Meeting minutes

CENTRAL-WEST ORANA REZ COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

Held on: 17/2/2026 – 10:00am to 2:00pm

At: Western Plains Cultural Centre, 76 Wingewarra St, Dubbo

Chaired by: Lisa Andrews

Attendees:

Independent Chair	Lisa Andrews (Chair)
EnergyCo representatives	Alicia Rados, Associate Director Community & Place (AR) Rebecca Williams, Community Engagement Manager (RW) Liz Sacco, Stakeholder and Engagement Manager (LS) *online* Courtney Moran, Principal Planning Manager (CM) *online* Kelly Carbery, Manager Strategic Projects, NSW Dept Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, Water (KC) *online* Anna Zycki, Executive Director, Development and Solutions, Transport for NSW (AZ) *online*
LGA delegates	Councillor Katie Dicker, Mid-Western Regional Council (KD) *online* Councillor Kathy Rindfleish, Mayor of Warrumbungle Shire Council (KR) *online* Cr Josh Black, Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council (JB)
Government/MPs	Dugald Saunders MP (Member for Dubbo) (DS) Jane Diffey, Snr Electorate Officer Dugald Saunders' Office (JD) Mel Manchee, Snr Electorate Officer Roy Butler's Office (Member for Barwon) (MM) *online*
Community representative	Neville Mattick, Community representative (NM) *online* Colin Kilby, Community representative (CK)
Stakeholder groups	Beverley Smiles, Central West Environment Council (BS) Rosemary Hadaway, Mudgee District Environment Group & Watershed Landcare (RH) Jane Hegarty, Cassilis District Development Group (JH) Aleshia Lonsdale, Mudgee Local Aboriginal Land Council (AL) *online* Kylie Manson, Warrabinga Wiradjuri #7 Native Title Claimants *online*
ACEREZ ACJV representatives	Kee Li, Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager (KL) Steven Bowman, Community Place Manager (SB) Sonja Malcolm, Workforce Development and Training Manager (SM) *online* Nick Francesconi, Environmental Advisor (NF) Catie Anderson, Operational Services Director (CA) *online* Tim Smith, Property Manager/Area Manager (TS) Pablo Alvarez, Project Manager (PA) *online*
Network Operator Representatives	Sharon Labi, Senior Manager Corporate Affairs (SL)

Apologies	Cr Pat Ryan, Upper Hunter Shire Council Mark Squires, RE-Alliance Jock Rice-Ward, Community representative David Thorne, NSW Farmers (Mudgee) Tony Fuller, Aboriginal Affairs Department delegate

AGENDA

1	Acknowledgement of Country	Chair
2	Welcome and introductions	Chair
3	Apologies	Chair
4	Governance/declarations	Chair/All
5	Business arising	Chair
6	Correspondence	Chair
7.0	ACEREZ – Construction update	TS/PA
7.1	ACEREZ – Community engagement update	KL
7.2	ACEREZ – Industry & Aboriginal participation	SM
8.0	EnergyCo – Biodiversity offsets and strategic offset delivery agreements	CM/KC
8.1	EnergyCo – Port to REZ	AZ
8.2	EnergyCo – Social Impact Management Plan update	AR
9	General business	All
10	Next meeting	Chair

MEETING MINUTES S

1	Acknowledgement of Country	LA	Acknowledgement of Country by LA.
2	Welcome and introductions	Chair	Meeting opened at 10:33am
3	Apologies	Chair	As listed
4	Business arising from last meeting (18/11/25) Minutes finalised on 16/12/25	Chair	

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
1	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations	KL	Ongoing	Management plans being prepared. BS commented that M/Plans are difficult to find on website, requested status - i.e. under review, with DPHI for approval, etc.	Ongoing. Request for update at Q2 CRG
2	Provide a copy of the Heritage Management Plan to CRG members	CA	With DPHI for approval. When available	Link provided in email (also accessible via www.acerez.com.au/resources)	Complete 12/02/26
3	A copy of the policy and application results will be provided when available for CEPB community grants through Regional Development NSW	YL	When available	Link to the CEBP Policy: https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-06/community-employment-benefit-program-for-rez-policy-paper.pdf List of all grant recipients can be found here (bottom of the page): https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/living-in-a-renewable-energy-zone/community-employment-benefit-program	Complete 12/2/26

4	Send online survey to members on CEBP application process	YL	When available	An online survey for feedback on the CEBP process was provided to all members via the Chair. Results were received and will be considered as part of the program evaluation.	Complete 12/2/26
5	Investigate whether trees removed will be replaced	TP	Next CRG	Information on clearing included in presentation for this meeting.	Complete.
6	Provide breakdown of statistics for location of Aboriginal workers	SM	Next CRG	Presentation included in this meeting.	Complete.
7	Provide map of proposed projects from DPHI	AR	Next CRG	Link to the Renewable energy project tracker.	Complete 12/2/26
8	Amend ToR in relation to minutes process	LA	With minutes	Complete.	Complete.
9	Review structure of CRG including request for sitting fees	AR	Discussion at next CRG	Under current Terms of reference sitting fee is not applicable for this term. Terms of Reference to be reviewed prior to next term*	Complete 17/2/25.
10	Obtain advice from DPHI & DCCEW regarding use of bore water for construction of projects for UHSC	AR	Next CRG	Advice provided directly to UHSC. LA requested copy of response for the information of all CRG members.	Complete. Send with minutes of Q1 CRG.
11	Present on Biodiversity Offsets	AR	Next CRG	Presentation included in this meeting.	Complete.

*Note for Item 9 - CK asked who made this decision. AR provided a response and stated that Terms of Reference for term 3 of the CRG would be reviewed to consider this request and asked for further feedback from members on the CRG structure. CK commented on the impact of time and costs for members to attend meetings. Requested there be different fees for attendance in person vs online participation. CK requested that sitting fees be backdated for term 2. Supported by RH.

5	Declarations	Chair	No changes to declarations.
6	Correspondence report	Chair	As per the meeting notice, final agenda and slide pack sent 12/02/26.
7.0	ACEREZ construction update	TS PA TS	• Presentation included: ○ Indicative construction timeline ○ Construction activities – Merotherie and Sandy Lane (work in November, December & January included) ○ Construction activities – Merotherie and Sandy Lane (temporary workforce accommodation and energy hub) ○ Construction activities – Barigan Creek (work in November, December & January included) ○ Construction activities – Elong Elong (work in November, December & January included) ○ Merotherie Road upgrade (information and what to expect) ○ Upcoming road upgrades (Ulan Road and Golden Highway intersection update + Blue Springs Road and Golden Highway intersection upgrade) ○ Vegetation clearing (process explained regarding survey works to identify habitat features, roles of ecologists/fauna spotters and liaison with WIRES and veterinarians) ○ ACEREZ supporting Merotherie neighbours (assistance with 4 fires and liaison with RFS) RW added two instances of Port to REZ contractor BMD assisting, one helping with equipment to fight a fire and the other assisting a driver with chest pain. ○ Construction activities – transmission line (transmission line access tracks construction, survey works, fencing/gate alterations, vegetation clearing, land cut/fill operations, bulk earthworks, construction of access tracks, excavation of tower foundations and tower ground earthing installation) ○ Three-month look ahead – February to April 2026 (project-wide, energy hubs, transmission lines)

Questions & Responses:

JH enquired if there is a preferred traffic route for northern end of Cassilis. TS advised that transport strategies are still being finalised Route is not locked in yet. Works will not commence in that area for a few months. Discussions on access tracks for Valley of the Winds development (currently in Land and Environment Court). The switching station will be constructed as approved.

BS enquired whether there had been a change in name of the accommodation camp from Merotherie to Sandy Lane. TS confirmed the name of the energy hub had been changed to Sandy Lane Energy Hub. Current capacity for the temporary workforce is 600, daily numbers vary depending on rosters and contractors. JH asked what the rosters were; TS responded 14 days on 7 days off, however, it depended on the type of work/roles and whether they were local workers. RH asked how far away workers were coming from as this impacts traffic movements. TS advised that some workers are transported in by buses from Sydney, Wollongong and Canberra.

CK asked how truck movements were being managed. TS responded that the initial restrictions have now been lifted due to the completion of the upgrade to the intersection at Merotherie. CK asked if the road was sealed. TS advised no, however, graded regularly with dust suppression used. It will be sealed when drainage is complete. CK enquired where the water was coming from for dust control. TS advised multiple sources of water were utilised, including commercial arrangements, water sourced from the water treatment plant onsite and retention basins created during construction. JH asked, with the unlimited vehicles coming in and out, will there be monitors on the road to record heavy vehicles. TS stated no, however, he was unsure what requirements are outlined in the Transport Strategy. TS explained induction process and working with truck drivers to use approved routes and to assist in providing accurate directions to delivery sites via QR codes.

BS asked what route the gravel trucks from the Bylong Valley are travelling. TS advised by the Golden Highway. CK commented that it would be beneficial to have road user counts to keep a record, citing the recent timber railway bridge at Beni Creek that burnt down requiring grain trucks to be re-routed.

KR stated that she was disappointed that Council had not received information of the AFC announcement prior to it becoming public. TS advised that this was not made public and will discuss with KR post meeting.

RH raised community interest in knowing more about clearing on Birriwa Bus Route South for final road alignments. TS advised that no further clearing works will be undertaken by ACEREZ for road upgrades on Birriwa Bus Route South, however ACEN Solar may be as part of its energy project. AR clarified that the transmission project crosses Birriwa Bus Route South and clearing for the cross section with the alignment was required. AR to provide more information. **Action.**

			Discussions about previous clearing, rehoming of fauna and breeding seasons. JH asked if any lessons have been learnt from the clearing in relation to the protection of fauna. NF explained process of environmental surveys, on-site ecologists, working with WIRES, fauna catchers and local veterinarians. KL advised ACEREZ regularly speaks with WIRES. RH commented that there are only 2 WIRES volunteers in the area and the need to inform the local volunteers, not just WIRES head office. BS enquired when towers will be seen on the ground. PA advised 4-6 weeks in between Sandy Lane and Blue Springs Road. Trucks will drive down easements prior to the road network being approved. Components are still being delivered to site via containers and towers will be assembled on site, prior to erection. BS enquired how many trucks per tower it will take and requested information about the volume of truck load movements. **Action.**

7.1	Community engagement update	KL	• Presentation included:
			  ○ Christmas gift giving (supporting St Vincent de Paul & Barnardos)
			  ○ Attendance and sponsorship for community events (Dunedoo Christmas Markets, coffee drop-ins, Christmas lunch for Kahkama House, Dunedoo Lions Christmas Festival, Dunedoo Amateur Swimming Carnival, Gulgong Christmas raffle, pop-up with TILT Renewables & EnergyCo in Coolah, Dunedoo Show and upcoming Gulgong & Mudgee Shows
			  ○ ACEREZ Community Grants Program (information sessions held in Mudgee, Coolah, Dunedoo, Cassilis and tonight in Wellington).Timeline provided for EOI, applications and last step for successful applicants
			
			Questions were asked throughout the presentation, including:
			
			AR sought feedback from community members on the informal coffee drop-in sessions.
			
			KL explained the community grants application process. BS commented that it would have been better to receive responses to questions asked at the sessions to assist in preparing applications. KL invited BS and any other attendees to contact him for further questions. AR stated that an update on EnergyCo's community grants program will be provided when available. **Action.**
			
			BS thanked RW for organising a joint project meeting for the Wollar community, which was very useful to have developers in the room together and also discuss cumulative impacts.
			
			DS suggested ACEREZ make the community grants information available now, prior to formally opening applications so that groups know what material they need to prepare. KL thanked DS for the feedback. SL thanked DS for sharing information via his social media page to get information out. *(DS & JD left at 12.04pm.)*

7.2	Industry & Aboriginal participation	SM	• Presentation included:
			  ○ Statistical information on the workforce profile, including Aboriginal participation (as requested at the previous meeting)
			  ○ Headcount, full-time equivalents, learning workers, young people & underrepresented groups, Aboriginal FTEs, targets against trades workforce
			  ○ Local workforce and support (outcomes of percentages of the workforce who are local to the REZ and adjacent LGAs)
			  ○ Local engagement (Mudgee, Orange & Dubbo 2025 Try-a-Trade events - community training success, engaging youth in renewable energy careers)
			  ○ Local engagement – Quarterly events and engagement (The Summit NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce, Orange Careers Expo & Trade Experience, Dubbo Try-a-Trade, Business briefings in Mudgee and Dubbo)
			  ○ Reporting on number of placements (trainees, graduates, work experience placements)
			Questions were asked and answered throughout the presentation:
			JB asked if Wellington High School could be included in the Try-a-Trade. SM stated she would be happy to work with them. JH asked if there had been any interaction with Coolah and Merriwa high schools. SM took on notice. *NOTE:* KL informed JH at the end of this meeting that SM had advised that Coolah had been included and she would look into having Merriwa included.

	LUNCH BREAK		**Members broke for lunch at 12.10pm. Meeting recommenced at 12.21pm**

8	EnergyCo update
	8.1 – Port to REZ
		AZ	• Presented on Port to REZ:
			• Operational Logistics Review:
			  ○ Commissioned for CWO REZ to assess journey times, pinch points, operational issues along the full journey
			  ○ Identified issues such as:
			  ▪ Port circulation – storage, circulation and queueing
			  ▪ Travel times
			  ▪ Coordination with other OSOM
			  ▪ Rest areas and passing opportunities
			  ▪ Height width restrictions for safe movement
			  ▪ Curfews and network access

- Transport program:
    - Transport is working on a number of programs to support renewables
    - Delivering safety and logistics management works along the CWO and NE corridors to complement capacity works being provided by EnergyCo
    - Establishing a logistics function to better coordinate timing and access from the Port to REZ zones
    - Working with Police on planning for provision of OSOM escorts
    - Reviewing curfew and network access requirements.

Questions were asked and answered throughout the presentation:

JH asked about travel times and coordination of OSOM vehicles. How many OSOMs will be released from the Port? AZ advised that this will be variable and dependent on weights of products being transported, the types of vehicles, etc. CK asked whether they were contemplating movements at night. AZ explained that there will be movements at night, however, there is a night curfew at Warkworth. Currently working on arrangements for real time monitoring, escorts, etc to ensure movements are safe. Discussions on time taken to arrive from Port to Golden Highway and curfews. The need to liaise around shift changes at mines, school zones, etc.

JH enquired about the proposed overtaking lane near Merriwa and how sites are determined. AZ explained process of typography, location of pullover bays, potential land acquisitions, shoulder space and safety of drivers.

JH advised of a landowner impacted by one of the proposed pullover bays (west of Glenroy Rd) who is concerned about safety and access to their property. AR advised that the EnergyCo team was aware of the matter and offering to meet the landowners.

KD asked if there is a process if vehicles break down. AZ explained that Transport for NSW has a procedure and transport companies have an allowance for tyres and brake pads. There are transport maintenance teams to assist as well.

LS

LS presented on:

- The Port to REZ project – Port of Newcastle to Elong Elong:
    - 19 upgrades and 6 pullover bays are included in the first stage of work
    - 3 sites now complete
    - 11 sites to be completed in early 2026 with the remaining 5 to be completed by mid-year

			• Port to REZ project – Pullover bays
			  ○ BMD constructing 6 new pullover bays as part of their work
			  ○ Early work to begin in February (survey, flagging etc)
			  ○ Major construction to start in early 2026
			  ○ 2 pullover bay locations still to be finalised
			
			Questions were asked and answered throughout the presentation:
			BS asked about the detour around Denman. LS advised that vehicles too high to go over the Denman Bridge will go via Bengalla and Wybong Roads. These roads will be reclassified as state roads. Muswellbrook Shire Council received disaster relief funding to repair roads. Works will be starting soon. Once completed the roads will be handed over to Transport for NSW. BS asked if Wybong Road would be upgraded. LS advised that it would be repaired.

8.2	Biodiversity offsets and strategic offset delivery agreements	KC	• Presented on the biodiversity offset delivery for the CWO transmission project:
			• Strategic Offset Delivery Agreements (SODA):
			  ○ A legally binding agreement between a renewable energy proponent and the Environment Agency Head. Enables the project to meet offset obligations immediately on signing
			  ○ Offsets are delivered by DCCEEW through:
			  ▪ retirement of like for like biodiversity credits
			  ▪ targeted conservation actions aligned with regional priorities
			• Offset delivery is consistent with the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme and regional Conservation Investment Strategies
			• Sourcing offsets for the SODA:
			  ○ Retirement of like for like biodiversity credits from EnergyCo BSA sites
			  ○ Retirement of like for like biodiversity credits purchased from the market
			  ○ Conservation actions if like for like credits are unavailable

- Offset delivery progress:
    - Nearly half of the offset obligation sourced by September 2025
    - Full obligation met for 2 ecosystems and 6 species
    - Offset delivery progress reports published for every quarter – next quarter will be available soon
    - Offset transactions are recorded on the public register
- Presented on:
    - Local biodiversity offsets:
        - Protecting important local habitats
        - Supporting threatened species
        - Providing long-term conservation outcomes
        - Advised of purchase of two large conservation properties to deliver the required offsets (Mount Marsden Biodiversity Stewardship site and Turill Biodiversity Stewardship Site)
    - Implementation of the SODA and benefits to the region:
        - There is an expectation that EnergyCo partner with DCCEEW to deliver all project offset obligations for its projects

CM

Questions were asked and answered throughout the presentation:

BS enquired whether the Turill Biodiversity Stewardship site is the same as Saddlers Creek. AR advised that it is the same property. BS stated that with everything going on, especially in relation to the fires, is the loss of food considered for the Regent Honey Eater. CM advised that whilst the area was charred, ecologists visiting the site have advised that it will regenerate. CM commented that the Regent Honey Eater also lives in the nearby National Park. BS asked if the site will be a state conservation area or part of the National Park. CM advised that this is still to be decided. National Parks is working with EnergyCo. Looking to preserve as National Park but may not be able to initially. BS advised that the property owner was selling it, hoping that it would be included in the National Park. Further, half of the area has a mining exploration licence over it. CM advised that EnergyCo & National Parks can co-exist with the exploration licence. Once the BSA is executed the land will be managed. BS raised concern that some of the offsets were already offsets from other projects.

8.3	Social Impact Management Plan update	AR	• Presented on the Social Impact Management (SIM) Plan – Quarterly Dashboard • Information on the SIM Plan Monitoring Dashboard, which brings together data across 8 key themes to show how EnergyCo and ACEREZ are managing social impacts during construction of the transmission project
9	General Business	LA	• JH suggested that the next meeting be held at the Merotherie temporary accommodation site. KL to confirm whether this is possible. All agreed it would be good for this term of members to be able to view the site. • CK commented on the Regional Major Infrastructure slides from the Out of Session meeting which stated that there was no potable water in Gilgandra. Advising that there is a fully approved 500-bed accommodation site for the Inland Rail project, and there is enough water available for that. Several new bores have been put in. AR will refer the query to DCCEEW about potable water in Gilgandra. **Action.** • CK raised concerns with the boundary for the REZ and that Gilgandra has been left out of the Narromine Shire, this will affect potential applicants for EnergyCo's Community and Employment Benefits Program. RW advised that if groups are partly within the shire, they are eligible for funding. • CK advised that global energy companies are still taking up landholder contracts when access to the transmission line may be refused due to capacity. JB commented that they can still gain access to the existing distribution network for Essential Energy. AR commented that access right holders have been approved for a certain capacity and that there is still some capacity available. • CK raised the matter of a recent article in The Land (12 February edition, page 9) reporting on EWON's statistics from its Annual Report on complaints received about EnergyCo. AR advised that she and SL have regular meetings with EWON and there are currently no complaints open. CK was concerned that the way it was reported did not reflect well on EnergyCo, asking whether it was possible to receive a slide at the next CRG explaining the statistics. AR discussed EWON's current jurisdiction. AR also advised that there are two different organisations; EWON (transmission) and the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commission (who handles energy generating projects – solar, wind, etc) **Action.** • BS thanked EnergyCo for the update on the biodiversity offsets. Most of the slides answered the questions she had. BS stated that the Biodiversity Offset Management Plans are out of date and some of the appendices have been redacted. NF explained that redaction was due to sensitive information about property purchases. SL will speak to KL about streamlining resources on the ACEREZ website. • JH said the community wants cleared vegetation replaced, not just offset. Corridor trees should be planted. TS advised it is difficult to replace as the reason for the clearing is to build the project. There is a landscaping requirement that will see planting around the energy hub site. • LA advised that she should send out the current Terms of Reference for this CRG, requesting members review and provide any comments/proposed changes for consideration. This matter will be discussed at the next meeting. **Action.**

10	Next Meeting	LA	• May 2026 (Merotherie or Mudgee) – Date and venue to be confirmed.
11	Meeting close	LA	• Meeting closed at 1:58 pm with LA thanking all for their attendance and contribution.

ACTION ITEMS

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
1	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations	KL	Ongoing	Management plans being prepared	Ongoing
2	Advice on clearing works on Birriwa Bus Route South	AR	Next Meeting		
3	Update map of transmission line access tracks construction to show how many towers there will be and truck load movements	TS	Next Meeting		
4	Update on EnergyCo's community grants program to be provided	AR	When available		
5	Slide explaining EWON's Annual Report & reporting of EnergyCo complaints	AR	Next Meeting		
6	Send current CRG's Terms of Reference to members for review	LS	Next meeting	Sent 18/2/26	Comments due back to chair 28/3/26
7	DCCEEW potable water in Gilgandra	AR	Next meeting		

NEXT MEETING (FINAL CRG FOR THIS TERM)

Date: Tuesday, May TBC

Time: 10am morning tea 10.30am to 1pm CRG

Venue: TBC (Mudgee)

ACEREZ
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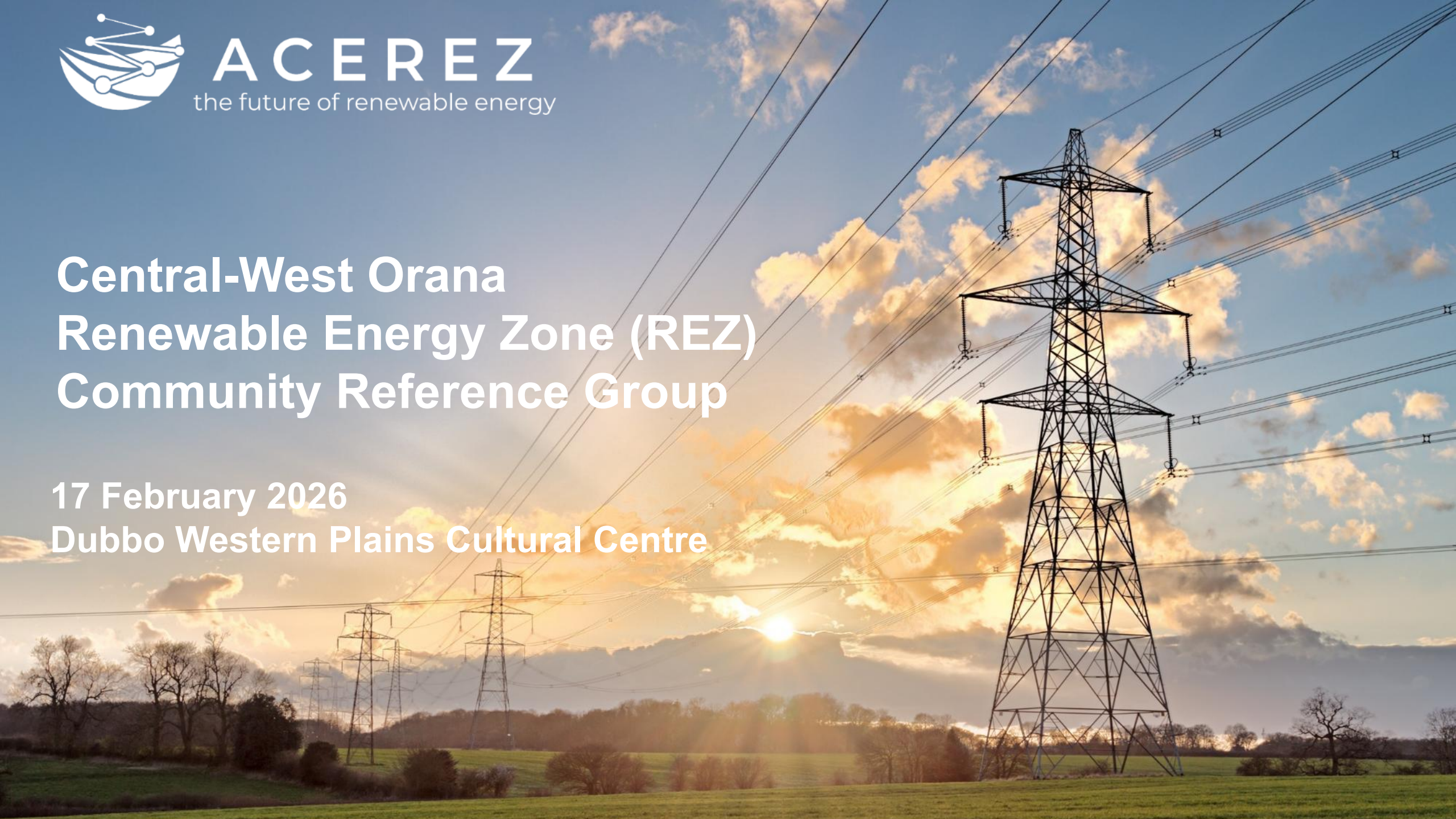
Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Community Reference Group

17 February 2026
Dubbo Western Plains Cultural Centre



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Acknowledgement of Country

Agenda

ACEREZ
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1. Welcome and introduction
2. ACEREZ project update
    - Construction update – Tim Smith and Pablo Alvarez
    - Community engagement update – Kee Li
    - Industry and Aboriginal participation – Sonja Malcolm

Lunch break

4. EnergyCo update
    - Biodiversity offsets and strategic offset delivery agreements – Courtney Moran and Kelly Carbery, DCCEEW
    - Port to REZ – Dimitri Perdikaris and Anna Zycki, Transport for NSW
    - Social Impact Management Plan update – Alicia Rados
4. General business

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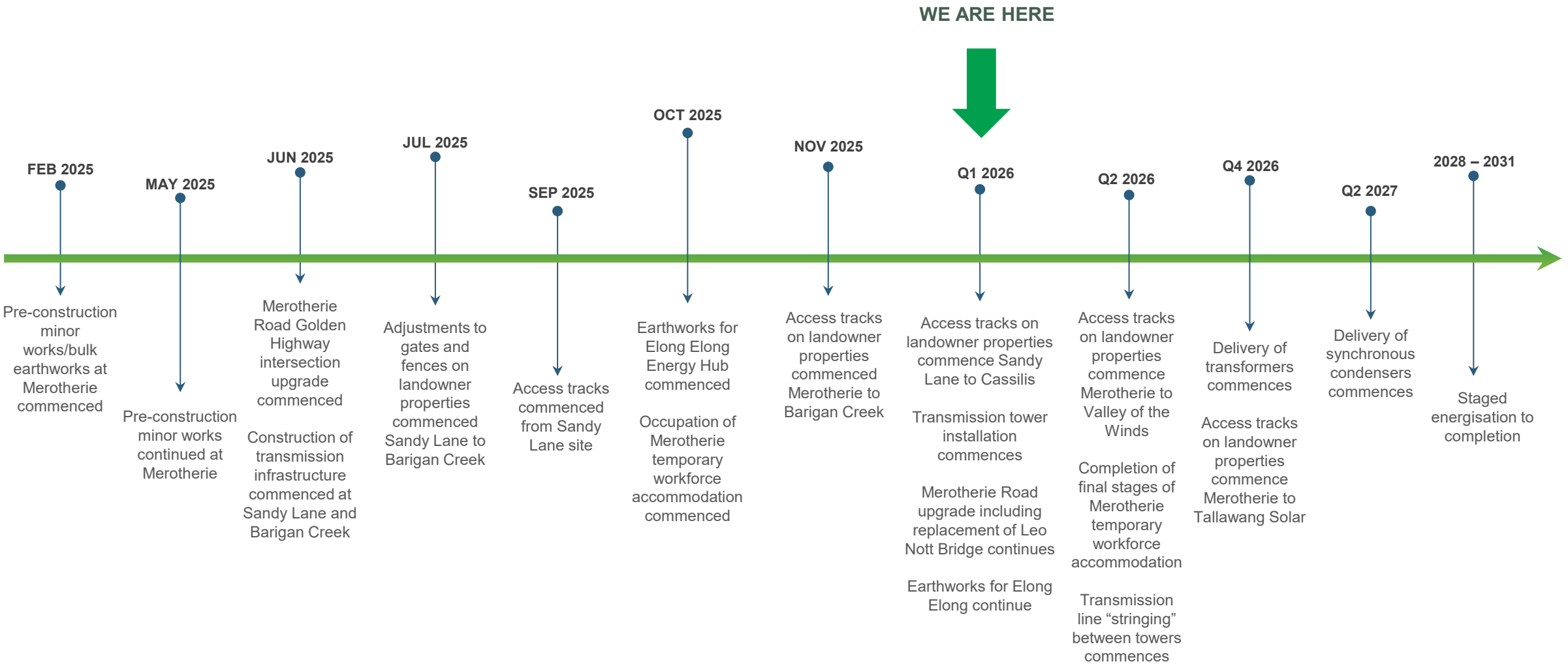
ACEREZ project update

Indicative construction timeline



Construction activities – Merotherie and Sandy Lane

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Work in November, December & January included:

- Delivery of machinery, equipment, materials and temporary accommodation units
- Installation of accommodation units, associated facilities and site utilities
- Commissioning of the water treatment plant
- Construction of internal roads, laydown area, plant workshop and access gates
- Bulk earthworks to prepare the energy hub site for construction
- Piling of foundations for energy hub infrastructure and transmission towers
- Construction of access tracks and transmission tower pads
- Ground and utilities investigations

Construction activities – Merotherie and Sandy Lane

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Temporary workforce accommodation

- Staff to continue to move into the temporary workforce accommodation in Merotherie as units are completed
- Current capacity is up to 600 beds
- The permanent kitchen, dining hall, reception and gym facilities are now open
- The final stages of the temporary workforce accommodation are expected to be finished by mid-year with capacity for up to 1,200 workers to support construction of the energy hubs, transmission lines and related infrastructure

Construction activities – Barigan Creek

Work in November, December & January included:

- Delivery of machinery, equipment and materials for the piling scope
- Piling foundations for energy hub infrastructure
- Establishment of the laydown area and installation of dome shelters
- Delivery of substation equipment components
- Construction of drainage, internal roads and hardstands
- Construction of access tracks, including vegetation clearing, on agreed private properties
- Ground and utilities investigations along the transmission line easement

Construction activities – Elong Elong

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Work in November, December & January included:

- Mobilisation of machinery and equipment for the start of bulk earthworks
- Completion of temporary laydown areas for storage of construction materials and machinery
- Installation and commissioning of temporary site offices
- Utilities investigations along the transmission line easement

Merotherie Road upgrade

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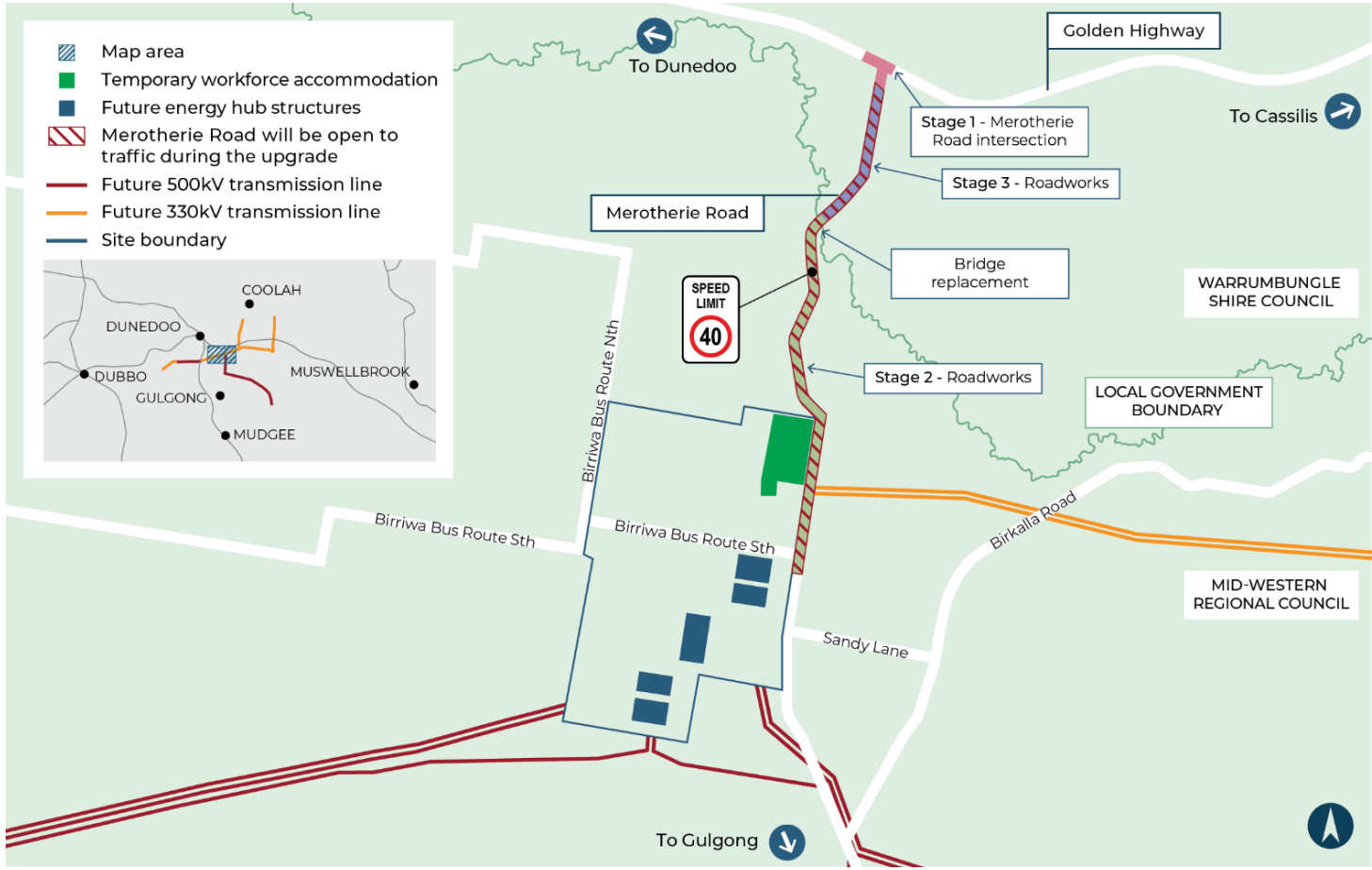
- Merotherie Road upgrade is being done in stages
- Stage 1 – upgrade of the Golden Highway Merotherie Road intersection was finished in December 2025
- The upgrade of Merotherie Road is continuing, including the construction of a new bridge over the Talbragar River

What to expect:

- Temporary stop-go traffic control
- Reduced speed limit of 40km/h around the construction site
- Oversized plant and machinery within the construction site
- Water spray trucks will be used to reduce dust
- All relevant environmental controls will be in place during the work
- Access to Merotherie Road will be maintained at all times
- Safe access for cyclists will be maintained



Upcoming road upgrades

- **Ulan Road and Golden Highway intersection upgrade (WAD2)**
- **Blue Springs Roads and Golden Highway intersection upgrade (WAD2)**

Works are expected to commence in Q2 2026, and will include new road surface, turning allowances, line marking and drainage.

ACEREZ will inform the community before starting the roadworks via:

- Community notifications
- Radio announcements, newspaper notices and Variable Message Signs
- Face-to-face engagement with neighbouring landowners

Vegetation clearing

Construction of the transmission project requires some vegetation clearing.

ACEREZ is undertaking all construction activities in accordance with the Project's planning approval, Environmental Impact Statement and Biodiversity Management Plan.

Clearing process:

- Prior to any clearing taking place, ecologists complete a pre-clearing survey of work areas to identify habitat features.
- If habitat features are identified and required to be removed, a two-stage process is carried out
- Under the guidance of ecologists and fauna spotters on site, any displaced fauna is relocated or taken to wildlife carers
- ACEREZ continues to liaise with WIRES and other wildlife carers

ACEREZ supporting Merotherie neighbours

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Date	Location and details	ACJV assistance
15 March	**Stubbo** A grass fire started near the Stubbo Solar Farm.	Liaised with RFS to provide water carts
7 November	**Merotherie near Free Flight MX Park** A lightning strike hit a tree near a neighbour's property, causing a fire.	Provided water cart, front-end loader
1 December	**Birriwa Bus Route North** A grass fire broke out, potentially caused by a spark from harvesting machinery on a paddock.	Provided graders, water carts and dump trucks
10 December	**Wardens Rd, Leadville, north of Golden Highway** A bushfire of 630ha that had been burning for more than 24 hours.	Liaised with RFS to provide water trucks

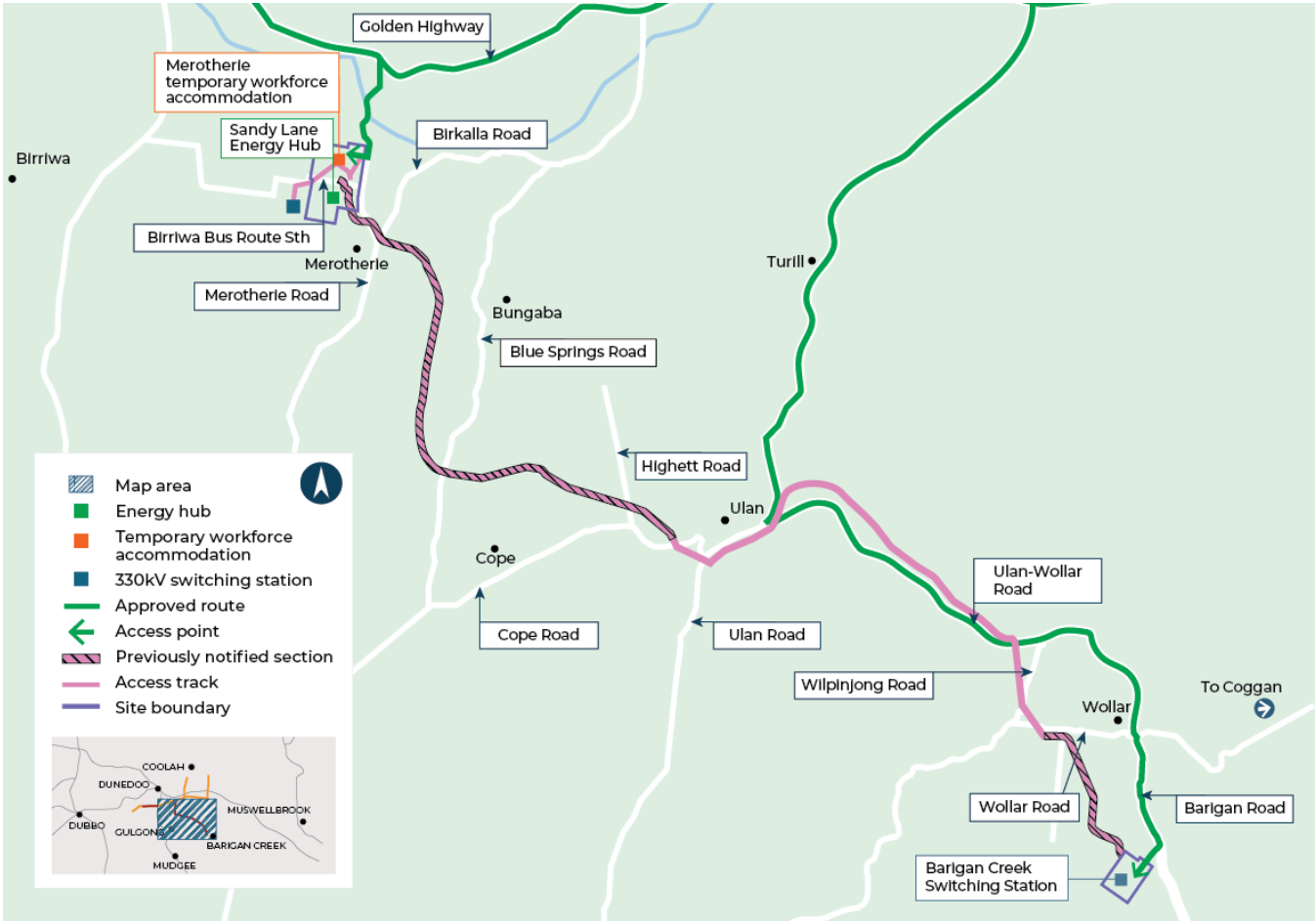
Construction activities – transmission line

Transmission line access tracks construction

ACEREZ is continuing to establish access tracks within the easement on private properties to prepare for the construction of foundations and the erection of transmission towers, from Sandy Lane Energy Hub (previously known as Merotherie Energy Hub) to Barigan Creek Switching Station.

Construction vehicles are currently crossing public roads at:

- Merotherie Road
- Birkalla Road
- Blue Springs Road
- Highett Road



Work area map

Construction activities – transmission line

Transmission line access tracks construction

We will soon commence work from the Sandy Lane Energy Hub to Cassilis.

We will continue to notify the community as work progresses to further sections within the easement alignment.

Latest community notifications on construction activities can be found on www.acerez.com.au/resources.

Work area map

Construction activities – transmission line

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Transmission line access tracks construction

Work includes:

- Survey works
- Fencing and gate alterations
- Vegetation clearing
- Land cut and fill operations
- Bulk earthworks
- Construction of access tracks
- Excavation of tower foundations
- Tower ground earthing installation

Three-month lookahead – February to April 2026

ACEREZ
the future of renewable energy

Project Wide

- Completion of the remaining temporary workforce accommodation and associated infrastructure (Stage 3 & 4)
- Commencement of road upgrades on the Ulan Road intersection and Blue Springs Road intersection, subject to approval

Energy Hubs

- Continuing earthworks to prepare for construction at the Sandy Lane and Elong Elong Energy Hubs
- Continuing piling of foundations at Sandy Lane Energy Hub and Barigan Creek Switching Station
- Start of pre-assembly on steel gantries at Sandy Lane and Barigan Creek

Transmission Lines

- Continuing construction of tower foundations between Merotherie and Barigan Creek
- Commencement of access tracks between Merotherie and north Cassilis including vegetation clearing
- Start of transmission tower pre-assembly
- Commencement of access tracks between Merotherie and Valley of the Winds including vegetation clearing

Community engagement

Christmas gift giving

ACEREZ employees supported St Vincent de Paul and Barnardos with a Christmas giving tree appeal in December 2025.

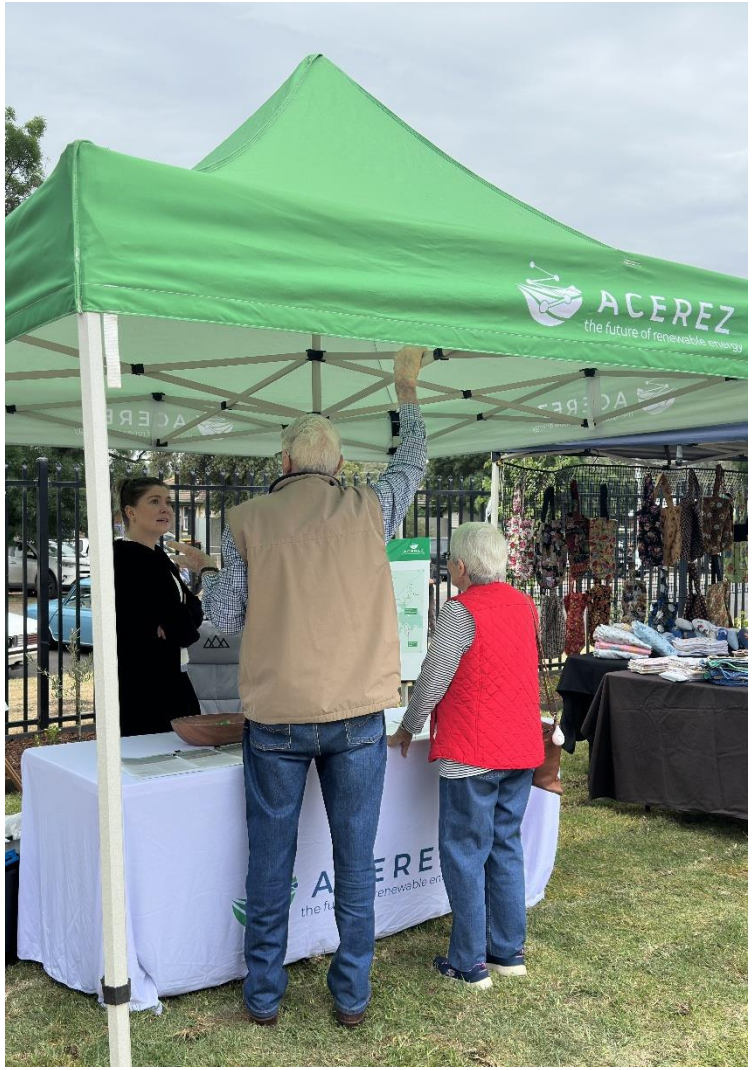
Non-perishable food items and gifts were donated by team members at the Community Information Centre in Mudgee as well as offices in Sydney and Merotherie.

The week before Christmas, the Community Team took the gifts and food to Vinnies and Barnados – helping bring a little extra joy to locals who needed it.

Community engagement

ACEREZ has been actively involved in the community, sponsoring and attending events, including:

- Dunedoo Christmas Markets on 13 December to offer a free community BBQ to celebrate the festive season
- Coffee drop-in with EnergyCo and Transport for NSW in Coolah on 14 November
- Sponsorship of a Christmas lunch for Kahkama House in Dunedoo
- Sponsorship of the Dunedoo Lions Christmas Festival & Dunedoo Amateur Swimming Carnival
- Donation to support the Gulgong community Christmas raffle
- Pop-up with TILT Renewables and EnergyCo in Coolah on 19 January
- Sponsorship to support the Dunedoo Show held on the weekend
- Attending Gulgong Show this Saturday



ACEREZ Community Grants Program

Applications for our grants program open next month.

We've hosted four Community Information Sessions in the REZ in:

- **Mudgee**
- **Coolah**
- **Dunedoo**
- **Cassilis**

We have another session **tonight** at:

- **Wellington Soldiers Memorial Club**
  from 5pm-7pm

ACEREZ Community Grants Program

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01

EOI

Interested applicants can attend an information session or contact ACEREZ to discuss their ideas

02

Apply

Applicants must submit a full application

Applications will be open from 1 March to 31 March

03

Last Step

Successful applicants will be announced 6 weeks after applications close

Workforce profile

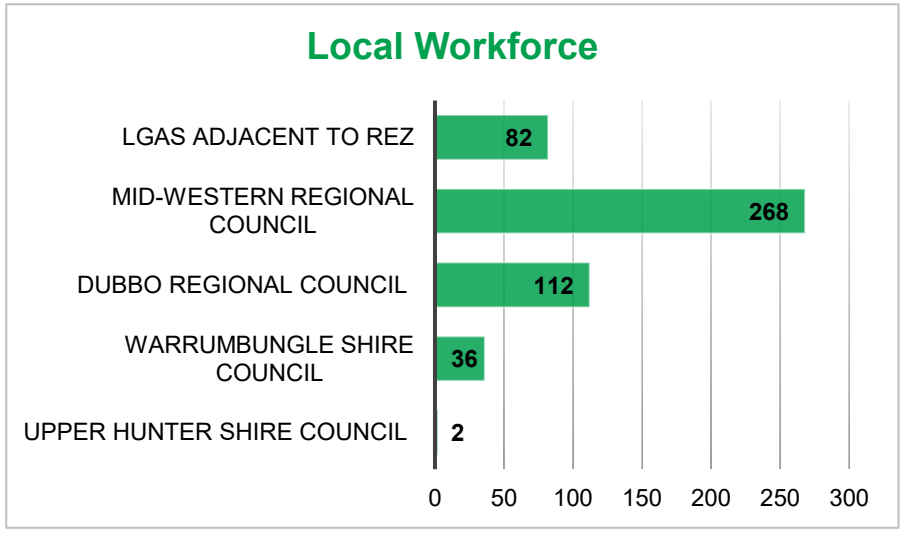
Project workforce				Gender ratio			
Headcount	1472	Full time equivalent (FTE)	719		Women 15%	Men 81%	Prefer not to say 4%

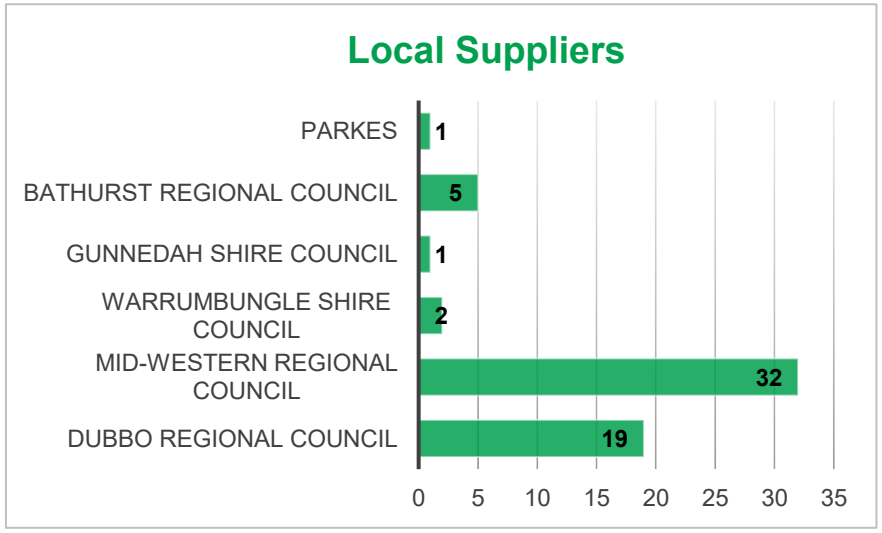
Targets against Project Workforce (FTE)	Target	Performance	FTE Number
Learning Workers A worker with or without qualifications, who needs to gain qualifications or skills to meet the needs of the infrastructure project	43%	45%	324
Young People < 25	8%	6.3%	46
Underrepresented Groups A demographic group that is not proportionately represented in various industries or fields	15%	44%	313
2% Aboriginal FTE employment opportunities	2%	3.5%	25

Targets against Trades Workforce (FTE)	Target	Performance	FTE Number
Trades workforce on site	NA	NA	28
Apprentices	25%	50%	14
Women	2%	5%	1.5

Local workforce and suppliers

Reporting % against Project Workforce headcount		
Local employment outcomes (percentage of the workforce who are local to the REZ and adjacent LGAs)	34%	500





Data sourced December 2025 reporting period

Local engagement

Mudgee, Orange and Dubbo 2025 Try-a-Trade events

Community training success

Five hundred locals have now completed workplace training programs, up from previous quarters. Training has covered project inductions, cultural awareness, first aid, safety and mobile plant operations, continuing to build skills and strengthen workforce capability.

Engaging youth in renewable energy careers

In 2025, ACEREZ attended six career expos, Try-a-Trade events and youth forums across the region, engaging with more than 2,000 students. These initiatives helped raise awareness among local young people about jobs and skills opportunities in the renewable energy sector.

Local engagement

Quarterly events and engagement

ACEREZ attended the following events to increase awareness of the types of roles and supply chain opportunities on the project:

- **The Summit** NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce on 27 and 28 October 2025 at Rydges Resort Hunter Valley where ACEREZ had a stall and engaged with businesses to increase awareness of supply opportunities on the project.
- **Orange Careers Expo & Trade Experience** on 5 November 2025 and **Dubbo Try-a-Trade** on 2 December 2025 where more than 800 local students had an opportunity to speak about the types of roles and training needed for the project.
- **Business briefings** in Mudgee on 2 December and Dubbo on 3 December where more than 120 attendees heard about supply opportunities for the coming months. ACEREZ has participated in 21 industry briefing events since July 2024.

Reporting number of placements	
Trainees	5
Graduates	24
Work experience placements	5

Questions

Courtney Moran, Principal Planning Manager, EnergyCo

Kelly Carbery, Manager Strategic Projects Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regs, DCCEEW

Biodiversity Offsets

Local biodiversity offsets

As part of project approvals, EnergyCo is required to deliver biodiversity offsets to mitigate unavoidable impacts from the construction of the transmission project.

Offsets are being delivered within the region, with a focus on:

- **Protecting important local habitats**
- **Supporting threatened species**
- **Providing long-term conservation outcomes**

EnergyCo has purchased two large conservation properties to deliver these offsets:

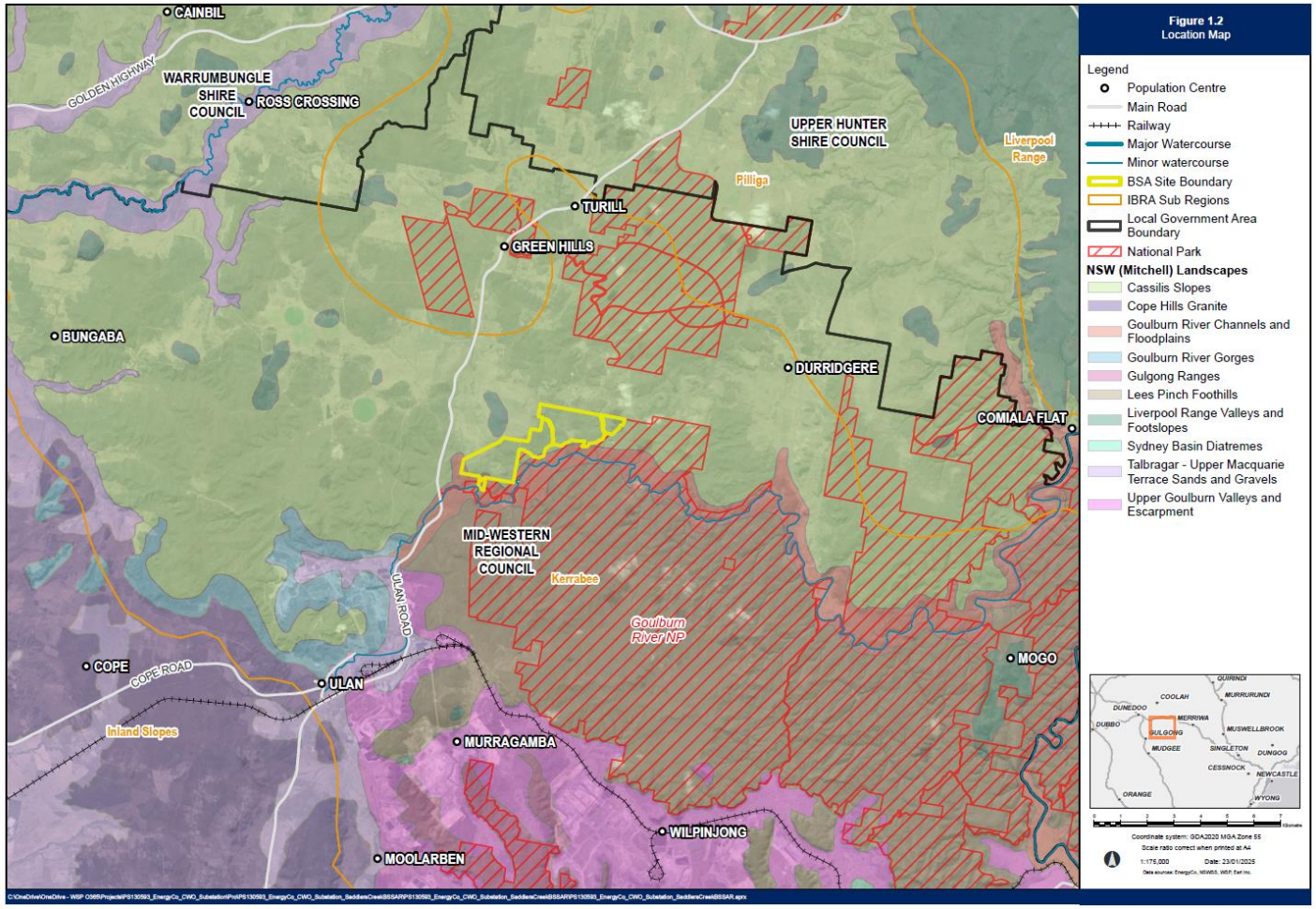
- **Mount Marsden Biodiversity Stewardship Site**
- **Turill Biodiversity Stewardship Site**

These sites are established under NSW's biodiversity framework and are managed in perpetuity for conservation.

Mount Marsden Biodiversity Stewardship Site

29 January: Site inspection – post wildfire

Turill Biodiversity Stewardship Site



Location map

Area within the biodiversity site

Implementation of the SODA and benefits to the region

There is an expectation EnergyCo partner with DCCEEW to deliver all project offset obligations for its projects

- The Minister for, Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Heritage has approved the development of Conservation Investment Strategies (CIS) to optimise conservation outcomes in each REZ.
- The CIS seeks to achieve more strategic conservation vision for the CWO region than traditional offset delivery approaches by proponents, which is resulting in uncoordinated and inefficient investment
- EnergyCo was instructed by the Minister and Secretary DCCEEW that EnergyCo are not to pursue offsets independently and are to explore all options work with DCCEEW as a foundational investment partner of the CIS..
- DCCEEW and EnergyCo have been negotiating a Strategic Offsets Delivery Agreement (SODA), whereby EnergyCo funds DCCEEW to deliver on its remaining biodiversity offset obligations for the CWO REZ Transmission Project in alignment with the CWO CIS.

Dimitri Perdikaris, Strategic Delivery Manager

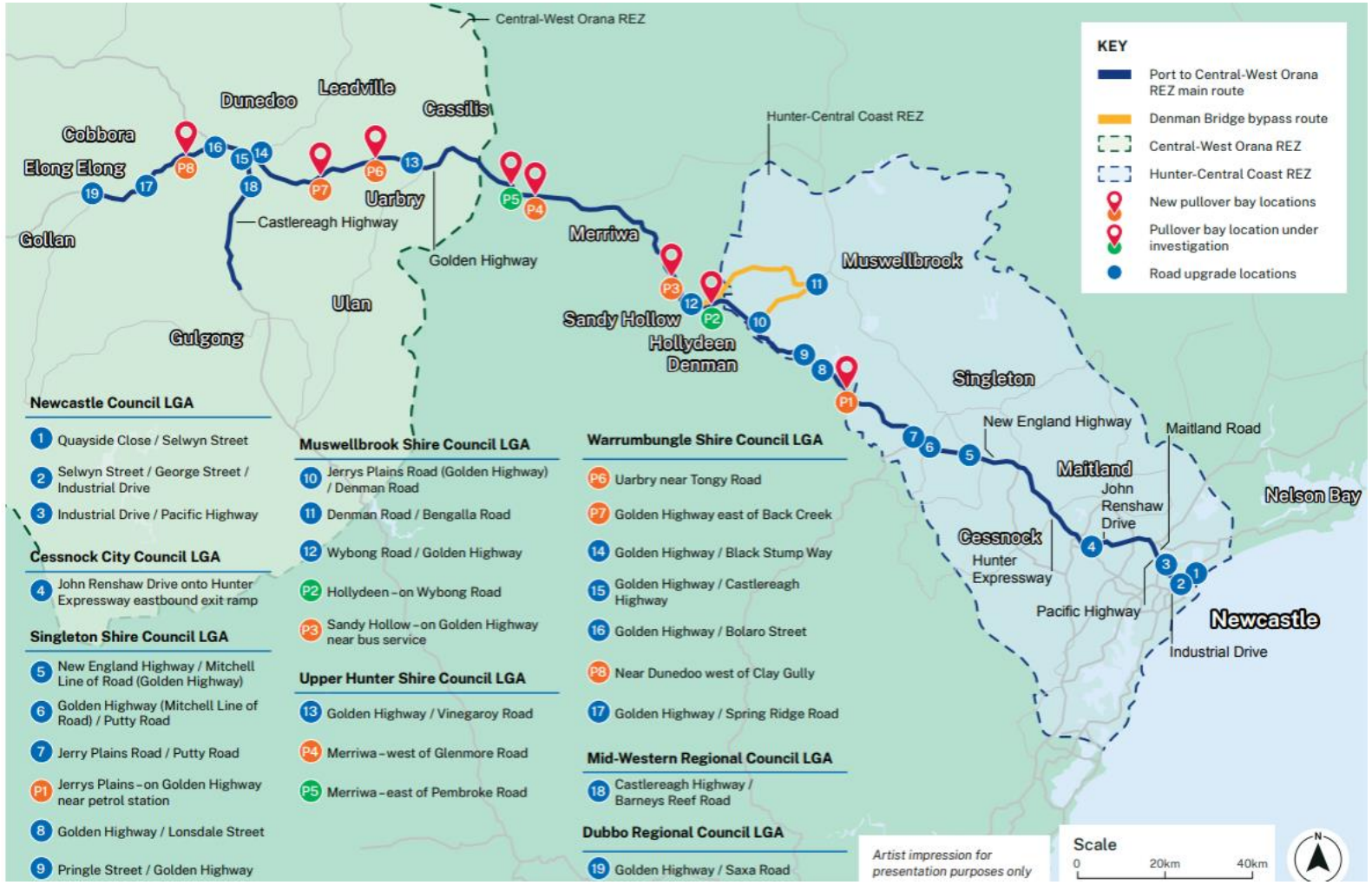
Anna Zycki, Executive Director, Development and Solutions,
Transport for NSW

Port to REZ Project Update

Port to REZ project – Port of Newcastle to Elong Elong

- 19 upgrades and 6 pullover bays are included in the first stage of work.
- 3 sites now complete
- 11 sites to be completed in early 2026 with the remaining 5 complete by mid-year

Port to REZ project – Pullover bays

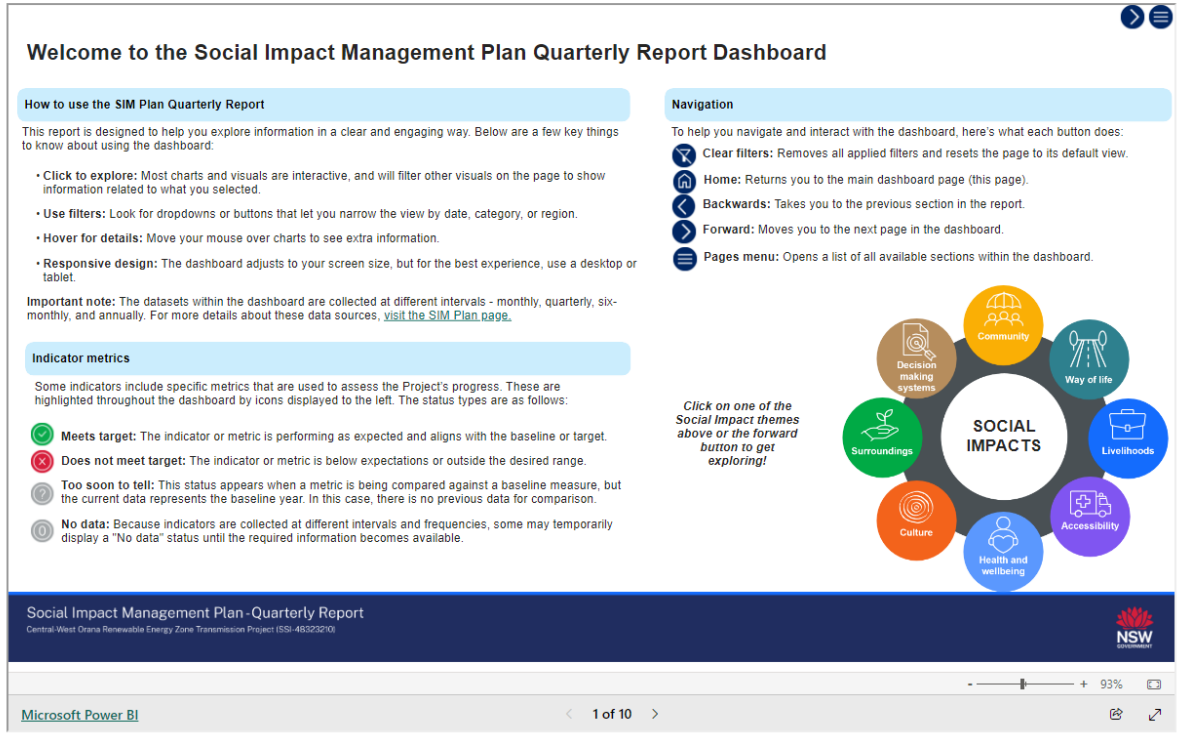
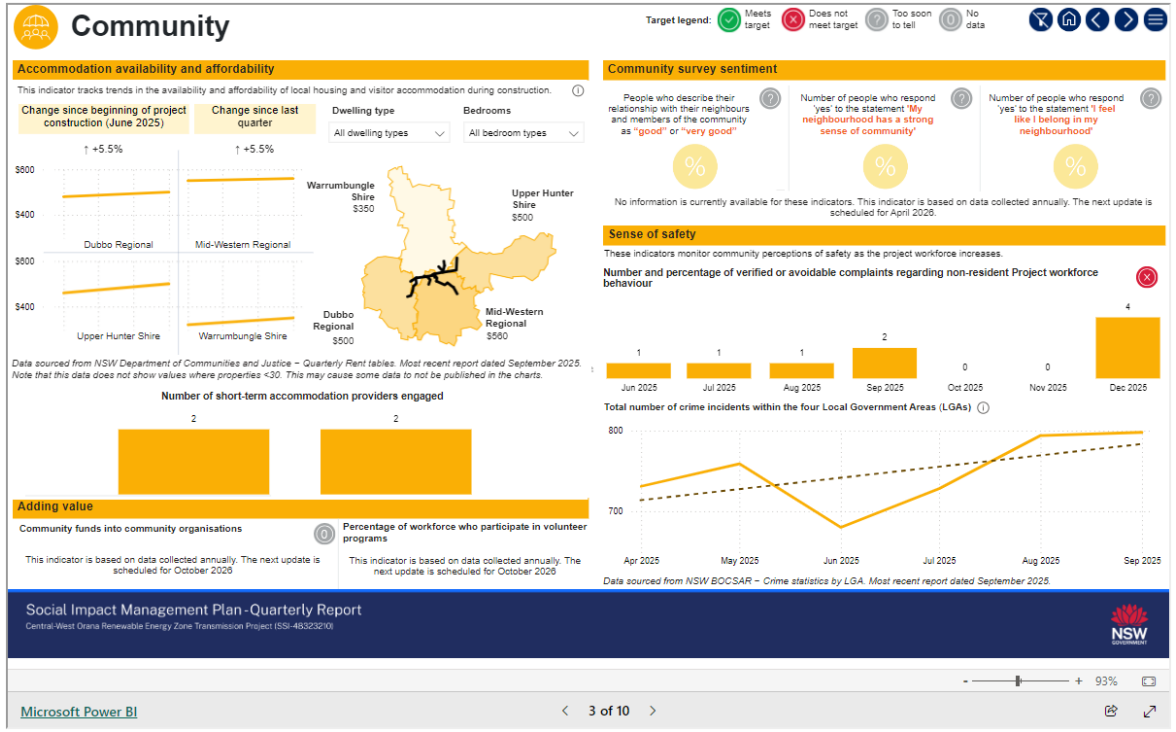


- BMD constructing 6 new pullover bays as part of their work
- Early work to begin in February (survey, flagging etc)
- Major construction to start in early 2026
- 2 pullover bay locations still to be finalised

Alicia Rados, Associate Director Community and Place

Social Impact Management Plan – Quarterly Report Update

Social Impact Management Plan – Quarterly Dashboard now available

SIM Plan Monitoring Dashboard

The SIM Plan Monitoring Dashboard brings together data across the 8 key themes to show how EnergyCo and ACEREZ are managing social impacts during construction of the transmission project. Use the dashboard to stay informed about our progress and how we are meeting our social impact commitments.