

Regional water demand update

New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) | October 2026

The NSW Government recognises that water security and avoiding impacts to local water supply are serious issues for communities in the region. EnergyCo are working with government agencies, councils and industry to plan for regional water requirements.

EnergyCo and the Water Group of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) have developed updated modelling of expected water demands using the latest information on REZ delivery. The new modelling shows water demands from REZ projects is lower than reported in the December 2025 water and wastewater security study, which intentionally assessed all known major projects and used high range assumptions to provide shared evidence base for future planning.

Our refined modelling provides a more realistic development scenario, while still relying on assumptions about project timing and scale. These assumptions are necessary to plan for potential future demand before projects are confirmed. The resulting demand estimates are indicative only and will be updated as more accurate information becomes available.



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Summary

Effective management of water resources is critical to the successful delivery of the New England REZ. The NSW Government has been investigating regional water demands for the REZ since 2024, recognising the long lead times required to develop effective solutions.

Our focus is on meeting the temporary water needs of renewable energy projects and transmission infrastructure without placing undue pressure on existing town water supplies or water sources, while still delivering the REZ on schedule.

New England regional major infrastructure studies

EnergyCo released a water and wastewater security study in December 2025 based on extensive engagement with councils, industry and agencies. This point-in-time analysis provides a shared evidence base for future planning and helps identify potential water-demand scenarios and gaps in capacity, assets, or services needed to support REZ development.

To ensure potential challenges and opportunities could be identified early, this study adopted a broad and unconstrained approach which considered the water demands of all proposed renewable energy projects and major infrastructure projects known at that time. This totalled 114 projects and the network infrastructure project, across 11 local government areas.

Refining the modelling

Our current planning for the network suggests around 13-15 gigawatts (GW) of new generation (i.e. from solar and wind) will be able to connect in the REZ. This would not accommodate all the renewable energy projects we considered in our 2025 study. Furthermore, community and stakeholder feedback about regional water security impacts reinforced the need to revisit the modelling and ensure it reflects a more realistic REZ scenario.

EnergyCo and the Water Group of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) subsequently updated the regional water demand modelling incorporating knowledge as of September 2026. The refined modelling reflects a more detailed understanding of the network design, potential generation and storage projects, anticipated project delivery timeframes and sequencing.

The new water modelling considers:

- water demands for the New England REZ network infrastructure project as reported in the environmental impact statement (EIS), Section 3.3.13
- water demands based on a refined 'realistic' development scenario for generation and storage projects (35 in total), with a combined capacity aligned to the 13 to 15 GW aggregate maximum capacity cap range as published in the July 2026 [draft access scheme positions paper](#).
- refined assumptions on water required by renewable energy projects such as for concrete production.

Updated methodology

To refine the modelling, we adapted our methodology to provide a more realistic picture of estimated water demands.

The biggest change was moving to a **representative scenario** of projects likely to connect to the REZ network, rather than considering all proposed projects. This is simply a credible mix of projects that could connect to the REZ, based on our current network design, capacity and timing. It includes 36 projects in total (35 generators and the transmission project) – around a 70% reduction from the original study. REZ project delivery was modelled over an updated timeline aligned with energy-hub rollout, which also reduces peak water demand.

The second key change was adopting **average water-use metrics** based on project type. This applies DCCEE's established methodology, which uses industry benchmarks from more than 60 sample projects to estimate water needs. In contrast, the original study relied on high-range assumptions where project data was unavailable, which overstated water use. Importantly, actual project water needs will vary and factors like dust suppression rely heavily on local weather conditions at the time.

Our methodology also introduced updated assumptions about the use of non-potable water in concrete. This significantly reduces the proportion of estimated water demand expected to come from potable water, noting that individual projects will still need to assess the feasibility of using non-potable water for concrete on a case-by-case basis.

Outcomes

The new modelling shows water demand estimates from REZ projects is lower than reported in the 2025 study, and that the largest peaks in potable and non-potable water demand are later in 2033 to 2034.

While this recent work has helped us better understand potential water demand, further work is needed to understand potential supply shortfalls. We are working with DCCEE Water and council to understand regional water supply estimates under a range of conditions. Together with our refined demand modelling, these two pieces of work will give us a clearer picture of the potential gap between water demand and supply.

This will allow us to assess which options best address the region's temporary water demands during REZ delivery, informing feasibility studies, funding pathways and delivery planning in close collaboration with the DCCEE Water, local councils and industry.

While further work is still required, strong progress has already been made through our collaborative efforts with councils, agencies and other stakeholders. We expect to share more detailed information on proposed water initiatives in 2027.

Most of the solutions under investigation are not expected to be needed for another two to four years, aligning with the anticipated peak in construction activity in the REZ.

How water is managed

NSW's water sharing rules protect the environment and essential community needs. Water access for renewable energy projects, including those in the New England REZ, depends on the water source, licence and supply arrangements.

Under the *NSW Water Management Act 2000*, ordinary water sharing principles prioritise protection of water sources and ecosystems, followed by basic landholder rights, while town water supply and domestic and stock licences generally have priority over other licence categories, subject to the relevant water sharing plan.

All water users, including renewable energy projects, must secure a lawful supply. To take water, all water users must:

- hold the necessary licences, approvals or authority.
- have sufficient allocation where required.
- comply with applicable access rules and restrictions.

Projects may also obtain water through authorised suppliers or lawful trading, and all water sourced in this manner is subject to the same rules. All water sourced through local water utilities is subject to restrictions and limits applied by councils, including during drought.

Water availability during drought and critical water shortages provides challenges for all water users. Projects must comply with restrictions and may need to change sources, scale back or pause water-dependent activities.

During severe drought or extreme events, NSW may implement restrictions or suspend water sharing plan provisions. Under the relevant suspension provisions, essential domestic supplies and town services receive priority. In the NSW Murray–Darling Basin, critical human water needs receive first priority for water allocations. Depending on circumstances, environmental provisions may be adjusted and water licences typically used for industrial and construction access may be restricted or suspended. Town water users and landholders may also face restrictions imposed by local councils according to their drought management plans.

What the new modelling found

Water demand estimates from the new modelling show:

Potable water 1,913 ML

Total estimated potable water demands for New England REZ projects for 2027 to 2035

Non-potable water 5,405 ML

Total estimated non-potable water demands for New England REZ projects for 2027 to 2035

Total demand 7,318 ML

Total estimated water demands for New England REZ projects for 2027 to 2035

These estimates provide a point-in-time analysis as of September 2026 based on our current understanding of the network design, potential generation and storage projects, anticipated project delivery timeframes and sequencing.

Key findings

- The amount of potable water expected to be needed to deliver the REZ is much lower than reported in the 2025 study (by around 95 per cent from the maximum scenario) and is small compared with the amount of water already used by towns across the region.
- Without intervention, some smaller communities may still experience local pressures managing the additional REZ demands during dry periods. Identifying suitable solutions is a focus for NSW Government.
- Around 74 per cent of REZ project construction demand is for non-potable water (not used for drinking) and may be supplied from a range of water sources.
- There are multiple peaks in potable and non-potable water demands which reflect the combined level of anticipated REZ development, with the largest demand peaks being in 2033 to 2034.
- Once construction of the network infrastructure and renewable energy projects is finished, ongoing water use is expected to be relatively low.
- The new water modelling estimates how much water may be needed for REZ projects, but does not assess water supply sources, availability, or community and other user demand.

Ongoing tracking of water demands

Understanding future water demand is an ongoing process. As renewable energy projects progress and more information becomes available, water demand estimates will continue to be refined (including the split between potable and non-potable water). This will help inform planning, identify potential constraints and support future decision-making. We will update the community as more information becomes available.

Potable water demand and supply

Drinking-quality water for people and uses that require it

Potable water is water that is safe for human consumption. Potable water demand for renewable energy projects will mostly be for construction workforces, food preparation, amenities and site facilities.

1,913 ML

Total estimated potable water demands for New England REZ projects for 2027 to 2035

213 ML/year

Estimated annual average potable water demand from New England REZ projects for 2027 to 2035

360 ML / 1,553 ML

Total estimated potable water demand from the network infrastructure project / renewable energy projects

Table 1: Estimated potable water demands for REZ projects (2026) in megalitres (ML)

LGA <i>Based on project location, not source of water</i>	New England REZ generation and storage projects <i>Total in ML</i>	New England REZ network infrastructure <i>Total in ML</i>	New England REZ potable water demands <i>Total in ML</i>	New England REZ potable demand annual average <i>Total in ML/year</i>	Demand peak <i>ML (year)</i>
Armidale	380	1	380	42	124 (in 2033)
Glen Innes	27	-	27	7	11 (in 2032)
Inverell	100	-	100	14	39 (in 2028)
Muswellbrook	-	49	49	8	18 (in 2029)
Tamworth	88	176	263	38	70 (in 2031)
Upper Hunter	-	47	47	8	20 (in 2030)
Uralla	663	4	667	83	202 (in 2034)
Walcha	296	83	379	47	98 (in 2033)
Regional total	1,553	360	1,913	213	449 (in 2033)

Possible sources and delivery options

- Council town-water systems, where the council confirms capacity and agrees commercial and operating arrangements.
- Project-operated treatment systems or packaged supplies that meet drinking-water standards.
- Commercial bulk-water suppliers using an approved source, appropriate treatment and safe transport arrangements.
- Transfer via the existing underground and surface water pipeline (reticulation) network, temporary pipelines, tanker delivery and on-site storage selected for each project and location.

Access to town water requires agreement from the local water utility, which in most cases is council. A supply arrangement should help to ensure that any conditions of supply are understood. Local water utilities are responsible for ensuring sustainable management of town water supplies under a range of conditions, including the use of town water restrictions to reduce demand during drought.

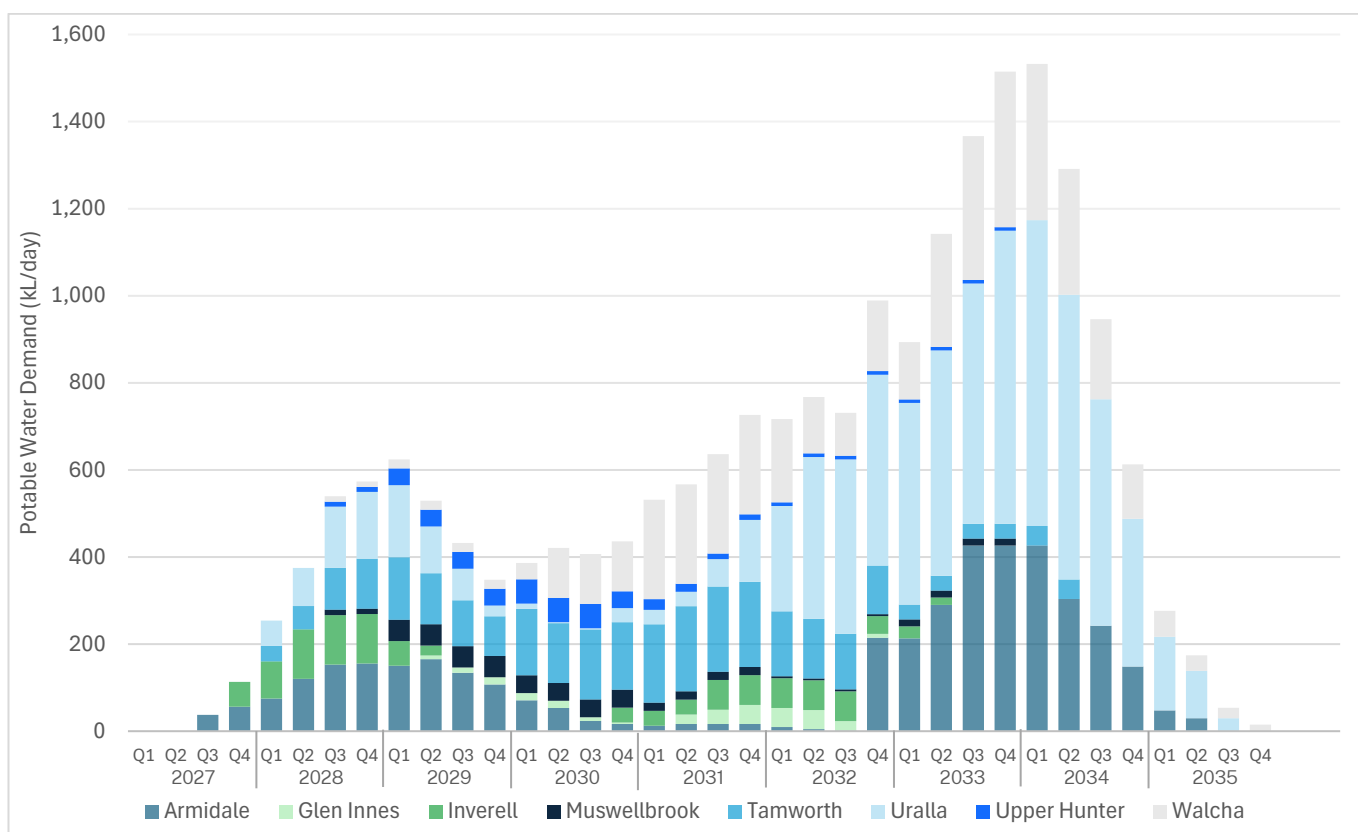


Figure 1: Estimated average daily potable water demand for New England REZ projects, split by LGA.

Key findings

- Potable water usage is expected to increase from mid-2027 with a small initial peak during the end of 2028 and beginning of 2029. This reflects the delivery of renewable energy projects connecting into the existing Transgrid network in Armidale, Inverell, Tamworth and Uralla, and the beginning of construction of the network infrastructure project.
- From 2030 onwards, potable water demand is anticipated to increase until it peaks at end of 2033 and beginning of 2034. This reflects the increase in workers delivering renewable energy projects and the ongoing construction of the network infrastructure project.
- The LGAs which have the largest share of REZ potable demands include Uralla, Armidale and Walcha, noting that the results show the location of the projects rather than source of water.
- Anticipated REZ demand is small relative to existing use, but the proportional effect may be more significant for smaller systems including capacity, timing and planning for dry periods.

Modelling approach: Potable water demands for renewable energy projects was estimated based on domestic uses and drinking water for workers. The analysis assumes 185 litres per person, per day (L/p/day) for human use at temporary worker accommodation camps and 60 L/p/d at construction sites. These estimates generally align with comparative planning assessments, which vary in their methods. Potable water use was assumed to follow a typical workforce profile based on duration of construction and peak workforce numbers. For the network infrastructure project, the environmental impact statement (EIS) estimated demands for potable water were used.

Non-potable water demand and sources

Using the right water for the right purpose

Non-potable water that is not treated to drinking-water standards but may be suitable for construction activities, landscaping and rehabilitation. Using fit-for-purpose water can reduce pressure on treated town water supplies.

5,405 ML

Total estimated non-potable water demands for New England REZ projects for 2027 to 2035

601 ML/year

Estimated annual average non-potable water demand from New England REZ projects for 2027 to 2035

2,040 ML / 3,365 ML

Total estimated non-potable water demand from the network infrastructure project / renewable energy projects

Table 2: Estimated non-potable water demands for New England REZ projects (2026) in megalitres (ML)

LGA <i>Based on project location, not source of water</i>	New England REZ generation and storage projects <i>Total in ML</i>	New England REZ network infrastructure <i>Total in ML</i>	New England REZ non-potable water demands <i>Total in ML</i>	New England REZ non-potable demand annual average <i>Total in ML/year</i>	Demand peak <i>ML (year)</i>
Armidale	793	59	852	95	311 (in 2033)
Glen Innes	37	-	37	9	19 (in 2031)
Inverell	203	-	203	29	61 (in 2028)
Muswellbrook	-	216	216	36	87 (in 2029)
Tamworth	213	595	808	101	208 (in 2030)
Upper Hunter	-	407	407	68	158 (in 2029)
Uralla	1,351	344	1,695	188	504 (in 2033)
Walcha	769	418	1,187	148	305 (in 2033)
Regional total	3,365	2,040	5,405	601	1,204 (in 2033)

Construction uses for non-potable water

- dust suppression
- earthworks and road construction
- vehicle and equipment washing
- landscaping and rehabilitation
- construction-area cleaning
- concrete production where engineering and quality specifications are met.

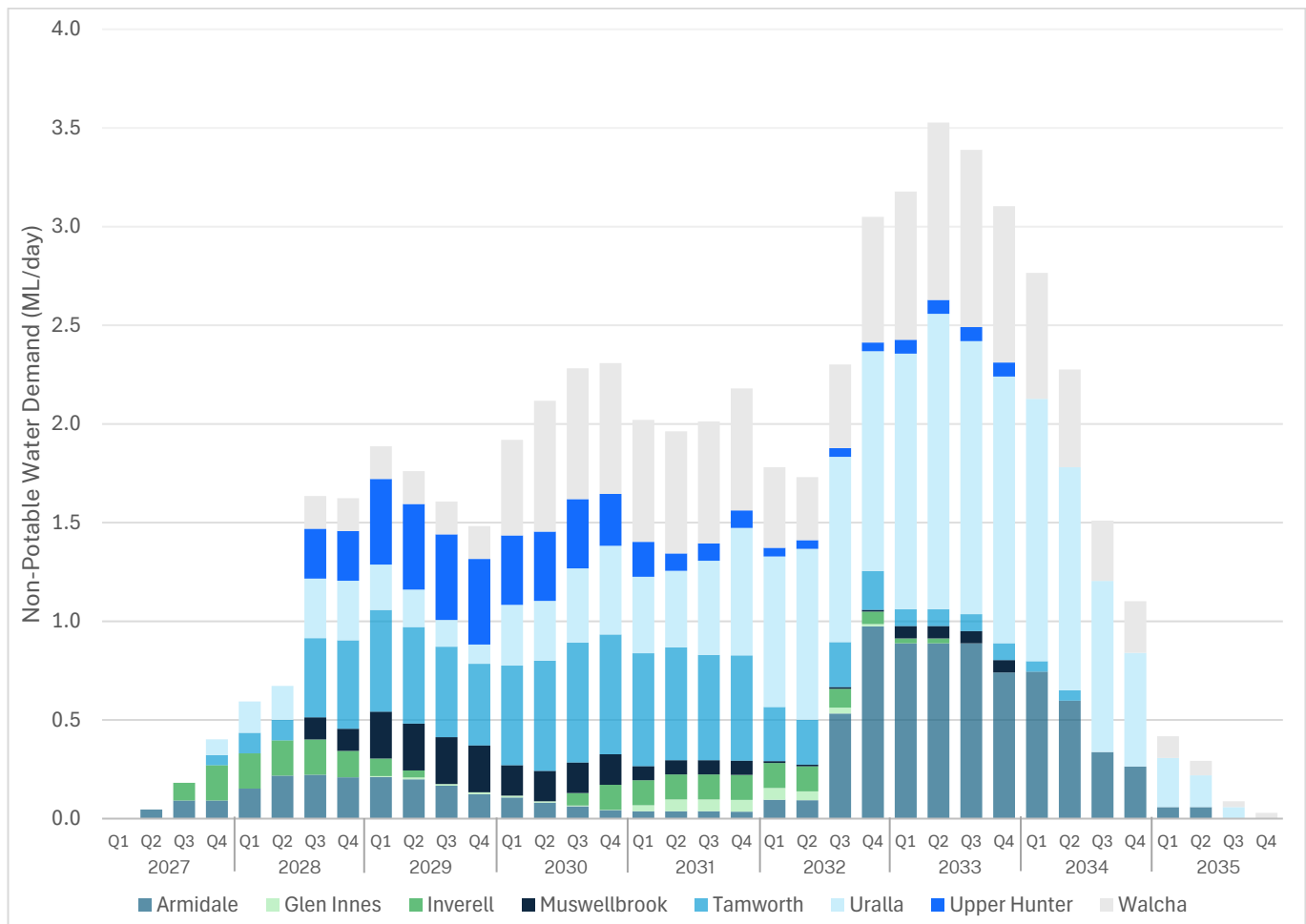


Figure 2: Estimated average daily non-potable water demand for renewable energy projects, split by LGA

Key findings

- Similar to potable water, non-potable water usage is expected to increase from mid-2027 with a smaller initial peak at the end of 2028 and beginning of 2029. This reflects the delivery of renewable energy projects connecting into the existing Transgrid network in Armidale, Inverell, Tamworth and Uralla, and the beginning of construction for the network infrastructure project.
- From mid-2028, non-potable water demands remain consistently above 1.5 ML/day and increase to above 2 ML/day from mid-2030.
- There is a second peak in non-potable water demands towards the end of 2030, as a result of the ongoing construction of renewable energy projects and the network infrastructure project.
- The third and largest peak in non-potable water demand is anticipated to occur in mid-2033, with a regional demand of around 3.6 ML/day. This reflects the construction of renewable energy projects connecting to the network infrastructure project.
- Modelled REZ-related water demand reduces to pre-REZ levels towards the end of 2035.
- Any delays to construction timelines would likely see the peaks flatten and demands push out to 2036 and beyond, depending on the extent of delay.

Modelling approach: Non-potable water demand for the construction of renewable energy projects was based on industry benchmarking analysis of over 60 reference projects with published water demand estimates, categorised by project type and size in megawatts (MW) of generation. The following benchmark figures were used:

- battery storage: 0.016 ML/MW of storage/year
- solar: 0.181 ML/MW of renewable generation/year
- wind: 0.178 ML/MW of renewable generation/year.

For the network infrastructure project, the EIS estimated demands were used.

Non-potable water demand typically builds to its peak earlier in the construction phase than potable water. The demand profile begins with early activities of soil compaction and dust suppression. Demand peaks (particularly for wind farms) with concrete production for foundations and electrical substations, and then drops to much lower levels, predominantly for dust suppression and landscape establishment during the mechanical/electrical fit out and commissioning phases. These estimates are based on assumptions about the sequencing of construction activities in a typical development. Different construction approaches would result in changes to the patterns of water use.

Potential water sources

Source	Key considerations
Regulated rivers	Water held and released through dams, weirs and reservoirs - access depends on entitlement, allocation and rules of water sharing plans.
Unregulated rivers	Rivers and streams where flows occur naturally - access is constrained by flow and rules of water sharing plans.
Groundwater	Water accessed from underground aquifers through bores - availability depends on aquifer condition, entitlement, bore approval and rules of water sharing plans, including extraction limits.
Recycled water	Treated wastewater or recovered water from local water utilities or from on-site treatment - existing supplies in towns may already be committed to agriculture, parks, environmental purposes or other customers.
Captured water	Approved rainwater and stormwater capture and water held in on-site dams and tanks.
Commercial supply	Businesses that source, transport and supply water, supported by suitable storage and delivery arrangements.

REZ projects will use a range of water sources during construction, with suitability depending on a range of factors including location, weather, availability, water quality, infrastructure capacity, cost and regulatory and environmental requirements.

Identifying a water source does not necessarily mean it is available as renewable energy projects are subject to the same water management rules and assessment processes as other developments. Non-potable water is regulated according to water sharing plan rules, allocations, licence and approval conditions, and any metering and reporting obligations continue to apply.

You can read more about how water is managed in NSW on the [DCCEEW Water website](https://water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au) at water.dcceew.nsw.gov.au.

Operational demand is expected to fall substantially after construction and can often be met through on-site capture, storage or another approved local source.

Modelling scenario used in the analysis

The new water modelling uses a single representative modelling scenario with a combined generation and standalone storage capacity of between 13-15 GW, which aligns to the aggregate maximum capacity cap range in the July 2026 [draft access scheme positions paper](#).

This scenario includes 35 renewable energy projects located within the New England REZ boundary, and the estimated water demands for the network infrastructure project, as reported in the EIS, Section 3.3.13 (totalling 36 projects). The identified renewable energy projects include those planning to connect to the existing Transgrid network and the proposed New England REZ network infrastructure.

The construction timeline for renewable energy projects has been informed by our current understanding of the status of projects in development, the expected completion date for the network infrastructure project and anticipated commissioning profiles.

It is important to note that the list of renewable energy projects connecting to the network infrastructure will not be known until the access rights allocation process is completed in 2028. The modelled scenario provides a point in time as of September 2026, and inclusion of a project does not represent NSW Governments view on the likelihood of a project proceeding.

This analysis does not include pumped hydro energy storage (PHES) projects, primarily as they may be on a different timeline compared to other generation and battery storage projects. Additionally, the timing of the initial filling of reservoirs often depends strongly on flow conditions, which cannot be predicted years in advance.

Understanding the assessments to date

The assessments serve different purposes and should not be read as competing forecasts. The 2025 study identified where regional challenges could arise under an unconstrained scenario which assessed all known major projects in and beyond the REZ. The refined water demand analysis provides a more realistic development scenario for REZ-driven water demands.

Importantly, individual projects must continue to identify and assess estimated water demand, potential sources and impacts for the purposes of their planning consent.

Aspect	Water and wastewater security study (2025)	New water modelling (2026)	Renewable energy project and network infrastructure EISs
Timing	Published December 2025 (data inputs as of November 2024)	Published October 2026 (data inputs as of September 2026)	As each project progresses
Purpose	Broad regional study of major infrastructure projects to determine the key challenges and opportunities	Realistic, point-in-time regional planning estimate of REZ demands	Inform assessment of potential project impacts as part of the development consent process for each project
Projects	Up to 114 major infrastructure projects, including non-renewables plus the network infrastructure project (all known major infrastructure projects within the study area)	35 generation and storage projects plus the network infrastructure project (select project list based on design capacity)	Individual network, generation or storage project
Scale	About 28 GW	13-15 GW	Capacity and program proposed by the project
Study area	11 LGAs intersecting the REZ boundary, network infrastructure and Singleton LGA	7 LGAs within the New England REZ boundary and extent of network infrastructure alignment	Project site, source and affected water systems
Method	Bottom-up estimate. Existing context plus REZ development; upper, lower and dry-period sensitivities	Benchmarking total demand. Expected network capacity, commissioning and standard construction assumptions	Site-specific demand, source reliability, impacts, mitigation and monitoring
Potable water	Based on number of workers + concrete Includes potable water used in concrete (very conservative mix ratio of 960L/m ³)	Based on number of workers multiplied by per worker ratio (245 L/d) Assumes concrete does not use potable water	Assessments carried out to meet the individual project requirements and the Secretary's Environmental Assessments Requirements (SEARs)
Non-potable water	Demands by assumed construction activities per technology	Baseline ratios by technology (ML/MW/year) Assumes concrete uses non-potable water	Assessments carried out to meet the individual project requirements and the SEARs

Why and how the estimates changed

- We have progressed our understanding of network design and renewable energy projects likely to connect which has informed the list of projects included in the new water modelling.
- A more realistic renewable energy generation and storage project profile was used in the new water modelling which saw the number of projects considered drop by around 70%, noting that non-renewable projects and projects outside of the REZ boundary have not been considered.
- Up-to-date information on project timing, delivery and commissioning assumptions.
- A clearer distinction between potable and non-potable construction uses, including water requirements for concrete production. For example, the water and wastewater security study used a highly conservative concrete / water mix ratio of 960 L/m³ (likely to be as much as 70% less in practice) and assumed it would be supplied by town water.
- Use of industry benchmarks drawn from available project information and comparable renewable energy developments.
- The refined assessment considered a more likely overall timeframe for project development and connection sequencing, extending the duration of the assessment by 3 years (and therefore lowering the peak demand in a given year).

Future timeline for renewable energy projects

Understanding water demands from renewable energy projects is an ongoing process. Estimates will continue to be refined as projects progress and more information becomes available.

We won't know which renewable energy projects are connecting to the network infrastructure until the access rights tender process is completed in 2028, and many of those projects may not exhibit their EIS for many years.

The New England REZ access scheme is expected to be declared by the end of 2026. Once the access scheme is declared, EnergyCo intends to run an access rights tender process in 2027 to ensure the right mix and quality of projects are awarded access rights to connect to the transmission network.

You can read more about the access scheme and access rights on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

New England REZ network infrastructure project EIS

The New England REZ network infrastructure project EIS was placed on public exhibition in October 2026. The EIS includes assessments of surface water, flooding and groundwater impacts for the network infrastructure project and identifies measures to avoid and manage any potential impacts during construction and operation. The EIS also includes an analysis of water demands for the project.

You can read more about water use for the REZ network infrastructure project in our EIS water fact sheet and access digital resources including our interactive map and virtual EIS room on our engagement portal at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne-rez.

Managing REZ-wide water challenges

The NSW Government will continue to monitor project timing, proposed water sources, and potential impacts on shared water resources, town systems, and regional infrastructure. This supports early action but does not replace each proponent's responsibility to secure water and approvals.

Each project, including EnergyCo for the network infrastructure project, must demonstrate secure water supply and assess cumulative impacts before a planning approval can be granted by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) and construction can proceed.

Responding to changing water conditions

Project proponents need to respond to actual water availability. For example, during dry periods, projects may need to use different water sources, reduce water use or reschedule water-intensive work. Importantly:

- town supply is used only where the council confirms capacity and acceptable conditions
- existing licence holder access, basic landholder rights and environmental requirements are managed through the rules of the existing statutory framework
- projects should consider maintaining alternative-source and demand-reduction measures, with construction adjusted to ensure compliance with planning approval obligations
- anticipated demands, emerging constraints and management responses should be reviewed and communicated transparently.

The NSW water management framework

Water is managed primarily under the *Water Management Act 2000*, the *Water Management (General) Regulation 2025* and legally binding water sharing plans. The framework governs how water is shared and used and includes water access licensing and trading, environmental protections and drought-management provisions.

Framework aspect	Purpose
Water sharing plans	Set long-term extraction limits, protect environmental water and basic landholder rights, and establish access, allocation and trading rules for each water source
Licences and approvals	Approve water use, establish an entitlement and allocation, and regulate extraction works and water use where required
Planning assessment	Assesses project-specific surface water, groundwater, infrastructure, cumulative and environmental impacts and establishes mitigation, monitoring and reporting requirements
Compliance	Licence, approval, metering and water-account conditions are monitored and enforced by the responsible agencies, including Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR)

Working together to manage regional water needs

A range of organisations and communities contribute to water planning, assessment, supply, compliance and decision-making across the New England REZ.

Stakeholder	Primary role
NSW DCCEEW – Water Group	Develops water-sharing policy and plans, administers relevant licences and approvals for state significant projects and provides water-assessment advice.
WaterNSW	Operates major dams and regulated systems, provides licensing and customer services within its responsibilities and administers water trades.
Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR)	Independently monitors and enforces compliance with NSW water laws, licences, approvals and metering requirements.
NSW Department of Planning, Housing, Infrastructure (DPHI)	Oversees the planning and assessment framework for state significant projects, including the assessment of EISs, determination of planning approvals and consent conditions, and regulation of compliance through monitoring and reporting requirements.
Premiers Department coordinating whole of government	Accountable for coordinating NSW Government response to cumulative impacts, including water.
Local water utilities	Manages town water and wastewater systems, determines supply capacity and commercial terms and implements restrictions when required.
EnergyCo	Supports the assessment of regional demand, manages network delivery and engages with agencies, councils, proponents and communities. Accountable for meeting infrastructure planner obligations under the <i>NSW Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020</i> .
Network operator	Responsible for the construction and operation of the New England network infrastructure project, including identifying and implementing water demand management measures, securing lawful water supplies.
Project developers	Assesses demand and impacts, mitigates its own cumulative impacts to acceptable levels and minimises the overall contribution to cumulative impacts, secures lawful water supplies, obtains approvals, constructs required infrastructure and implements contingency plans.
Commercial suppliers	Sources, transports and supplies water under applicable laws and commercial arrangements.
Communities	Local and Aboriginal communities contribute local knowledge, identify concerns and help shape acceptable regional and project outcomes. This occurs through community consultation, public exhibition of planning documents, stakeholder reference groups, Aboriginal engagement processes and ongoing project engagement during planning, assessment, delivery and operations.

Next steps

While peak REZ water demand is not until the early 2030s, EnergyCo recognises that planning for the REZ needs to be progressed now to allow time to identify, develop and implement effective solutions. Although this work takes time, we are moving quickly to ensure appropriate strategies are in place, working closely with DCCEEW's Water Group.

The new water modelling provides refined estimates for how much potable and non-potable water may be needed for REZ projects and informs future planning. Further work is underway to better understand the implications of these demands on water sources, supply systems and overall water availability. Further work is also required to understand the potential demands on wastewater systems.

EnergyCo will continue engaging closely with NSW government agency partners, generators, local councils and other stakeholders to support opportunities that minimise the impacts of REZ delivery, support steady regional growth and maximise benefits for local communities.

As part of this work, EnergyCo is undertaking technical investigations and feasibility studies over 2026 and 2027 to identify, assess, prioritise and scope initiatives that respond to forecast water and wastewater infrastructure capacity challenges and help to mitigate cumulative water impacts. These investigations will include potential funding and delivery pathways of identified initiatives, and opportunities to drive legacy benefits across the New England region.

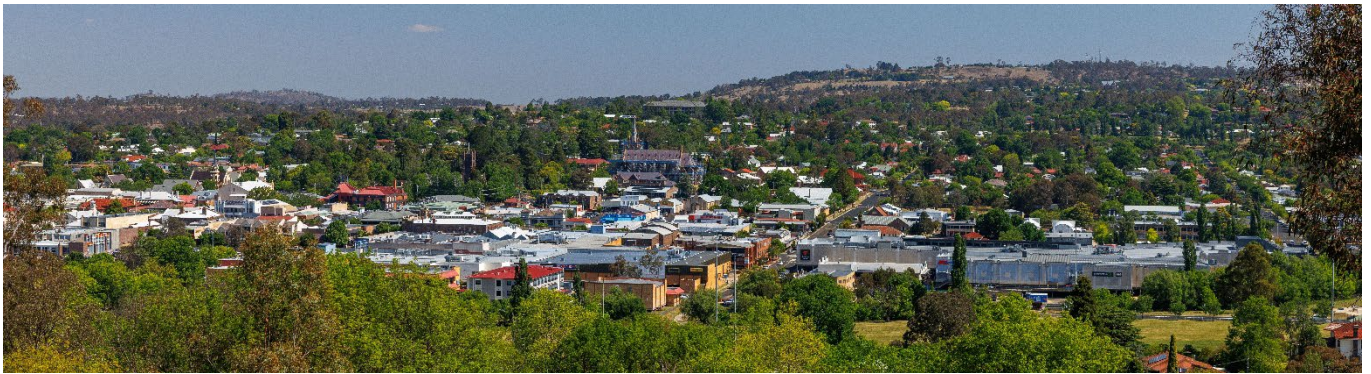
While we don't have all the answers yet, we have made significant progress through our collaborative efforts with stakeholders. We expect to share further details of proposed water security initiatives for the broader New England REZ in 2027.

Importantly, most of the solutions being explored are not expected to be required for another two to four years, ahead of anticipated peaks in construction activity.

Staying informed

We understand that water security is an important issue for communities across the New England region. This update is intended to share what we know so far, explain how our understanding of water demand has evolved and outline the work that is continuing.

As further information becomes available, we will continue to keep communities informed about the outcomes of this work.



About EnergyCo

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is a statutory authority responsible for leading the delivery of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) as part of the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

EnergyCo is working closely with communities, investors and industry to deliver the state's first five REZs.

For more information about EnergyCo, visit our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-energyco.

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