



Hunter Central Coast Regional Reference Group

Acknowledgement of Country



Energy Corporation of New South Wales acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and 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



ltem	Lead	Time
Welcome	Chair	1 minute
Acknowledgment of Country	Rodney Groves HTP First Nations Lead	2 minutes
Hunter Transmission Project EIS • Summary of EIS feedback themes	Carolyn McCallig Stephanie Lewis	30 minutes
 Community and Employment Benefit Program (CEBP) What is the CEPB Insights and what has been delivered in Central-West Orana Program of engagement in the Hunter 	Ryan Skinner	20 minutes
HCC REZ Network Upgrades update (Ausgrid)	Amanda Stephinson Jason Wall	10 minutes
Port to REZ and Newcastle Logistics Precinct updates	Liz Sacco Lemuel Yeung	15 minutes

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Agenda



Item	Lead	Time
Hunter Cumulative Impacts update	Emily Davies O'Sullivan	15 minutes
General Business		
2026 schedule of meetings to be discussed and confirmed	Chair	10 minutes

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Hunter Transmission Project EIS

Carolyn McCallig – HTP Planning and Environment Lead Stephanie Lewis – HTP Communications and Engagement Manager

Exhibition period: 27 Aug – 24 Sept 2025 (28 days)



EIS Exhibition 2025



Project eDMs & letters

- 2 eDMs to 1,017 recipients (announcement + closing reminder)
- ~1,000 near neighbours adjacent to alignment received letters and project updates

Direct stakeholder contact

- 300+ stakeholders received tailored emails
- 42 stakeholders contacted by phone

Awareness channels

Media, social media, newsletters, posters, community collateral

Digital engagement

- 750 unique users accessed digital EIS
- Avg. 6 mins; most revisited
- 8 fact sheets + interactive digital map published

Face-to-face/online engagement

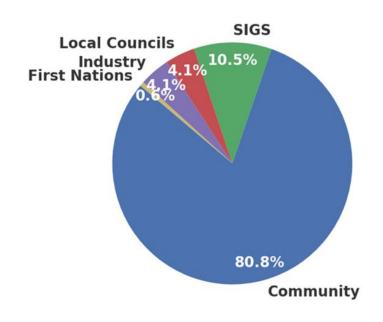
- 14 engagement sessions
- 210+ attendees (info sessions, pop-ups, webinars)

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Overview of EIS community submissions



HTP EIS Submissions Breakdown



To analyse the **173 submissions received**, we grouped them into categories and aligned them to relevant EIS chapters and key themes.

- 1. Community Submissions (140): Individual landowners, residents, and farmers (80 named, 60 withheld).
- 2. Special Interest Groups SIGS (18): Advocacy groups, NGOs, campaign networks, associations.
- 3. Local Councils (7): Formal submissions from affected councils.
- **4. Industry (7):** Mining, energy, and business organisations.
- **5.** First Nations (1): Submission from Traditional Owners.

Key themes, issues & stakeholders



Top 5 Themes (aligned to EIS chapters):

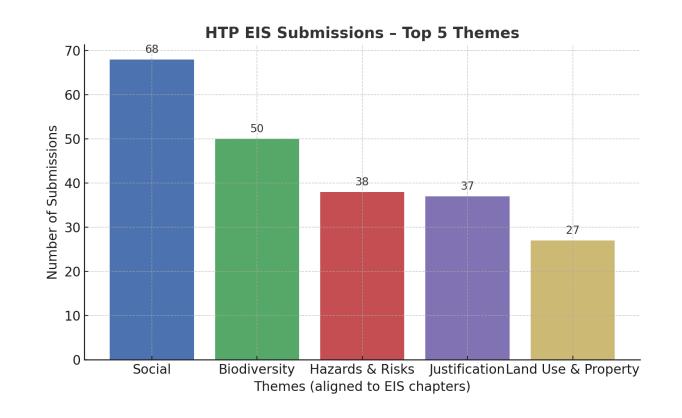
- Social (68): Wellbeing, amenity, equity, trust.
- Biodiversity (50): Flora/fauna, offsets, biosecurity.
- Hazards & Risks (38): Bushfire, aviation safety, emergencies.
- Justification (37): Need, economics, governance.
- Land Use & Property (27): Farming, property values, acquisition.

Top 5 Issues:

- Noise (construction/operations)
- Biodiversity loss
- Bushfire risk
- Aerial firefighting limits
- Property value loss

Most Referenced Stakeholders:

- Local residents
- Cessnock City Council
- NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)
- Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
- Hunter Valley Gliding Club



Project timeline and milestones





July 2022 to October 2023

Investigations to identify where the HTP should be located including consultation with local councils. members of parliament and government agencies

Late 2023

Seek community feedback on the HTP preliminary corridor

May 2024

Scoping report -Present revised corridor to the community and start environmental assessment process

During 2024

Develop detailed HTP design, assess impacts and prepare EIS

Mid 2024

Report back to the community for midyear project update

Late 2024

Report back to the community for midyear project update

Early 2025

Share early findings from EIS investigations and studies, and gather feedback on mitigations

Mid 2025

Submit the EIS Public exhibition of the EIS

Late 2025

Publish submissions report on community feedback received on the FIS

Early 2026

Ministers make final decisions

2027

Start detailed design and construction

2029

Start operation



Community and Employment Benefit Program

Ryan Skinner – Manager Program Delivery

Community and Employment Benefit Program



Overview:

The *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (the EII Act) requires components of REZ access fees to be used for a "community purpose" and an "employment purpose" (ss 26[2] and [4]) and gives EnergyCo, as the infrastructure planner in a REZ with a declared access scheme, a function to administer, manage and make payments of money held for these purposes (cl 42D of the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Regulation 2021*).

The **Community and Employment Benefit Program** (the Program) provides the framework for how EnergyCo administers access fees for community and employment purposes across REZs within a declared Access Scheme (noting that NSW Government is considering reforms to deliver community and employment benefits outside declared Access Schemes).

The Program will:



Invest millions into regional communities



Share the benefits of the REZ with impacted communities



Be informed by local community priorities



Leave communities better off than they were before

Ell Act: Community and Employment Purposes



Community purposes and employment purposes are defined in the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Regulation 2021*-see Sections 56 and 57, respectively.

Purpose	Examples
Community purposes	Public or community services or infrastructure, health services or infrastructure
	Services, programs or infrastructure for First Nations people
	Accommodation or housing
	Local or regional energy programs or infrastructure, environmental programs or infrastructure
	Parks and recreation infrastructure, education programs or research, arts or cultural programs, tourism programs or infrastructure
	Any other service, program or infrastructure which benefits the relevant local community
Employment purposes	Employment programs and associated services and facilities
	Skills and training programs and associated services and facilities
	A program, service or facility that supports the relevant employees to gain employment skills or experience

Community and Employment Benefit Program

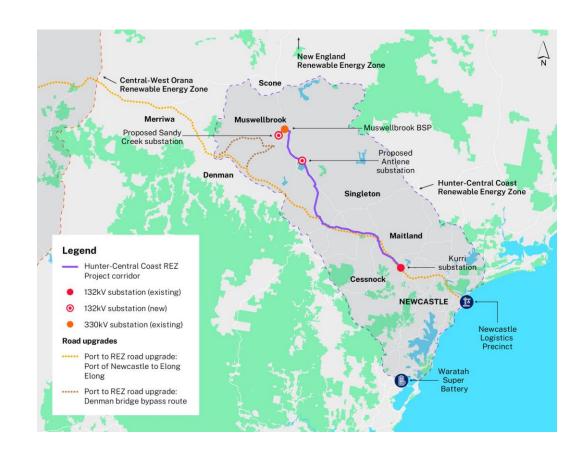


Challenges in the Hunter and Central Coast regions:

- No declared access scheme for the Hunter-Central Coast REZ and no new generation linked to the Hunter Transmission Project;
- Smaller Program funding envelope compared to Central-West Orana due to absence of ongoing access scheme contributions;

EnergyCo is actively investigating solutions to these challenges in partnership with DCCEEW:

 Regulatory amendment proposed (not yet approved) to establish a general benefit-sharing function, enabling EnergyCo to coordinate infrastructure planner fee funding outside of a declared access scheme



Community and Employment Benefit Program



Program objectives:



1. Improve liveability in regional communities impacted by new energy infrastructure by supporting better public services and infrastructure such as roads, housing and accommodation and access to health services



4. Support regional economic development through tourism programs, infrastructure and legacy projects that provide enduring benefits for host communities



2. Improve and create local employment opportunities through training and skills programs or infrastructure that increases the capacity of the local community to benefit from local employment and income generating opportunities



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



3. Improve outcomes for First Nations people by increasing capacity of First Nations organisations and providing additional services and infrastructure to support First Nations people to maximise the economic opportunities from the energy transition



6. Boost resilience and innovation through community energy programs and environmental improvement programs.



Funding delivery streams



To maximise Program outcomes and ensure funding can be provided to a diverse range of stakeholders, funding may be allocated through three delivery streams:



1. Grants to non-profit community organisations, councils, incorporated First Nations organisations, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and other stakeholders;



2. Partnerships with other NSW
Government agencies, statutory bodies
or the renewable energy industry to
deliver strategic projects that align with
the Program objectives and community
priorities; and



3. EnergyCo procuring or commissioning programs, services and/or infrastructure on behalf of the community

These delivery streams are aligned with EnergyCo's functions established under the EII Act and funding administered via grants is subject to the **NSW Government's Grant Administration Guide**.

Priorities from Community Engagement Central-West Orana REZ



Community consultation

EnergyCo hosted an <u>online webinar and Q&A session</u> on 5 February 2024 to provide an update on the Program, outline priority initiatives and to answer questions from community members. EnergyCo also held six facilitated stakeholder workshops from 6-9 February 2024 and eight community drop-in sessions 26 February to 1 March 2024, with an online survey also available from 5 February to 10 March 2024.

Consultation findings

The consultation confirmed the key priorities for the CWO REZ community (as below). Community members preferred **application** writing support over co-design and that funding should be made available and prioritised for communities most impacted by the REZ.



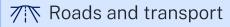
Housing and accommodation

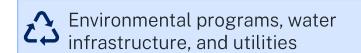


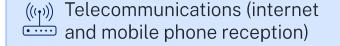
Training, employment and business opportunities



Social infrastructure and services







Community and Employment Benefit Program Central West Orana REZ



The Program was strongly-received by the CWO REZ Community

All public funding streams were over subscribed, with the FNF paused in September and the LCSG paused in December 2024 due to the exhaustion of funding.

Grant stream	Eligible applicants	Eligible projects
Local Community Fund	 Not-for-profit community organisations Local Aboriginal Land Councils Aboriginal community organisations Local councils (where they are in partnership with or in support of a community project. 	Projects that improve community amenity, increase community connection and boost resilience and innovation.
Local Community Small Grants	 Not-for-profit community organisations Local Aboriginal Land Councils Aboriginal community organisations Local councils (where they are in partnership with or in support of a community project). 	Small-scale activities, events, initiatives or projects that deliver benefits to the local community.
First Nations Fund	 Local Aboriginal Land Councils Aboriginal community organisations 	Projects that increase capacity of local Aboriginal organisations, improve Aboriginal employment opportunities and improve outcomes for Aboriginal people by supporting better access to health services, housing and accommodation and other cultural programs or services.
Legacy Infrastructure Fund	Impacted councils	Infrastructure projects that support regional economic development, improve liveability and community amenity

Case study 1: Local Community Fund (CWO)



Putta Bucca Wetlands Redevelopment Project:

A Rewilding Initiative

Grantee: Mid-Western Regional Council

Grant amount: \$500,000.00

Location: Putta Bucca Wetlands

This project will revitalise a decommissioned landfill at Putta Bucca Wetlands, transforming it into an interactive and inclusive space for environmental education and outdoor recreation.

Led by Mid-Western Regional Council, the initiative includes revegetation with endangered native species as well as the construction of accessible parking, walking trails and a scenic viewing platform.

Community involvement will be central to restoring the site's ecological heritage, fostering environmental stewardship, enhancing biodiversity and reconnecting people with nature.



Case study 2: Gilgandra Local Social Housing Roof Restorations (CWO)



Gilgandra Local Social Housing Roof Restorations

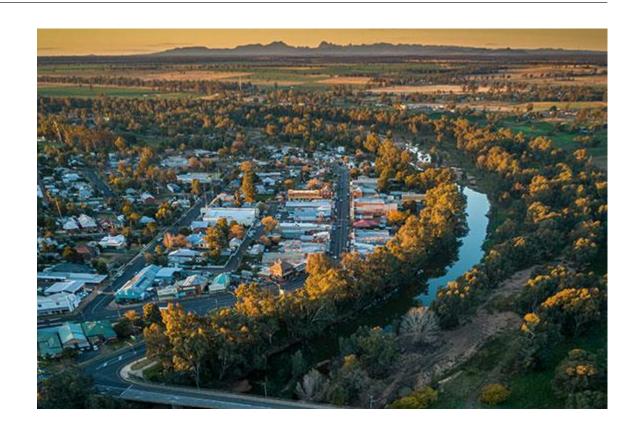
Grantee: Gilgandra Local Aboriginal Land Council

• **Grant amount:** \$612,018.00

Location: Gilgandra

The project will support critical upgrades across 11 properties owned by the Gilgandra LALC, focusing on roof repairs and solar system installations. The project aims to improve the liveability and safety of social housing while addressing the community's need for better housing conditions.

An Aboriginal-owned business will be engaged to employ and train two local First Nations community workers to assist with these infrastructure upgrades. The project will deliver lasting housing and employment benefits to First Nations community members in the Gilgandra region.



Case study 3: Local Community Small Grants



Creating Resilience through Recreation: strengthening women and communities around the Wambuul Macquarie River

Grantee: Green Canoe

• **Grant amount:** \$16,559.66

Location: Macquarie River, Dubbo

This project will deliver a multi-stage kayak initiative designed to strengthen community, empower women and improve health and wellbeing. Through hands-on kayak safety courses, women will gain practical skills and confidence on the river.

A dedicated community network will foster connection, resilience, and peer support, while an informative brochure will promote environmental awareness and stewardship.



Hunter-Central Coast



Next steps:

- Community consultation to commence in Q1 2026;
- Insights gathered will directly inform Program structure and delivery
- Regional Reference Group-specific consultation to shape early Program design
- Ongoing updates to the Reference Group throughout the consultation process



Hunter-Central Coast - Preparing for CEBP



Topics for discussion

EnergyCo is seeking your advice on effective engagement to shape CEBP in the Hunter and Central Coast...

- What are the best methods of community consultation?
- Key stakeholder groups to include
- Addressing barriers to community engagement/consultation fatigue
- Preparing community organisations for CEBP opportunities
- Grant writing support





HCC REZ Network Upgrades update

Amanda Stephinson, Jason Wall-Ausgrid

HCC REZ Network Infrastructure



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Key dates:

- AER determination due 12 November
- EnergyCo and Ausgrid Deed signing (mid-late Dec)
- Construction scheduled for February 2026

Recent and upcoming engagement activities in Hunter Region:

- Procurement workshops (4, 5, 6 November)
- Connecting with Community BBQ (11 November)

Current activities:

- Individual landowner negotiations continue commencement of letters of offer.
- Undertaking early distribution works to ready the network for the REZ works. This has included relocation of some poles, some communications network and some vegetation management.



Port to REZ and Newcastle Logistics Precinct updates

Liz Sacco – Stakeholder Engagement Manager (P2R) Lemuel Yeung - Design Project Manager (NLP)

Newcastle Logistics Precinct project



A critical new hub that will expand portside storage for OSOM equipment and strengthen the supply chain between the Port of Newcastle and renewable energy projects.



General update:

- EIS exhibition scheduled for Q2 2026
- Construction scheduled for 2027

Recent and upcoming engagement activities in Hunter Region:

- Newcastle Rotary Group 14 October
- Mayfield Day 18 October
- Cessnock Postie Bike Grand Prix 26 October
- Newcastle Farmers Markets 30 November

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Port to REZ stage 1a



Construction update:

- Some locations to be completed by December.
- More locations are scheduled for completion in early 2026, leaving the balance until mid-2026.

Recent and upcoming engagement activities in Hunter Region:

- Mayfield Day 18 October
- Cessnock Postie Bike Grand Prix 26 October
- Newcastle Farmers Markets 30 November



Jerrys Plains – retaining wall under construction



Hunter Regional Major Infrastructure Studies

Cumulative Impacts Update

Emily Davies O'Sullivan Manager Regional Coordination



EnergyCo

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Hunter Regional Major Infrastructure Studies

Cumulative Impacts

Presented by Emily Davies O'Sullivan

What are we trying to achieve?

Purpose:

Aims to identify cumulative impacts, constraints, and opportunities within the HCC REZ and the network infrastructure project footprint, guiding a coordinated Whole-of-Government (WoG) response.

Outputs:

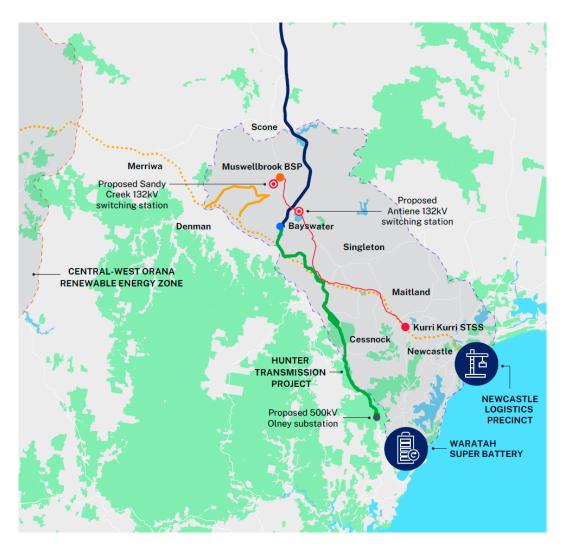
- To mitigate risk of stakeholder disruption and impacting out ability to deliver critical projects.
- To foster community support.
- Proactively respond to emerging issues.
- Better equip EnergyCo to influence Whole of Government.
- Ensure EnergyCo has the data and evidence to validate or dispel ambit claims of cumulative impacts.



EnergyCo in Hunter and Central Coast Region



HCC REZ	1 GW upgraded network capacity (Once this option is built, the REZ is expected to host approximately 2,800 MW of generation)	Completed by 2028
НТР	New overhead 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission line of around 100 kilometres between Bayswater in the Upper Hunter and Olney	Completed by 2029
WSB	The battery's capacity expected to be 850 megawatts (MW) / 1,680 megawatt-hours (MWh).	Completed by 2025
Port to REZ	There will be 19 road upgrades along the 320-kilometre route from the Port of Newcastle to the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone.	Completed by June 2026
NE REZ	Transmission line will come from the north through the Upper Hunter and connect into the network at Bayswater.	Completed by 2036



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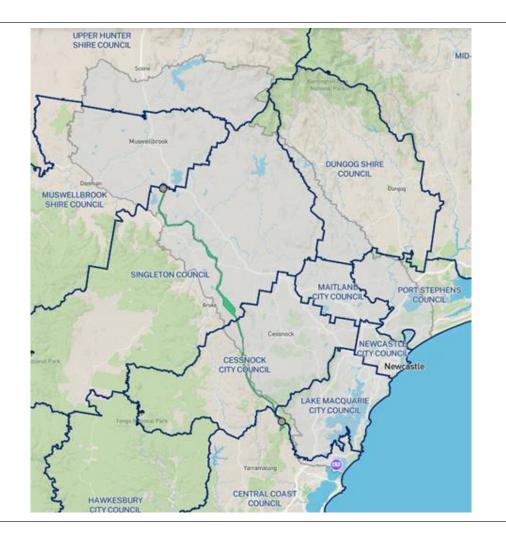
Geographic Area



The studies will be defined by the Local Government Areas located within, either whole or in-part within the declared boundary of the HCC REZ

- Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Singleton Council
- Dungog Shire Council
- Maitland City Council

- Port Stephens Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Lake Macquarie City
 Council
- Cessnock City Council
- Central Coast Council



Work Packages















NSW Water is

undertaking







this study in consultation with EnergyCo

Scoped for dedicated focus area

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Study approach









Baseline assessment

What is the current capacity?

Establish the current capacity of the local supply chain within the REZ Study Area.

Scenario assessment

What is the demand under a likely development scenario?

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

Opportunities

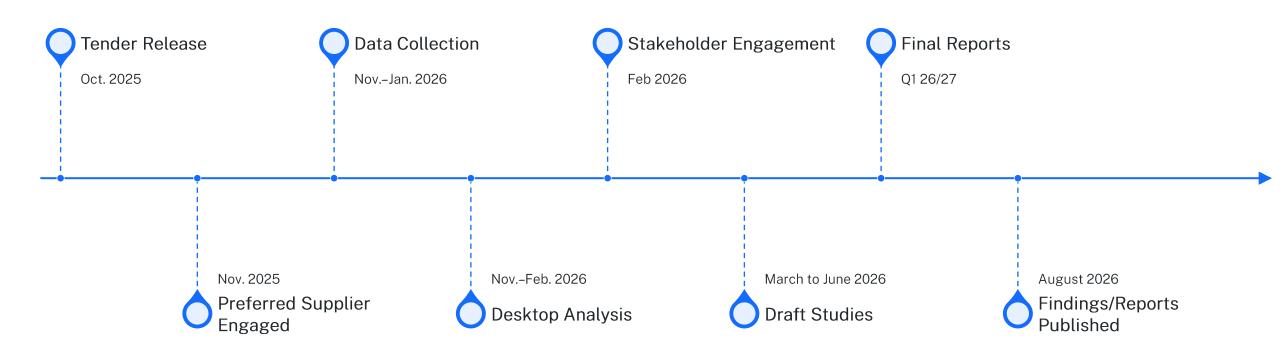
What are the opportunities to mitigate impact?

Understand the best opportunities across the region to mitigate the cumulative impacts.

Project timeline



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General business

Regional Coordination - Notable Updates





NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce Awards – Hunter Valley



Ready for Renewables – Local Business Workshops



REZ Social Risk and Opportunity Analysis Community Co-Design



Biosecurity Training RDA + CSU (February 2026)



Hunter Trade Mission

Regional Coordination – Upcoming Engagements



- Business Singleton Luncheon 7 November
- Nature Conservation Council (Newcastle) 17 November
- National Reconstruction Authority Hunter Workshop (Newcastle) 20 November
- Port of Newcastle Community Liaison Group 25 November
- Chartered Institute of Logistics Hunter Branch Dinner –4 December
- Regional Development Australia (Hunter) –11 December

General Business



• 2026 schedule of meetings to be discussed and confirmed