

Minutes

HTP Regional Reference Group – Meeting

Monday, 2 December 2024

10:00am – 12 noon

Online – MS Teams

Chaired by: Bob Pynsent – Independent Chair

Online	In person	Apology	Name	Represents
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Pynsent (BP)	Independent Chair
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sue Moore (SM)	Mayor Singleton Council
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Watton (DW)	Mayor Cessnock City Council
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adam Shultz (AS)	Lake Macquarie City Council
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	John Sullivan (JS)	Singleton community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Phillip O’Neill (PO)	Cessnock community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diane Crosdale (DC)	Lake Macquarie community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Anderson (CA)	Regional Environment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Samantha Martin-Williams (SMW)	Regional Business
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nathan Towney (NT)	Regional Aboriginal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Katie Brassil (KB)	RRG Secretariat
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alana Kosklin (AK)	RRG Secretariat

Visitors

	NAME	POSITION
Online	Carolyn McCallig	HTP Environment and Planning Lead
Online	Rodney Groves	HTP Community Team
Online	Darren Clarke	NSW EnergyCo Director Regional Coordination
Online	Melanie Rippon	EMM Consulting
Online	Chris Mahoney	EMM Consulting

Declarations of interest

Nil to declare.

Agenda item discussion and actions

Item 1. Welcome and Acknowledgement

The Chair delivered an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members and visitors.

Item 2. NSW EnergyCo Update - Secretariat

James Hay has left the role of CEO after holding the position for five years and been replaced on an interim basis by Hannah McCaughey as the EnergyCo board seeks a long-term replacement. James will take up a new position in the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water as Deputy Secretary, leading a critical project working on regulation of access between energy transmission networks.

Advance notice was provided to members re: an ABC radio story covering impacted landowners and including an interview from an EnergyCo representative.

As requested by the RRG, the RRG Chair and Regional Environment Representative will be meeting with HTP Project Leaders on 10 December to discuss importance of strategic biodiversity offsets and benefit sharing.

The hosting of 2025 meetings by councils will reflect availability and include Lake Macquarie City Council's administration building when it returns to operation.

Item 3. Presentation on Construction Compounds and Access Roads

Presentation by Carolyn McCallig, HTP Planning and Environment Lead

- The project will be supported by six construction compounds (LGA's: 1 Muswellbrook, 2 Singleton, 2 Cessnock and 1 Lake Macquarie) and support sites of which three will also include accommodation camps (Muswellbrook, Singleton and Lake Macquarie LGA's).
- Construction access roads are in the early stages of investigation and modelling.

Discussion:

Construction Compounds

SM asked about consultation with landowners.

CM confirmed consultation with landowners which allowed her to share this information with the RRG.

PO enquired where on Wollombi Road the construction compound in Cessnock LGA would be located.

CM and RG advised on land close to the sawmill in Millfield, on either side of the road, two sites needed to service separate transmission and switching station contractors.

AS asked for an overview of what activities and how many people would be accommodated at the proposed Freemans Drive construction compound.

CM advised it would comprise a site office for contractors, with a work force of 700 at its peak spread evenly across each of the three sites. Construction compounds are designed to be self-sufficient re: sewerage water, catering, health services. The assessment of construction compounds and any associated impacts will form part of the EIS and SIA studies for the whole project.

CM invited feedback/ input from RRG members re: local knowledge and potential for local suppliers. It was noted the workforce would travel from the construction compounds by bus to the work site to reduce traffic movements on local roads.

PO asked about provision of legal advice to landholders and neighbours.

CM advised the proponent of a project has a legal obligation to consult with all relevant stakeholders throughout the EIS process.

KB explained construction compounds were not a permanent easement or acquisition as is the case for transmission infrastructure. Landowners will be entering into a construction lease for a specified period of time for a negotiated/ agreed amount.

AS asked, what the land will look like or be returned to at the end of the construction lease particularly if accommodating workers etc.

KB explained this would be agreed between the landowner and EnergyCo and would be included in the construction lease

SM asked when neighbours can provide input and have their issues/concerns heard

CM explained the consultation process was ongoing through the EIS process, however, there are also formal opportunities for submissions during a public exhibition process where the proponent would need to address and mitigate issues in a response to submissions and some cases may need to provide an amendment report.

Access Roads:

CM advised they were in the early stages of investigations, with traffic modelling and more detailed work required to inform the suitability and outcomes including any upgrades required

Interactions with roads (eg. stringing across a road) and the safety processes and measures with TfNSW were outlined and there was one rail crossing identified.

Any oversize overmass loads, which will be limited, will need detailed investigation

PO asked about traffic movement from the Port of Newcastle and the cumulative impacts associated with the CWO REZ development activities and transport movements.

CM advised this work is yet to be done however, state roads will be used. HTP is on a different timeline to CWO REZ and will have far less large equipment to move from the port. More detail can be provided as studies progress.

Chair asked if these technical studies would be progressed sufficiently for an update at the February meeting.

CM committed at the November meeting to share this information which is still in the formative part of the process, requires further modelling and investigations to refine the traffic and transport assessment which will include cumulative impacts.

Action: CM agreed to provide an update on all these items at the February meeting of the RRG.

Item 4. Social Impact Assessment

Presentation by Melanie Rippon and Chris Mahoney – EMM Consulting

Melanie and Chris introduced themselves. Melanie introduced the outline for the presentation and discussion.

- An overview of the NSW SIA requirements
- Social impact themes
- Preparation of the SIA report
- Social locality defined (corridor, local and regional)
- The engagement plan
- A list of identified stakeholders

Melanie sought feedback and invited discussion from the RRG.

Presentation slides attached.

Discussion:

MR explained there was a level of flexibility in the consultation and engagement process due to the holiday period and could accommodate feedback and engagement in the new year.

PO asked about interviews with impacted landowners.

MR and CM advised this is currently the case for the SIA and more broadly the Communications and Engagement Teams activities are ongoing and underpin the entire process.

MR sought feedback on the stakeholders identified for SIA engagement including one on ones with RRG members or completing the online SIA survey.

SM posed questions from an impacted landowner who has expressed frustration by questions remaining unanswered. SM asked how the information gathered via the SIA process is captured and used.

MR explained the feedback is recorded verbatim and then deidentified for inclusion in the report. The issues raised need to be addressed and mitigated where possible.

SM posed a number of unanswered questions from a landowner - what other farms currently operate with 500Kv lines, land sterilisation, biosecurity issues.

CM advised there are avenues for raising concerns, through a place manager, property formality process and EIS process. HTP's current alignment has been refined to respond to impacted landowners. However, the options for further changes are reduced as we move through the process.

KB asked SM to pass on the correspondence from the impacted landowner and reinforced CM's comments around limited scope for changes to alignment.

DC advised EnergyCo and NSW Farmers were close to releasing guidelines for transmission lines and farmers' interface.

PO questioned the length of time taken from the collection of data, developing a draft report and ability for feedback and input.

CM outlined the opportunities for feedback, the EIS exhibition period and the onus on the proponent to adequately address issues in the response to submissions document which further informs the process and in some cases the need to generate and amendment report if changes are substantive.

CM committed to ongoing engagement and communication of SIA outcomes prior to release as a technical chapter in the EIS.

The Chair asked to be included in the SIA interview process.

Action: *It was agreed the SIA online survey link would be provided to RRG members and individual members could request an SIA interview directly with Melanie*

Item 5. Update - Planning and Engineering Support for Council's

Presentation by Darren Clarke – NSW Energy Co Director, Regional Coordination

Darren caveated that what was being presented was waiting formal EnergyCo approval. Darren outlined the development of a Council Commissioning Payment Policy designed to support councils with a single EnergyCo agreement which covers all EnergyCo projects. The payment is premised on the level of impact and expected interface between EnergyCo and each Council. A scope of the types of council activities which would be covered by this payment was also outlined.

Discussion:

PO indicated he felt this support was inconsistent with what the RRG had been seeking in response to a community group seeking independent engineering advice and support for potential road impacts and potential upgrades.

SM sought clarification on the activities associated in the scope.

DC confirmed the purpose of the financial support, and it was not covering any road repairs.

Chair asked if Council could allocate fund to cover engineering support for a community group.

DC would seek clarification on provision of engineering advice to the Pokolbin Mountains Road group however, this was not the purpose of the commissioning payments.

Item 6. General Business

SM asked about providing RRG minutes to Councillors.

Secretariat advised the RRG minutes were publicly available on the EnergyCo website.

CA and Chair to report back to the RRG on Biodiversity offsets and Benefit Sharing. The agenda will also include concerns raised by SM.

DC affirmed it was the intent to have a decision this year on council commissioning payments.

Action	Responsible	Status
Carolyn McCallig to provide an update at the February meeting on progress of construction compounds, lay down areas and access roads	Carolyn McCallig/ Secretariat	ongoing
The RRG Chair and Regional Environment Representative will report at the February meeting the outcome/s of the meeting held with HTP Project Leaders on 9 December	Chair/ Secretariat	ongoing
The online SIA survey link will be provided to RRG members and individual members could request an SIA interview directly with Melanie from EMM Consulting	Secretariat	done

Upcoming meetings

Meeting Schedule for 2025:

3 February – TBC - *to hear from regional business organisations*

5 May – TBC

4 August – TBC

3 November – TBC

Meetings to be held on the first Monday of the month from 10am – 12noon.

The Chair thanked members for their contribution to the discussions and wished everyone a safe and enjoyable holiday period.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:35 am.

Social Impact Assessment

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

2 December 2024



Outline

- 01** Introductions
- 02** Social Impact Assessment – regulatory context
- 03** Social locality
- 04** Engagement program
- 05** Discussion / Q&A

NSW Social Impact Assessment Requirements

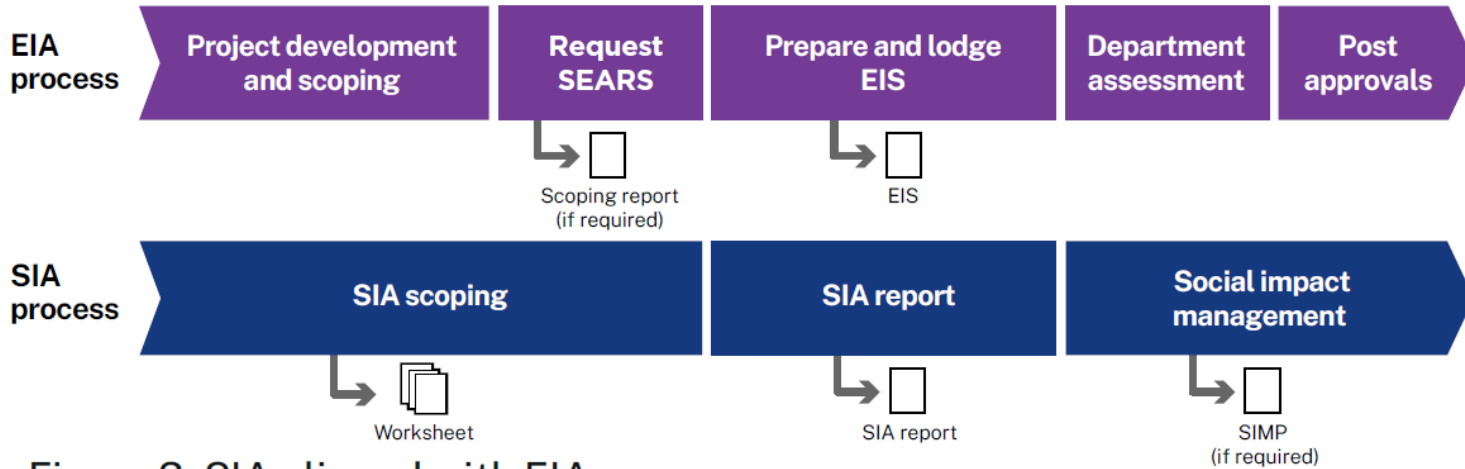
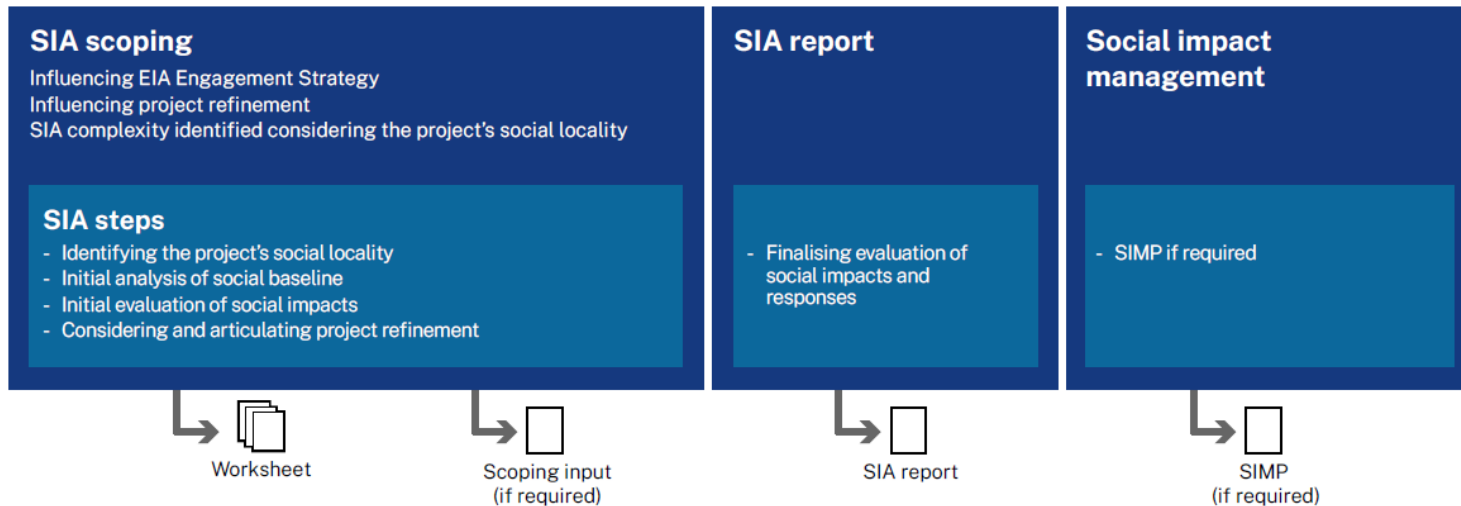


Figure 3: SIA aligned with EIA



Social impact themes

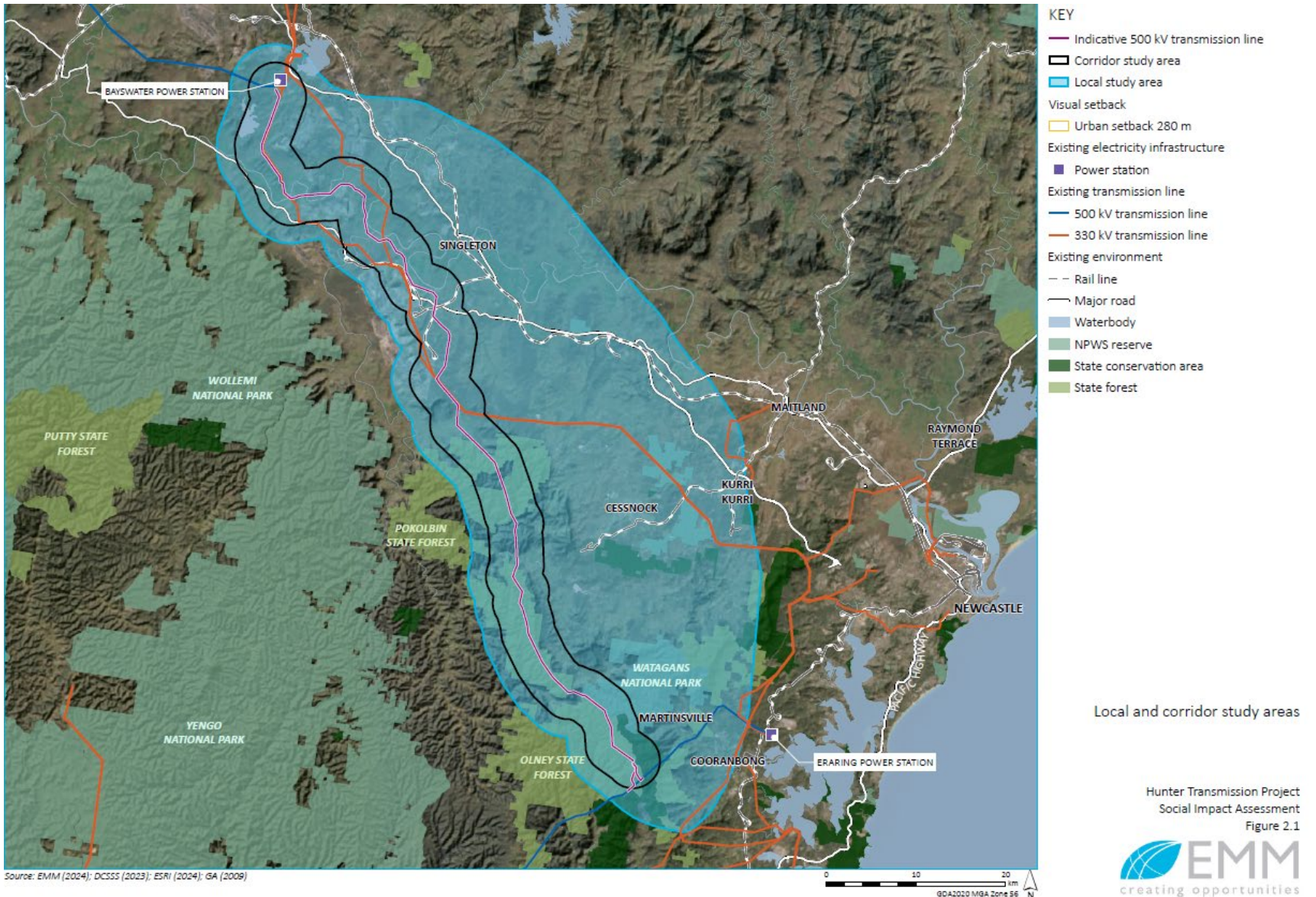


A landscape photograph showing a dense green forest covering a valley. In the foreground, two high-voltage power line towers are visible, with power lines stretching across the scene. The background features rolling hills and a cloudy sky. The overall scene is a mix of natural environment and infrastructure.

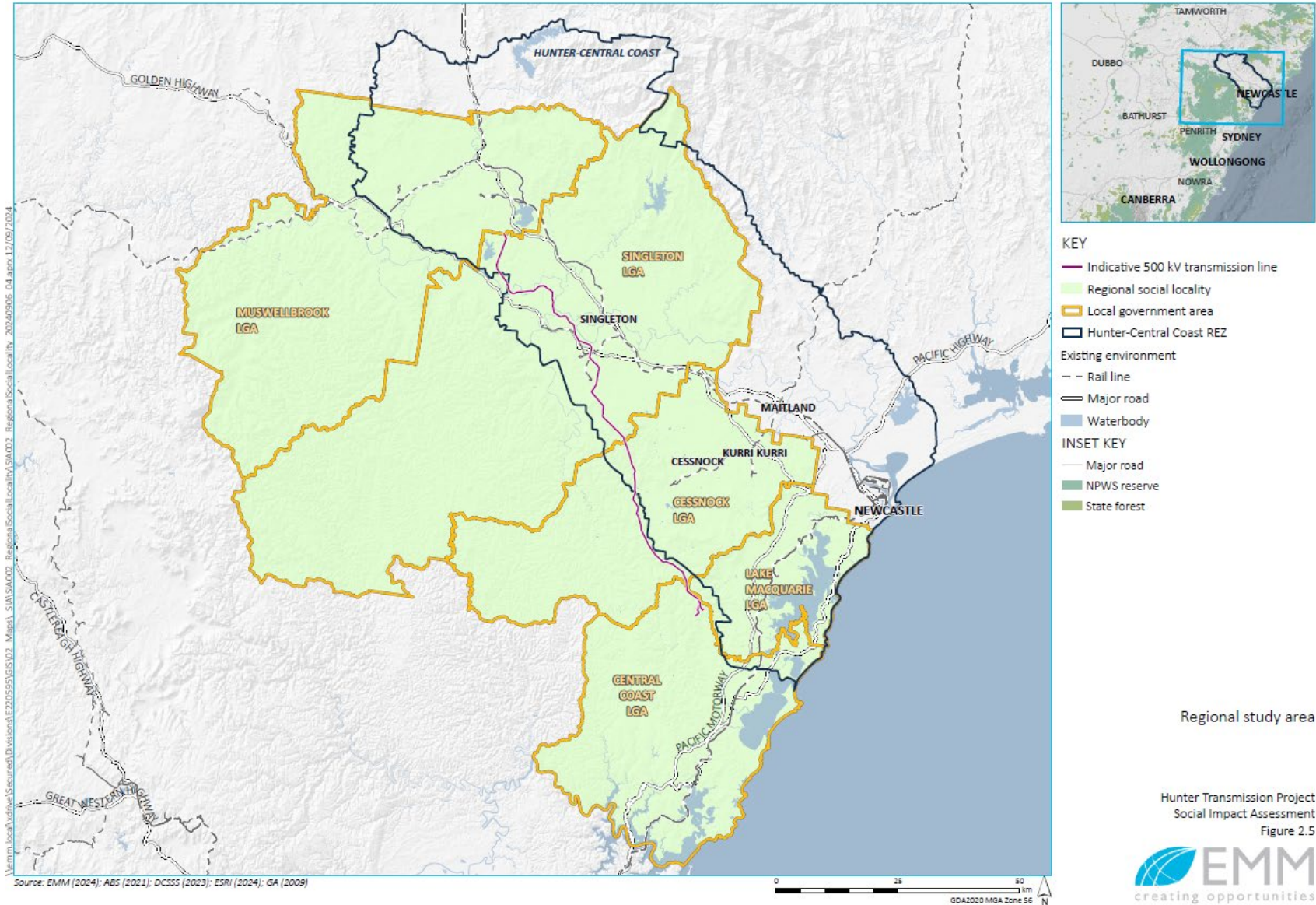
Preparation of SIA Report

- Collection of secondary data through stakeholder engagement – semi-structured interviews and survey
- Refining RFIs
- Thematic analysis of interview transcripts – key themes and issues
- Social impact evaluation – project and cumulative
- Development of mitigation and management measures

Social Locality – corridor and local



Social Locality - regional



Regional study area

Hunter Transmission Project
Social Impact Assessment
Figure 2.5

Engagement Plan for SIA

- Stakeholder identification and analysis undertaken
- Series of semi-structured interviews with targeted stakeholders using a pre-prepared enquiry framework. In person and via Teams or ZOOM.
- Online survey option for those we can't interview
- Engagement has commenced this week with broader community representatives e.g. environment groups, business bodies, relevant departments, schools, community groups etc
- Introduction of SIA and offers of interviews has occurred with directly affected landowners
- Data analysis – thematic analysis of interview transcripts and survey results. Will inform impact evaluation.

Stakeholders for SIA Engagement

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholders	Estimated # of interviews
Directly impacted landowners - North	-	4-5
Directly impacted landowners - Central	-	4-5
Directly impacted landholders - South	-	3
HTP Regional Reference Group	10 members	TBD
Environment groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hunter Community Environment Centre Hunter Wildlife Rescue 	2-3
Schools	Cessnock Public School, Cessnock East Primary School, St Patrick's Primary School, Mount View High School	2
Business bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hunter Valley Wine Tourism Association Business Hunter 	2
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Singleton Cessnock Lake Macquarie 	3
State Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW National Parks Association Forestry Corporation Health and emergency services 	2-3
Elected Representatives – State and Federal	Member for Upper Hunter Member for Cessnock Member for Lake Macquarie Member for Hunter	2

Discussion

1. *Which stakeholders are missing from the list? Who else should we be talking to?*
2. *What are the views and attitudes of your communities towards the energy transition in general, and more specifically HTP?*
3. *What do you perceive as the major social issue that we need to address as part of the SIA?*
4. *How could EnergyCo best mitigate or manage these risks?*
5. *Are there any groups that are particularly vulnerable to the social impacts that might occur?*
6. *What community opportunities or benefits can you identify? How could EnergyCo best collaborate with Council's and the wider community to maximise benefits?*

Australian locations

SYDNEY

Ground Floor, 20 Chandos Street
St Leonards NSW 2065
T 02 9493 9500

NEWCASTLE

Level 3, 175 Scott Street
Newcastle NSW 2300
T 02 4907 4800

BRISBANE

Level 1, 87 Wickham Terrace
Spring Hill QLD 4000
T 07 3648 1200

CANBERRA

Suite 2.04, Level 2
15 London Circuit
Canberra City ACT 2601

ADELAIDE

Level 4, 74 Pirie Street
Adelaide SA 5000
T 08 8232 2253

MELBOURNE

Suite 8.02, Level 8
454 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
T 03 9993 1900

PERTH

Suite 3.03
111 St Georges Terrace
Perth WA 6000
T 08 6430 4800

Canadian locations

CALGARY

606 4th Street SW, 11th Floor
Calgary, Alberta T2P 1T1

TORONTO

2345 Yonge Street, Suite 300
Toronto, Ontario M4P 2E5
T 647 467 1605

VANCOUVER

422 Richards Street, Unit 170
Vancouver, BC V6B 2Z4
T 604 999 8297

