

## New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)

### Community Reference Group (CRG) South - Meeting 4

Date: Wednesday 24 September 2025 – 5pm to 7.30pm

Location: Wests Tamworth Leagues Club, 58 Phillip Street, West Tamworth

Chaired by: Margaret Harvie

#### Attended

<b>Chairperson</b>	Margaret Harvie
<b>Community Representatives</b>	Mac McLeod Robert Warren Kate Whitehead Valley Alliance – Mark Eather
<b>LALC Representatives</b>	Nungaroo Local Aboriginal Land Council – Noel Downs Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council – De-Anne Douglas*
<b>LGA delegates</b>	
<b>EnergyCo Representatives</b>	Julian Watson, New England REZ Deputy Project Director Phil Jones, New England REZ Planning and Environment Lead Amanda Antcliff, Umwelt Senior Principal Environmental Planner Jess Anagnostaras, Umwelt Manager Social & Community Practice Melissa Maurer, New England REZ Community Engagement Manager Leanne Thompson, New England REZ Senior First Nations Advisor
<b>Note taker</b>	Kate McGrath
*Online attendance	

#### Apologies

Ninna Douglas

Upper Hunter Shire Council – Councillor Adam Williamson

Linda Taylor

#### Declarations of interest

Member	Details
Kate Whitehead	Pecuniary interest: Acting for Upper Hunter Shire Council in relation to the Maizewood Battery Energy Storage System Project at Aberdeen, NSW.

	Potentially acting for a landholder in negotiations with a Turnbull Renewables entity in relation to the proposed Scott Creek Windfarm located at Willow Tree, NSW.
Mark Eather	Pecuniary interest: Landholder within EnergyCo proposed transmission line corridor.
Brigitte Thomas	Pecuniary interest: Landholder within EnergyCo proposed transmission line corridor.
Robert Warren	Pecuniary interest: Landholder within EnergyCo proposed transmission line corridor.
Linda Taylor	Pecuniary interest: MBC Recruitments intend to tender for paid recruitment contracts.
Nungaroo Local Aboriginal Land Council – Noel Downs	Pecuniary interest: Nungaroo land may be included in the transmission line corridor
Kate McGrath	Non-pecuniary interest: Kate is the Employment Facilitator for the New England North West Local Jobs Program which provides funding and support for workforce development in the renewables sector.  Pecuniary interest: Investor in Sapphire Windfarm.
Margaret Harvie	Non-pecuniary interest: Margaret has advised generators on community engagement and delivers a community engagement training course which generators participate in.

## Agenda item discussion and actions

### 1. Acknowledgement of Country

- Meeting opened 5.09pm.
- The Chair acknowledged that we are meeting on Aboriginal land, paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Energy Corporation of NSW acknowledgement was on the PPT presentation.

### 2. Welcome and housekeeping

- Chair welcomed members and outlined structure of meeting.
- Members participated in group photograph outside the venue.

### 3. Notes of actions from last meeting

	Action	Responsible	Status
1.	EnergyCo to request DCCEEW brief CRG about New England REZ Conservation Investment Strategy	Darren Clarke	Currently liaising with DCCEEW to schedule a briefing.
2.	Share meeting invitation once online CRG sessions are confirmed	Chairperson	<b>Complete.</b> First online session completed on 21 August 2025.

	Action	Responsible	Status
3.	Send out information to CRG members about First Nations Guidelines when available.	Leanne Thompson via Chair	To be sent once available. Leanne Thompson to provide updates at CRG meetings.
4.	Creation of register of questions asked by members between meetings	Melissa Maurer	<p>Commenced. CRG members can continue to submit questions for the Questions Register via the CRG Chair. When submitting a question, please make it clear that it is intended for inclusion in the Questions Register.</p> <p><i>Please note that questions may be paraphrased or reworded to improve clarity, ensure they are easily understood, and avoid duplication. Some questions may be submitted by multiple members or include nuances that are grouped and rephrased to reflect common themes.</i></p>

#### 4. Meeting process

- Chair clarified the Actions Register is separate to Question Register and includes actions arising directly from the meeting.
- Question Register includes questions received between meetings or from online sessions.
- Items identified through the Actions Register or other means may also be discussed during meetings. The purpose of the Questions Register is to save valuable meeting time by capturing questions that only require a response from EnergyCo. These can then be addressed outside the meeting, allowing more time for discussion of broader matters.
- Comment from CRG members that this is not an appropriate process.
- CRG member suggested that there are additional questions in the register that were not asked in meetings, as well as others that have been asked but are not recorded.

**Response from Chair:** Questions are received from a range of sources — including between meetings, from both the North and South CRGs, and from online sessions — and are all added to the Questions Register. This means some questions may not be visible to all members at the time they are raised. If there are any questions that have been asked but are not yet included in the current register, they can be submitted at any time and will be added accordingly.

#### 5. Environmental impact statement overview

- Presented by Phil Jones, New England REZ Planning and Environment Lead and Amanda Antcliff, Umwelt Senior Principal Environmental Planner.
- Design updates for Glenbawn Dam and Chaffey Dam required, aiming for completion in October.

- Due to ongoing corridor refinements, the EIS timeframe is currently being reviewed and an update will be provided once confirmed.
- Comment from CRG member that Minister for Emergency Services should be contacted regarding Glenbawn Dam and Chaffey Dam and statute law to protect property and life.

**EnergyCo response:** There will be changes to ensure the corridor does not impact firefighting services.

- CRG member commented that studies have been underway in Duncans Creek for two years and expressed concern that there is only a small window to lodge complaints, noting that this could affect the EIS.

**EnergyCo response:** The corridor in this area requires changes, and significant work has been undertaken to address this. An update will be provided and communicated in October.

**Action: Provide information about changes to corridor when available.**

- EIS is a key part of the planning approval process.
- REZ was declared critical state significant infrastructure (CSSI) by the Minister as essential for economic and social reasons.
- Minister for Planning is determining authority for declaration.
- CSSI declaration covers stages 1, 2 and 3.
- EIS covers stages 1 & 2, which includes the energy hubs.
- EIS for the network infrastructure project covers core infrastructure and does not include connections from generator projects to energy hubs.
- The EIS will also seek approval for ancillary development, including upgrades to existing infrastructure, road upgrades, access tracks, and required temporary infrastructure. There may be other development which will be dealt with in separate approvals.
- CRG member asked whether workforce accommodation infrastructure and sites will be identified prior to the EIS or included within the EIS, and whether this also covers doctors and nurses.

**EnergyCo response:** Health services are considered separately; however, some temporary workforce accommodation facilities may be identified as part of the EIS. It will be a combination of approaches.

- CRG member expressed concern that EISs have a minimum 28-day exhibition period, expressing this does not allow enough time for review.
- NSW approval is from Minister for Planning under *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and Minister for Water under *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.
- Bilateral agreement between NSW State Government and Federal government, in which State determination is referred for separate Commonwealth determination.
- Key planning milestones:

- Study corridor lodged with Department of Planning, which provides Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) to guide the development of the EIS.
  - Longer lead time required for biodiversity, cultural heritage and visual studies.
  - Lodgement of EIS followed by 28-day public exhibition.
  - EnergyCo required to lodge a Submissions Report, providing a detailed response to each submission.
  - An amendment may need to be lodged if significant change is required.
- CRG member asked if the EIS includes offsets.  
**EnergyCo response:** Yes, it does provide a strategy for offsetting.
  - EIS includes detailed overview of project, technical assessments, and outlines impacts and how EnergyCo proposes to avoid, minimise, mitigate or offset identified impacts, as well as an overview of stakeholder consultation and engagement.
  - Key assessments identified in scoping report include biodiversity, heritage, social impacts, agricultural and land use, traffic and transport and visual amenity.
  - Whole range of other studies are also undertaken, including comprehensive assessments of other impacts like noise, vibration, water.
  - EIS studies are undertaken in accordance with the SEARs and relevant assessment guidelines. They typically involve a combination of desktop analysis, review of databases and registers, and consideration of previous studies.
  - Predictive modelling is undertaken using desktop analysis.
  - Engagement activities with landholders, agencies, communities and special interest groups.
  - Field studies undertaken when access is available.
  - EnergyCo's current field studies focus is on biodiversity, heritage and visual impacts.
  - CRG member asked how much of the line has been surveyed.  
**EnergyCo response:** A significant amount has been completed and further information will be provided by Amanda in her presentation.
  - Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) undertaken by Umwelt in accordance with *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* began with a desktop analysis. Detailed flora and fauna surveys commenced in October 2023.
  - 83 weeks of field survey has now been completed.
  - 7000 hectares have been surveyed, and the team have walked more than 4000km for the flora surveys alone.
  - Biodiversity flora survey uses various methods. Vegetation mapping is defined in the BAM as a process which identifies what is expected, to then undertake more detailed investigation within a community.

- Plots are targeted areas to inform the detailed survey to confirm the vegetation community. 400 detailed plots completed.
- Plant community types identified in the BAM, 6 aligned with threatened ecological communities, the box gum being a key one.
- Fauna survey methods include spotlighting, call playbacks, remote detection surveys, motion triggered cameras, acoustic recording.
- CRG member asked how seasonal aspects are managed.

**EnergyCo response:** The BAM calculator provides guidance on which species are expected in an area and outlines seasonal survey requirements. Spring is targeted for certain species, such as orchids. Seasonality is planned well in advance, with survey windows identified in the report. The regulator ensures surveys are conducted at the appropriate time for each species. The Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR), included in the EIS, contains detailed tables and information and must follow the approved template.

- Comment from CRG member about presence of diamond sparrow and asked if local bird watchers have been used to support data - suggesting that engaging these groups will help.

**EnergyCo response:** The team utilise all existing knowledge they can publicly access and liaises with a local biodiversity reference group, which includes local ecologists and also includes at least one CRG member.

- Surveys of threatened species are included in a government database.
- CRG member expressed surprise that there were only 135 different species identified in the fauna surveys to date, own surveys have included 115 on a single property.
- Thermal detection drones have been used.
- Of the 135 species observed, 21 have been identified as threatened.
- Spectrogram of Powerful Owl call captured, thermal drone survey then used, drone operator stands at a point with drone going no more than 500m within line of site and takes images.
- Videos (not able to be shown at this meeting due to technology) show how the drone operates and how thermal fingerprint in tree canopy is used to identify koalas.
- Spotted tail quoll was surveyed, it is a cryptic animal difficult to find. Feral animals and other fauna also identified in surveys.
- Aboriginal Heritage Survey (AHS) has commenced and contributions of Aboriginal people in survey, excavation and cultural value interviews is recognised.
- Study corridor intersects with five LALCs and several first nations groups.
- Guidelines determine how AHSs are to be undertaken. Assessment includes desktop analysis of Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) database, and consultation process starts very early in assessment.

- Consultation started in 2023 to seek Registered Aboriginal Parties for the project. 80 RAPS are registered for this project.
- RAPs are provided the methodology for comment before field work starts.
- CRG member question about the difference between LALCs and RAPs, and how RAPs are identified.

**Response:** Any Aboriginal person with an interest in the area can register as a RAP, whereas LALCs are automatically registered and are representative bodies.

- Comment from CRG member that the 80 RAPs are not necessarily from the project area; however, they are permitted to register under the current government process. EnergyCo confirmed this was the case and clarified it does not have direct control of this process.
- CRG member clarified that Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) do not determine who holds cultural knowledge. The concern raised was that some individuals may seek involvement for payment, potentially taking the place of recognised knowledge holders within the community.
- Methodology for the cultural heritage study is sent to regulator and a predictive model is built based on data and consultation.
- Spatial dataset that is based on established known occupation and context of Aboriginal use of the land - red indicates high potential landforms and circles are the known sites registered in AHIMS with 200m buffer. Perennial waterways, landforms, will indicate high probability of occupation.
- High, moderate and low are surveyed to inform accuracy of the model, and more thorough surveying in high potential areas.
- 7000 hectares in three stages of fieldwork has been surveyed, with 1200km walked to date.
- 220 Aboriginal heritage sites identified including artefacts, modified trees (scar trees), and areas of Potential Archaeological Deposits (PADS) where subsurface artefacts are suspected.
- Implementation of 5 weeks of test excavation program in field with RAPs to dig test pits in PAD to find artefacts, with 215 test pits undertaken and RAP involved in all of this work.
- Cultural values assessment also undertaken to establish intangible value of the project area.
- Non-Aboriginal heritage assessment conducted concurrently.
- Desktop assessment considers heritage registers. Alignment intersects one item, a homestead near Armidale, but no other listed heritage items.
- Non-Aboriginal heritage assessment includes areas of interest.
- Landscape and Visual Impact assessment is guided by new guidelines.
- Transmission guidelines were released last year and includes a technical supplement which defines the methodology for landscape and visual impact assessment.
- The Landscape Character Assessment and Visual Impact Assessment is being undertaken by Moir and assesses the potential impact on views from primary viewpoints.

- Understanding the sensitivity of a view and the magnitude of change are the key elements assessed.
- Visual assessment is based on tower height of 80 metres to provide a conservative assessment, though project maximum is approximately 74m.
- Graph in guidelines state study area based on height - 80m requires 1.5km from the transmission line.
- First step is desktop analysis based on topography and situation of alignment, tower and dwelling.
- For purpose of assessment, a tower is assumed every 100m (conservative assessment), project will be every 400-600m.
- Comment from CRG member that wires are visible for 100 percent of alignment and that impact should be assessed.

**EnergyCo response:** Guidelines require assessment based on towers. There is analysis of visibility, sensitivity and magnitude.

- Wireframe model has been built assuming no vegetation or screening. For detailed assessment landscape architects will take photos and build a photo montage.
- CRG member indicated that as an impacted landholder working a farm the dwelling view is less important than visibility in paddocks.

**EnergyCo response:** The assessment process has been set up to focus on dwellings.

- CRG member indicated that creeks and riparian areas are habitat for platypus and native water rats, and they need to be included in field survey, and impact of water management and use needs to be considered in relation to impacts. EnergyCo confirmed this would be considered in the EIS.
- EnergyCo advised the visual assessments would be supplemented with a fully interactive model of the route, where you can navigate along the alignment and gauge impact on property, dwelling, farm and elsewhere with ground level modelling.
- Comment from CRG member that the interactive map is a significant improvement on previous models.
- Learnings from CWO REZ include doing REZ wide studies early in the process, which have been commissioned and will then feed into the EIS and allow for better coordination to manage cumulative impacts.
- Strategic Offset Delivery Agreements (SODA) are managed by Department of Climate Change Energy Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and funded by EnergyCo.
- CRG member asked if SODA was a lesson learned from CWO.

**EnergyCo response:** SODA wasn't available at the time for CWO, however it is now for the New England REZ.

- CRG member asked if the SODA is well funded.

**EnergyCo response:** Yes.

- Developing SODA and conservation investment strategy to highlight key areas to focus offsets and conservation offsets.
- CRG member commented that the presentation at last meeting and size of offsets is concerning. There is no way to monitor the offset versus the loss of biodiversity and there isn't confidence in ability to make sure it is like for like.

**EnergyCo response:** The credit requirements will be the same under SODA.

- Comment from CRG member that due to wildlife migration, offsets must be in the immediate vicinity.  
**EnergyCo response:** Assessment and approval will give conditions and strategies to manage this. Example given that clearing will happen in accordance with vegetation clearing management plan and is reported.

- CRG member indicated they believe that unless there is a nearby protected area there will be loss of animal life, example given of a dam drained for mines and 300 turtles died in the process. Chair noted there will be a future biodiversity online session with DCCEEW to discuss offsets.
- Comment from CRG member that they believed EnergyCo have given money to DCCEEW to enable EnergyCo to destroy the land.
- EIS is required to consider incremental and cumulative impacts. REZ wide studies will impact cumulative impacts assessment.
- When EIS and SIA are completed, they will be lodged with Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) who will assess it and place it on exhibition for a minimum of 28 days. Documentation will be available on the major projects site and submissions can be made by community members at that time.
- EnergyCo engagement is ongoing and there is no need to wait for the formal submission period to have input.
- CRG member asked with the two stages for the EIS, where does Stage 3 fit into timeline.

**EnergyCo response:** It has been deferred indefinitely.

- Comment from CRG member asking if the mitigation measures have been identified for biodiversity impacts.  
**EnergyCo response:** Survey is still going and mitigation measures won't be developed until final impact is known. EIS report will have an appendix which will consolidate all impacts and mitigation measures.
- CRG member asked how 1.5km from tower was determined for the visual assessments.  
**EnergyCo response:** It is in accordance with the guideline and is based on tower height.
- CRG member indicated that under the sales and goods act and consumer rights, the cement pads need to be removed from the land if the line is ever removed.  
**EnergyCo response:** EIS will include decommissioning details.
- CRG member asked if Stage 3 included the generator connections to the energy hubs.

**EnergyCo response:** 2 stages are to get 6 GW and the third is the legislated maximum and has been deferred.

- CRG member indicated they felt the EIS is to the hub seems silly - to spend money doing all this not knowing if projects will be approved.

**EnergyCo response:** The consultation paper for the Generator Access Scheme has been published. It focuses on the technical aspects of how generators may connect to the network within the New England REZ. The paper outlines three potential models - a generator-led approach, a farm gate model for generators, and EnergyCo's preferred option, in which EnergyCo undertakes part of the planning and acquisition and recoups costs from generators, who then manage the connection from the farm gate. No decisions have been made at this stage, but the document is intended to inform generators about the proposed access scheme.

- CRG member indicated they believed the NEREZ infrastructure would be a road to nowhere if generators are unable to get approval for their connections.
- CRG member indicated the worker accommodation sites won't be needed if locals are employed.

**EnergyCo response:** There may not be enough available workforce within the New England and Hunter to provide the 4000 people that might be required.

- CRG member believed that operators would like a team of people to start at Walcha and finish in the Hunter, and that local employment isn't a priority for these operators.

**EnergyCo response:** Some specialised roles will require a specialised team, however earthworks, roadworks, and other subcontractor roles will probably be sourced locally. The skills challenge is in erecting towers and stringing. Hubs are largely civil works and there is strong local business opportunity in this.

CRG member raised a concern that the government may contract out services such as biodiversity offsets, and questioned who is accountable if those third parties fail to deliver.

**EnergyCo response:** Explained that the priority is always to avoid impacts wherever possible - both at a macro and micro scale. Where impacts cannot be avoided, minimisation and mitigation strategies are developed, with offsetting considered only as a last resort.

- CRG member indicated road upgrades are required and Thunderbolts Way needs to be transferred from the local council to the state.
- CRG member feels health and doctors should be included in the social impact assessment. EnergyCo confirmed the social infrastructure study in the REZ wide studies considers health access and wellbeing.
- CRG member noted that creek lines in the area have changed over time - creeks that were once permanent are now considered run-off gullies - and commented that prior to colonisation, these were perennial waterways. The member asked whether this change is considered in the predictive models.

**EnergyCo response:** EnergyCo advised that surveys are conducted across the landscape, including waterways, and these factors are considered in the modelling. Specific details regarding this matter were taken on notice for further clarification.

**Action: Provide information regarding changing of waterways since colonisation being assessed in Aboriginal Heritage Survey.**

- CRG member asked if a copy of CWO community benefit agreement can be provided.

**EnergyCo response:** A breakdown is available on the CWO website and summaries will be shared with CRG members along with the ministerial announcement.

**Action: Share Central West Orana Community and Employment Benefit Program information and associated ministerial announcement with CRG.**

- Request by CRG member that note taker take precise notes for question: “How EnergyCo will monitor the loss of biodiversity offsets and ensure the like for like and near locations and ensure native life loss is minimised through displacement as much as possible and enable migration?”.

6. Break - 6.53pm to 7.04pm

7. Social Impact Assessment overview

- Presented by Jess Anagnostaras, Umwelt Manager Social & Community Practice.
- Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is part of the EIS.
- Scope includes any impact that is identified in relation to the project that may affect people. People is defined to includes individuals, families, communities, regions.
- Impacts include many categories, including way of life, communities, access to infrastructure and services, health and wellbeing, culture, decision making systems, livelihoods, and surroundings.
- Based on NSW Government guidelines for SIA development, updated in recent months, all state significant infrastructure must do a SIA in line with guidelines.
- The scope of the SIA includes the network infrastructure project.
- The process began with the scoping phase, which was completed last year. The second phase involves developing the assessment and preparing a report to be submitted to the State Government as part of the EIS. The third phase will occur following project approval and is likely to include a condition of consent requiring the development of a Social Impact Management Plan.
- The study area of project is complicated due to its size - summary of localities and considerations is outlined in the presentation, including population centres, communities.
- The approach and methodology for the Social Impact Assessment include establishing a social baseline using primary data, followed by impact prediction and assessment, and the development of impact management measures.

- Consultation for the Social Impact Assessment (SIA) has been ongoing since the project was announced in 2023 and includes feedback from the CRG, community members, and various groups and organisations. Engagement activities have included workshops, interviews, meetings, briefings, and surveys.
- Umwelt is working closely with EnergyCo teams to review other engagement.
- Consultation is ongoing and has not yet been finalised.
- CRG member indicated that Rural Fire Service (RFS) local branches need to be consulted with as specialised interest volunteers.

**EnergyCo response:** RFS branches have been engaged with as part of broader engagement.

- CRG member indicated that asset protection is important and RFS may not have the equipment for safely managing fires around transmission lines.
- CRG noted Aboriginal people often do not participate in surveys and direct contact is needed.

**EnergyCo response:** The information presented reflects consultation completed to date, which will continue. A broader program of Aboriginal consultation has also been developed to support ongoing engagement.

- The technical process for assessing social impacts involves validating impacts through community consultation, analysing the findings, and then evaluating each impact using a significance ranking.
- The SIA Guideline provides a tool to determine impact, which considers likelihood and magnitude.
- CRG member indicated they felt it doesn't matter if Transgrid or someone else owns something, there needs to be a cost impact.
- CRG member indicated they felt there is only one go at social impact and Broken Hill isn't happy, we need the tacticians to provide intelligence, and police have charged people in Victoria.
- Stakeholder significance is assessed by considering the level of impact and importance from the perspective of affected people and communities, which is evaluated separately from the technical significance.
- The scoping report engagement summary indicates top ten issues raised at that time and this dataset will be cross referenced in developing the SIA report. The summary does not breakdown into specific locales or interest groups, it provides a broad overview.
- The SIA community survey went live in April. Over 500 responses were received and are still being assessed.
- First Nations consultation is a key next step including a number of meetings and interviews planned over the next few months.
- People who have not yet participated in the SIA will have the opportunity for additional interviews and meetings.
- Input will be sought into mitigation and management measures for impacts.

- REZ wide studies will help inform the SIA through findings and feedback.
- A Social Impact Management Plan may be required.
- CRG member indicated their eyes are drawn to the powerlines on the landscape, and the visual amenity and landscape impact is a social impact.

**EnergyCo response:** Powerline appearance is considered in the visual and landscape assessment.

- CRG member commented that social impacts affect different groups in different ways, noting that while some people may benefit financially, others may experience negative impacts. The member asked how these varying impacts are differentiated in the report.

**EnergyCo response:** The aim of the assessment is to understand the unique impacts on each locality and stakeholder group, recognising that some landowners are comfortable with hosting infrastructure while others may not be.

- CRG member indicated that hosting benefit varies between sizes of lots.
- CRG member indicated that scoping reports look good. Mitigation assessments are needed from fire services, under the magna carta an officer needed a warrant to enter property and landowners have been made criminals by legislation that says we can bulldoze your property and your rights, freehold should mean freehold and the king should need a warrant to come onto my . It's the principle of the thing.
- CRG member made comment that communities in the southern part of the REZ and downward between Hunter Central Coast REZ and NEREZ will be heavily impacted by infrastructure although they are outside the REZ, and there is no proposal for community benefits to flow to these communities.

**EnergyCo response:** EnergyCo recognises this and it is currently being considered.

- CRG member raised concerns that some communities may be heavily impacted by job losses and asked whether EnergyCo is involved in any related studies or initiatives.

**EnergyCo clarification:** Asked if this was in reference to the mining industry.

**CRG member response:** Confirmed yes — referring to both the mining and agriculture industries.

**EnergyCo response:** The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and EnergyCo have been working to connect local people with upcoming opportunities, including civil works, and to support businesses in preparing for contracts. Employment readiness and management form part of the work led by EnergyCo's Regional Coordination team. EnergyCo acknowledged that this is an important period of transition and confirmed that both EnergyCo and other government departments are aware of their roles in supporting this process. EnergyCo will keep the CRG informed as further initiatives progress.

An information session is planned for Muswellbrook in November, with details to be shared once confirmed.

- An Agricultural Impact Assessment is also planned and will consider all aspects of the agriculture industry.

8. First Nations Engagement

- Presented by Leanne Thompson, New England REZ Senior First Nations Advisor.
- Update about NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) forum briefing held recently in Tamworth.
- Tamworth face-to-face briefing to be scheduled for mid-October.
- DCCEEW guidelines meeting is scheduled for October.
- SIA interviews for mid-November in Tamworth, Walcha, Uralla, Tamworth, Muswellbrook and Singleton.
- Cumulative impact studies had underrepresentation from Muswellbrook to inform SIA interviews and connections with local groups would be appreciated.

**Action: Nungaroo Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO Noel Downs will connect Leanne with local organisations and people.**

- CRG member indicated that lots of consultation is happening around the same time.

**EnergyCo response:** EnergyCo will work with available dates for the community.

**Action: Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO De-Anne Douglas and Leanne Thompson to liaise regarding suitable dates.**

9. General Business and questions

- EnergyCo is calling for nominations for the Social Risk and Opportunity Analysis reference groups and calling for CRG members to participate in co-design of analysis during 2 online sessions over 4 hours.
- Outcomes will be communicated through existing CRG groups.
- Nominations close 25 September for sessions to be held in October.
- Question from CRG member about Aboriginal people nominating. Nungaroo Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO Noel Downs will participate if no other representatives have nominated.

**Action: EnergyCo to advise Nungaroo LALC if no nominations are received from Aboriginal representatives.**

- Chair led discussion about next meeting dates for last week of November or first week of December, agreement for first week of December - possibly Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Round the room with last comments/ questions from members.**

- CRG member asked if EIS will be lodged by next meeting?
- CRG member indicated that public benefit should be on public land and best practice leads to best outcomes, the rest of the modern world are going underground and that's what I want, otherwise under the sales and goods act I don't have to buy your goods.
- CRG member indicated they are looking forward to EIS and updates on 2 dams.
- CRG member indicated they felt this meeting has been much more productive than previous meetings.

- CRG member asked how many land claims the project intersects with within the Nungaroo LALC boundary. Question taken on notice.

**Action: Provide information regarding project intersection on land claims within Nungaroo LALC boundary.**

- CRG member asked how many transmission towers per thousand collapse over a ten-year period and how many is acceptable under best practice. Question taken on notice.

**Action: Provide information regarding average rate of tower collapse per ten-year period if available and advise if there is an acceptable rate per thousand.**

- CRG member suggested the need for independent legal advice from Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) for redress options.
- Meeting closed 7.55pm

	Action	Responsible	Status
1.	Provide information about changes to corridor when available.	Melissa Maurer	<b>Completed.</b> Project update provided on 2 October 2025, with online CRG briefing held at 5pm.
2.	Provide information regarding changing of waterways since colonisation being assessed in Aboriginal Heritage Survey.	Phil Jones	
3.	Share Central West Orana Community and Employment Benefit Program information and associated ministerial announcement with CRG.	Melissa Maurer	
4.	Nungaroo Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO Noel Downs will connect Leanne Thompson with local organisations and people	Noel Downs	
5.	Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO De-Anne Douglas and Leanne Thompson to liaise regarding suitable dates	De-Anne Douglas/ Leanne Thompson	
6.	EnergyCo to advise Nungaroo LALC if no nominations are received from Aboriginal representatives	Melissa Maurer	
7.	Provide information regarding project intersection on land claims within Nungaroo LALC boundary	Leanne Thompson	
8.	Information regarding average rate of tower collapse per ten-year period and if there is an acceptable rate per thousand	Melissa Maurer	

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## Upcoming meeting

- Next meeting - November/December – **Proposed for Wednesday 3 December - evening.**