

Working with the community

New England Renewable Energy Zone

August 2024

EnergyCo is leading the delivery of the New England REZ network infrastructure project to connect new renewable energy generation and storage in the REZ to the existing electricity network. We are committed to early and ongoing engagement with landowners, communities and stakeholders as we develop the REZ.

Overview

We have been engaging with local communities since June 2023 to inform the REZ network infrastructure project, including working with landowners to refine the study corridor and receiving feedback on the location of the project infrastructure. We will continue to work closely with landowners and the community to support the ongoing development of the network infrastructure project and the broader REZ.

Community engagement snapshot



440 meetings with landowners, community members and key stakeholders



Several corridor refinements informed by community feedback



Around 150 email enquiries and 150 calls to the project hotline



Engagement with local councils and MPs within the REZ network infrastructure project area



18 community sessions in local towns with 715 attendees



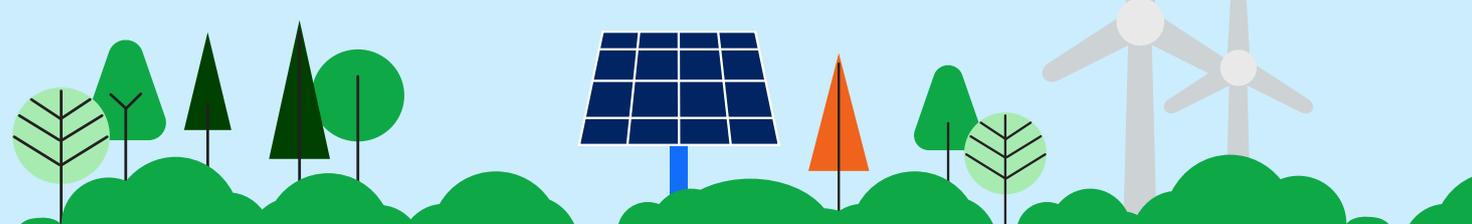
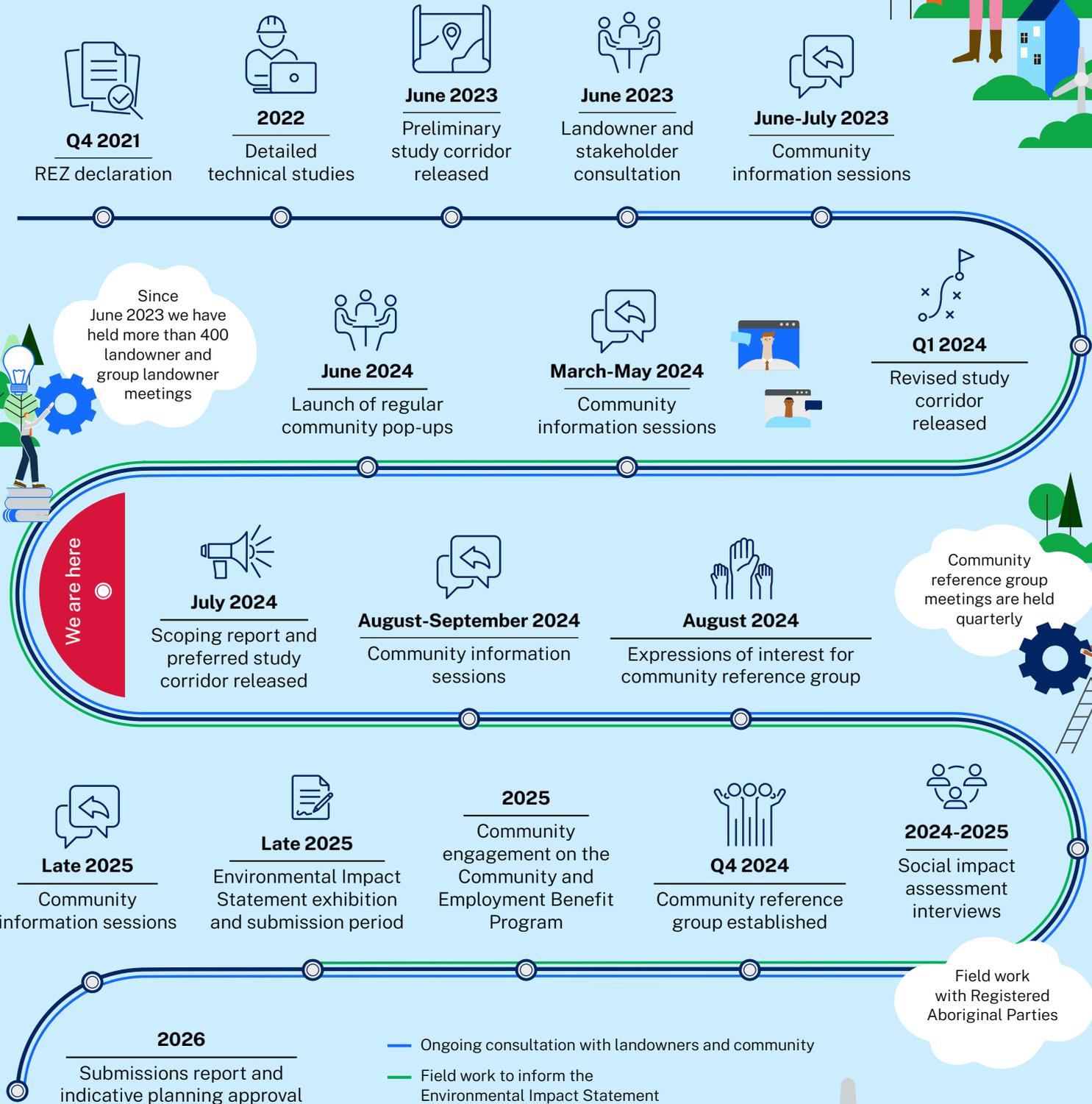
More than 1200 subscribers on the project email list



Community engagement milestones

We are continuing to work closely with landowners and the community to develop the New England REZ network infrastructure project and the REZ as a whole.

We have held community information sessions in Armidale, Uralla, Tamworth, Muswellbrook, Murrurundi, Scone, Walcha and Woolomin



Keeping you informed

We are using a range of engagement methods and activities to help ensure communities receive information about the New England REZ network infrastructure project. We understand different communication methods suit different people, which is why we use multiple channels to engage with communities. These include:



Publishing project information and tools on EnergyCo's website including:

- fact sheets
- an interactive map
- reports
- frequently asked questions
- upcoming engagement events.



Project update newsletters and work notifications



Advertising in local and regional media outlets



E-newsletter to registered community members and stakeholders



Regular briefings with community groups and stakeholders



A dedicated phone number and email address to respond to enquiries



Media release for project milestones and announcements



Direct contact via regular meetings, emails and phone calls with affected landowners for the REZ network infrastructure project.

We encourage you to subscribe for email updates to ensure you receive our latest information and announcements. More information can be found on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.



Community feedback

EnergyCo has received a range of community and stakeholder feedback and questions throughout the development of the REZ network infrastructure project. Below is a summary of key themes raised to date during our engagement with landowners and communities.

- **Project planning process** including how the transmission route has been developed and any alternative routes considered
- **Biodiversity** including impacts to known habitats of flora and fauna on private properties
- **Hazards and risk** including the management of livestock and wildlife around the project, biosecurity, bushfire and safety, health, and avoiding land contamination
- **Heritage** including Aboriginal cultural values and built or natural heritage items across the landscape
- **Economic matters** including business impacts and regional development opportunities such as employment and training
- **Land uses** and potential changes to operations due to the project
- **Water** including availability and water quality
- **Engagement** including feedback on how we engage with impacted landowners and suggestions on how we engage with the wider community
- **Access and transport** including accessing existing road infrastructure, private access roads or tracks
- **Amenity matters** including potential noise generation from the project and visual changes to the landscape
- **Cumulative impacts** from the project, future proposed projects and the REZ as a whole

The project's scoping report released in July 2024 provides a preliminary assessment of the key topics outlined above. To view the scoping report, you can find a link on our website energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne. These matters will be further considered and assessed as part of the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).



How community feedback is being considered



Route selection

Feedback from landowners, communities and key stakeholders has played a critical role in the route selection process to date, resulting in a number of changes and refinements to improve outcomes for landowners.

We started consulting with local communities in June 2023 with the release of a preliminary study corridor for the project. Since then, we have held ongoing discussions with landowners to better understand opportunities and constraints for the transmission route.

We will continue to work closely with landowners as we refine the corridor and develop the EIS through 2024 and 2025. We expect to lodge the EIS with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) for assessment and public exhibition in late 2025. For more information on how we developed the study corridor, you can read our route selection fact sheet on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.



First Nations

EnergyCo is working with First Nations representatives and key stakeholders to ensure local knowledge and places of significance are considered as we develop the project. This includes preparing an Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment for the EIS in consultation with registered Aboriginal participants.



Social impact assessment

We are preparing a social impact assessment as part of the EIS for the project. The social impact assessment aims to identify and evaluate potential social impacts from the project and how these will be managed. From later this year until early 2025, we will be engaging with a range of stakeholders to inform the assessment. This will include interviews and surveys with landowners, interest groups and key stakeholders. We will keep the community informed about opportunities to get involved in this work.



Delivering community benefits in the REZ

As the Infrastructure Planner, EnergyCo is coordinating the development of the New England REZ as a whole, including identifying opportunities for community benefits and strategies to minimise cumulative impacts in the region. We understand local communities know what is best for their region, so we will be engaging key stakeholders in the project area to better understand priority areas to deliver benefits across the REZ. We will provide an update on this work later in 2024, including how you can get involved.

For more information on our work with key stakeholders to coordinate the delivery of the REZ and deliver long-term benefits to communities, read our fact sheet on delivering community benefits via our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne. We will keep the community informed as the project progresses and welcome ongoing feedback to inform our planning.

Community information session in Muswellbrook



EnergyCo pop-up at the Aberdeen Highland Games



Tools and resources

We have a range of supporting resources and tools available to help you better understand the REZ network infrastructure project and learn more about key topics.

Fact sheets

We have published a variety of fact sheets on key project topics including the route selection process, environmental assessments, the project planning pathway and more. You can view the fact sheets on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

Community information sessions and pop-up events

EnergyCo holds regular pop-up events and information stalls in the region to chat with the community and answer any questions about the New England REZ network infrastructure project. We also hold community information sessions at project milestones so the community can learn more about the project and speak with the team.

You can view the details of upcoming sessions and pop-up events on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

Interactive map

Our interactive map shows key features of the New England REZ including the transmission study corridor, proposed energy hub locations, existing high voltage network and land boundaries. The map is available to view online at portal.com.au/energyco/rez.

NSW Planning Portal

The scoping report is available to view on the NSW Planning Portal by searching “New England REZ transmission project” at planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects. You can also find a link on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

Community reference group coming soon

In late 2024, we will begin work to establish a community reference group for the New England REZ. The community reference group will aim to provide an open forum for discussion between EnergyCo, community representatives and key stakeholders about the network infrastructure project and the broader REZ.

The community reference group will include a range of people from local communities who can represent the views and interests of their members, groups or organisations. This may include representatives from Aboriginal Land Councils, First Nations organisations, environmental groups, community development associations and industry groups. We will notify the community when applications are open.

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 first five REZs.

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

Contact us

For more information, please visit our website or get in touch with our team.

 nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au

 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.