

Biodiversity

New England Renewable Energy Zone network infrastructure project

Environmental impact statement | Fact sheet | October 2026

The New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) network infrastructure project is a key part of NSW's clean energy future, connecting renewable energy projects to the electricity grid and delivering reliable power to homes and businesses across the state.

Overview

The New England and Upper Hunter regions are home to a diverse range of native plants, wildlife and habitats across their forests, woodlands, rivers and farmland.

We are committed to reducing the project's impact by carefully planning our work and protecting local species and habitats.

The biodiversity assessment in the environmental impact statement (EIS) identifies the plants, animals and habitats present in the project area, how they may be affected, and what will be done to avoid and reduce those impacts.





Thermal drone surveys

How we surveyed the corridor

From 2023 to 2026, we carried out seasonal biodiversity surveys using the NSW Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM).

This work included vegetation mapping, flora and fauna surveys, habitat assessments and targeted searches using survey methods like remote cameras, acoustic recorders and thermal drones.

After the corridor was updated in October 2025, some previously surveyed areas fell outside the project boundary, but the data collected still helps us understand biodiversity across the wider region.

Since late 2025, we have continued surveys across the current project area of 10,928 hectares (the area that will contain the REZ transmission project). About 54 per cent of this area has been surveyed so far. Some areas remain unsurveyed due to access limitations, but work is ongoing where access is available.

Where surveys could not be completed due to access restrictions, we have assumed the native vegetation is in optimum condition, and all threatened species that are predicted to occur in that vegetation are present. The combination of field surveys, expert inputs, precautionary and remote assessment methods has enabled a comprehensive assessment of biodiversity values across the entire project area.

We will update our studies as we access more land and complete further surveys. This will help make sure our planning reflects the most up-to-date information. We expect biodiversity impacts to reduce as we update our studies. We will also work with the network operator to further reduce biodiversity impacts as part of the detailed design process.

How we avoid, minimise and offset impacts

We avoid and minimise biodiversity impacts first before considering how to offset any remaining impacts, as required by the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.



Avoid

Avoidance is the most effective way to protect biodiversity.

This involves selecting route options and locating infrastructure away from sensitive habitats and threatened species.

We balanced this against impacts to landholders, communities and technical considerations.

We sought to avoid impacts to biodiversity by:

- using cleared land instead of forested areas where we could
- locating infrastructure away from known locations of threatened plants and animal habitats
- moving the route away from sensitive cave systems at Timor, which are home to threatened species like bats.

Opportunities to avoid impacts would also be adopted during design and construction phases of the project, including minor adjustments to locations of transmission towers (micro siting) to minimise clearing and further reduce impacts to biodiversity.



Minimise

Where impacts cannot be fully avoided, we look at how we can minimise them.

This includes measures like locating infrastructure in already disturbed areas, preserving habitat corridors, implementing controls to protect waterways and retained vegetation.



Offset

Habitats and ecosystems within the region will be protected and restored to offset biodiversity impacts in accordance with legislative requirements.



Example of transmission tower above managed vegetation

Vegetation removal

We take the impact of our work seriously. We will make every effort to further reduce impacts on vegetation and protect fauna and flora during construction.



No national parks or nature reserves are impacted by the project



Less than a third of the project footprint involves native vegetation removal – around 3,203 hectares



Of the native vegetation to be removed, around 42 per cent is forest and woodland while the rest is grassland.

Minimising vegetation removal is a key consideration during construction. As much as possible, we are looking to locate construction compounds and construction access tracks in places where we do not need to remove trees.

This could include locating new infrastructure on already cleared and disturbed areas, using or upgrading existing access tracks to reduce the need for new access tracks and disturbance, or 'micro siting' infrastructure within approved impact assessment areas to further avoid and minimise impacts.

Managing biodiversity impacts

Before construction starts, a biodiversity management plan will be prepared outlining how biodiversity impacts will be managed during the construction and operation phases.

Measures will include:



Clearing controls like no-go zones, pre-clearing surveys, fauna spotters on site and protocols for safely relocating wildlife found in the work area



Supervision of clearing activities by an ecologist to help manage any animals that are found



Inductions, toolbox talks and targeted training on biodiversity protocols for project personnel



Choosing temporary construction locations (such as laydown areas) that avoid sensitive habitats and species, including waterways



Habitat protection and restoration measures



Weed and pest management, and biosecurity controls



Independent audits and inspections to confirm appropriate measures are in place and effective



Erosion and sediment controls.

We will work with our network operator, who will build and operate the project, to further minimise impacts as they move into detailed design and delivery.



Protecting koalas and other wildlife

We recognise the strong community connection to koalas and the importance of protecting koalas and other wildlife.

The EIS identifies around 1,373 hectares of koala habitat would be impacted by the project. Of this, 604 hectares is forest and woodland while 768 hectares is scattered trees, mostly in farmland.

Impacts on koala habitat will be offset, and we expect to see an extensive area of habitat protection and restoration delivered.

We are looking at ways to ensure animals, including koalas, can move across the transmission corridor safely. This may include retaining trees in some places, providing koala refuge poles, glider poles, rope bridges and keeping important habitat features like hollow logs and rocks on the ground for smaller animals.

We are working to keep smaller trees and vegetation where we can in the transmission easement.

A connectivity strategy will be prepared that identifies where habitat linkages are, and how we will encourage animals to continue to move through the transmission easement to those habitat linkages.

Investment in protecting and restoring nature

When an infrastructure project impacts native plants, animals or habitats, NSW laws require these impacts to be offset by gains that benefit those same species and ecosystems.

This means conserving and enhancing biodiversity in other locations so that, overall, there is no net loss.

EnergyCo will meet its biodiversity offset obligations for the project through a strategic offset delivery agreement (SODA) with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

Offsets will align with DCCEEW's Conservation Investment Strategies for the New England and Hunter regions which identify landscape-level priorities for biodiversity protection, habitat connectivity and long-term conservation outcomes.

Under the SODA, it's expected that at least 4,000 hectares of koala habitat will be protected and restored.

This will help protect land that provides food, shelter and movement corridors for koalas, helping to strengthen habitat connectivity and improve resilience of local koala populations over time.



Aerial view above Sergeants Gap Road, Pages Creek



Discussing remote survey methods with the Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation (CPHR) group

About DCCEEW's Conservation Investment Strategies

A Conservation Investment Strategy identifies key strategic priorities in a region to protect and restore biodiversity values and improve connectivity and resilience. DCCEEW published a strategy for the Hunter region in September 2025. The strategy for the New England region will be released in late 2026.

The strategies seek to guide investment being made into conservation in a region and will underpin the strategic offset delivery agreement for the New England REZ network infrastructure project. The strategies have been developed to:



Integrate conservation programs and priorities to optimise delivery of regional conservation outcomes



Protect regionally significant conservation values



Improve ecological connectivity and resilience to climate change



Restore degraded ecosystems and habitats



Contribute to a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected area system



Deliver social benefits for the region.

Read more at environment.nsw.gov.au by searching 'Conservation Investment Strategy'.

Biodiversity stewardship opportunities for landholders

Landholders can take part in offset opportunities by establishing biodiversity stewardship sites and generating biodiversity credits.

Every stewardship agreement contributes to a broader network of protected and restored habitat across NSW, creating a lasting environmental legacy alongside renewable energy development.

For the Central-West Orana REZ transmission project, more than 15,000 hectares of land is being protected and restored through biodiversity stewardship agreements.

These agreements permanently integrate conservation into land management, including habitat restoration and pest and weed control.

If you are a landholder in the project area and would like to learn more, you can contact supplyfund@environment.nsw.gov.au.



Example of alignment using ridgelines to reduce impact



Biodiversity surveys



A koala identified during a remote camera survey

Read more

Visit EnergyCo's engagement portal at energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez to learn more about the project and biodiversity:

- EIS Section 7: Biodiversity
- EIS Section 25: Environmental Management and Mitigation Measures
- Technical Report 1: Biodiversity Development Assessment Report

Learn more and have your say on the EIS

The environmental impact statement (EIS) is on public exhibition in October and November 2026. You can have your say on the EIS by making a submission to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure on the NSW Planning Portal.

To view the EIS and make your submission, visit planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects and search application number 'SSI-74175972'.



Scan the QR code to visit the NSW Planning Portal.



Contact us

EnergyCo wants to hear what you think about our plans. If you have questions or want to give feedback, please get in touch with our team.



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