

Delivering community benefits

New England Renewable Energy Zone

July 2024

EnergyCo is committed to planning and delivering NSW Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) in a way that minimises impacts and provides long-term benefits to regional communities who are hosting renewable energy infrastructure.



Walcha

Key benefits of the REZ



New income streams for landowners

New income streams for landowners from lease payments for hosting renewable energy infrastructure, including wind and solar projects.



Reliable clean energy supply

The REZs will help contain electricity costs and improve the reliability of energy supply for communities across NSW.



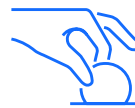
Employment and training programs

Employment and training programs to promote job opportunities and the use of local content, goods and services.



Community and employment benefits

Hundreds of millions of dollars in community and employment benefits for communities hosting renewable energy infrastructure in the REZ.



Landowner benefit payments

Landowner payments of \$200,000 per kilometre of new transmission lines hosted in addition to compensation under the *Just Terms Compensation Act 1991*, subject to Consumer Price Index (CPI) and paid out in annual instalments for a period of 20 years.



Employment opportunities

The delivery of the REZ will support over 6,000 construction jobs and 2,000 ongoing operational jobs in the region.

REZ-wide coordination and planning

EnergyCo is leading an all-of-government approach to ensure benefits to local communities are maximised through the delivery of the REZs. In collaboration with other NSW government agencies, EnergyCo is in the early stages of investigating potential cumulative impacts and priority areas for delivering community benefits in the New England REZ. We are working closely with:

-  **Local communities including First Nations people**
-  **Councils**
-  **Government agencies**
-  **Industry**
-  **Interest groups**
-  **Generation project developers**

Assessing potential impacts and opportunities in the New England REZ

Under the NSW planning system, all major projects are required to assess cumulative impacts. The approach to assessing these impacts acknowledges that each project is required to mitigate its own impacts to acceptable levels and minimise the overall contribution to cumulative impacts.

EnergyCo also recognises that coordinating projects in the REZ requires a region-wide, collaborative approach between EnergyCo, renewable energy developers, councils, government agencies and service providers.

We are in the early stages of carrying out investigations to coordinate from the New England REZ network infrastructure project and the wider REZ, including identifying potential opportunities to deliver benefits. The priority areas for these investigations are outlined on the next page.

Working with communities

We understand that local people who live and work in regional NSW know what is best for their communities and we will seek feedback to inform our planning in this area. We will keep you informed about opportunities to have your say. For more information about how EnergyCo is coordinating the REZs to deliver benefits for landowners and communities, visit our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/community.





Solar and battery project near Uralla

Focus areas for REZ coordination studies

We are carrying out investigations to identify opportunities to deliver benefits and address potential impacts across several topics:



Social infrastructure to understand demand for community services such as utilities, housing, education, healthcare and emergency services and community facilities to support potential population increases



Local supply chain to understand the prospect of local suppliers and likely demands on resources, plant and equipment, professional services, trades and other services



Housing and accommodation to understand housing and accommodation profiles, and identify potential opportunities to help meet the demands generated by the temporary population increase associated with incoming construction workforces



Telecommunications to understand the availability and coverage of mobile and internet services, and identify potential initiatives to improve the infrastructure to provide increased connectivity for communities



Traffic and transportation to identify the transport infrastructure upgrades to safely and efficiently accommodate the projected traffic and transportation demands



Waste and circular economy to review the capacity of regional waste and recycling facilities and investigate opportunities to improve resource integration, reduce waste generation and meet anticipated demands for waste management and recovery associated with infrastructure development across the region.



Water and wastewater security to understand the current capacity of these services and likely peak demands during development in the REZ, and to identify the management and security strategies to ensure an adequate supply of water and treatment of wastewater



Training and skills to determine employment needs and opportunities to support the growth of skills in the region



Separate to the studies, we are exploring opportunities to develop a REZ-wide approach to biodiversity offsets. For more information on our work to date, see the biodiversity offsets fact sheet on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.



Tamworth



Regional Steering Committee

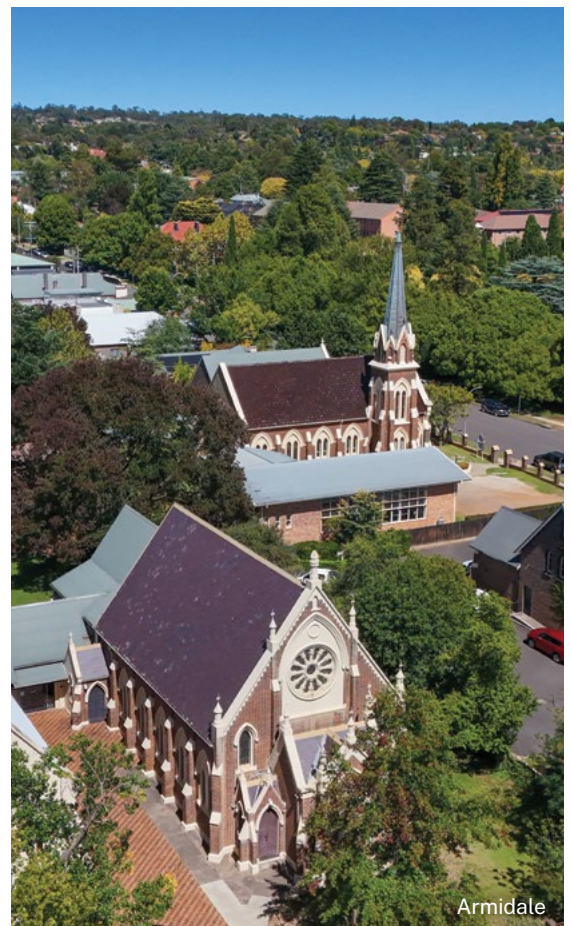
An intergovernmental and council steering committee will be established later this year to coordinate REZ-wide community benefits and develop strategies to manage cumulative impacts. EnergyCo will keep the community informed on the development status of the committee.

Engaging with councils

Meaningful engagement with councils is central to the coordination and development of the New England REZ. EnergyCo established regular meetings this year with seven key councils where the network infrastructure project intersects their local government area (LGA). The interface meetings are a key forum to work through specific issues and opportunities within each LGA related to the development of the New England REZ and network infrastructure project. The studies form a critical part of this engagement.

Planned program of work:

May - June 2024	Early engagement with councils as part of the housing and accommodation study
We are here July 2024	Specialists engaged by EnergyCo to carry out remaining studies
August 2024 – December 2024	Detailed investigations, studies and engagement with councils to identify potential constraints and opportunities for community priority initiatives
Q1 2025	Recommendations to determine potential solutions and initiatives
2025	Engage with potential delivery partners including NSW government agencies, councils and industry



Armidale



Tamworth



Muswellbrook



Types of community and employment projects which could be delivered through the program include:

- Public or community services or infrastructure
- Health services or infrastructure
- Accommodation/housing
- Local or regional energy programs or infrastructure
- Environmental programs or infrastructure
- Parks and recreation infrastructure
- Education programs or research
- Arts or cultural programs
- Tourism programs or infrastructure
- Services, programs or infrastructure for First Nations people
- Skills, training and employment programs and associated services and facilities
- Programs, services or facilities that support employees to gain skills and experience for employment
- Other services, programs or infrastructure that benefit the relevant local community

Community and employment benefit program

EnergyCo is establishing a community and employment benefit program in the New England REZ to ensure regional communities see long-term benefits from the energy transition through funding for community-led projects and initiatives. The program will allow community groups, councils and First Nations groups to apply for grants to deliver projects for their local community. We will keep you informed about opportunities to get involved and have your say on how benefits are delivered in New England. You can find more information on EnergyCo's website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/cebp. The program will aim to:



Improve people's lives

in regional communities by supporting better access to health services, housing and accommodation, telecommunication connectivity and other public services and infrastructure.



Foster community connection

by making it easier for people to access quality sport, recreation and other community facilities, as well as arts and cultural programs that bring people together.



Create local employment opportunities

through training and skills programs or infrastructure.



Boost resilience and innovation

through community energy programs and environmental improvement programs.



Improved outcomes for First Nations

people through provision of additional services, infrastructure and programs to support First Nations people.



Support regional economic development

through tourism programs and infrastructure and legacy projects that provide enduring benefits for host communities.

Benefits for landowners

EnergyCo is delivering initiatives to ensure landowners share in the benefits of the once-in-a-generation economic opportunity presented by the energy transition.

Hosting transmission projects

The NSW Government has established a Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme which will see private landowners hosting new critical high voltage transmission projects paid a set rate of \$200,000 per kilometre of transmission hosted, subject to CPI and paid out in annual instalments over 20 years.

This is in addition to the compensation landowners are entitled to under NSW land acquisition legislation. The scheme is the first of its kind in Australia and recognises the NSW Government's commitment to building a modern grid that maximises benefits for communities and households.

For information about the scheme visit energyco.nsw.gov.au/community/strategic-benefit-payments-scheme

Hosting energy generation and storage projects

Solar, wind and storage projects can provide farmers with new, long-term income streams alongside existing agriculture and land uses. Under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, landowners could receive an estimated \$1.5 billion in lease payments over the next 20 years. Renewable energy projects can complement farming practices through 'agrivoltaics', such as sheep grazing or cropping underneath solar panels.

Neighbouring landowners

EnergyCo acknowledges that communities are concerned about potential amenity and environmental impacts associated with new energy infrastructure, including transmission lines. The NSW Government is developing guidelines for assessing the impact of major new transmission lines, including considering payments to address significant residual visual impacts on nearby landowners.

Biodiversity offsetting opportunities

Many private landowners in and around the REZs have areas of native vegetation that may be protected for conservation purposes as a biodiversity stewardship site. For more information about hosting a biodiversity stewardship site, please read the biodiversity offsets fact sheet on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

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.

Contact us

If you have any questions or would like to provide feedback, please contact us on the details below. We look forward to hearing from you.



nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au



1800 061 114
(9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)



energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne



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. If you need help understanding this information, contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** and ask them to call **1800 061 114**.