

# New England REZ North Community Reference Group

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Meeting 3

Wednesday 2 July 2025

**EnergyCo**

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)



# Acknowledgment of Country

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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.

# Agenda

Item	Responsible
Acknowledgement of Country	Margaret Harvie
Welcome and housekeeping	Margaret Harvie
Pecuniary interests	Margaret Harvie
Noting of actions	Margaret Harvie
Meeting procedures	Margaret Harvie
Strategic Biodiversity Offsets Delivery	Darren Clarke and Laura Hoffman
Break	All
REZ-wide studies	Michael Burden
First Nations engagement	Melissa Maurer
General business and questions	All
Next meetings	All



Murrurundi

# Noting of 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 delivered by the following meeting where possible, unless assigned a timeframe for delivery based on feedback from CRG members

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



# 1

## Meeting procedures

## CORE VALUES

IAP2 Federation's Core Values for Public Participation professionals define the expectations and aspirations of the public participation process. Processes based on the Core Values have been shown to be the most successful and respected.

**1** Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

**2** Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

**3** Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.

**4** Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

**5** Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

**6** Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

**7** Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

# IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

INCREASING IMPACT OF THE DECISION



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

# 2

## New England Strategic Biodiversity Offsets Delivery

Darren Clarke  
Director, Regional Coordination  
Planning & Communities

# Biodiversity offsets strategy

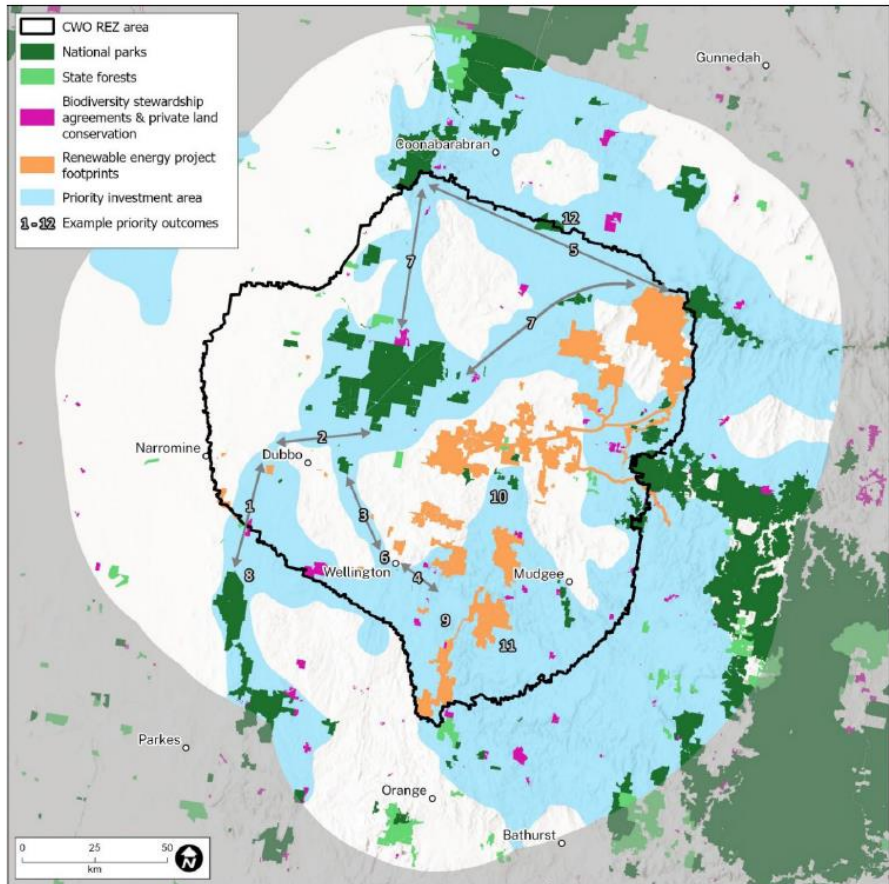


Figure 7 Priority investment areas and examples of priority outcomes in the Central West Orana region

## EnergyCo is partnering with DCCEEW to deliver biodiversity offsets for the New England REZ network infrastructure project

- The Energy Minister has announced the development of Conservation Investment Strategies (CIS) to optimise conservation outcomes for the REZs
- The CIS will allow EnergyCo and DCCEEW to deliver conservation outcomes in a more strategic and carefully coordinated way.
- EnergyCo is exploring options with DCCEEW to deliver the CIS for the New England REZ.
- DCCEEW and EnergyCo will enter into a Strategic Offsets Delivery Agreement (SODA) in which EnergyCo will fund DCCEEW to deliver its biodiversity offset obligations for the New England REZ network infrastructure project in alignment with the New England CIS.

EnergyCo will be the first ever Proponent in NSW to enter into a Strategic Offset Delivery Agreement for the Central-West Orana transmission project.





Scotts Creek

# New England Conservation Investment Strategy



The New England CIS is currently being drafted by DCCEEW.

- The CIS will outline priority areas and actions for investment across the REZ to improve the protection and resilience of biodiversity in the region.
- DCCEEW will consult with key stakeholders once a preliminary draft CIS is prepared – targeted for late Q3 2025.
- The *Biodiversity Conservation (Strategic Offset Delivery Agreement) Amendment 2025* (gazetted on 9 May 2025) allows for transmission network, generator and storage projects within a REZ to enter into a SODA with DCCEEW.
- EnergyCo will be required to make payment to DCCEEW to deliver offsets and conservation outcomes in alignment with the NE CIS.
- EnergyCo will be working with DCCEEW to determine an offset delivery estimate under the SODA.

EnergyCo will no longer independently pursue biodiversity offset opportunities with landowners, Aboriginal Land Managers or via market processes administered by the NSW Biodiversity Credit Supply Taskforce.

# Strategic Offsets Delivery Agreement (SODA)



## Financial Certainty

for EnergyCo and energy consumers with upper limit fees and any savings reimbursed. This includes certainty on how much we pay for administrative effort.



## Compliance Certainty

Under proposed regulatory amendments, EnergyCo will be considered to have fulfilled its offsetting obligations on entry into a Strategic Offset Delivery Agreement.



## Resource Efficiencies

Reduced administrative burden by utilising DCCEEW expertise, meaning reduction in outsourced specialist support for EnergyCo and effort to attain internal approvals for offset expenditure.



## Eliminates Probity Risks

Offsets delivery would be managed by DCCEEW and under established procurement and probity measures, thereby significantly reducing probity risks associated with establishment of BSAs by EnergyCo with private landowners.



## Portfolio Delivery

Capacity to replicate this strategic offsets delivery agreement model drive efficiencies for other EnergyCo projects.

KEY BENEFITS

Beyond enhanced biodiversity conservation outcomes, SODAs provide additional financial and compliance certainty.

- Under the newly introduced amendments to the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017, the Environmental Agency Head assumes responsibility for delivery of all offsets under a SODA.



# Opportunities for landowners

EnergyCo is working closely with DCCEEW to make sure landowners understand how they can participate in biodiversity stewardship programs.

DCCEEW is providing ongoing information sessions for landowners to understand how they can participate and understand what credits are in demand. There are two upcoming online sessions that anyone can join:

- Wednesday 2nd July -12:30 – 1:00pm
- Wednesday 6th August -12:30 – 1:00pm

Landowners can also view the DCCEEW Stewardship Support Program landing page for more information on how they can potentially participate in stewardship programs moving forward.

## Stewardship Support Program

The Stewardship Support Program provides landholders an easy pathway to apply for a biodiversity stewardship agreement.

Topics

Heritage

Animals and plants

Biodiversity conservation framework

Biodiversity Offsets Scheme

About the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme

Generate credits with a biodiversity stewardship agreement

Generate and sell biodiversity credits

Apply for a biodiversity stewardship agreement

Stewardship Support Program

Biodiversity stewardship agreements map

Total Fund Deposit and discount rate

Case studies and landholder stories

Clear and develop land

On this page

[Stewardship Support Program applicant's guide and webinars](#)  
[Apply to the Stewardship Support Program](#)  
[Priority in-demand credits for June–August 2025 program round](#)  
[Get support to set up a biodiversity stewardship site](#)  
[About the NSW biodiversity market](#)  
[Find out more](#)  
[Related information](#)

Stewardship Support Program status

The Stewardship Support Program is open for applications from Wednesday 25 June to Sunday 17 August. Only applications received by 11:59 pm Sunday 17 August will be considered.  
More information on the program is available below.

Stewardship Support Program applicant's guide and webinars

The Stewardship Support Program applicant's guide provides detailed information on how the program operates and how to correctly complete and submit an application.  
[Request the applicant's guide](#)

Webinars sharing more information about the program and application process will be held:

- Wednesday 2 July 2025, 12:30 pm – 1:00 pm | [Register for the webinar](#)
- Wednesday 6 August 2025, 12:30 pm – 1:00 pm | [Register for the webinar](#)

# Break

# 4

## New England REZ-wide studies

Michael Burden  
REZ Coordination Lead, New England REZ

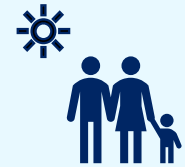




# REZ coordination



**Powering  
NSW**



**Empowering  
New England**

*The EII Act is more than just energy,  
it's about people and places.*

# Benefits vs Impacts: Two sides of the transition

## Community benefits

*Intentional positive outcomes* delivered to host communities.

Aim to create a net positive legacy and foster shared prosperity.

e.g. New community facilities, local jobs, training programs, economic diversification, grants.

Adding value

## Cumulative impacts

The *combined effects* of multiple projects over time and space.

Aim to avoid significant unmanaged consequences and maintain regional well-being.

e.g. Housing shortages, traffic congestion, strain on services, water demands, waste management

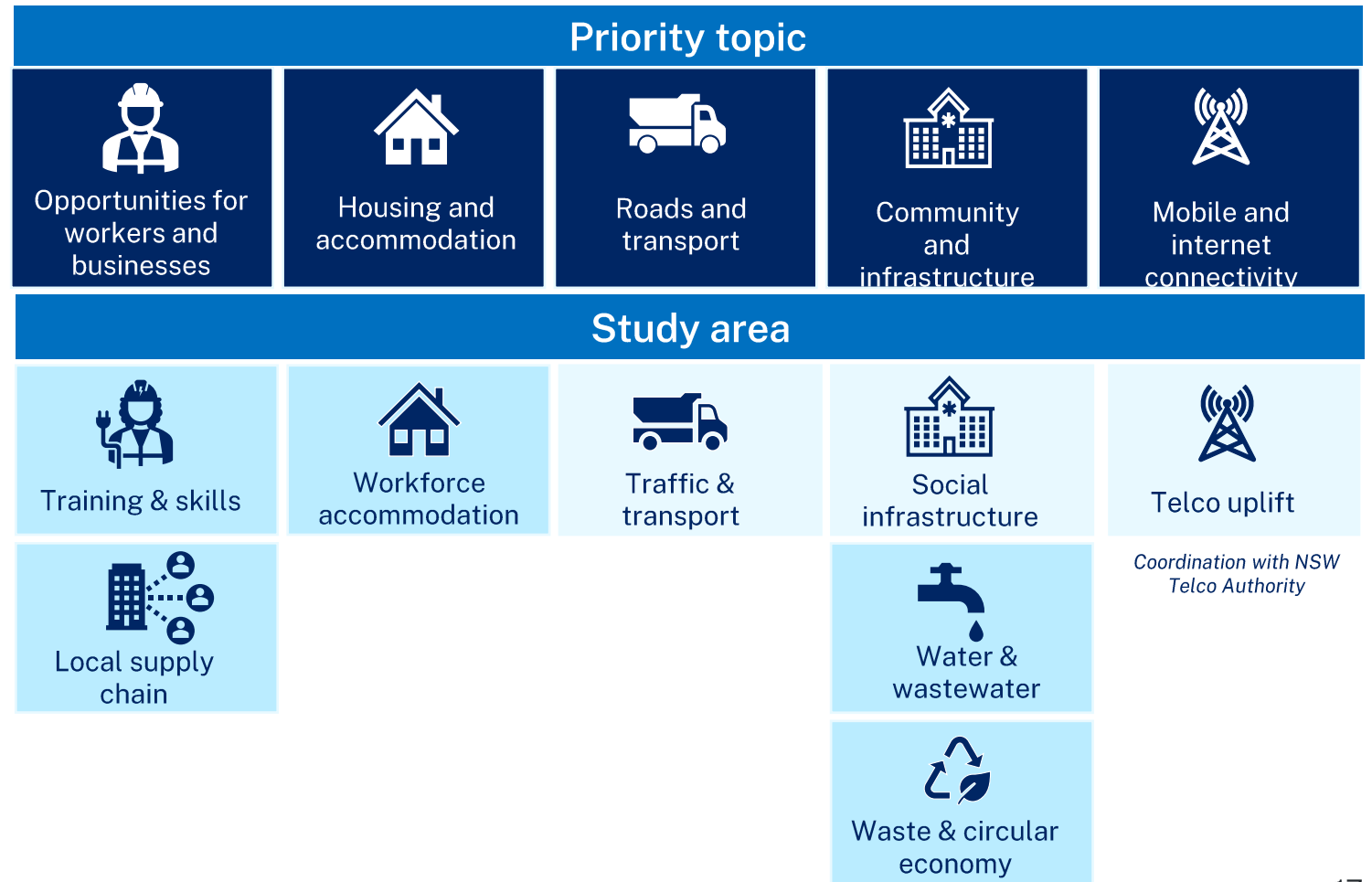
Managing impacts

We can't have one without addressing the other

# REZ-wide studies

The studies aim to:

- identify cumulative impacts, constraints, and opportunities
- guide a coordinated Whole-of-Government response.







Fields near Walcha

# Process and role of the REZ-wide studies

- consultation to date
- role of the REZ-wide studies
- differences (and similarities) to Central-West Orana REZ
- role of regional forums
- next steps to finalise the studies
- the 'end of the beginning'

# How were the studies developed?

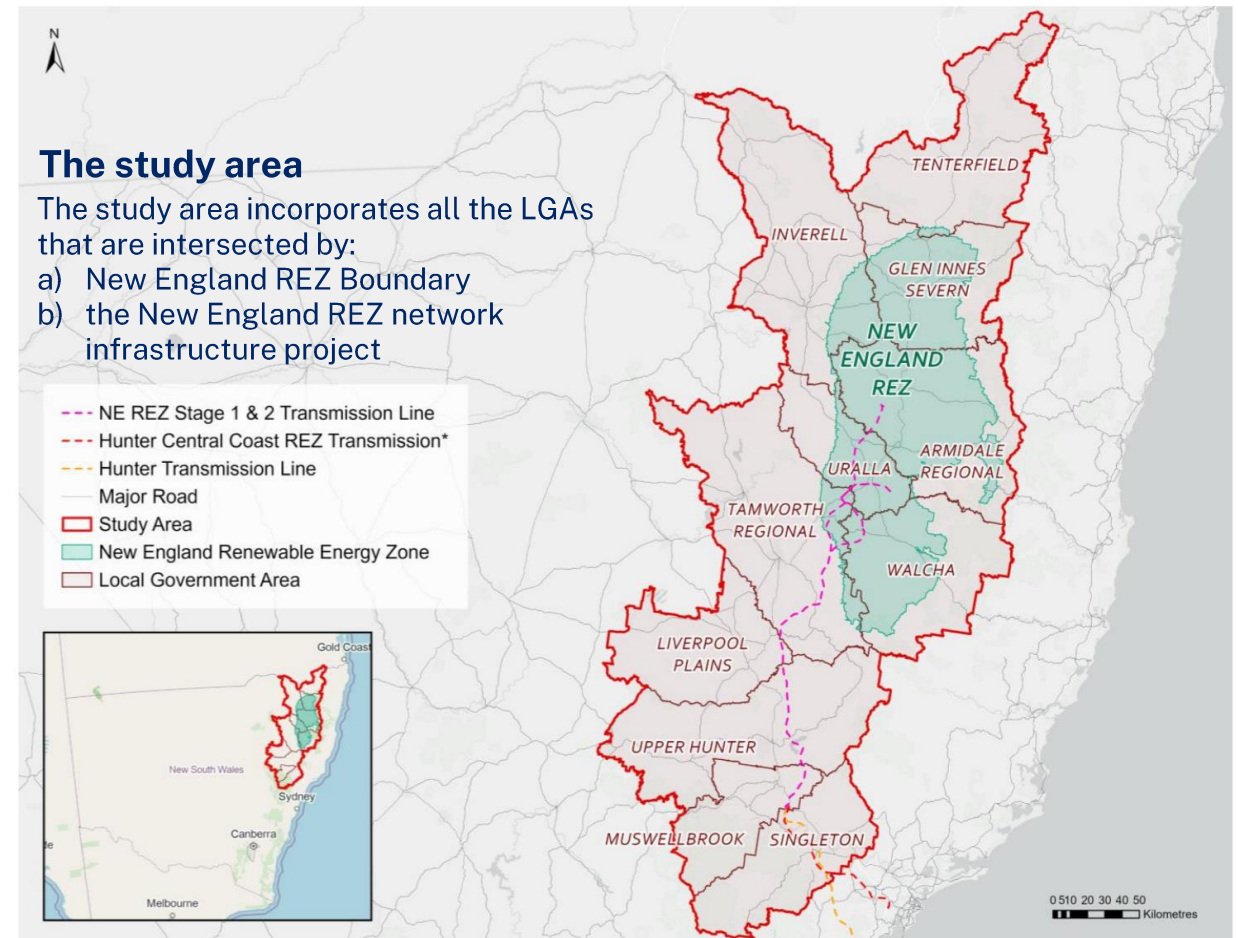
## 1. Collection of data points from public sources and direct generator engagement – provides a comprehensive data set and consistency of reference projects to be used for the REZ wide studies sourced from:

- DPHI Planning Portal projects
- New England REZ Generator Engagement (EOI process)
- EnergyCo projects and New England REZ project information

## 2. Industry data sources and lessons learnt from previous projects

## 3. Stakeholder engagement

- Council workshops
- Interviews with industry and peak body groups
- Business survey
- Consultation with generator projects
- New England REZ project information (constructability)





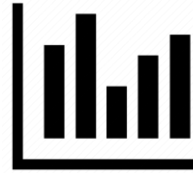
# What was the study approach?



## Baseline assessment

What is the current capacity?

Establish the current capacity within the New England REZ study area



## Demand assessment

What is the demand?

Estimate the demand from renewable energy and transmission projects, by modelling the projects projections



## Gap analysis

Where are the gaps?

Compared estimated demand to baseline output to identify growth needed for the New England REZ

# The studies are ‘just’ one piece of the puzzle

- ✓ The release of the REZ-wide studies is the first step to understand constraints and opportunities
- ✓ Importantly, the community will be invited to provide feedback on priority areas through a ‘have your say’ period
  - This feedback will be used alongside the studies to inform community benefit programs and initiatives
  - (more on this later)







New England Solar Farm

# Overview of the studies

01



Workforce accommodation

02



Waste & circular economy

03



Water & wastewater

04



Local supply chain

05



Training & skills





# Workforce Accommodation Study (Urbis)



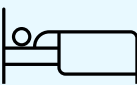
“

*How can we accommodate the New England REZ workforce?*

*What are the opportunities for legacy housing benefits?*

”

# Workforce Accommodation Study (Urbis)

<b>Baseline assessment</b>	 <p><b>Overall: 0.4% Population Growth</b> <i>across Study Area</i></p>	 <p><b>Tamworth is main growth centre</b></p>	 <p><b>Declining growth in Walcha, static in Uralla</b></p>	 <p><b>1.5% rental vacancy rate</b> <i>across Study Area</i></p>	 <p><b>1,736 rooms</b> <i>Motels / Hotels</i> <b>+99 rooms planned</b> <i>across Study Area</i></p>
<b>Demand assessment</b>	 <p><b>7,071 Jobs</b> <i>(peak July 2030)</i> Operational: 1,597 Construction: 5,474</p>	 <p><b>Uralla LGA</b> Estimated 3,000 workers in 2030</p>	 <p><b>Temporary Accommodation will be needed</b></p>	 <p><b>2yr lead time</b> for temporary accommodation</p>	 <p><b>Tamworth</b> highest demand for permanent <b> dwellings</b></p>





Muswellbrook town centre

# Potential opportunities



## Economic revitalisation:

The influx of temporary workers can rejuvenate regional towns, some of which have experienced slow or declining population growth.



## Housing development:

There is a significant demand for additional dwellings, with projections showing a need for 5,704 new homes by 2039.



## Legacy benefits:

There is potential for temporary worker accommodation to transition into permanent housing, addressing gaps in affordable and smaller homes. This can provide lasting benefits to the community.



## Stakeholder engagement:

The study emphasises the importance of engaging with community housing providers and local developers to ensure the accommodation needs are met. This collaboration can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions.



## Temporary accommodation solutions:

The study identifies the need for temporary worker camps, which can be company-specific or multi-business camps. These camps can provide efficient and centralised accommodation solutions.



Wind project near Wellington

# Waste and Circular Economy Study (MRA)

“

*What are the anticipated waste demands expected from the New England REZ?*

*Is there enough capacity within existing waste infrastructure to meet this demand?*

”



# Waste and Circular Economy Study (MRA)

- Renewable waste volumes not that high compared to non-renewable, however waste streams are complex (hazardous, contaminated, electronic, composite wastes).
- Limited infrastructure to cater for renewable energy waste, e.g. solar panels, batteries, wind turbine blades.
- Remote project locations and international supply chains reduces commercial benefits of resource recovery.
- Existing waste facilities facing various constraints.
- Evolving understanding of renewable energy waste management and associated opportunities.



# Potential opportunities

## Council and industry support

Providing information and resources to support Council and industry

*e.g. Advisory services and standardised documentation requirements*

## Circular economy

Encouraging reuse and refurbishment to minimise waste disposal

*e.g. Digital marketplace for used renewable energy components, such as solar panels and batteries*

## Policy and co-ordination

Streamlining approvals and improved reporting and monitoring

*e.g. REZ working groups*





Existing transmission line  
near Armidale

# Water and Wastewater Study (Jacobs)

“

*Is there enough raw water available  
to meet the demands of the New  
England REZ?*

*Is there enough treatment capacity  
for potable water and wastewater  
demands?*

”





Burrendong Dam

# Water and Wastewater Study (Jacobs)

- While water resources are generally sufficient in an average year, dry years may present challenges.
- Solutions required to ensure there is adequate potable water treatment capacity during peak construction (2027-2033).
- Modelling estimates that the existing wastewater treatment can accommodate the development of the REZ, with all LGAs –except Liverpool Plains – showing a surplus in capacity.

# Potential opportunities

## Addressing water supply challenges

Ensuring adequate raw water is available

*e.g. Collaborate with Councils on updating their Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) Strategies*

## Managing demand

Minimising the REZ driven demands on the existing system

*e.g. Plan and sequence projects to minimise cumulative demand*

## Optimising water and wastewater treatment

Improving efficiency and capacity of water and wastewater treatment

*e.g. Identification of cost-effective solutions to provide greater treatment capacity*





New England Highway

# Local supply chain study (Arup)

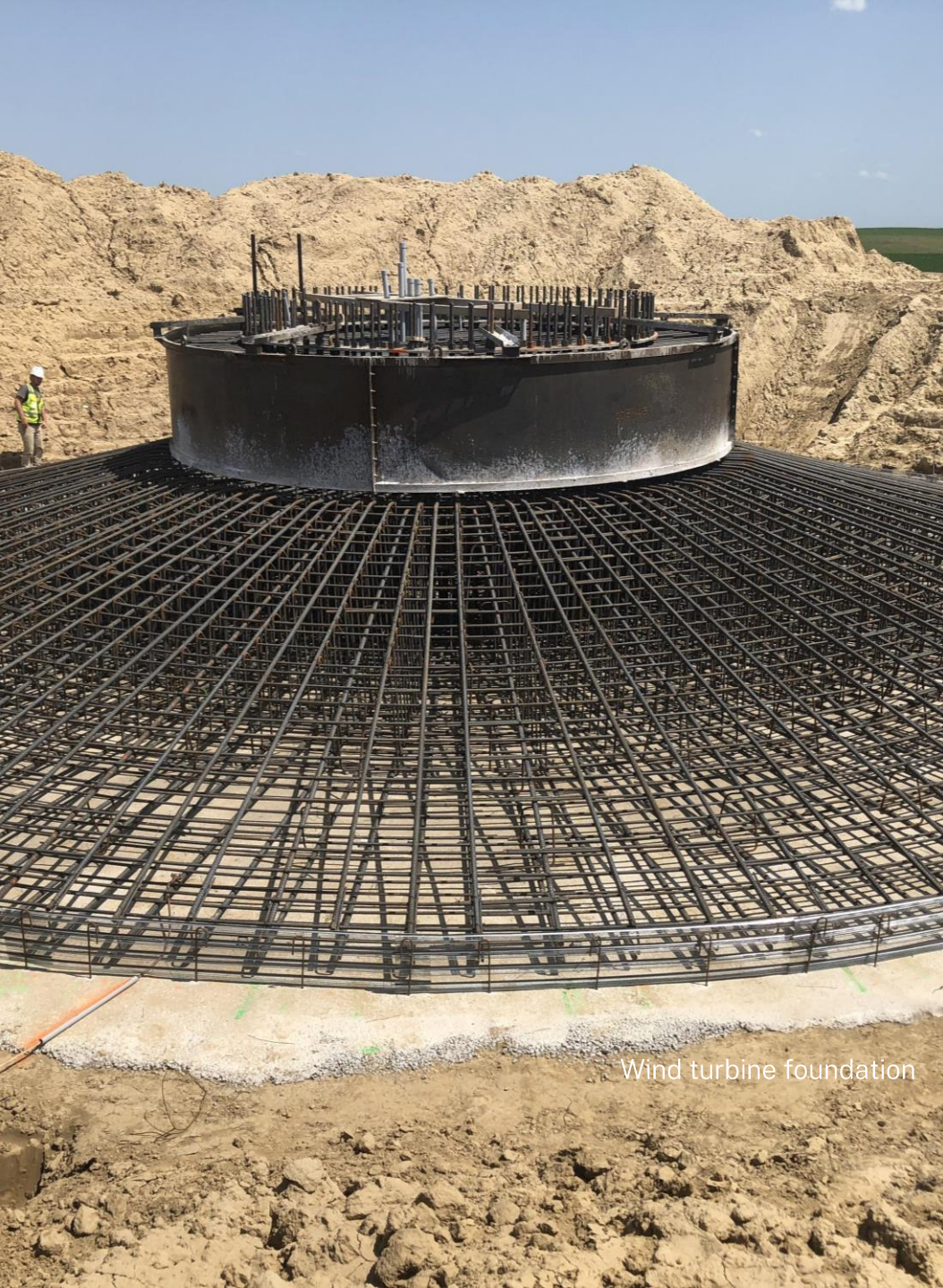


“

*How can the local supply chain be scaled and supported to meet the demands of New England REZ?*

”





Wind turbine foundation

# Local Supply Chain Study (Arup)



## Scalable – with constraints



Materials



Plant and equipment hire



End of life

### Constraints:

- Planning approvals
- Water usage
- High upfront costs
- Long lead times

## More easily scalable sectors



Construction services



Transportation



Security and surveillance



Catering and hospitality



Warehousing and storage

# Potential opportunities

## Business support

Reducing barriers for businesses to access REZ opportunities

*e.g. Business planning support*

## Connections

Connecting businesses and proponents through adequate communication

*e.g. Local business forums*

## Compliance

Specifying requirements and making procurement and approvals easier

*e.g. Local content requirements and simplifying planning approvals for upscaling businesses*





Uralla town centre

# Training and Skills Study (UTS)



“

*What are the key barriers for the local workforce to access jobs required for New England REZ?*

*What can be done to reduce or remove barriers?*

”



# Training and Skills Study (UTS)

## 1 Fluctuating employment demand profiles

Employment peaks and troughs increase the risk of skill shortages and socio-economic impacts (e.g. boom-bust cycles of development).

## 2 Tight labour markets and skill shortages

High demand from other infrastructure sectors resulting in skill shortages in key occupations (e.g. electricians).

## 3 Lack of diversity in energy sector

Limited resource pool in energy sector and not reflective of the wider Australian society. At a regional level this is more pronounced.

## 4 Training capacity in a 'thin market'

Low demand for training spread across large areas making economics of specialised training challenging and creates gaps in training access.

## 5 Insufficient investment in training

Short construction timeframes (e.g. solar) and project uncertainty limits ability to take on apprentices for longer contracts and invest in training.

## 6 Use of skilled migrants

No specific skilled migration program focused on the clean energy sector, and lack of a supported pathway for international students.

# Potential opportunities

## Increasing workforce supply

Reducing barriers for the workforce to access REZ opportunities

*e.g. Increasing diversity of workforce through programs for First Nations, females, underrepresented and diversity groups*

## Pathways for students

Building pathways for students to the renewable energy workforce

*e.g. School awareness programs and pre-apprentice programs*

## Increasing training capacity

Expand training capacity and availability to increase workforce supply

*e.g. Expand TAFE's mobile training facilities to support regional towns*

# Have your say on priority areas



- Alongside the release of the studies we will launch a 'have your say period' to invite community feedback on priority areas. We will:
  - ✓ hold community information sessions so people can speak to the team, learn about the studies and give feedback
  - ✓ have an online survey (accessible options over the phone or in person)
  - ✓ SME group interviews
  - ✓ prepare and publish a community feedback report after the consultation period
- ✓ What we need from you
  - Would your group like a briefing as part of the public consultation period?
  - Does your group have insights into any of the topics and would like to participate in an interview?



# First Nations engagement



Scar tree in a field near Walcha

## Update

- Project briefings, meetings and ongoing engagement with Local Aboriginal Land Councils and First Nations representatives
- First Nations Briefing held in Tamworth on 5 June
- Social Impact Assessment interviews to commence in coming weeks

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

# 5

## General business and questions



# Next meeting

- ✓ Meeting 4: Week commencing 22 September
- ✓ Meeting 5: Week commencing 24 November
- ✓ Location: Uralla
- ✓ Agenda items