

New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)

Community Reference Group (CRG) North - Meeting 5

Date: Thursday 4 December 2025 – 12pm to 3pm

Location: Country Comfort, 86 Barney St Armidale

Chaired by: Margaret Harvie

Attended

Chairperson	Margaret Harvie
Community Representatives	Alex Hunter Bruce McMullen James Reilly Tony Lashlie Voice for Walcha – Michael Luchich
LALC Representatives	
LGA delegates	Armidale Regional Council – Stephen Wood Uralla Shire Council – Cr Sarah Burrows Walcha Council - Councillor Rachael Greig
EnergyCo Representatives	Julian Watson, New England REZ Deputy Project Director Melissa Maurer, New England REZ Community Engagement Manager Leanne Thompson, New England REZ Senior First Nations Advisor
Note taker	Kate McGrath
*Online attendance	

Apologies

- Diane Gray
- Annette Kilarr
- Lakeisha Hile
- Inverell Shire Council – Mayor Kate Dight

Declarations of interest

Member	Details
Sarah Burrows	Pecuniary interest. Landholder of property in proposed transmission line corridor.

Kate McGrath	<p>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.</p> <p>Pecuniary interest. Investor in Sapphire Windfarm.</p>
Margaret Harvie	<p>Non-pecuniary interest. Margaret has advised generators on community engagement and delivers a community engagement training course which generators participate in.</p>

Agenda item discussion and actions

Item 1. Acknowledgement of Country

- Meeting opened 12.01pm.
- 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 handout.

Item 2. Welcome and housekeeping and apologies

- Chair welcomed members and outlined structure of meeting.

Item 3. Pecuniary interests

Item 4. Noting of actions

#	Action	Responsible	Status
1	Provide information about access to REZ wide studies and if changes are made based on council feedback	Melissa Maurer	The REZ-wide Studies (now Regional Major Infrastructure Studies) are due to be publicly released before the year concludes. A survey will accompany this release through which all stakeholders can provide their comments and ideas.
2	Provide EIS timeline to CRG	Melissa Maurer	Completed. Provided in project update on 2 October 2025.
3	Confirm that information about flora and fauna surveys is provided to landholder on request and ensure landholders can receive information about flora and fauna on their property	Melissa Maurer	<p>Throughout the project to date, where landowners have shown interest in the findings, a summary of the ecology survey results carried out on that property has been provided on request.</p> <p>This summary provides results such as the types of threatened plants and/or animals recorded on that property. It does not represent an impact assessment (i.e. the extent and nature of the impact the project may have on that property) as this is subject to further analysis and</p>

#	Action	Responsible	Status
			<p>consideration as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).</p> <p>Our ecologists are required to submit all noted threatened flora and fauna locations to Bionet Atlas. Bionet Atlas is a searchable database of animal and plant species across NSW managed by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The records would become publicly available upon the completion of the project.</p>
4	Provide information regarding the engagement of local ecologists	Umwelt	<p>Our biodiversity assessment includes survey results collected, and assessments made, by a large number of ecologists including those that are based in the region.</p> <p>EnergyCo also directly engages with local ecologists, UNE researchers, biodiversity interest groups (eg Landcare) and members of the Biodiversity Reference Group coordinated by the Community Power Agency.</p> <p>EnergyCo is keen to hear from landowners and local ecologists about any biodiversity data and information they may hold which may assist in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) for the project. The BDAR is being undertaken in accordance with assessment guidelines including the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) and is being prepared by BAM- accredited ecologists.</p>
5	Provide information about required drone distance to mitigate noise disturbance	Umwelt	<p>Our thermal drone surveys, used to identify the presence of threatened arboreal mammals such as koalas and squirrel gliders, are only undertaken at properties for which the landowner has provided explicit permission. A landowner may retract access at any time, including if there are concerns about disturbance to livestock during lambing or calving.</p> <p>Drone flights target paddock trees and patches of woodland or forest between about 8pm and 4am. We have not recorded any adverse reactions (disturbance) of stock to the drone flights.</p>

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6	Confirm if feral animals are included in fauna surveys	Umwelt	Feral animals or evidence of same is anecdotally recorded during ecological surveys. The variety of fauna survey methods, including diurnal (daytime) and nocturnal (nighttime), means feral animals are often incidentally identified.
7	Provide information about level of approval required from RAPs	Umwelt	<p>The RAP registration process and the selection of RAPs to undertake field surveys includes consideration of their cultural connection and knowledge of land to which they have lived experience.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) is being undertaken in consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), in accordance with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010.</p>
8	Provide information about location of dual transmission lines	Melissa Maurer	Twin 500 kilovolt (kV) lines will be built from Bayswater Power Station through to Central Hub A and B area. There will be twin 330kV lines between Central Hub B and East Hub. A single 500kV (to be initially operated at 330kV) transmission line is proposed between Central Hub A and the North Hub area.
9	Offer online session for housing	Melissa Maurer	This will be looked at in more detail at a session following the release of the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies (formerly known as the REZ-wide Studies).
10	Email to provide more information about social outcome reference group including time commitments and operation.	Melissa Maurer	Completed. Sent following meeting on 24 September 2025.
11	Creation of register of questions asked by members between meetings	Melissa Maurer	<p>Ongoing. 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>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.</p>

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12	Need to have deeper discussion about workforce accommodation	Chairperson	To be scheduled for future CRG meeting. Information to be provided to CRG as it becomes available.
13	EnergyCo to investigate developing a post- event summary to meet landholders' biosecurity needs.	Julian Watson	Biosecurity is a matter we take very seriously. Accordingly, EnergyCo will work with individual landowners to ensure the requirements of their Biosecurity Management Plans are adhered to when the organisation's personnel or contractors are intending to visit, are on or are departing their properties.
14	Community Employment Benefit Program targeted session will be delivered later in the year.	Julian Watson	An update will be provided during this session.

Chair invited questions in relation to the Actions

Item 5. Questions from CRG member as to why REZ-wide studies haven't been released.

Response from EnergyCo that they are complete and would hope that they might have been released, feedback will be given up the chain of EnergyCo.

Action: Communicate the CRG request for Regional Major Infrastructure Studies (formerly REZ-wide studies) to be released.

- Comment from CRG member that the Bionet searchable publications being released at the end of the project isn't useful when people want to see the information now.
EnergyCo will see if data can be provided to landowners, as some summaries have already been provided.

Action: Follow up and see if data for inclusion in Bionet database can be shared prior to publication.

- EnergyCo understand that information can be provided on request and will be made broadly public in the long run.
- EnergyCo indicated that Consultants, as part of their licence requirements, ensure things get to Bionet publication, but there is a process. Results have been provided to landowners regarding their own property where the information can be provided.
- Comment from CRG member that people want to know about the biodiversity in the easement and corridor, request to know where to find the information.

EnergyCo indicated that currently this is only on individual request, but the data will be provided in the EIS.

- Comment from CRG member that drones have been flying over people's houses at night and landowners believe these are EnergyCo drones.

EnergyCo indicated this would only occur where permission has been provided, will check to confirm this situation.

Action: Check if drones have been flying over the location in question (*note that information sourced during the meeting was reported later in the meeting to address this question*).

- CRG member indicated that the property owner has reported the incident to the police.
- CRG member asked to cross check if access agreements align with drone path. Comment from CRG member that it may be legal, but it isn't ethical.

Reconfirmation by EnergyCo that survey work only occurs where there is landowner approval.

- CRG member asked how many access agreements EnergyCo has and how many have been surveyed?
- Chair reminded that the item that is being discussed at this time is questions on the action list. Additional items such as this can be in general business.
- CRG member again asked that EnergyCo commit to not using drones if they don't have access agreements.

EnergyCo member again indicated that this commitment is in place, and EnergyCo will not do thermal surveys without agreements.

- Request that the community member in question put their concerns in writing and pass it on rather than it being discussed in this forum.
- CRG member indicated that EnergyCo are not behaving well.

EnergyCo suggested that if they aren't EnergyCo drones then that's not true.

- CRG member indicated that traffic cameras are pointing at peoples' residences.
- Chair redirected the conversation for this part of the meeting to action list.

Item 6. Meeting process

- Chair apologised for late distribution of questions register.
- Chair invited comment about the benefit of the question register.
- Comment from CRG member that it's a good way of capturing questions that can't be covered in the meeting and allows the people with the expertise to take the time to answer to the best of their ability.
- Comment from CRG member that is has provided quality information.
- Comment from CRG member asking for names of who submitted the questions in the register.
- Chair indicated that she understands that many of the responses in the register are amalgamations of duplicates, but multiple names could perhaps be included.
- Comment from CRG member that questions asked appeared differently on the register.
- EnergyCo indicated that if the question isn't adequately captured as it was intended to let EnergyCo know and this adjustment will be made to the question.

- EnergyCo indicated that combining questions makes for a more readily readable document.
- Chair indicated that there have also been incident of people asking questions without wanting their name on the question register.

CRG RENOMINATION PROCESS

Chair led a discussion around the renomination process and what is currently working for the CRG process.

- All current members can continue – they just need to indicate their interest to the Chair.
- An application isn't required to renominate.
- A member indicated that they will potentially leave the area but would like to continue until they leave.
- Response from Chair that members can stay on as long as they choose and vacancies can be filled as required.
- Chair confirmed that Council appointed renominations will continue and are to be determined by that Council.
- Chair asked if the composition of the CRG is representative of the region or are there any sectors that are missing.
- Comment from CRG member that many CRG members are concerned about the town and not so much the land acquisition.
- EnergyCo indicated that landowners have separate means of communication.
- CRG member asked if there can be wider representation from Walcha including other groups.
- Chair indicated that people are welcome to nominate and that at this time Voice for Walcha is the representative group, Voice for Walcha could hand over their representation to another group if they choose.
- Concern from CRG member that the route choice is result of Barnaby Joyce. The previous corridor directly impacted the Joyce family property at Danglemah where the line was to split into two separate lines to two hubs.
- Comment from CRG member that Inverell, Glen Innes and Tenterfield aren't in the thick of things at the moment, but those members will, in time, be affected and meetings should be held in Glen Innes because it's a long way for them to travel to participate.
- Comment from CRG member that CRG representatives travel expenses should be reimbursed, as this may be a barrier to participation.
- Chair indicated that private proponents usually offer some reimbursement that is taken up by some.

Action: Request that EnergyCo considers reimbursement of CRG member travel expenses.

- Comment from CRG member asking if there's been any thought about how Local Aboriginal Land Council representatives can be encouraged to be more involved.

- Chair indicate that Tamworth LALC was a late apology for the meeting. Suggest that there be reiteration of the CRG encouragement that these representatives attend.

EnergyCo response that we can be more proactive in inviting them. As raised at previous meeting, the programs of work with First Nations Advisory team are a preferred forum for LALC engagement. They have frequent meetings with Leanne Thompson and EnergyCo will also meet with members and board regarding Hubs. Land Councils are getting the information and engaging meaningfully, but doing it in a culturally safe space given that the land claims in the corridor are a primary concern.

Action: Communicate to Local Aboriginal Land Councils that the CRG would like for them to attend and participate in the CRG.

- Comment from CRG member that Local Aboriginal Land Councils have a heavy workload of consultation and their time is spread pretty thin. They have competing priorities.
- Chair again asked what elements of the CRG process have been useful or not useful.
- Comment from CRG member that the CRG works well but want to be assured that the CRG get information before the broader community.

Response from EnergyCo that it will always be hard, there isn't an expectation of CRG members to sign confidentiality deeds, so sensitive information won't be shared until it is public.

- Comment from CRG member that they were blindsided by the route and hubs and there's been some angry conversations, and people aren't satisfied that the CRG has no knowledge. Comment from CRG member that some advance warning would be appreciated.
- A CRG member indicated in the previous meeting that there was a comment that was a bit of a tip off to the change, without saying anything outright.

EnergyCo indicated it can be a balance and some of these changes aren't going to happen until they are announced, and that's part of the government process.

- Comment from CRG member that the concept of having the notes taken and the minutes handwritten can dilute the depth of what was discussed.

The Chair reiterated that members are welcome to comment on the notes and add in additional information to the notes if they are considered incomplete. This has occurred previously.

- Comment from CRG that people don't remember what happened in the meeting when the notes are released.

Response that the notes get out in two weeks, and ideally within a week.

- Comment from CRG member that recording and having a transcript to refer to would be better.

Chair reiterated that she believed that a transcript won't be a more useful way for the broader public to understand what has happened at the meeting, the meeting notes are an external facing document, for the community.

- CRG member suggest that there be both.

Response that EnergyCo are more expansive and candid in these meetings, but if it was recorded and publicly posted there would be a need to stick to the talking points and not engage in free-flowing discussion and conversation. This also protects members to be able to speak their mind without considering how it may be interpreted or misinterpreted out of context.

- Comment from CRG member that this is a pointless conversation, CRG can't make decisions and aren't accountable to anybody, and putting it down in fine detail or a recording isn't productive when we don't make decisions.

Chair concluded the discussion reiterating that if anyone wants to add additional notes when they are distributed for comment, this is encouraged, and that document must be accessible and understandable to those not at the meeting.

- Comment from CRG member that for those in the meeting items may be missing, is this information removed before publication because it isn't for public consumption?

Chair indicated that Kate takes the notes, Chair reviews, and then it goes to EnergyCo for technical review of accuracy of information. If anything is missing, please draw it to the attention of chair as it will not be because it is removed by EnergyCo.

- Chair asked about communication between meetings, such as question register and project updates, and if its working and useful.
- Comment from CRG member that it's good, and being by email it's easy to refer to as required.
- Chair asked about expectation of being a community conduit and what additional support is required?
- Comment from CRG member that the letterbox information was timely and all the updates are helpful.
- Comment from CRG member asking if everyone is getting information and updates by email.

Response from EnergyCo that if they aren't received then please let EnergyCo know.

Item 7. Study area update overview

- Presented by Julian Watson New England REZ Deputy Project Director.
- Most CRG members are across the detail already, and happy to speak in either general terms or the detail but won't go too deeply to make time for questions.
- Acknowledgement that most CRG members have participated in webinar and public meetings.
- Updated study area announced in October, moving part of the former study area between Bayswater and central south hub.
- Additional information [Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report](#).

Action: Provide direct link to [Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report](#).

- EnergyCo continuing to seek feedback from landowners and community members.
- Community information sessions held – 12 sessions and 2 town hall meetings with about 850 people in attendance with a lot of detailed information and discussion.

- Have your say period has been extended to 12 December 2025.
- EnergyCo have met with landowners during and since this process.
- Summary of issues raised - overview of a range of broader subject areas raised in the consultation.
- Contact details provided for people to provide feedback.
- Next steps include ongoing engagement with landowners.
- Amended scoping report by end of year.
- Certainty for landowners and community by bringing 3km corridor to 1km is a priority, aiming for late February or early March.
- Community Consultation Report will be published in early 2026.
- Looking to submit Environmental Impact Statement in second half of 2026.

Item 8. Study area update: CRG members feedback - What are you hearing?

- Comment from CRG member that getting topographic maps and putting them together from Glenbawn Dam to Walcha, the terrain is very inaccessible and it's a lot lower down, getting the equipment in will be challenging, it's all backroads, unsure how this option will be cheaper.
- Comment from CRG member that of the six options there were three that didn't seem viable.
- Comment from CRG member that EnergyCo CRG representatives are the feet on the ground, but do the higher ups know about the concerns.
- CRG member indicated that Anna Young (Member of Walcha High Country Guardians) in interviews was talking about how environmentally this line didn't stack up against other options. It's a shame that the old line was moved completely although understand it changed due to firefighting. There seems to be influence regarding who and why the line has been changed. Understood that everything was embargoed, did any landowners of the new path get approached earlier or did it all happen after the announcement? CRG member believes that behind the scenes there's political jousting and that's why the line was moved.

EnergyCo indicated that the terrain is challenging and the changed route is not free from challenge. There's a shorter distance with less climbing and rise and fall of topography. Route gains the Walcha plateau which is less challenging than Weabonga area. Regarding the political and landowner influence, the answer is no. The change was technically led. EnergyCo were speaking to landowners from 1 October. Addressing Glenbawn and Chaffey dams needed to happen, and to address risk without creating more difficult construction. The last week, due to fires, Glenbawn has been in use. EnergyCo will get flight data from Rural Fire Service to double check with technical team. First pass looks like current line won't impact aerial firefighting capability. Sometimes conspiracy theories are easier than boring data.

- Comment from CRG member that the part of the route through Bendemeer was changed because of one particular landowner selling his property.

Response from EnergyCo that if people in the line are having trouble selling then they should discuss with EnergyCo. There are people who will be impacted at that delicate point of the sale, there are processes for anyone working under just terms for EnergyCo to step in as the buyer.

- Comment from CRG member asking if firefighting in Glenbawn will be impacted.

Response from EnergyCo that logs and data from recent use of Glenbawn will be assessed against route and first pass it looks to be ok.

- Comment from CRG member that there hasn't been much feedback from the community, more from the landowners.
- Comment from CRG member that community response was of shock and surprise and the typical reaction of disbelief and anger and that emotional process.
- Comment from CRG member that a mother of a land holder said they want to build the lines 50m from the house, there are misunderstandings of the study zone and the purpose of the 3km corridor.
- Comment from CRG member that most people see the benefits and are supportive and want to get on with it.
- Comment from CRG member that most inquiries are about Central Hub B and timeline of cumulative impact studies and the delays.

Response from EnergyCo that completion of studies is not the challenge, they are complete and awaiting release.

- CRG member asked if the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies will be coming.
- EnergyCo indicated that project team would have liked them out a long time ago, there is some interplay with Central West Orana REZ. The frustration around them not being released is shared.
- CRG member indicated that people won't believe information until they see it, and people are forming opinion without fact.

EnergyCo indicated that they will pass on the feelings of frustration.

- CRG member asked if councils can write to EnergyCo and say we need the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies released.

Action: Councils to consider writing to EnergyCo CEO and Minister asking for Regional Major Infrastructure Studies to be released.

- Question from CRG member about who is likely to listen.
- EnergyCo indicated that CEO is highly supportive.
- EnergyCo indicated that Julian reports to Doug Parris, who reports to Chief Project Officer Mark Westbrook who reports to the CEO.
- Comment from CRG member that the hub is the one we're getting the most battering about. The hub neighbours are very unhappy. It's a large capacity and brings up questions of what is planned.

Response that EnergyCo has engaged with landowners and some have put views forward quite forcefully, acknowledged that it's a big shift.

- Comment from CRG member that it would be nice to know about possible projects coming because everyone is living in limbo about what could be happening, and even if there's published EOIs about projects, it would help to dispel circulating rumours and provide some information.

Chair indicated that there is now well documented fear and intimidation toward land holders who are speaking to generators. Knowledge of conversations creates a pressure for landowners from others in the community.

- Comment from CRG member that EOIs can be shared.

Reiteration that land holders have been harassed when there is information released about early stages of projects.

- Comment from CRG member that ZNET was asked to talk to Hillview Energy Hub which is owned by ACE Power, now TAG Energy - a Portuguese French company, interesting timelines and it may not be up and functional for another ten years.
- Comment from CRG member wondering what the constraints are and how this pulls together, look at existing projects and what were their timelines and did it start in the 90s and only recently come to fruition?
- Comment from CRG member that these are hideously long timelines.
- CRG member had the view that developer interest needs to be on the books.

Response from EnergyCo that people can be protected and must be allowed to protect their financial interest. There is good reason why people aren't having these conversations publicly.

- CRG member indicated that secret conversations are being held with each landowner.
- CRG member indicated that there is pressure to sign up. Does not agree with how the current system of secrecy occurs.
- CRG member indicated that land holders can choose to work together as a group and take suggestions to EnergyCo and that collective action has created changes. Land holders have worked together and discussed options with each other, even used the same solicitor and have been heard by EnergyCo.

EnergyCo indicated there has been several times where that has happened, and it doesn't always work but if it's not shared then no one knows.

- Comment from CRG member that this isn't pitting owners against each other.
- Comment from CRG member that the terrain of the new easement won't be easier than the old one.
- Comment from CRG member that report that was released and new route gets green tick for every box and so now people are asking why this wasn't the route in the first place?

Response from EnergyCo that doing the work and making the comparison has informed this decision.

- Comment from CRG member that it looks like a set up and that is what people are saying.
Response from EnergyCo that the decision has been made based on the study, it's a data led decision.
- Comment that the specifics of the gradient of the access route is detailed, there must be access pathways chosen and the CRG would like this information.
Response from EnergyCo that there is a nominal route but it isn't public yet as subject to change from landowner feedback.
- Comment from CRG member that the routes may be fire tracks or not exist.
Response from EnergyCo that yes, access tracks are usually constructed tracks and may connect to existing roads but are usually constructed.
- Comment from CRG member that impacted people want this information.
Response from EnergyCo that people can talk about where they want roads on their property, they can speak with EnergyCo, people can't demand information and at the same time refuse to talk with EnergyCo.
- Comment from CRG member that people are sceptical and want to understand why and want to know it's a better easement and they don't have the information to do that.
Response from EnergyCo that they can speak with EnergyCo.
- Comment that CRG members are speaking with EnergyCo on behalf of community.
Response from EnergyCo that information which is not public won't be shared with CRG and is still subject to change with optionality based on feedback and landholder recommendations, which will be taken into account.
- Comment from CRG member that the route and the access should be shared if it's so exact.
Response from EnergyCo that the first set of discussion is about transmission route itself, and access sits under to and adjacent to that. In areas of challenging terrain there is a need to go in and out and up and down and there will be factors considered. The data is generated to understand not to justify, it's to understand the challenges and will be shared at a decision-making point.
- EnergyCo indicated that technical work is being done, but focus is on meeting with landowners to understand the constraints, no one knows the land better than the land holder and there is a process to reduce that 3km down to 1km. Beyond the 'have your say' period there is a need to sit with property owners and make a decision based on correct information and talk with landowners, without this feedback it becomes based on desktop data. Capturing feedback for the consultation report is not the end of the conversation and discussion will continue until EIS lodgement.
- Comment from CRG member asking if consultants and land managers are incentivised to get access agreements. Reports of being rough and threatening and allegedly threatened a landowner with security and said they will be entering the property whether he gives permission or not. Another received a call at 10pm and then in a second call EnergyCo allegedly mislead the property owner's son saying EnergyCo were meeting with parents.

- Response from EnergyCo that this is a very serious matter and CRG member will be asked to share further details privately to ensure it can be followed up. Property managers are not incentivised, access is voluntary. Advised this complaint should be provided to EnergyCo with further detail so it may be investigated.

Action: Share complaints line information.

- Comment from CRG member that the situation has been logged, this is just a high level comment for the CRG.

Reiteration that EnergyCo take this very seriously and encourage people to provide all the detail to ensure complaints can be investigated properly.

- Comment from CRG member that names of expert consultants have been redacted in the report and the CRG would like to know why?

Response from EnergyCo that they are individuals, and it is to protect their privacy.

- Comment from CRG member that expert opinion doesn't need to be protected.

Response from EnergyCo that the consultants weren't utilised to be part of a public consultation process, they were utilised to provide internal advice in an internally prepared report.

- Comment from CRG member asking if EnergyCo take feedback to the Minister.
- Response from EnergyCo that the Minister is aware of the communities concerns and has to balance that with ensuring continuity of energy supply for NSW. Can't speak on behalf of the Minister but the EnergyCo Board is appraised of the feedback as is the executive and ultimately, it's a broader decision and a legislated project.
- Comment from CRG member that cumulative impact reports have been held up, are they supportive of the current proposals?

Response from EnergyCo that they aren't designed to be a 'yay or nay thing', they are looking at the peaks, and the extent of modelling coming to fruition, identifying if there would be supply issues. They are looking at what is needed in the community to support the REZ, rather than does the community support it.

Response from EnergyCo that it's getting a baseline of strengths and challenges and then working with government to overcome areas of focus, such as improving water supply and wastewater treatment, accommodation, etc. How this gets addressed is the next stage of the process. Each LGA has similar broad themes, but particulars are quite different and require different responses. Councils have a good idea of their infrastructure status and the challenges, and will want to set their priorities and have focus based funding.

- Comment from CRG member asking if cumulative impact takes into account generator construction or just EnergyCo infrastructure.

EnergyCo response that the studies do consider generator projects.

- Comment from CRG member that this will therefore give an indication of planned projects.

- Question from CRG member asking if there is information by LGA?

Response from CRG to take the question on finer detail on notice.

Action: Determine the level of LGA specific detail contained within Regional Major Infrastructure Studies.

- CRG member asked the number of people in the Walcha landowner corridor who have signed access agreements?

Response from EnergyCo that there are a range of people EnergyCo are talking to.

- Comment from CRG member asking for status for Walcha LGA specifically.
- Comment from CRG member about the access team and the consultants seeing property owners, one of the people who had an awful engagement with EnergyCo has asked for guidelines and engagement protocols to be made available.

Response from EnergyCo that there isn't a formal land access protocol. EnergyCo follows "Centre for Property Acquisition" just terms compensation act process, which provides guidelines and process documents. There are many publications regarding what can be expected, what are your rights and responsibilities and the structured process for land holder access.

- Chair suggested that a document be shared with CRG.
- Comment from CRG member that consultants turn up without a card and only a badge and basic information about next steps and process needs to be shared.
- Comment from CRG member that its only access agreements at this stage.

Response from EnergyCo that yes, it's not a property acquisition agreement it's letting people know about the 3km corridor and they are invited to discuss how it can work on their property and if invited EnergyCo will undertake flora and fauna studies etc. Voluntary access, that can be rescinded.

- Comment from CRG member that we keep being promised a discussion about how EnergyCo is working with local councils to enhance housing, water and waste. It's an old chestnut and we're sounding like broken records, but the conduit of information ends with council and if there are ongoing discussions we need to know. CRG is the first line of defence. Housing is an issue and in respect of the Homes North organisation land acquired for affordable housing there's a view that it's social housing for criminals and drug addicts, but that's a lie. Why waste a good story with the truth and this is what we're facing because we don't know the truth. There needs to be an emphasis on the action taken to provide housing and we need the services to cater for the influx and water is a huge issue, it's going to drain out the dam.

Action: EnergyCo engagement with local government regarding local infrastructure and services to be on the agenda for the next meeting.

- Comment from CRG member that he understood that every member of the EnergyCo board is in Sydney and they should be a representative group and there should be a board member from each of the REZs – there's union and business representatives and they're all based in Sydney.
- Comment from CRG member that locals need a voice and we need someone on the board.

- Update provided in meeting in response to concern about drones at night. Last set of drone surveys conducted by EnergyCo were on 19 September and this only occurs where there is land access, and additionally there is no good reason to fly over a house.
- Comment from CRG member that the new route hadn't been announced yet.
Response from EnergyCo that yes, therefore there has been no drone surveys in the study area to date.
- EnergyCo indicated that other future use of drones is proposed for landscape assessment, and this hasn't started yet. Will occur during the day in places with agreed land access and in public places.
- CRG member raising this will pass on this information to the land holder.
- Also EnergyCo reported on the traffic cameras that at a range of locations to help format OSOM assessment and origin destination surveying and traffic counts. For a 3-week period, cameras are at fixed angle to count passing traffic, not able to identify facial features. Will be removed when work is complete, planned for 17 December dependent on weather.
- CRG member asked what origin destination surveying is.
Response from EnergyCo that it's looking at where vehicles come from and go to, to identify important routes.
- EnergyCo indicated that from Monday next week there will a consultant called Moir doing landscape character and visual assessment and they will be in the field looking at landscape characteristics and more information is in the newsletter.
- CRG member asking if it's for the understanding of how big things are?
Response from EnergyCo - yes it's to establish the visual impact.

Item 9. Break - 1.42pm to 2.10pm

Item 10. First Nations engagement

- Presented by Leanne Thompson New England REZ Senior First Nations Advisor.
- Key briefings held at Tamworth LALC with Gomeroi native title group.
- Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) network governed by NSW Aboriginal Land Council.
- Meeting with Walcha LALC which was very productive.
- LALCs wanting return visits by EnergyCo to report to member and boards members about the alignment.
- Engagement about land claims with maps of alignment and land claim number and lot DP number in relation to corridor.
- LALCs introduced to manager of project team to have a direct contact.
- Each LALC will need to look at parcels of land and assess the cultural value in consultation with their community.

- Social impact assessment interviews have been deferred to 2026 as LALCs are in Christmas mode with parties and events and many close over January.
- Supporting Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to develop First Nations guidelines, first draft provided yesterday and LALCs will provide feedback.
- Guidelines include an Aboriginal working group.
- CRG member asked if CRG can see the document?

Response from EnergyCo that they will go to Aboriginal stakeholders for comment before being made publicly available which will be when they are finalised by DCCEEW.

- First Nations guidelines for Central West Orana and Hunter REZs have been completed and published.
- EnergyCo indicated that the community was adamant that they didn't want a cut and paste exercise and the local infrastructure, dynamic, wants and aspirations need to be considered in the guidelines and the New England REZ guidelines will be specific and targeted to their communities.
- Comment from CRG member that Uralla and Walcha community can be tricky to get to.

Response from EnergyCo that any names or numbers would be appreciated to have some more direct engagement.

Action: Sarah Burrows and Leanne will liaise about contacts for Uralla Aboriginal groups.

- EnergyCo reported strong relationships in Armidale and Tamworth.
- Comment that Uralla and Armidale are very separated.
- CRG members indicated that they will help however they can.
- Comment from CRG member that there are a high number of First Nations people in the region.

Item 11. General business, questions and updates

Re-exhibition of Generation and Storage Paper considering project changes

- EnergyCo has no plans to re exhibit the generation and storage consultation paper. Th change has not changed the purpose. Further consultation is planned within the process, with draft access scheme declaration planned for early 2026.
- EnergyCo refined asset connection model strategy paper planned for early 2026. Generation team is heavily involved.
- Comment from CRG member that the paper was very technical about lines classification, but the last chapter about easements for generation projects connecting to the REZ suggests EnergyCo would be taking over and compulsorily acquiring for access and there should have been a different document to talk about this.

Response from EnergyCo is that the point taken on board and the intent of publishing the document wasn't to hide it and part of the aim was to try and make sure there is a more coordinated effort from

generators being able to provide a way to minimise lines and have more shared infrastructure where we can and minimise total infrastructure.

- Comment from CRG member that land holder feedback is vital and new landowners wouldn't know the paper exists and they have missed the first round of consultation, and were any landowners consulted?

Response from EnergyCo that most of the document is related to the technical side, unable to speak to who exactly was consulted.

- Comment from CRG member that the people who would respond weren't given the opportunity and if people aren't supported to make a submission it's not consultation. EnergyCo refused to meet with Walcha council to support them making a submission.

Response that EnergyCo representatives present were unaware of the request from Walcha Council.

Land access and landowner rights

- Comment from CRG member that EnergyCo aren't doing a good job consulting with people in relation to land access issues.

Response from EnergyCo that the land access purpose is twofold, to access for surveying to inform EIS and design and construction, and also to get land holder feedback.

- CRG member indicated that EnergyCo needs to comply with landholder biosecurity protocols. CRG member indicated that this isn't happening and hasn't happened since 2023.

Response from Chair that this was in the action list and should have been addressed.

- Comment from CRG member that Local Land Services audit farms on biosecurity and for some kinds of accreditation, up to date biosecurity measures are required to be provided.

Response from EnergyCo that they have said they will comply with biosecurity management plans.

- Comment from CRG member that it must be every single farm every single time.
- Suggestion from CRG member that there must be a procedure for this.
- Comment from CRG member that EnergyCo have been good at giving notice about entry, timeframe and presence.
- Comment from CRG member that when EnergyCo went to Walcha they didn't give notice.

Response from EnergyCo that yes EnergyCo contacted some people directly and access records will reflect that.

- Comment from CRG member that they should have complied with biosecurity requirements.
- Comment by CRG member that biosecurity requirements should be posted at point of entry.
- Comment by CRG member that signage isn't enough for an audit, landowners need to say why and for how long they were on the property and verify the car has been washed and cleaned to stop weed transmission.

- EnergyCo indicated that if access isn't granted, then that's the landowner prerogative and in the EIS EnergyCo will use alternative methods in accordance with regulatory requirements. These include remote survey techniques or a process for proxy site use to understand sites based on adjacent land data and similarities can be identified, applies conservative assumptions such as an area being recognised as being able host a plant community or threatened species so it will be assumed to be present.
- EnergyCo noted that after the EIS exhibition, a confirmation survey may be required. This would form part of the pre-construction conditions and may also be needed to inform the Response to Submissions and any changes arising from public feedback.
- EnergyCo indicated that Aboriginal cultural heritage predictive model is used based on known site record along with Registered Aboriginal Parties and LALCs to build understanding of culture across the landscape.

Land acquisition

- EnergyCo indicated detailed information about land acquisition is available on the website.

Action: Provide links to information about land acquisition.

- EnergyCo indicated that Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991 is the prescribed process. Includes considering impact of project and any adjustment that may be required such as relocation of infrastructure.
- EnergyCo indicated the process involves appointment of an independent legal and valuation specialists. Minimum 6 month's negotiating window and when agreed outcome is reached EnergyCo gains access within designated easement which is 140m for bulk of the route. Acquisition is registered and some areas there may be a need to take freehold purchase.
- EnergyCo indicated in instances where it can be reasonably demonstrated there's financial hardship due to the project, there is a process for EnergyCo to replace the buyer in the market, and this has occurred previously. After agreed outcome is reached, landowner receives agreed purchase price.
- EnergyCo spoke to the strategic benefits payment (SBP) as recognition of impost, this payment is over and above the just terms compensation. The SBP payment is \$200,000 per kilometre of each transmission line and is paid out in instalments over 20 years.
- Question from CRG member as to why the payment is over 20 years, when it's on the land forever?
- EnergyCo indicated that the Strategic Benefit Payment is paid per line, per km, and is adjusted with CPI. The payment is paid when the transmission line is energised.
- CRG member asked if there is a price per tower?

Response from EnergyCo that no, there isn't a prescriptive formula, it depends on the use of the land, the value, the amount of usable property impacted. The valuer will evaluate and recommend a valuation with compensation and landowner will engage valuer that EnergyCo pays for and then compensation negotiation begins.

- CRG member asked is there a lease?

EnergyCo indicated that a lease would only be applicable if it's a temporary agreement, but compensation is for the easement, which provides the right to access to build operate and maintain the line.

- Comment from CRG member that this is effectively a lease.

Response from EnergyCo that compensation is a one-off payment whereas a lease is ongoing.

- EnergyCo indicated once compensation is agreed, 80% is paid upfront and 20% once the easement is registered. No other compensation payments are provided after this.
- Comment from CRG member that the infrastructure is still on our land and you are still affecting that farm.

Response from EnergyCo that this is why you need to speak with the valuer about long term price impact and ensure the compensation is fair.

- Comment from CRG member that this is an impost put on us by the government, it has ongoing ramifications for future farmers and there needs to be consideration for the people who buy the farm in 25 years, the payment should last as long as the impact.

Response from EnergyCo that the intent is that the compensation payment under just terms exist to compensate for the impact and should consider the long-term impacts as well.

- CRG member asked how would you feel if it was your land?

Response from EnergyCo - I would speak with my valuer and ensure I'm getting appropriate compensation.

- Comment from CRG member that unless you buy the land you're still on my land. It should be compensation, it should be ongoing and paid until it goes, and selling the lines off in the future will make you a lot of money.

Response from EnergyCo it will be built, owned and operated by someone on behalf of the state.

- Comment from CRG member that there is already discussion about which companies will own this infrastructure in 10 years.

Response from EnergyCo that the process is to own the infrastructure and operate on behalf of the state.

- Question from CRG member about how Transgrid took over from EnergyCo after it was built?

Response from EnergyCo that TransGrid predates EnergyCo.

- Comment from CRG member these things get sold off and in the long term someone will sell it off and make money and the land holder gets nothing from that and it's unfair and will get bigger when it goes all the way through to Queensland.

Response from EnergyCo that this is a challenge with government infrastructure.

- Comment from CRG member that just compensation should last more than 20 years and EnergyCo should just buy the land, buy the easement.

Response from EnergyCo that compensation is paid for the easement, which is a right of way, and landowners continue to own the land.

- Comment from CRG member that some must be unjustly unpaid to benefit the state – it is not a system I can be proud of and is a totalitarian state.

EnergyCo indicated that this is a philosophical discussion.

Action: Feedback that compensation should be ongoing, or delivered as a purchase or lease arrangement, will be passed on to the Land and Property team.

- Comment from CRG member that renegotiating with buyer could be negotiated.
- CRG member asked what's the life of the transmission lines and do they last more than 20 years.

Response from EnergyCo that Transgrid has been here since the fifties or sixties.

- Question from CRG member if there are leases for temporary buildings?
- Response yes, there may be leases for construction compounds or laydown areas to support construction.

Action: Confirm if 250m construction easement is subject to lease payment.

- CRG member asked for confirmation that government don't buy the land at all.

Response that EnergyCo is just paying compensation for the right of way (easement), not ownership.

- Comment from CRG member asking the benefit, why would they do it?

Response that EnergyCo try to avoid compulsory acquisition and most people can agree to negotiated acquisition.

- Comment from CRG member asking how the figure is calculated when it's compulsory.
- Response from EnergyCo that the process is similar. There is a letter that goes out, a 21-day period and then 90 days to complete. If agreement can't be reached it goes to the valuer general who makes the decision and sometimes it can end in a good outcome, or sometimes the negotiated process can be better. Decision can be challenged in Land and Environment Court, but the challenge with the court is that if the finding isn't in your favour you may get less than a negotiated outcome.
- Negotiated process allows a fuller length of time to put forward concerns and make argument for adjustments and relocation of infrastructure, the challenge is the timeframes. Going through that process of compulsory acquisition, valuer general and then land and environment court is no longer about right to access but around compensation, and in the end it's not an argument about can it happen or how it can best happen, it is simply a matter of compensation. Agreed acquisition allows for a fair negotiation and there is a mandated policy period and process. Landowners in consultation with legal representative generally prefer this option.
- CRG member suggested to go home and watch *The Castle*.
- EnergyCo indicated that the movie may have given people unrealistic expectations.

- Comment from CRG member that the acquisition process is very poorly understood by everyone and the links to information about acquisition didn't explain anything, and CRG members thought compulsory acquisition was a purchase.

Response from EnergyCo that we've been discussing a webinar approach for the property team to talk through the different processes and how they work together to provide some clarity.

- Comment from CRG member they need a handout and a pamphlet and a video.
- Comment from CRG member that it's going to be different for everyone and there is a lot of misinformation.

EnergyCo explained that valuations consider both the activities that permanently affect land - such as the tower footprint, which can no longer be used - and the partial impacts associated with the easement. These elements are assessed differently. Valuations are itemised and structured to reflect impacts, land use, and any necessary adjustments. It is not a simple matter of assigning a fixed amount to a tower; rather, each component is evaluated through a detailed process. Comment from member that CRG members thought there was going to be a fixed price for towers and then different land assessment.

Response from EnergyCo that strategic benefits is the only fixed price, with compensation there is no fixed price or formula. It is a negotiation based on valuation.

Action: Provide information about the different payments and what they mean and the associated processes of voluntary and compulsory acquisition.

- Comment from CRG member that compulsory acquisition sounds like purchasing.
- Question from CRG member as to whether the valuers are across this system and able to do the work?

Response from EnergyCo that many are familiar with just terms and there will be valuers who target this market. Many valuers are experienced and though they can't act for both parties they are familiar with the whole process.

- Question from CRG member asking if when the old lines were put in was there a similar process?

Response from EnergyCo that fifteen years ago this was the process, that Transgrid would get a valuer and the land owner would get an independent valuer and the process would go from there.

- Question from CRG member asking if TransGrid offered ongoing payments?

Response from EnergyCo that Transgrid would pay a one-off compensation and no ongoing payment or strategic benefit. Strategic Benefit Payments are now an additional payment.

Community benefits

- EnergyCo spoke to a Community and Employment Benefit Program (CEBP) being developed and the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies will inform the development and inform where they are in the process and the base line setting. To assist in the development of the benefit program consultation, including a survey, will determine key values and priorities.
- CRG members expressed their desire for CRGs to be specifically consulted on the CEBP.

- EnergyCo noted that amendment to Energy Legislation Amendment Act 2025 enables initiatives to be delivered in any local government area or local Aboriginal land council area fully or partially in the REZ. This allows funds to be used for the benefit of the council area and not just in the portion within the footprint of the REZ.
- CRG member indicated that it's concerning because most benefits will go to Tamworth and Armidale who are better able to absorb the impact, but the smaller communities which will be more impacted need to be the priority for the benefits and reducing the impact.

Response from EnergyCo that such feedback will be passed on.

- Comment from CRG member that many CRG members are here for that reason – to ensure fair distribution. It needs to be in regard to what the towns want and their priorities.
- Comment from CRG member that communities need to be careful about what we want from the REZ and how we want it to change our towns.
- Comment from CRG member that funds for councils need to be front loaded and that isn't how it's happened. Money has been received by council to help work through this.
- Comment from CRG member that it helps if everyone works together and there's a better outcome for it.
- Question from CRG member as to whether the legislation amendment will change the CWO CBEP model.
- Response from EnergyCo that they are unsure of this and will confirm.

Action: Report back on whether the legislation change will impact the CWO CBEP model

- New England will be similar but the next couple of priorities are working out what the model is, what needs to be allocated across community, employment, and First Nations.
- Comment from CRG member that Tamworth LGA inclusion will be interesting.
- Comment from CRG member that the money that comes into the regions needs to be used for good and there's a certain LGA where a developer has indicated that money will go to unnecessary and unimportant and hardly relevant projects.

Action: Include the CBEP and structure of other benefit payments on the next agenda for explanation.

- Comment from CRG member that councils need to spend responsibly.
- Comment from CRG member that Voluntary Planning Agreements have guidelines and generators have a say about expenditure.
- Comment from CRG member that any payments made to LGA for anything must have money put aside for upkeep and maintenance.

Other General Business, question and updates

- EnergyCo indicated that the 1km refinement will be determined but timeframe is not certain at this stage. This may follow the next CRG meeting date.
- Comment from CRG member that EnergyCo can be honest even if they don't share everything.

- CRG member asked for a refresher on biodiversity offsets. Crown land managers may be well positioned to support revegetation of some of these areas and conflict occurs where crown doesn't want land held in perpetuity for biodiversity.

Action: DCCEEW presentation may require an online meeting or will occur in 2026.

- Comment wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Item 12. Meeting close

- **Next meeting proposed to be 11am Friday 20 March 2026 in Walcha.**
- Meeting closed 3.37pm

#	Action	Responsible	Status
1	Action: Communicate the CRG request for Regional Major Infrastructure Studies (formerly REZ-wide studies) to be released	Julian Watson	Complete. Studies released on 9 December 2025.
2	Follow up and see if data for inclusion in Bionet database can be shared prior to publication	Julian Watson	
3	Check if drones have been flying over the location in question	Julian Watson	Completed. Response provided later in meeting. Details page 16 of the meeting notes.
4	Request that EnergyCo reimburse CRG members travel expenses	Julian Watson	
5	Communicate to Local Aboriginal Land Councils that the CRG would like for them to attend and participate in the CRG	Leanne Thompson	
6	Provide direct link to Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report	Julian Watson	Completed. Link to Bulk Corridor Design Refinement Report provided on page 9 of the meeting notes
7	Councils to consider writing to EnergyCo CEO and Minister asking for Regional Major Infrastructure Studies to be released	Council representatives	

#	Action	Responsible	Status
8	Share complaints line information	Melissa Maurer	<p>You can submit a complaint to nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au. Alternatively, if</p> <p>If you're unsatisfied with any aspect of our work, please tell us by completing our complaints and feedback form.</p> <p>In addition to the above, the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) is a free, independent, dispute resolution body that investigates and resolves complaints about electricity, gas and some water providers. You may contact EWON at any time for independent advice and assistance.</p> <p>EWON's contact details are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Freecall: 1800 246 545 • Freefax: 1800 812 291 • Website: www.ewon.com.au • Post: Reply Paid 86550, Sydney South NSW 1234
9	EnergyCo engagement with local government regarding local infrastructure and services to be on the agenda for the next meeting	Melissa Maurer	
10	Liaise about contacts for Uralla Aboriginal groups	Leanne Thompson Sarah Burrows	
11	Provide links to information about land acquisition	Melissa Maurer	<p>Easements and compensation fact sheets - <i>outlines how easements are negotiated, compensation principles and what is typically included.</i></p> <p>Understanding the land acquisition process</p> <p>Valuation and compensation explained</p> <p>Compulsory acquisition explained</p> <p><u>NSW Government Compulsory Acquisition Process</u> – <i>general overview of the statutory process, rights of landowners, timelines and the role of the Valuer General.</i></p> <p><u>Valuer General – Land Acquisition Information</u> – <i>information on valuation, compensation, and the acquisition timeline.</i></p>

#	Action	Responsible	Status
12	Feedback that the compensation should be ongoing, a purchase or a lease payment will be passed on to Land and Property team	Julian Watson	
13	Confirm if 250m construction easement is subject to lease payment		
14	Provide information about the different payments and what they mean and the associated processes of voluntary and compulsory acquisition		
15	Report back on whether the legislation change will impact the CWO CBEP model		
16	Include the CBEP and structure of other benefit payments on the next agenda for explanation	Melissa Maurer	
17	DCCEEW presentation may require an online meeting or will occur in 2026		

Upcoming meetings

Regular meeting 20 March 2026

Announcement of refined corridor at this time or future online meeting.