New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)

Community Reference Group (CRG) North – Meeting 7

Held on: 15/06/2026 – 12.30pm to 3pm

Location: Uralla Council Chambers, 32 Salisbury Street, Uralla

Chaired by: Margaret Harvie

Key takeaways and outcomes

- **Land access approach**: EnergyCo's Site Manager for New England REZ explained how we work with landholders to seek access for field work activities and how this informs our design and environmental assessments for the project.
- **Draft access scheme for New England REZ**: EnergyCo's Access Team explained key elements and next steps for the proposed access scheme which is due to be released for public consultation shortly. CRG members will be invited to submit feedback during the consultation period.
- **Community and Employment Benefit Program**: Following announcement of an initial $60 million funding allocation in May, members would like to see consultation prioritised and expedited so CRG input informs decision-making around the program design. EnergyCo is finalising the consultation program to inform the CEBP and expects to engage with the CRG shortly.
- **Uralla Shire Council guest presentation**: Council's Strategic Planner outlined its Local Housing Strategy which sets out Council's 20-year plan to ensure the shire has the right mix of housing to support its growing community.
- Actions focused on sharing resources and documents including the property webinar recording, Renewable Energy Sector Board Plan, and draft access scheme declaration (once published).

Attended

Role	Attendee
Chairperson	Margaret Harvie
Community Representatives	Alex Hunter James Reilly Annette Kilarr Paul Butterworth Rebecca Taylor Justin Hoad
LALC Representatives	
LGA delegates	Armidale Regional Council – Cr Paul Gaddes Tamworth Regional Council – Cr Russell Webb (Mayor) Uralla Shire Council – Cr Sarah Burrows Inverell Shire Council – Cr Kate Dight (Mayor)
EnergyCo Representatives	Julian Watson, Deputy Project Director – New England REZ Flynn Reyners, Manager Generation and Access - EnergyCo* Dan Taylor, Site Manager – New England REZ Melissa Maurer, Community Engagement Manager – New England REZ Amy Lin, Senior Project & Policy Officer, Generation and Access - EnergyCo*
Guests	Emily Sims, Strategic Planner - Uralla Shire Council
Note taker	Kate McGrath

*Online attendance

Apologies

Bruce McMullen

Michael Luchich - Voice for Walcha (currently withdrawn from CRG participation)

Walcha Council - Cr Rachel Grieg (currently withdrawn from CRG participation)

Declarations of interest

Member	Details
Kate Dight	Non-pecuniary interest. Personal relationship with project developer.
Sarah Burrows	Pecuniary interest. Landholder of property in proposed transmission line corridor. Landholder of property with option for proposed wind project.
Kate McGrath	Pecuniary interest. Investor in Sapphire Wind Project.
Margaret Harvie	Non-pecuniary interest. Margaret has advised generators on community engagement and delivers a community engagement training course which generators participate in.
Justin Hoad	Pecuniary interest. Lobbying for Energy Hub to be established on land he owns.

Common Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation / Acronym	Definition	Abbreviation / Acronym	Definition
CEBP	Community Employment Benefits Program	CRG	Community Reference Group
CWO	Central West-Orana REZ Project	DCCEEW	NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DPHI	NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure	EII Act	*NSW Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020*
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement	GW	Gigawatt
INSW	Infrastructure NSW	kV	Kilovolt
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council	LGA	Local Government Area
MW	Megawatt	NER	National Electricity Rules
OSOM	Oversize, over mass	P2R	Port to REZ Transport Project

Abbreviation / Acronym	Definition	Abbreviation / Acronym	Definition
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone	RFP	Request for Proposal
RMO	REZ Mobile Office	SEARs	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
TfNSW	Transport for NSW		

Agenda item discussion and actions

Item 1. Acknowledgement of Country

- Meeting opened at 12.39pm.
- The Chair acknowledged the meeting is being held on Aboriginal land and paid respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Item 2. Welcome, housekeeping and meeting procedures

- Housekeeping and apologies
- Welcome to new members
- Overview of agenda
- The CRG was informed a total of 13 people applied to join the CRG to fill recent vacancies. Given the strong interest from the community, elected councillors who applied were considered already represented through their Council and were not selected. Hosts of generation projects were not selected as they were viewed as having a financial interest. Applicants who were selected were more directly and geographically affected than other applicants. Most applicants presented a balanced perspective toward the REZ (neither for or against). In response to the high level of interest, three members were appointed for the two advertised vacancies. This means if a further resignation occurs, the position will not need to be replaced (the number of community members remains at 7 but for now is 8).
- The Chair invited feedback about the selection process.
- A comment was made by a CRG member that there is a need for group membership to be diverse.
- Existing and new members were introduced.
- Pecuniary interests were noted as previously declared with no additions.

- A CRG member asked if a discussion about the CEBP was planned as part of this meeting.
- EnergyCo indicated that discussions on the CEBP are continuing and the engagement process is being finalised.
- CRG members responded there hasn't been input from the CRG as yet despite previous assurances. Concerns that it will be like Central West Orana and not enough time to understand the proposed approach and differences and concerns. Need to vision and plan how it will happen, a short process isn't useful and a long lead time needed. Considers it is going to be another indication of poor community engagement. EnergyCo responded that details are being finalised and the CEBP consultation process will include 6-8 weeks of engagement and feedback.
- The Chair advised the CRG that the CEBP will be included as a standing agenda item moving forward as previously agreed, regardless of whether there is an update or not.
- The CRG Action and Questions Registers as issued prior to the meeting were noted. The Chair explained the Registers as incorporating of many questions, not containing duplications of similar questions, and noting some questions asked may have been reworded.
- Actions from the previous meeting:

#	Action	Responsible	Status
1	Commence the advertising process for CRG recruitment now to maximise opportunity to nominate.	M Maurer	**Completed.** Advertising and promotion by direct email and stakeholder contact occurred during May. Deadline for applications was 5 June.
2	Share link for CRG membership application with CRG members.	M Maurer	**Completed.** Link shared via email on 18 May.
3	Include CEBP update as a standing item for future meeting agendas.	Chair	A workshop for CRG members on the CEBP is proposed for July and will be discussed during this session (15 June).

#	Action	Responsible	Status
4	Request that EnergyCo reimburse CRG member travel expenses.	J Watson	The New England REZ CRGs have been framed to operate in accordance with the DPHI *Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Development.* Under these Guidelines, representatives are not eligible to receive 'sitting fees.' However, Section 4.10 does allow for proponents to consider reimbursement of reasonable out -of-pocket expenses. Accordingly, EnergyCo is now looking at applying this provision to members' travel expenses. If endorsed, payments would be aligned with the prevailing Australian Tax Office rate and would need to be declared as an individual member interest.
5	Include the CEBP and structure of other benefit payments in the next agenda for explanation.		A workshop for CRG members on the CEBP is proposed for July and will be discussed during this session (15 June).
6	DCCEEW presentation to be subject of an online meeting during 2026.		EnergyCo has approached the Conservation, Planning and Offsets Division of DCCEEW which has indicated it would be prepared to offer the CRG an online presentation in the coming months.
7	Offer online session focussed on housing.		A presentation on the Uralla Shire Council Housing Strategy is included in the agenda for this session (15 June). Work is continuing on EnergyCo's approach to workforce accommodation, with details to be presented to the CRG once they become available.
8	Deeper discussion about workforce accommodation.		A presentation on the Uralla Shire Council Housing Strategy is included in the agenda for this session (15 June). Work is continuing on EnergyCo's approach to workforce accommodation, with details to be presented to the CRG once they become available.

Item 3. Project updates – Overview of key developments since our last meeting and upcoming activities.

Presented by Julian Watson

- EnergyCo announced the 1km refined study corridor in April 2026. Landowners were advised of the update before the public announcement. Landholders were given a Lot Plan and potential access track locations to provide a better idea of the current design plans.
- Minister Sharpe announced $60 million of early funding for the New England REZ CEBP.
- The project passed a mandatory INSW 'health check'.
- Port to REZ design work has progressed.
- The Draft Access Scheme declaration is progressing with feedback considered arising from the Generation and Storage Consultation Paper released in August 2025.
- RFP stage of the Network Operator procurement is in progress with three shortlisted tenderers.
- Surveys and assessments have been ongoing across a large range of environmental study areas including biodiversity, flora, fauna, heritage, Aboriginal Heritage, visual impacts and assessing assets and structures for roads and other design investigation work.
- Technical work is continuing to coordinate road upgrades with Transgrid, TfNSW and Local Government.
- EnergyCo has been meeting with a range of agencies including NSW Rural Fire Service and DPHI.
- EnergyCo has responded to a Standing Order 52 including presenting documents to Parliament.
- A range of stakeholder and industry engagement has been carried out including:
    - Hunter Energy Symposium in late May
    - Aboriginal Focus Group meetings
    - Council engagement about corridor refinement and local roads
    - a range of community engagement for the Tamworth OSOM route including meeting with the Nemingha community and various community forums
    - Information stands and the RMO in Muswellbrook, Scone and Nundle planned for 23 / 24 / 25 July with 'drop ins' welcome.
- The New England REZ and Hunter Transmission Project teams are working on coordinating connections to Bayswater Power Station.

- Ongoing meetings with landowners including discussions about acquisition and access track locations.

ACTION: Share link to property webinar held for landholders on 10 June.

- EnergyCo has identified most appropriate route and tracks. This aims to give landholders a starting point with detailed locations to be confirmed pending further engagement.
- EnergyCo is in the process of identifying sites for workforce accommodation which can host the required number of workers close to project sites (maximum 45 minutes travel distance). These are likely to be properties purchased by EnergyCo through 'hardship' provisions or outright. Workforce accommodation will be described in detail in the project's EIS.
- EnergyCo is continuing to carry out studies and assessments which will form part of the EIS and be displayed for community comment.

Armidale Council Motion

- The CRG was informed of a recent Armidale Regional Council Mayoral Minute resolving not to sell water to the REZ or projects until there is a plan for their sustainable water supply. EnergyCo will work with Council on a water security package and in parallel develop alternative water supply.
- The Armidale Council representative present requested to speak to the matter. They indicated that the water security deficit is widely known and the New England REZ will place further demand on water. Water restrictions are currently in place at Level 2. Council acknowledges that water security is a binding constraint. It has had to adopt a position that there will not be an allocation to any projects until there is a clear and binding commitment to resolve the deficit. Council will advocate to the NSW Government for a formal funded commitment to address security and enabling infrastructure ahead of demand and the Oakey Dam restoration and dam raising. Council will also collaborate with its LGA neighbours to coordinate water solutions.
- CRG member commented that NSW Farmers members will support this position and groundwater must not be taken away.
- CRG member commented that sand availability is also an issue for NSW Farmers members.
- CRG member commented that most Councils in REZ will not provide water in any way until the matter is sorted.
- CRG member comment that Tamworth is also concerned, observing that water security is essential and projected needs are going to put systems under stress. It was suggested the city could not cope with a dry period and alternative water needs to be accessed. There are limited

supplies and a critical shortage across the state. There is also a funding shortage for water infrastructure of $4 billion so further water cannot be provided in this critical state.

- CRG member suggested that eastern water for Oakey Dam needs to be a focus as western water is fully allocated into the Murray-Darling Basin.
- CRG member asked how water issues will be managed given EnergyCo is not formally responsible for water.
- EnergyCo explained that it is coordinating closely with Councils to respond to water related issues, looking to minimise the need for water in the REZ, and overcome issues for generation projects. A range of options are being explored including using different water sources, such as non-potable sources for dust suppression and concrete. Solutions will need to be compliant with project permissions and approvals. Project planning approvals are expected to include conditions regarding water which have been consistently applied to recent transmission projects in NSW, and inadequate water supply may impact project size. EnergyCo is also working to understand different use and need, and both large and small scale solutions.
- CRG member raised that water security should be a whole-of-Government responsibility.
- EnergyCo replied that the Government is keen to progress the project, and water is a key consideration.

Break for lunch 1.21pm – 1.30pm

Walcha Council Motion

- Members were informed about a recent resolution of Walcha Council. Council advised they will not participate in REZ consultation in solidarity with community action groups. The organisation is still engaging in technical and other discussions. A Council resolution of 27 May indicated that they would not send representatives to June CRG. EnergyCo recognises this is in response to community engagement and accompanies a request from Voice for Walcha and other groups is that the Premier meets with community.
- The Chair stated she is unsure what this means for future participation, but all parties are welcome to return at any time and are still receiving communication.

CWO incident

- During construction of an access track, ACEREZ (network operator in CWO REZ) destroyed an Aboriginal heritage rock shelter. EnergyCo noted it was deeply sorry for the damage caused to the rock shelter and acknowledged the significance of this site to Aboriginal people. An

investigation is underway to determine exactly how this incident occurred. EnergyCo is fully cooperating with DPHI as it conducts its investigation.

Land access incident in Upper Hunter

- A contractor team was undertaking site investigations on behalf of EnergyCo at Belltrees. This work involved inspecting a culvert that forms part of the road. The inspection activities were in an area labelled as a public road on TfNSW's 'NSW Road Network Categorisation' website. An investigation is underway into this incident to determine the factors that led to it and any actions to improve our processes.

Item 4. Field work and property access update

Presented by Dan Taylor

- EnergyCo outlined the process for accessing private property which includes identifying sites, engaging with landholders and determining property access agreements which define the rules for accessing private property. Signing the access agreement is optional.
- The agreement determines methods for managing biosecurity, preferred communication with the landholder and frequency and requirements specific to the property. Once an agreement is in place, EnergyCo will plan work which could include geotechnical, visual, environmental studies, combining it where possible to minimise impact on the property.
- EnergyCo's Property Team will inform the landowner of the planned work and the landholder has the right to rescind and adjust permission. The access agreement is not binding on landowners and can be withdrawn at any time.
- CRG member raised a question regarding liability, loss and damage to property and stock and how it is that managed under the agreement.
- EnergyCo explained that there are insurances but there is a limit to what is insured and coverage for specific events may not be provided depending on the circumstances. This is discussed with landholders to set clear expectations.
- CRG member asked about biosecurity records and the need for many farmers to maintain European Union and Local Land Services standards for which there needs to be records.
- EnergyCo raised that there is a sign on/off process in consultation with landholders. Access is carried out in line with the signed access agreement to ensure biosecurity protocols and other requirements are adhered to.
- CRG member indicated that this wasn't explained when their access agreement was signed.

- EnergyCo suggested that this can be discussed at any time with their assigned Property Managers.
- CRG member requested that biosecurity and heritage findings be shared with landowners.
- EnergyCo indicated that this has been facilitated in the past and reports have been provided.
- CRG member indicated that there needs to be ability to cross check property findings against the EIS and landholders should be made aware of the findings.
- CRG member enquired about the course of action available when a landowner is first approached and access is denied, and the effect of this upon the project's design.
- EnergyCo explained that field investigations are undertaken on a voluntary basis and landholders are under no obligation to grant access. Route changes are not proposed in locations where access hasn't been granted. EnergyCo will look to access the land once permissible through the acquisition process under the Just Terms Act.
- CRG member commented that people will refuse both access and sale of the land.
- EnergyCo indicated that such instances will be considered in accordance with the Just Terms Act.
- CRG member asked how properties are assessed where access has been refused.
- EnergyCo explained that remote assessment and desktop mapping is carried out to inform the EIS. If access is obtained at a later date, this may be considered in the post-approval phase.

Item 5. New England REZ Access Scheme update

Presented by Flynn Reyners

- The New England REZ access scheme defines how generation and storage projects can connect to the REZ and governs costing and access rights. Fees charged for access fees will contribute toward community benefits.
- In August 2025 EnergyCo published a Generation and Storage Consultation Paper outlining the early proposed design features for an access scheme in the New England REZ, and invited feedback from community and stakeholders.
- The scheme is proposed to apply across the entire REZ (all network infrastructure at 132 kV and above within the REZ boundary). This introduces a minimum consultation standard, increasing coordination and oversight by EnergyCo and removing 'open access' arrangements. This will also support consistent delivery of the CEBP.
- An access scheme prevents oversubscription to the network by limiting projects and optimising utilisation. The New England REZ will have controls applied through either 1) an access rights

regime through competitive tender for any project seeking to connect to the access rights network, or 2) access control mechanism requiring projects to meet certain eligibility criteria and obtain consent from EnergyCo to connect to the access control network.

- Following feedback from the Consultation Paper, the Access Scheme term has been updated from 20 to 25 years. The extended scheme term means that communities will receive annual funds through access fees over a longer period.
- A Position Paper will be published with the New England REZ Draft Access Scheme Declaration to explain key details and features about how the access scheme will operate in plain English. Two public webinars will be held during the consultation period to help community and stakeholders better understand the draft declaration. The first webinar will be industry-focused, and the second will be for community and Councils. Submissions on the draft declaration will be received for a minimum for 28 days.
- After consultation, feedback will be assessed and a recommendation will be provided to the Minister. If approved, the scheme will become legislated, with the declaration expected around September 2026 (subject to Ministerial decision).
- CRG member asked if the payment will extend beyond the 25 years if the proponents are still making money.
- EnergyCo indicated that the Access Scheme term starts when the REZ becomes operational and projects begin paying access fees. The Access Scheme will revert to NER requirements after the scheme term ends. Extensions would be at the Minister's discretion.
- CRG member commented that it should not be given for free at this point, especially when people are still making money from it.
- EnergyCo responded that the updated Access Scheme term reflects the feedback received from the Consultation Paper from projects with longer operational lifespans. Projects will typically look to decommission or acquire new consent beyond the scheme term.
- CRG member comment that project responsibilities sit with proponents and people need to get legal advice on project responsibilities, any extensions beyond the scheme term would require new approvals and engagement, without EnergyCo involvement.
- EnergyCo acknowledged that the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991 and Strategic Benefit Payment (SBP) Scheme are two separate mechanisms and the SBP Scheme has a defined payment period.
- CRG member believed that it is unfair to landholders and the region and suggested that the government should be generous to the region for taking this burden on.

- CRG member asked how the REZ transmission line will be decommissioned.
- In response to questions about decommissioning, EnergyCo advised that all projects must meet requirements under the Renewable Energy Sector Board Plan and other relevant requirements, including having robust decommissioning plans under their consent that avoid landfill where possible. These requirements form part development consent conditions.

ACTION: Provide CRG members with a link to the Renewable Energy Sector Board plan

- The CRG requested a link to make submissions to the Draft Access Scheme Declaration when it is released.

ACTION: EnergyCo to provide link and information for Draft Access Scheme Declaration to CRG when available

- CRG member commented about decommissioning impacting upon land value and if the benefits cease, landholders lose value without income.
- CRG member enquired about the Network Operator timeline, indicating a need for a clear sense of the timeframe and how this will be managed given 2032-2034 is when all these developments will happen.
- EnergyCo re-stated that the Network Operator procurement is underway and that construction will start from 2028, with energisation from 2032-2034. The 25 year term to operate the network will start from energisation.
- CRG commentary nominated the need for a sense of the timeframe for all elements of the REZ (including water infrastructure), and modelling of where it will be in 10 and 25 years.
- CRG member asked that if the Access Scheme will be extended to 25 years, does this mean the CBEP has also been extended as it would be unfair if it doesn't go for the life of the project.
- EnergyCo explained that the Access Scheme term is 25 years if supported by the Minister, and if the feedback supports that then it will be implemented and the CEBP will be adjusted to suit. Placing an access control on high voltage lines is to respond to feedback that there must be coordination and control of project to ensure clear benefit for community within the REZ. National electricity rules are in place outside the REZ.
- CRG member asked that given the 132kV and 330kV infrastructure is owned by Transgrid, how is the access scheme applied.
- Under the EII Act, EnergyCo as the Infrastructure Planner has the legislative requirement and power to manage the connection of the lines in the REZs, and Transgrid understand the policy context and the impacts. EnergyCo is working hand in hand as Transgrid continues to be the

Network Operator for these lines. Access control applies to generators and there might be some value in more focused discussions when it's time for some of these to come online in the northern end as there is a number of lines that will be impacted.

- CRG member request for LGA-targeted consultation for northern Councils that will be impacted by the Access Control Mechanism.
- EnergyCo acknowledged that this will be a shift for projects within the boundary but not connecting to REZ infrastructure. This approach has been implemented with community in mind, and it's based on community feedback to have better control and coordination.
- CRG member commented that it will be in the interest of the community to stagger the access to reduce the peak of demand on water, accommodation and roads, and community benefits.
- EnergyCo nominated that a portion of access fees are put into broader funding of CEBP legacy projects and support for communities. Access fees are separate to the Voluntary Planning Agreements (VPAs) and other planning agreements with individual developers as part of their required planning commitments.
- CRG member commented that the CEBP is administered through EnergyCo and the Armidale Future Fund is from VPAs, developers of the generator sites and their development application (DA) fees, which is separate.

Item 6. First Nations engagement update

- The Senior Aboriginal Advisor absent so the Community Engagement Manager spoke to the slide in the presentation as an update.

Break 2.10pm to 2.35pm

Item 7. Uralla Shire Council – Local Housing Strategy

Presented by Emily Sims Strategic Planner

- Emily indicated that the presentation was originally developed for Planning Institute of Australia
- How to do we as Local Government mitigate risk and maximise opportunity and recognise we are part of a much larger effort and context? New England REZ may be the biggest in NSW, but there are large projects happening all around the place. NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap doesn't include local government. New England REZ has late mover advantage, benefit of this is that there are some fixes available, such as the Access Rights Scheme being introduced from the learning in Central West Orana and desire to resolve the problems. Another is Guidelines for Construction Workers Accommodation - May 2025 and State Environmental Planning Policy

inclusion to enable council to receive Development Applications without Local Environmental Plan amendment and can merit assess in-house.

- CRG question asking if that relates to housing anywhere?
- Presenter response that this is the case but there are limitation such as not in riparian zones and environmental zones, but can be on private property.
- CRG member asked if there is a ceiling for what Councils can assess?
- Response that yes, if it meets the threshold for State Significant Infrastructure it would go through that means.
- Without forward funding Uralla Shire Council wouldn't be able to pay for the Local Housing Strategy, feasibility for landfill expansion, growth management strategy, REZ Forum with University of New England and other events.
- Jack Archer, under the Striking a New Deal (SaND) project talks about the risks and opportunities. Risks are inherent, but opportunities are uncertain and require proactive work. Potential for waste with access to money where Council hasn't planned or asked community about priorities for community benefit spend. e.g. Opportunity to train young people and improve economic diversity, but also potential exacerbation of workforce shortages.
- Uralla has a strong community led grass roots movement in ZNET, which has been running for over a decade to understand how we, Uralla, can be a "transition town." Predisposed to wanting to explore opportunity. Local graziers provide clearly positive outcome through New England Solar Farm (ACEN).
- Times of drought have brought concern. Highlighted absence of water security.
- Uralla has 6,000 people on 3,000km squared, and an average age of 47. The 65 plus age group is the largest growing demographic cohort.
- Connected to the broader Armidale economic region. There are 5GW of projects.
- Housing Strategy Maps area within 45 minute travel time and is anticipating an influx of temporary workers. NSW planning assumptions hadn't changed so a plan was needed to demonstrate to state and that growth was expected. A proportion of REZ workers will settle here, but this isn't expected to result in a large number of permanent settlers. A potential 3,000 workforce coming in is an ambitious figure.
- State driven processes can feel powerless, as though this is happening to us and not with us. Local government and community are responding and there are initiatives to lower impacts. Uralla community was asked "What it would look like if renewable energy made Uralla better?"

Through the Striking a New Deal project. What does good development on the other end look like? Data turned into a plan that will go to council next month to identify key opportunities that community want to grab with both hands and careful actions for council to support and identify that community and partners are key. Council has limited control in many of the actions. Business capacity uplift will depend more on the Business Chamber for example.

- Affordable and diverse legacy housing and accommodation identified as a priority. Issues identified as sequencing, reduce dependencies through staggering, planning pathways to balance temporary accommodation with legacy housing, location of housing must be considered, typology such as modular builds, and period of investment when the build out for each project is about 4 years and may require sharing of facilities with underwriting of private capital for projects, and who will do this.
- Squadron Energy in Wellington are repurposing an aged care facility to provide accommodation. Proposed strategic in-fill development to create lots. Merotherie Camp in Dunedoo is a 1,200 bed facility and is large infrastructure that will be removed in 10 years, and Emily's view is that it is quite wasteful as there is no infrastructure legacy.
- Uralla Local Housing strategy is focused on planning context and mapping a positive legacy. Identify large sites and establish future use agreements and ask how council can achieve some win-wins for workforce accommodation and ensure that proponents are putting the right housing in the right place. Growth pathways outlined in growth management strategy and pathways of status quo, sustained, and boom growth patterns driven by REZ. Sites identified as being appropriate and suitable for temporary workforce accommodation. Council owned industrial land is being investigated and Council are considering working with a private developer to manage the bridge between demand and supply.
- Principles for workforce accommodation developed to guide DAs and Development Control Plan will be updated. Collaboration is key. Right stakeholders need to be at the table to make it happen.
- CRG member comment that assets will double in value, and a larger firefighting asset is needed to ensure protection and the Rowan Street land would be perfect.
- Presenter response that yes, the ancillary assets are required. Post temporary accommodation you then have serviced land for industrial use, and the lay down and batching all occurs on site but there will still be a need, and six hectares has been identified for potential rezoning to industrial land so that all industrial land isn't exhausted.
- CRG asking if NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) would go to airport at existing headquarters

- Presenter response that in 1997 the RFS came and sent all the trucks and equipment to council, and they couldn't be insured so the fight has been ongoing to get them under State control. The changes to the RFS don't impact operations or support and maintenance. RFS may look to set up a maintenance hub, and council will maintain commitment. Communication between developer and RFS is that part of the requirement under the EIS includes advice between RFS and Fire and Rescue. New battery construction is separated by three metres because Fire and Rescue can't put them out, they can only contain so it doesn't go to the next one. Eastern side of Uralla is a low-risk fire area, but some of the windfarms are in high-risk areas and will need these plans in place. Section 119 of the Rural Fire Service Act 1997 needs to be changed and there are more issues.
- CRG member question asking who organised fire sheds at Kentucky?
- CRG comment that Thunderbolt EIS is woeful in regard to consideration of fire.
- EnergyCo asked presenters view on the coordination gaps are and opportunities that need to be resolved.
- Presenter response that the big coordination gap for temporary workforce accommodation is that transition to legacy requires the gap to be bridged between what the private sector needs for a return and the difference between peak demand and the long operational period.
- EnergyCo has updated advice and its temporary workforce may be located within the easement, Uralla intend to push back on that because the network operator may be able to work with a developer in a preferred site for future growth, then that's the anchor tenant for legacy housing. New England REZ Forum identified that workforce providers had great discussion about potential government underwrite to bridge timeframe issues and generators and council can design plug and play accommodation that is scalable. Industry don't want timeframes dictated by other projects and there is a need to design a camp that can do that. Central West Orana learnings will be applied. Hay Shire have had a great outcome on council land, 18 units will be transitioned to housing for older people, but that's working with a single developer. Uralla will have multiple developers in quick succession and need to make it less costly or temporary worker accommodation will affect feasibility.

Item 8. CRG member updates – What are you hearing from your communities? What are the key issues? What would you like to hear more about? (the following is the comments from the CRG members)

- NSW Farmers Armidale has 79 members, and they have requested their needs be prioritised. Key areas of concern include access to water and sand, impact on cost and access to inputs, opportunity to access fertiliser production and biofuel, liability loss and injury, impact on land

values, pests and biosecurity. The CRG members indicated concern about low information literacy around understanding the REZ and lots of social vulnerability. The impact of 'loud objectors' is creating emotional distress for many people. The member requested guidance on how to share information in a way that is meaningful.

- Member raised access to primary services as a challenge and system will be choked with an influx of workers and there is a social cost to being involved in these projects. A request for evidence can have a significant social impact. Being associated with REZ can have social and economic impact– the member noted social cohesion is important.
- Water supply is less than previously thought. Managing roads and people who are out on dirt where the projects have taken a toll on those roads being driveable and it becomes council's problem –asserted developers should be insuring against road damage.
- Important to look at the control mechanism through the access scheme. They further commended the Armidale Mayoral Minute on water.
- Concern about staffing in the region. We don't have workforce to pull from, and people are worried about losing their employees to these projects and the CEBP doesn't provide enough for long term planning.
- Decommissioning, water, health and roads
- Water is the priority. Port to REZ is a focus, but roads out to projects need to be done before construction starts and it needs to start now to be done in time. Need ideas for legacy housing. Government-backed decommissioning is needed and legislated insurance guarantees for adjoining landowners if neighbours are damaged as they are being used as setback for project without compensation.
- Concern that infrastructure will have a higher value and so need more fire cover.
- Member considered REZ development overrun Uralla like the gold rush and as a consequence all members of the community need to see benefit, and if we're generating the power for the state, we should be getting wealth for the area.
- Need to identify sites for temporary workforce accommodation. Anecdotal reports were raised that Walcha Council is putting prohibitive conditions on a generator regarding accommodation and that the developer will just go to Uralla instead, so the retail businesses in Walcha would like this addressed. Workforce accommodation in Walcha may be a way to support retail and hospitality.
- Water, Water, Water

- Access to and availability of water is a priority. Roads and traffic concerns and closure of the eastern freeways routinely destroy the local highway, so increased traffic needs to come with safe roads as people move through regional centres. Accessibility of labour is a concern when there is competition for the same people. The member noted the challenge will be engagement with different operators on the right timeline. Waste generation will have an impact on local infrastructure.
- EnergyCo noted that work is being done in the waste management space.
- Remark that the meeting was good and the Uralla presentation was fantastic. CEBP, community engagement, and CRG involvement is a priority. Connectivity between all the work that has been happening is good but needs to be communicated and connected. The member asked how things can be made to travel forward? Sustainable Living Armidale got a grant for a workshop on 28 July at in Armidale at the Welders Dog (Big Dog) which will bring speakers together for a snapshot discussion to look at what people are actually doing in the renewables space.
- New England Biodiversity Reference Group is trying hard to engage with the DCCEEW conservation and offset team. There has been a good preliminary workshop, and the relationship building is a benefit and has value. The member noted they were excited to see where it is all going. They suggested that resourcing the community will help them connect to implement sustainable long-term benefits.

Item 9. General business, questions and updates

- From the agenda, the item regarding adequacy of consultation on the project to date was raised as a member request from the previous online session. No comment was made by members.
- From the agenda, the item regarding the meeting notes format was raised as a member request. The consensus of the meeting was that the notes are adequate and can be amended to accommodate specific concerns.
- EnergyCo request that the group photo be updated with new members.
- A CRG member commented that the CRG is a conduit for communication and there needs to be a push from EnergyCo for the group to stand together, be accessible to community, and for EnergyCo to resource it to some extent.
- Next meeting proposed to be held Thursday 10 September at 12 noon in Uralla (subsequent suggestion for an 11.30am start).

Item 10. Meeting close

- Meeting was closed at 3.43pm

- A CEBP workshop has been foreshadowed for July (TBC)
- The next regular CRG meeting is proposed for Thursday 10 September

Actions from Meeting

#	Action	Responsible
1	Share link to property webinar held for landholders on 10 June.	**Completed.** Access the link here.
2	Provide CRG members with a link to the Renewable Energy Sector Board plan	**Completed.** Access the link here.
3	EnergyCo to provide link and information for Draft Access Scheme Declaration to CRG	M Maurer

Upcoming meetings

- CEBP workshop – July 2026 (TBC)
- Next regular CRG meeting – 11.30am Thursday 10 September 2026