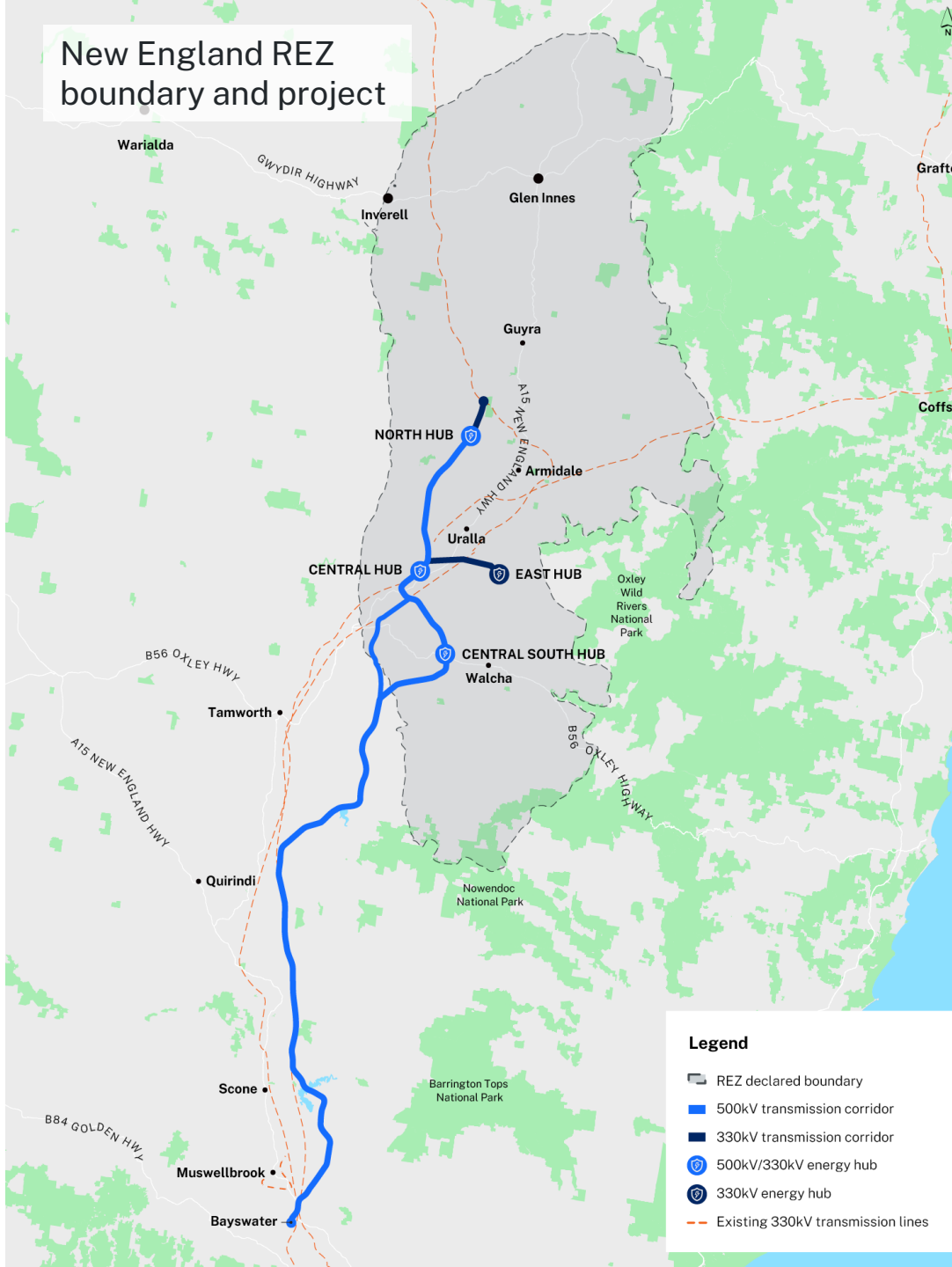


Provide up to \$660 million for landholders in lease payments²



Support the Commonwealth and NSW governments' energy security, cost and sustainability objectives, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy generation and supporting NSW and Australia on the path to achieving net zero emissions

¹ Based on updated estimates, June 2024
² NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) (2020) NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap



Project overview

The REZ network infrastructure project area is about 350km from north to south. About 180km of the project alignment is outside of the New England REZ connecting to the Hunter transmission project in the south.

The proposed infrastructure for the project includes:

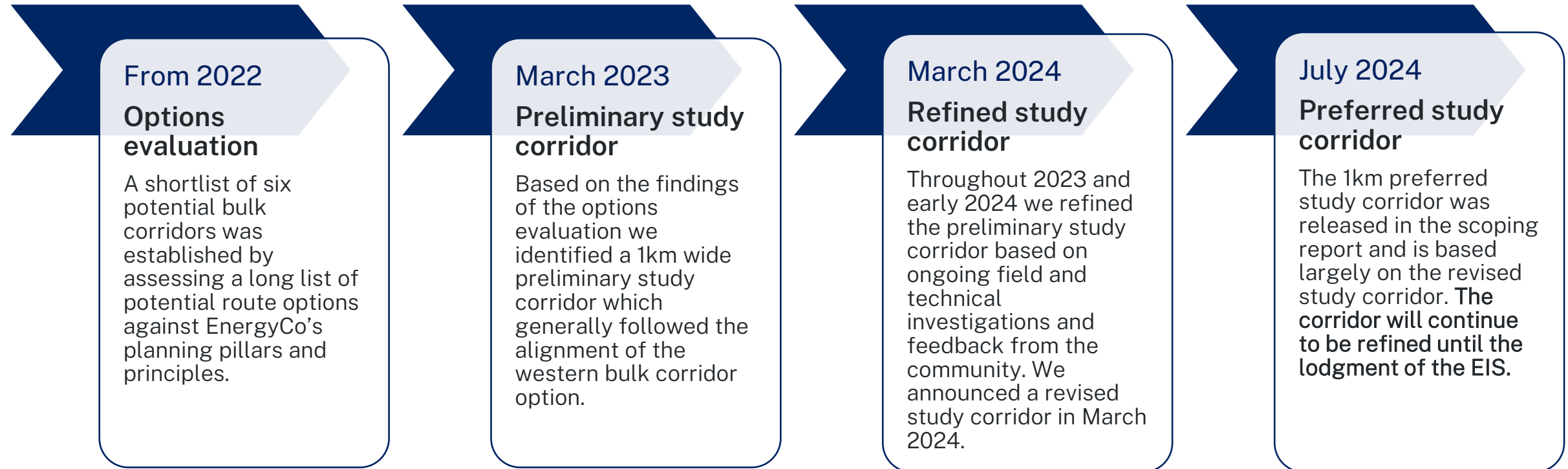
- 220km of dual 500kV lines including 180km co-located with existing Transgrid infrastructure
- 100km of single 500kV lines
- 400km of 330kV lines
- about 1,300 transmission line towers spaced about 400m apart
- four energy hubs
- enabling and ancillary infrastructure and state road upgrades to enable the transport of over-size-over-mass (OSOM) project components.

REZ network infrastructure project preferred study corridor, July 2024



Route selection process

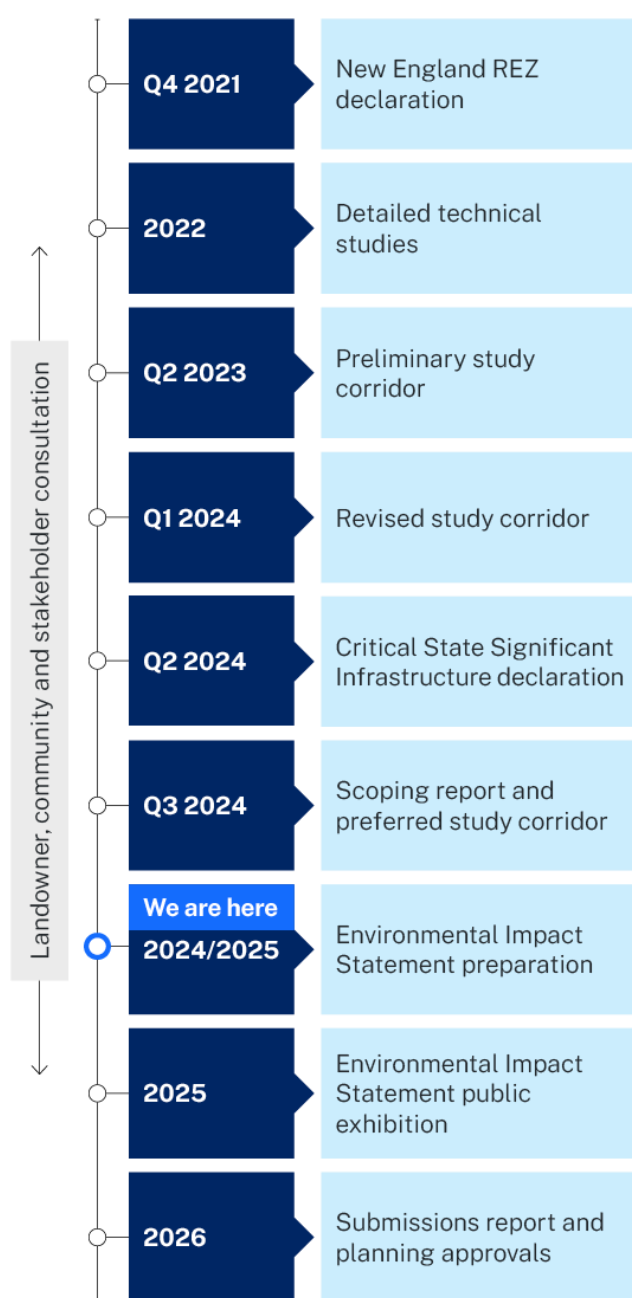
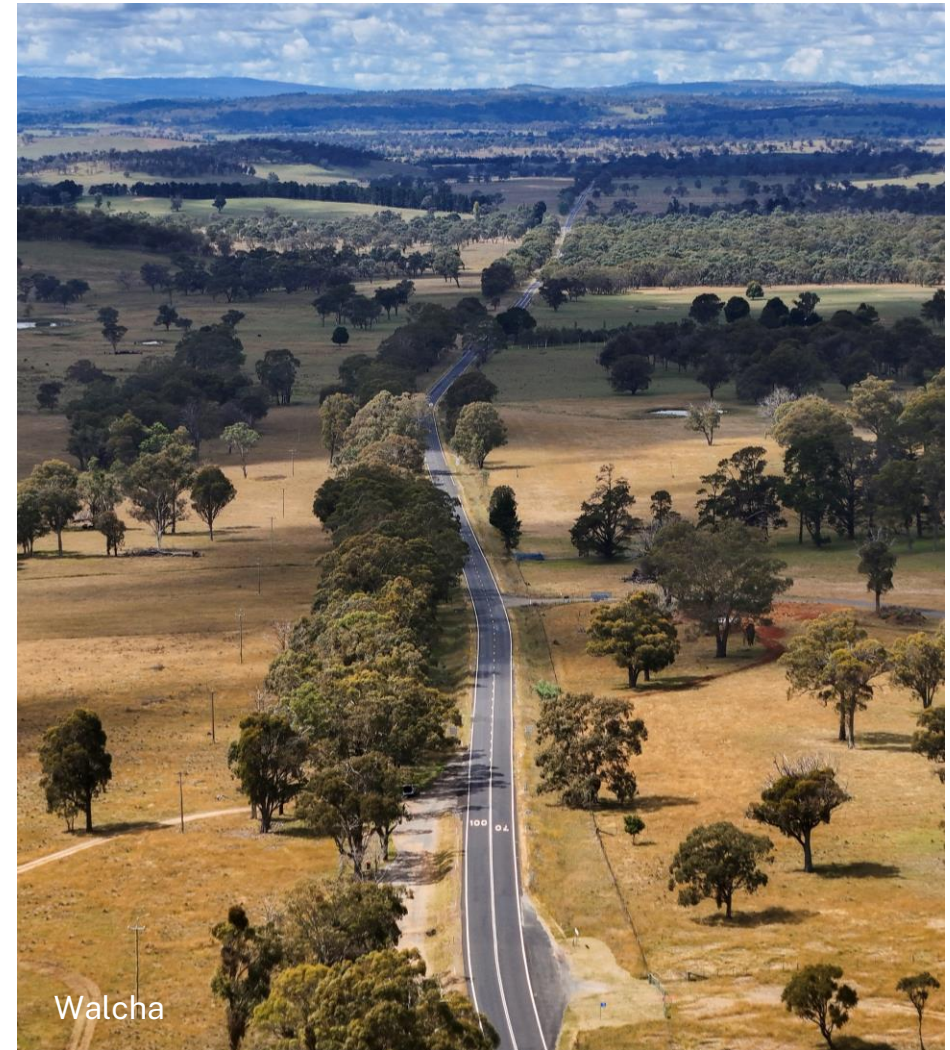
We have been following a comprehensive process to develop a study corridor since 2022 based on community and stakeholder consultation, field investigations and environmental and technical assessments.



Approval pathway

EnergyCo is securing the NSW and Commonwealth planning approvals for the REZ network infrastructure project.

- The project was declared critical state significant infrastructure (CSSI) in June 2024
- We are continuing to work with landowners and community to refine the project alignment
- We are undertaking field investigations for the preferred study corridor to inform the Environmental Impact Statement
- We will begin a competitive tender process to procure a Network Operator in 2025





Armidale community information session

Community engagement



We will continue to work with the community, landowners and key stakeholders throughout the delivery of the REZ network infrastructure project.

- Corridor refinement
 - EIS development and exhibition
 - Property acquisition
 - Project approval
 - Construction
 - Energisation
- ✓ Hosted 24 community information sessions and 27 community pop ups
 - ✓ 75 meetings with local councils and MPs
 - ✓ Regional Steering Committee to be established in Q2 2025
 - ✓ More than 600 stakeholder meetings held to date



Walcha Road train station

Working with landowners



We have been engaging with landowners since June 2023 to determine the preferred study corridor and receive feedback on the location of the project infrastructure.

- We provide landowners with a number of resources to support them through the development of the project including:
 - a dedicated Place Manager and Property Manager
 - property meetings and regular opportunities for engagement at community pop-ups
 - resources including our interactive map, fact sheets and visualisations.
- ✓ 485 meetings with landowners have helped refine the corridor
 - ✓ Preferred study corridor announced in Q3 2024
 - ✓ Progressing work with landowners to refine the alignment within the corridor
 - ✓ Final alignment to be presented in the EIS

Ongoing community engagement

Community feedback has played a critical role in the development of the project to date. We have a range of resources to help ensure communities are informed and engaged including:



Website where we publish the latest project information including project updates and fact sheets, visualisations and upcoming engagement activities.



Dedicated project phone and email line for the community to contact us with feedback and enquiries at any time.



Online interactive map which shows key features of the New England REZ and project.



Regular briefings with stakeholders including interested community groups like Valley Alliance and Voice for Walcha



Community information sessions and regular **pop-ups** in the region to keep the community engaged and informed about the REZ.



Community reference groups to help inform the development of the project and REZ as a whole



EnergyCo pop-up at the Aberdeen Highland Games



Solar project in Armidale region

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.

You can contribute to the inquiry by:

- Completing an [online questionnaire](#)
- Making a submission [here](#)

Submissions and online questionnaire responses close on 31 January 2025.

Need help with your submission

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) has put together a submission guide to assist those in our network to make their own submission, either as an organisation or an individual.

First Nations engagement



- 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 establish a First Nations Working Group
- Holding two workshops in Armidale and Scone for skills and training and social infrastructure studies

EnergyCo has committed to having First Nations engagement as a standing item on our CRG agenda to ensure we share the latest updates and get feedback/input from the CRG.

Coordinating the delivery of the REZ

EnergyCo is carrying out REZ-wide studies to understand the current context across priority areas in the REZ and identify opportunities for managing impacts and delivering community benefits.

- Studies began in mid-2024 with outcomes expected in early 2025
- Studies have been informed by feedback from stakeholders including councils
- Engagement with the community will take place in Q2 2025 to inform how initiatives are prioritised and delivered

Key focus areas



Community benefits

EnergyCo is establishing a community and employment benefit program in the New England REZ to ensure regional communities see long-term benefits from the energy transition through funding for community-led projects and initiatives.

- The program is expected to invest millions of dollars into the New England REZ economy over the next 20 years.
- The program will be tailored for the New England
- The program will be funded from access fees, paid by generation and storage projects with an access right to connect to the network infrastructure.



Improve people's lives

in regional communities by supporting better access to health services, housing and accommodation, telecommunication connectivity and other public services and infrastructure.



Foster community connection

by making it easier for people to access quality sport, recreation and other community facilities, as well as arts and cultural programs that bring people together.



Create local employment opportunities

through training and skills programs or infrastructure.



Boost resilience and innovation

through community energy programs and environmental improvement programs.



Improved outcomes for First Nations

people through provision of additional services, infrastructure and programs to support First Nations people.



Support regional economic development

through tourism programs and infrastructure and legacy projects that provide enduring benefits for host communities.

Community benefits

We will undertake a comprehensive consultation process to understand key priority areas for communities and identify initiatives which will deliver long-term benefits.

- Cumulative impact studies are underway and will identify opportunities
- Community survey
- Community information sessions
- Feedback and consultation with CRG

Key priorities identified in consultation so far	
	Housing and accommodation
	Roads and transport (condition, capacity and traffic)
	Training, employment and business opportunities
	Environmental programs, water and sewer infrastructure, and utilities
	Social infrastructure and services
	Telecommunications (internet and mobile phone reception)

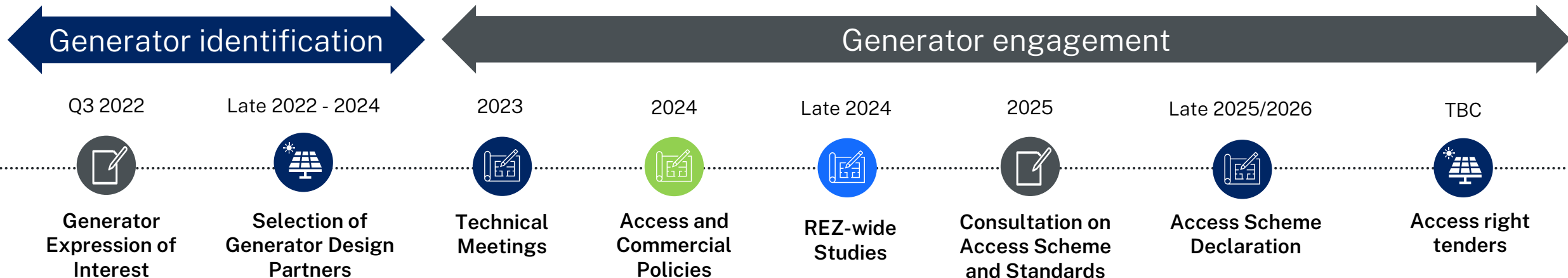
Working with generators

EnergyCo is working with generator design partners to ensure the new network is fit for purpose and to carefully plan the REZ as a whole.

Projects that wish to connect to the new network will need to obtain their own planning approvals and apply for network access rights.

Generator coordination objectives

- ✓ Understand generation context
- ✓ Ensure the network is fit-for-purpose
- ✓ Planning connection to the REZ (scope and timing)
- ✓ Coordinate whole-of-REZ issues with developers




Appointing a network operator

In 2025 EnergyCo plans to carry out a competitive tender process to appoint a network operator to finance, design, construct, operate and maintain the new network infrastructure for the REZ.

Indicative procurement timeline

- Call for Registrations of Interest – March 2025
- Industry briefing – March 2025
- Invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI) – April/May 2025
- Request for Proposal – September/October 2025

A photograph of a 330kV transmission line near Armidale. The image shows a large steel lattice tower in the foreground, with power lines stretching across a dry, hilly landscape. In the background, another similar tower is visible. The ground is covered in dry, yellowish-brown grass, and a few cows are grazing. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

Existing 330kV transmission line
near Armidale



Uralla town centre

Next steps

Timeline	Activity
Q1 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete REZ coordination studies• Announce Port to REZ route
Q2 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish regional steering committee• Broader community engagement on community benefit program• Establish First Nations working group
Q4 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EIS public exhibition and submissions period• New England REZ jobs summit
2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submissions report

*Field work and consultation with landowners to refine the study corridor and prepare the EIS is ongoing and will continue through 2025.

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Questions and general business



EnergyCo Information session in
Muswellbrook in 2024

Next meeting

- Proposed date: April 2025 (avoiding school holidays and Easter)
- Location – propose to alternate meetings between two locations
- Agenda items