

Media Release

Thursday, 8 August 2024

Commonwealth planning approval secured for Australia's first renewable energy zone

The Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) transmission project has secured Commonwealth planning approval, marking a pivotal step forward for Australia's journey towards a renewable energy future.

It follows the project's NSW planning approval granted in June. With both State and Commonwealth planning approvals now secured, this crucial infrastructure is poised to transition into its delivery phase.

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) will now continue working towards awarding the final contract to the preferred network operator to design, build, operate, and maintain the transmission line network for the Central-West Orana REZ.

This is the first REZ to reach this critical step, paving the way for the construction of essential transmission infrastructure to connect large-scale solar, wind, and energy storage projects to the electricity grid.

The Central-West Orana REZ is a key initiative under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (Roadmap) to deliver clean, affordable, and reliable energy to households and businesses across the State. The project will deliver at least 4.5 gigawatts (GW) of transmitted electricity.

The Roadmap will benefit consumers by enabling more renewable energy into the grid, putting downward pressure on electricity bills.

The Central-West Orana REZ is approximately 20,000km² and takes in cities and towns including Dubbo, Dunedoo, and Mudgee. The project is expected to drive up to \$20 billion in private investment in solar, wind, and energy storage projects, supporting around 5,000 jobs during peak construction.

Construction works are expected to begin from late 2024, with initial operation anticipated in 2028. The Central-West Orana REZ is a landmark project that will play a pivotal role in NSW's transition to a clean energy future and help the State achieve its Net Zero targets.

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is part of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)

Quote attributable to Chief Executive Officer James Hay:

“Securing planning approval for the Central-West Orana REZ transmission project is a huge step forward in progressing 12GW of generation under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap and moving towards NSW’s clean energy future.

“This is the first REZ in the country to obtain full planning approval, paving the way for a significant boost in renewable energy generation to replace aging coal-fired power stations.

“The Central-West Orana REZ isn’t just about clean energy. This project will bring long-term financial benefits to both NSW electricity consumers and the local communities where the REZ will be built.

“EnergyCo will continue to work closely with local communities, and the preferred network operator to finalise the project to financial close.”

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Media Contact: Sana Ahmadi | media@energyco.nsw.gov.au | 0457571148