

# New England REZ South Community Reference Group

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Meeting 5

Wednesday 3 December 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, housekeeping, agenda and apologies	Margaret Harvie
Meeting procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pecuniary interests</li><li>• Noting of actions</li><li>• Questions Register update</li><li>• CRG renomination process</li></ul>	Margaret Harvie
Study area: Update	Julian Watson
Study area: CRG feedback	All
<b>Break</b>	<b>All</b>
REZ First Nations Engagement	Leanne Thompson
General business, questions and updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Community benefits; Undergrounding of infrastructure; Property information; Access Rights</li></ul>	All
Next meeting	All

# 1

## Meeting procedures



Muswellbrook looking north

# 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 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.

# Questions and Actions Registers



## Questions Register

- Created in response to member requests for greater clarity, transparency and timeliness in tracking questions and answers.
- Captures all questions taken on notice, as well as any submitted in writing for the register between meetings. Members can submit questions at any time.
- An updated Register will be circulated before each meeting (noting that inclusion of questions depends on when they are received).
- A further updated version will be distributed after each meeting, including any questions taken on notice.

## Actions Register

- The Actions Register records key commitments made during meetings and tracks progress against them.



Community Reference Group meeting document

# CRG renomination process



- All current CRG members will be invited to renominate.
- To renominate, members must notify EnergyCo in writing by Friday 19 December 2025.
- Any existing member who renominates will be accepted for the 2026 CRG.

This ensures continuity, respects the commitment members have already shown, and keeps the process simple.

We would like to hear your thoughts on:

- Membership
- Meeting format and logistics
- Meeting structure and facilitation
- Communication between meetings
- Role clarity and expectations

# 2

## Study area: Update

# Recap of announcement

On 2 October 2025, we announced an updated study area for the New England REZ project.

The update involved moving part of the former study area between the **Bayswater Power Station near Muswellbrook**, and the **central south energy hub (substation) near Walcha**.

The updated study area through this section allows for:



safer and more efficient construction



better bushfire management



reduced construction, environmental and traffic impacts.

We've made this update to improve overall outcomes for the project and NSW energy consumers.



# Recap of announcement

## The new study area makes the project safer and easier to build:



**Less private land** will be impacted by construction of access tracks as the new study area is more accessible from the existing local road network.



The new study area requires **less earthworks and excavation** to construct the transmission tower foundations and access tracks. Less earthworks means fewer trucks on local roads and less environmental impacts.



There will be **less work carried out using heavy-lift helicopters**, reducing noise impacts on surrounding communities and farm animals.

## The new study area is better for bushfire management:



The new study area **avoids key aerial firefighting zones** around Chaffey Dam and Lake Glenbawn, consistent with our commitment to not impact aerial firefighting operations.



We have been consulting with NSW Rural Fire Service and aviation stakeholders to develop aerial exclusion zones around the dams.



The new study area is also **more accessible and crosses fewer areas of high bushfire prone land**.

# Seeking feedback



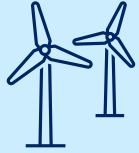
Since the announcement, we have sought to connect with landowners and key stakeholders to:

- Clearly explain the changes to the study area
- Support understanding of why these changes were made
- Gather feedback on the updated study area
- Begin identifying property-specific constraints and opportunities with landowners.

To support this, we have:

- Held 12 community information sessions across the project footprint between 28 October and 13 November, with more than 800 attendees
- Delivered two community-requested project briefings in Gundy and Walcha with senior project leadership
- Extended our 'Have Your Say' feedback period to 12 December
- Met with landowners to discuss their properties and hear their views

# What we're hearing from our community



## Network and generation

- Network vs generation capacity
- Change in network capacity
- Generation and storage project status
- Attraction for developers to build in REZ
- Connection of non-REZ projects to network
- Land acquisition for generator projects and transmission connections
- Undergrounding infrastructure
- Upgrading existing infrastructure / using easements
- Co-location
- Small-scale energy solutions
- Decommissioning



## Land and property

- Project expenditure on property
- Acquisition process – easements
- Compensation arrangements
- Compulsory acquisition
- Valuation
- Access for EIS studies



## Route options and assessment

- Assessment of previous study areas
- Consideration of other new study areas
- Re-adoption of previous study area
- Following the New England Highway



## Planning and assessment

- Scoping Report
- EIS
- Assessment without land access



## REZ configuration

- Central South Hub
- Need for transmission near Walcha
- South Hub plans



## Project budget and costs

- Project cost, financing and authorisation
- Cost of updating study area
- Cost of CWO REZ



## Biodiversity

- Environmental / biodiversity impacts
- Koala colony impacts

# What we're hearing from our community



## Agriculture and farming

- Impacts on agricultural land
- Impacts on beef production
- EMF impacts - livestock



## Public lands

- Public land / state forest use



## Bushfire risk management

- Consultation on bushfire management



## Geography

- Prevailing weather conditions and terrain



## Aviation

- Private airstrip / agricultural aviation impacts



## Constructability

- Areas of challenging construction



## Roads and access

- Access tracks and local road impacts







## Community benefits

- Host community benefits

# Our next steps

We are interested in all feedback from landowners and stakeholders with an interest in the New England REZ.

‘Have your say’ by **Friday 12 December**:

-  Email [nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au)
-  Call **1800 061 114** (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)
-  Tell us **in person** (arrangements made on request)
-  **Write** to us (arrangements made on request)

## Next steps:

- Ongoing engagement with landowners about their properties
- Amended Scoping Report (by end of 2025)
- Refine the study area from 3km wide to 1km wide (early 2026)
- Publish *Community Consultation Report* (early 2026)
- Submit Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (second half of 2026)



Nundle community information session

# 3

## Study area: CRG feedback



Kelly Street, Scone

# What are you hearing from your communities?



As our CRG members, we recognise the strong position you're in to understand the thoughts and sentiments of your communities.

We'd like to take some time in this session to hear from you about:

- Community response to the updated study area announcement
- Parts of the update you think people don't understand and/or need more information about
- What people are seeing as the benefits and disadvantages of the new study area
- The levels to which you think people want to be engaged in the new study area and their preferences for how
- Any other information you're happy to share with us

# Break

# 4

## REZ-First Nations engagement

# First Nations engagement



A coolamon in use for a smoking ceremony

- Key briefings held with:
  - Tamworth Land Council
  - Gomeroi Native Title Group
  - NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC)
- Engaging with key stakeholders on 24 Land Claims within the REZ project footprint
- Social Impact Assessment (SIA) interviews with Aboriginal stakeholders may be deferred until 2026
- Providing support to DCCEEW in developing First Nations Guidelines for the REZ

# 5

## General business, questions and updates



Lake Glenbawn shoreline

# Returning to matters raised earlier

## Undergrounding of infrastructure

- EnergyCo is progressing an overhead HVAC line design as this is considered the best overall solution based on our investigations to date.
- However, there are provisions in the network operator procurement process which allow the bidders to propose alternative design solutions in their proposals.
- If a proponent puts forward an undergrounding solution as part of their proposal, EnergyCo would consider this on its merits as part of the tender process.



Biodiversity surveying

# Returning to matters raised earlier

## Property – access, landowner rights, acquisition

### Land access

- Required for environmental and technical surveys informing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and design / construction.
- Landowner participation is voluntary.
- Tailored to individual landowner requirements to minimise disruption.
- EnergyCo staff and contractors must comply to landowner's biosecurity protocols.
- Managed by our in-region team which is experienced with working in agricultural environments.



Blandford looking south east

# Returning to matters raised earlier

## Community benefits

- A tailored community and employment benefit program will be developed for the New England REZ.
- The Regional Major Infrastructure Studies (RMIS – formerly ‘REZ-wide Studies’) will help inform its development.
- One of the aims of the RMIS release is to create conversations with communities and stakeholders about options to address the identified challenges and needs.
- Initial consultation will include a survey to help identify key values and priorities.
- Energy Legislation Amendment Act 2025 – enables initiatives to be delivered in any LGA / LALC fully or partially within a REZ.



Wind energy project - Victoria

# Returning to matters raised earlier

## Network access rights

- Access rights determine how renewable energy generation and storage projects will connect to the REZ network infrastructure.
- During August 2025, EnergyCo published the *Generation and Storage Consultation Paper* for public comment. This Paper proposed several options for how access rights might work.
- The Paper also proposed the application of an ‘access control mechanism’ to certain transmission lines outside of the REZ boundary.
- If adopted, any project wanting to connect to these lines would need Infrastructure Planner (ie EnergyCo) consent before applying.
- A draft REZ access scheme is currently being prepared for release and public comment in early 2026.
- EnergyCo is not considering any type of access rights trading scheme as rights are awarded on an individual project basis.

# Next meeting

✓ Meeting 6: TBC for 2026