

Aboriginal cultural heritage

Hunter Transmission Project

Fact Sheet | July 2026

EnergyCo recognises the Wonnarua, Awabakal and Darkinjung peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands along the project corridor and pays respect to Elders past and present. Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage has been a key focus of the project.

Project status

Following detailed assessment by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has granted planning approval for the Hunter Transmission Project and issued the Conditions of Approval.

The assessment considered environmental and technical studies, community and stakeholder feedback, and advice from councils and government agencies.

The project will now progress through detailed design and planning before construction can begin.

Subject to approvals and delivery planning:

- A network operator is expected to be appointed in 2026
- Detailed design and construction planning will continue
- Construction is expected to commence in early 2027.

Heritage management

Conditions of Approval include requirements for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage during construction and operation. The assessment considered:

- Existing Aboriginal heritage records, sites and places within and near the project area
- Field surveys, predictive modelling and targeted test excavations
- Ongoing consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties throughout the assessment process
- Potential heritage impacts during construction and operation

The project was designed to avoid and minimise impacts to culturally sensitive areas wherever possible. Measures include ongoing consultation and procedures for managing unexpected finds during construction.



Assessment updates

Following exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in August and September 2025, further investigations, consultation and project refinements informed the Submissions Report, Amendment Report and final planning approval for the project. Updates included:



Additional field surveys in previously uninspected areas and areas affected by project refinements



Further targeted test excavations



Refinements to identified sites and cultural landscapes



Updated Aboriginal cultural heritage impact assessment based on the refined project design



Conditions of Approval to manage Aboriginal cultural heritage during detailed design, construction and operation

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment addendum (February 2026) was prepared to reflect these updates and respond to agency and community feedback.

Additional Aboriginal objects and sites were identified through further fieldwork, primarily isolated or low-density artefact scatters.



Example of grinding grooves on exposed rock surfaces.



Stone artefacts identified during cultural heritage investigations

Heritage identified

Aboriginal objects, sites and places were identified within and near the project area. These included:



Stone artefact scatters and isolated finds



Rock shelters



Grinding grooves



Stone arrangements



Culturally modified trees



Subsurface cultural deposits

Broader cultural landscapes and viewlines were also identified, recognising connections between significant places and landforms across the region.

Most recorded sites are low-density artefact scatters, while a smaller number are considered to have higher cultural significance.



Aboriginal cultural heritage field survey in the project area

Avoidance and impacts

Avoiding impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage was prioritised throughout project planning and assessment. Avoidance and minimisation measures informed project refinements wherever feasible.

As the design was refined:

- higher-significance sites were prioritised for avoidance where feasible
- construction areas were adjusted to reduce potential impacts on known heritage sites.

Potential impacts are primarily associated with construction activities such as tower foundations and access tracks.

Where impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation measures and management requirements will be implemented in consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties and relevant government agencies, in accordance with the Conditions of Approval.

How heritage will be managed

Planning approval has been granted for the Hunter Transmission Project, including Conditions of Approval relating to the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

EnergyCo will continue consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties to help protect and manage Aboriginal cultural heritage throughout detailed design, construction and operation.

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan and Unexpected Finds Protocol will be implemented prior to construction to guide how heritage will be avoided, minimised and managed during delivery.

Works in culturally sensitive areas will be monitored during construction.



Example of a potential scarred tree recorded during a field survey

Ongoing engagement with Aboriginal communities

EnergyCo will continue working closely with Registered Aboriginal Parties, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and Aboriginal communities as the project progresses. Engagement will continue through detailed design, construction and operation to support implementation of the Conditions of Approval and agreed heritage management measures.

Aboriginal employment and participation

In addition to ongoing engagement, EnergyCo is committed to supporting Aboriginal employment, training and business participation during project delivery. These opportunities will continue to be explored and developed in collaboration with Aboriginal communities and in line with project approvals, procurement processes and delivery requirements.

What happens next

Planning approval has been granted for the Hunter Transmission Project, with Conditions of Approval now in place. The project will now progress through detailed design, pre-construction planning and delivery preparation.

Before construction can commence, a range of management plans and additional approvals required under the Conditions of Approval must be prepared and approved. In 2024, Transgrid was identified as the preferred network operator for the Hunter Transmission Project. Subject to final approvals and contractual arrangements, a network operator is expected to be formally appointed in 2026. EnergyCo, Transgrid and future delivery partners will continue working with communities, councils, landholders and stakeholders as the project progresses.



Aboriginal stone artefacts can be found near watercourses like this

How to stay informed

All project documentation, including links to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Submissions Report, Amendment Report and Conditions of Approval, is available on the Hunter Transmission Project website.

You can also sign up to receive project updates and e-newsletters. Visit energyco.nsw.gov.au/http



Scan the QR code to access the Hunter Transmission Project webpage.



Contact us

EnergyCo is the NSW Government statutory authority responsible for delivering the Hunter Transmission Project as a critical part of transitioning to a cleaner future under the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.



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