

Refining the Hunter Transmission Project

Hunter Transmission Project

December 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of Australia, and the oldest continuing culture in human history.

We would like to respectfully acknowledge the Wonnarua, Awabakal and Darkinjung people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we deliver our project to the community.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal people of these communities. We acknowledge the work that Aboriginal people have done to maintain land and water.

We will show respect through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to engage with the Aboriginal community to ensure local priorities and values inform and influence decision making.

We reflect on the continuing impact of government policies and practices and recognise our responsibility to work together, with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities towards improved economic, social and cultural outcomes.

Published by Energy Corporation of New South Wales (EnergyCo). EnergyCo is the NSW Government statutory authority responsible for delivering the Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) as a critical part of transitioning to a cleaner future under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. You can read more about EnergyCo on our website: energyco.nsw.gov.au

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Cover image: Photo taken in Corrabare State Forest of ecologist Mark Stables undertaking a spring threatened flora survey for the HTP.

More information: energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp

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Introduction

1

Foreword

As we plan the Hunter Transmission Project our role is to minimise the impacts of this critical new infrastructure on people and the environment.

Welcome to this update for the Hunter Transmission Project (HTP). Refining the HTP is another chapter as we plan this once-in-a-generation transmission infrastructure.

The HTP will help to provide energy security from renewable sources like solar and wind as the remaining NSW coal-fired power stations close.

Before the HTP can proceed, it must be approved by both the NSW Government and Australian Government. This report will update you on how we're continuing to refine the HTP ahead of its planning approval pathway as critical State significant infrastructure.

I'd like to acknowledge the ongoing feedback and information exchange between landowners, community members and the HTP project team.

EnergyCo is listening to your feedback. And that's part of the reason we're continuing to make small but significant changes to the project before its environmental assessment and planning determination.

When we started planning the HTP we sought to avoid areas with high-value 'valley floor' vegetation and habitat and committed to tread lightly on the environment – and this remains a priority.

We're continuing to look for further ways we can avoid and mitigate impacts on important biodiversity as more information becomes available through the seasonal surveys and detailed assessments we're doing for the environmental impact statement (EIS). These will be placed on public exhibition after the EIS is lodged in mid-2025.

I'd also like to acknowledge this is a challenging time for some landowners as we negotiate with them to acquire easements for the HTP. We're committed to negotiating these acquisitions by mutual agreement wherever possible in line with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*. Compulsory acquisition must only be used as a last resort.

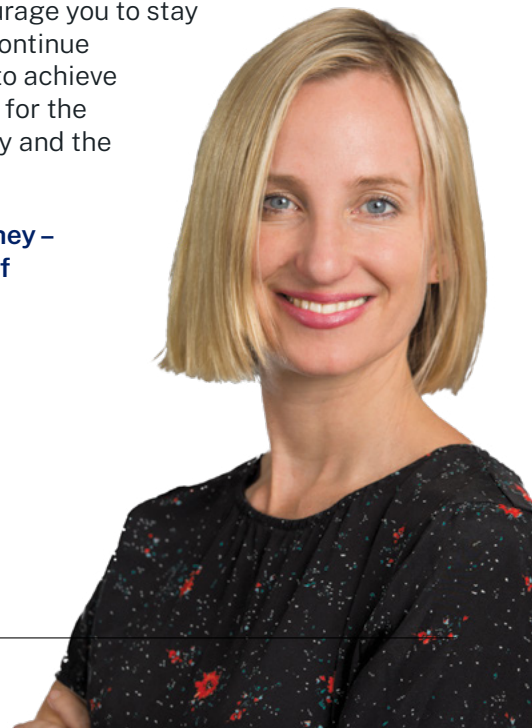
Our team is working hard to respond as sensitively as possible to each affected landowner's situation and requests. Regardless, we know it's a tough time for some people.

It's important for me to highlight there are some parts of the HTP's detailed design that can't be finalised until the construction phase begins. This is to be expected for any major infrastructure project and especially so given the Hunter's complex landscape.

For example, the EIS will include an indicative alignment for the location of around 230 transmission towers. But the exact location of each tower may need to be adjusted due to a variety of technical constraints before it can be finalised.

I hope you find this project update helpful and encourage you to stay informed, as we continue refining the HTP to achieve the best outcome for the Hunter community and the environment.

**Hannah McCaughey –
Chief Executive of
EnergyCo**



About the HTP

The Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) features a new 500 kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission line that will run through the Hunter region from Bayswater to Olney, near Eraring.



The new transmission line is expected to operate for at least 50 years.

We're building the HTP to make sure consumers in NSW have access to a reliable electricity supply from renewable energy.

Both the NSW Government and Australian Government agree the HTP is urgent. The existing transmission infrastructure lacks the capacity needed to transfer the electricity generated in the renewable energy zones to consumers.

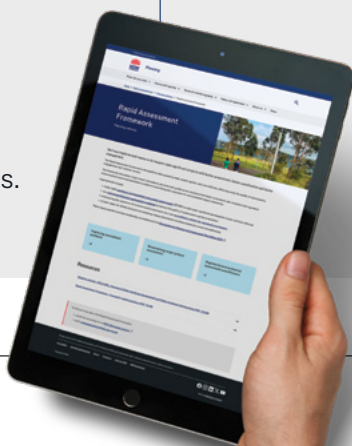
Rapid assessment framework

Because it's **critical State significant infrastructure** the HTP has a different planning approval pathway to many other major projects.

This includes a rapid assessment framework to streamline the assessment process.



Scan the QR code.



HTP at a glance



A new overhead 500 kV double circuit transmission line of around 100 kilometres



Will connect Bayswater to Olney/Eraring



New supporting infrastructure, including 2 switching stations



Will unlock electricity supply from the Central-West Orana and New England renewable energy zones



Urgent and must be operational by 2028



Will supply clean energy to consumers across NSW



Industry briefing

What happens when?

The HTP's next major milestone will be when we lodge its detailed environmental impact statement (EIS) in mid-2025.

The EIS will then be placed on public exhibition by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for a minimum of 4 weeks. This is when you can make a formal submission to provide your feedback.

Originally we anticipated the EIS being lodged and placed on public exhibition in late 2024.

The revised timeline allowed more time to consider ongoing community feedback in several locations.

The revised timeline also allows us to include both spring 2024 and summer 2024/2025 biodiversity surveys. These will provide important data on plants and animals for assessment through the EIS.

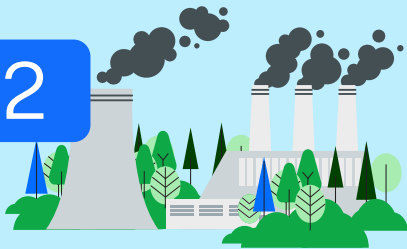
In most cases the revised EIS timeline won't delay the acquisition process for affected landowners and this is well underway. We remain committed to reaching a mutual agreement with landowners wherever possible.



Cessnock

HTP roadmap

2022



Early engagement with councils, MPs and government agencies

Declared critical State significant infrastructure

Preliminary corridor investigations

Community update



Refined corridor

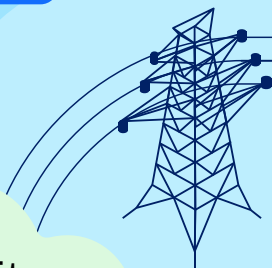


Opening letters issued

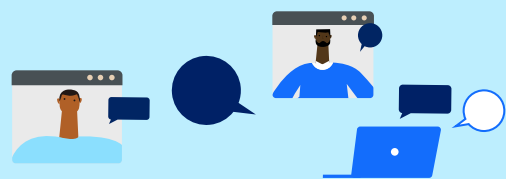
2025

Environmental impact statement (EIS) preparation/consultation

Community drop-in + briefing sessions



EIS lodged + public exhibition



EIS consultation

Finalise technical reports and preferred transmission route



Community update + drop-in sessions

Submissions report

2026

2023

Preliminary corridor

Community update + drop-in sessions

2024

Field work and technical studies begin

Early engagement

Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs)

Community update + drop-in sessions

Regional reference group established

Revised corridor + scoping report lodged

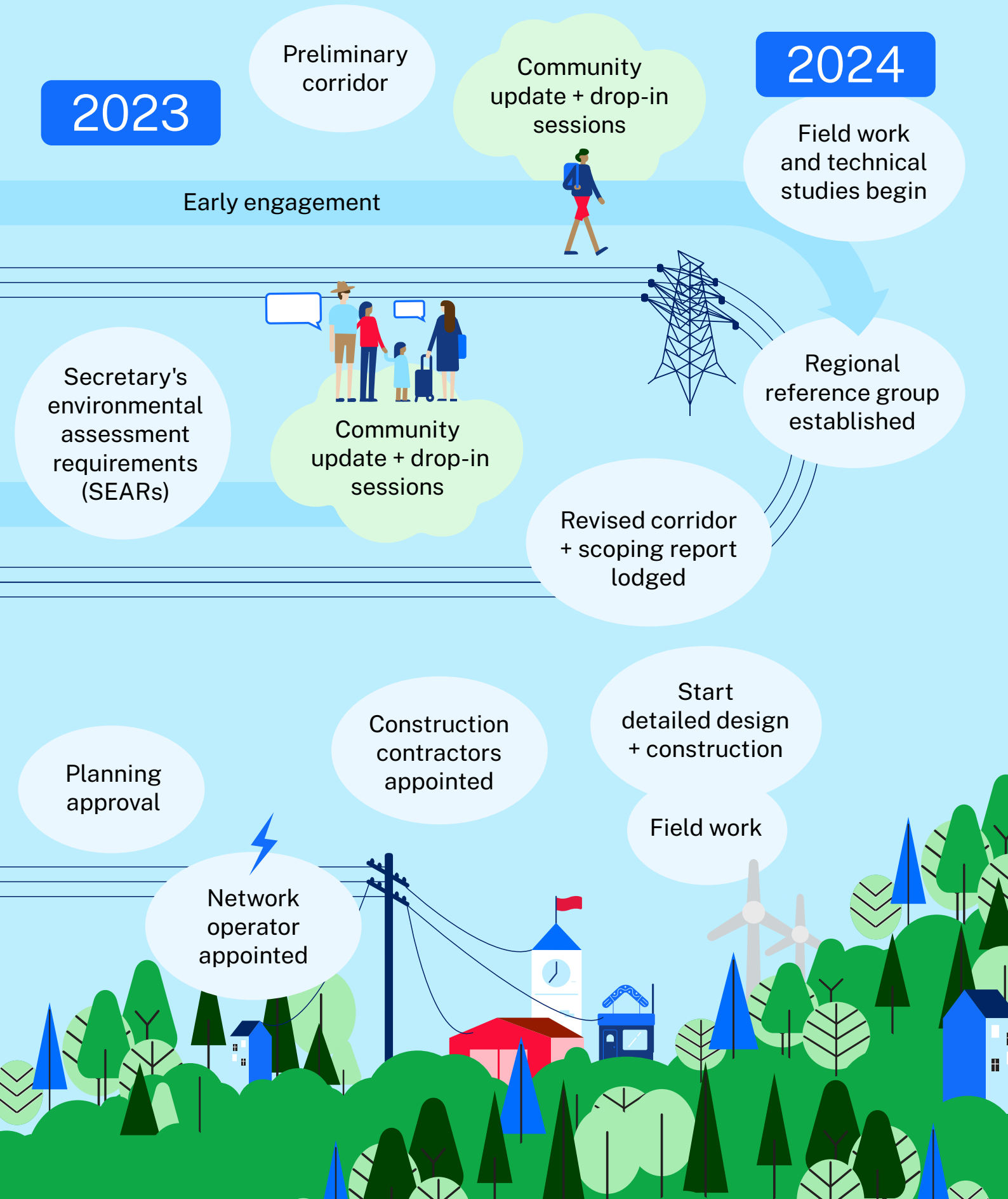
Planning approval

Construction contractors appointed

Start detailed design + construction

Field work

Network operator appointed

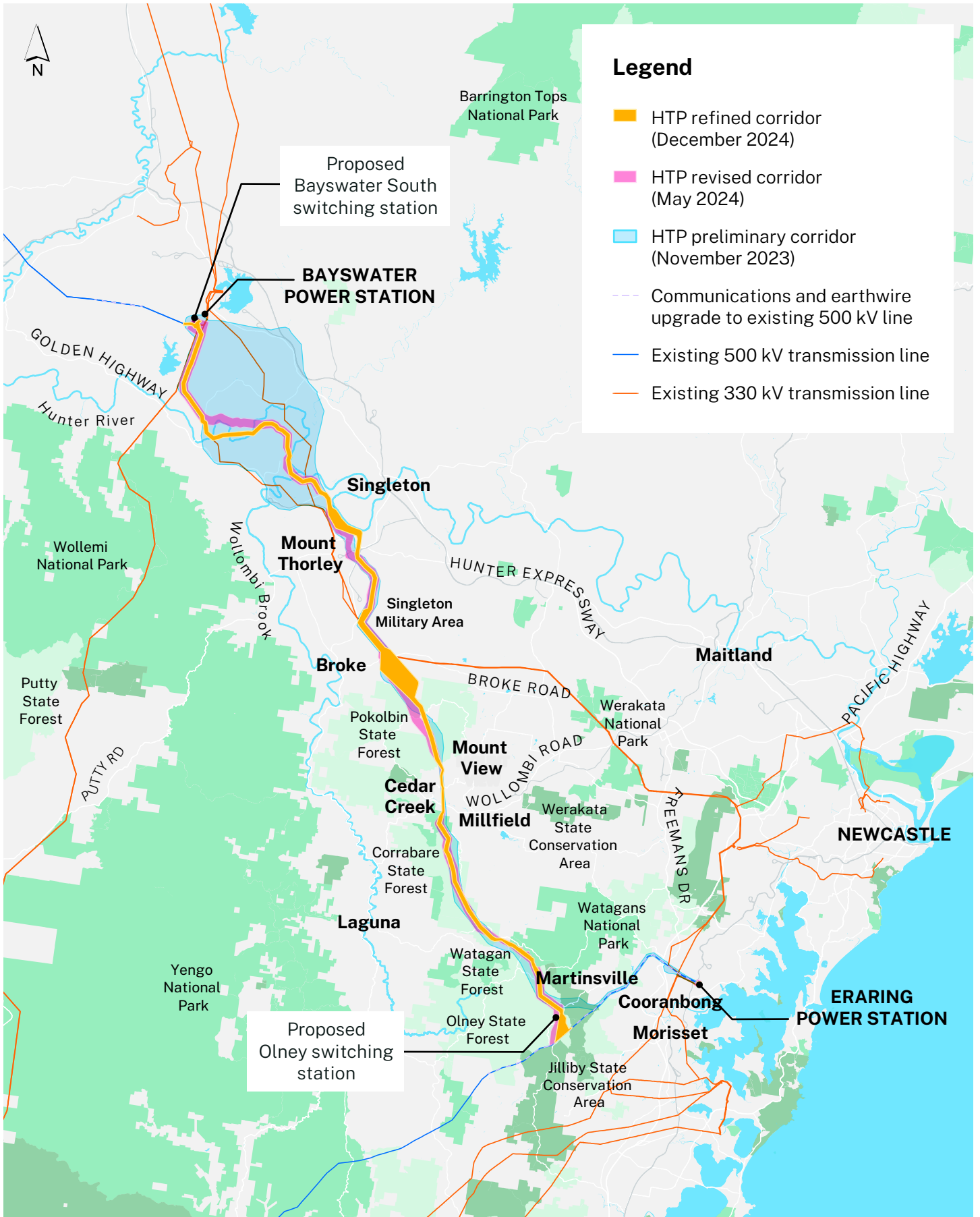




Did you know?

There are fewer than 25 private properties located in the HTP corridor. This was reduced from 78 in the preliminary corridor we presented to the community in late 2023.

HTP refined corridor



Refining the HTP

The HTP corridor has been refined through feedback, consultation and technical studies.

Summary of changes

We've adjusted the corridor in several places as we work with landowners and stakeholders to investigate constraints and opportunities to reduce impacts.

HTP North (Bayswater to Broke)

The refined corridor now deviates to the south of a proposed expansion area at Hunter Valley Operations coal mine. This was to accommodate mining operations and potential flooding of the Hunter River.

The corridor has also been shifted further east of Mount Thorley due to flooding scenarios for the Hunter River.

HTP Central (Pokolbin to Corrabare) and HTP South (Olney to Eraring)

Minor adjustments have been made to the corridor in the Pokolbin State Forest, Corrabare State Forest, Olney State Forest and private properties.

In many cases this was to avoid or minimise likely impacts to biodiversity (plants and animals), which were identified during field work investigations and through consultation with private property owners and Forestry Corporation of NSW.

Ongoing consultation

While the HTP corridor has been refined following substantial option analysis and investigation, the transmission line alignment or exact location of towers is still under design development.

Refinement will continue in 2025 as we work towards developing a detailed design for the transmission line and continue consulting with the community about ways to further minimise its impacts.



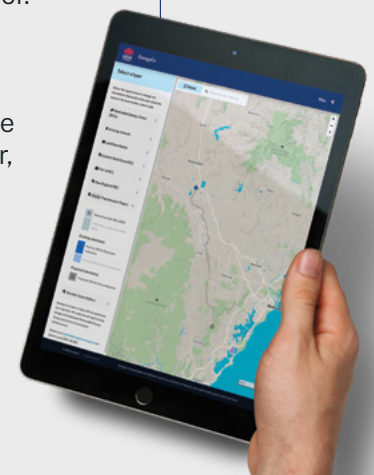
How to view the corridor in more detail

Visit EnergyCo's interactive map at caportal.com.au/energyco/rez to view the proposed HTP transmission corridor.

The interactive map includes key features such as the preliminary corridor, revised corridor and existing transmission network.



Scan the QR code to view the interactive map.





Did you know?

The Hunter Transmission Project is one of the State's **most critical** energy projects and will provide clean and reliable electricity to consumers for generations to come.

Community engagement



Community engagement

Listening to community feedback is an important part of refining the HTP to further reduce impacts on both people and the environment.

Revised corridor feedback

In May 2024, we presented the revised HTP corridor to the community. We published [Shaping the HTP](#) to explain how community feedback and further technical studies resulted in significant changes to:



Reduce the number of landowners in the corridor from 78 to fewer than 25



Make the corridor around 15 kilometres shorter



Avoid the Cooranbong and Martinsville communities



Avoid the Jilliby State Conservation Area

The preliminary corridor we shared with the community in late 2023 had already excluded the Watagans and Werakata national parks, and this didn't change.

The revised corridor also retained around 85% of its footprint on mining, industrial and public land. This was consistent with our goal of avoiding private property and environmentally sensitive areas where possible.

Building the HTP will require upgrades to some public roads and access tracks in the State forests. Read more about this on page 31.



Community information session in Singleton



Existing transmission line

What we heard

We held community drop-in sessions at Singleton, Millfield and Morisset to explain how and why we made changes to the corridor, and to encourage questions and further feedback. This allowed community members to ask questions relevant to them in an informal environment.

Landowners and community members were generally informed about the HTP. Most agreed the HTP is needed and understood why it's critical for energy security in NSW.

They wanted more detailed information about how the new transmission infrastructure is likely to affect them and their surroundings, during construction and operation.

This was especially the case for the small number of landowners whose properties remained in or near the revised corridor.

Popular topics



Potential relocation of wildlife before clearing and biodiversity offsets



Route selection and the initial investigations EnergyCo did before selecting the preliminary corridor



Visual impacts, particularly in Millfield and Congewai valley



Access routes and potential road upgrades to facilitate construction traffic



Existing transmission tower

Acquisition update

As of December 2024 most private landowners affected by an acquisition for the HTP have received their opening letter, which marks the formal start of negotiations in line with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*.

Importantly, EnergyCo will work with landowners towards **acquisition by mutual agreement** in line with the legislation. Compulsory acquisition will be used only as a last resort should these negotiations fail.

EnergyCo is in the process of negotiating with fewer than 25 private landowners for a permanent easement acquisition of land to host the transmission line. In most cases, these acquisitions are for an easement rather than a full property (freehold) acquisition.

We're also working with a number of landowners to acquire access easements (for access tracks) or construction leases (for laydown areas, intersection upgrades and road widening).

For the past year, the HTP team's place managers have been engaging with landowners to answer their questions about the planning, design and approval process – and to document their concerns, suggestions and local knowledge.

This feedback has been shared with the technical and environment teams who are planning the new transmission infrastructure. Consultation will continue as part of the detailed design development.



Supporting landowners

Land acquisition is understandably a stressful and emotional process for some landowners.

Our team is working as sensitively and as quickly as possible to progress acquisitions if this is the landowner's preference – and we acknowledge it's a challenging time for those who are directly affected by this critical project.

To support landowners affected by an acquisition, EnergyCo assigns a property acquisition manager to each landowner to answer their questions and provide information right through the process.

This includes property valuations and compensation, legal representation, timelines for the various steps, and more.

Please read the EnergyCo [support for landowners fact sheet](#) on our website for more information.

Opportunities for local industry

A series of industry briefings held in Singleton, Cessnock, Toronto, Newcastle and online in August 2024 attracted more than 150 people from local businesses and suppliers. They heard about the HTP's procurement process, timelines and future opportunities for involvement.

Since then we've had more than 150 expressions of interest from individuals and organisations to be included in a local supplier database.

A guiding project principle is **Hunter-first**. This means where possible we create opportunities to build on the Hunter region's diverse economic skill base and grow local jobs as we plan and build the HTP.

To find out more about the types of workforce and supplier opportunities that will be needed, please visit our website energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp and make sure your business is included in our EOI database.



Regional reference group update

The group's role is to facilitate strategic discussions between EnergyCo and the Hunter community about the HTP. It has 9 members and an independent chair.

If you'd like to get in touch with the regional reference group please visit our website energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp for a full list of members and their contact email addresses.



Since the regional reference group was established in early 2024 we've held 7 meetings (2 in Singleton, 1 in Cessnock, 1 in Lake Macquarie and 3 online), heard personal presentations from more than a dozen landowners and several community organisations, and requested regular briefings from the project team.

The most common issues and concerns we've been hearing about are communication (concerns that EnergyCo isn't listening and about conflicting information), uncertainty about the transmission line route, potential environmental damage, and what benefits are forthcoming to the community from this critical State significant infrastructure project.

As a result, we've been liaising between the community and project team and I'm pleased to report that Energy Co has listened to, and is aware of, these community concerns.

The regional reference group is committed to listening to the community. This includes getting answers to questions raised, supporting community suggestions, and advocating for a 'Hunter-first' community benefits program and strategic biodiversity offsets for our region.

I appreciate the efforts of all members in offering their time and energy to make sure the HTP supports the community.

Bob Pynsent — Independent Chair, HTP regional reference group



Assessment process

4

About the environmental impact statement

An environmental impact statement (or EIS) is an important part of the assessment process for all major projects in NSW, including critical State significant infrastructure such as the HTP.

EIS documents can be hundreds of pages long, depending on the size and scale of the project.

They must be prepared according to the [State significant infrastructure guidelines – preparing an environmental impact statement](#).



An EIS should be as succinct as possible and easy to understand



An EIS should clearly describe the project



An EIS should reflect community views



An EIS should contain a technically robust assessment of the impacts of the project



An EIS should justify and evaluate the project as a whole, having regard to the economic, environmental and social impacts of the project and the principles of ecologically sustainable development

An EIS must assess the HTP's economic, environmental and social impacts – and provide the information needed for the community, councils, government agencies and relevant ministers to decide if and how the project will proceed.

After EnergyCo lodges the EIS with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure in mid-2025, the department will place it on public exhibition. This is so interested members of the community can provide formal feedback directly to the department.

We must respond to all submissions received. This will form part of a submissions report, which EnergyCo will prepare as part of the assessment process.

The EIS will include technical assessments on biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural heritage, landscape character and visual impacts, bushfire risk, traffic and transport, hazards and risks, social impacts, and more.

The findings from these studies will help answer questions about the potential environmental impacts of the project, as well as how we plan to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate those impacts.

The technical assessments will be released for public review and submissions as part of the EIS.

The [Secretary's environmental assessment requirements \(SEARS\)](#) for the HTP have been published on the [NSW Planning Portal](#).

Planning and approval pathway

Consultation with the community happens throughout the planning and approval pathway



1. Scoping report

A scoping report is submitted to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

The scoping report provides an overview of the project and potential impacts that will require further consideration under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.



3. Prepare EIS

EnergyCo undertakes technical assessments of the project's impacts and opportunities.

The SEARs outline the requirements EnergyCo needs to address in the project's environmental impact statement (EIS).



2. SEARs

Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) are issued from the department.



4. Public exhibition of the EIS

EnergyCo lodges the EIS. The department places the EIS on public exhibition for a minimum of 4 weeks.

Community members can provide formal feedback on the HTP directly to the department.



5. Response to submissions

EnergyCo will prepare a submissions report responding to the issues raised and lodge it with the department.



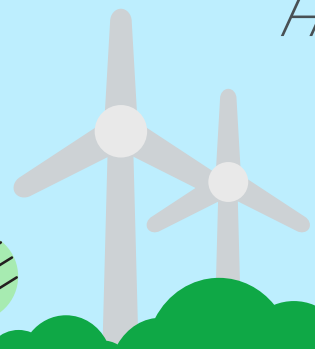
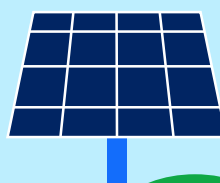
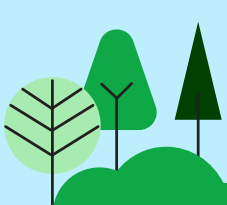
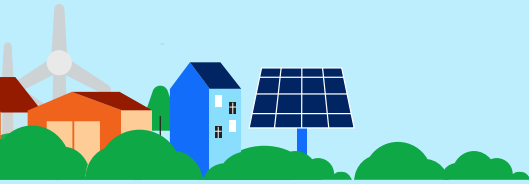
6. Assessment and determination

The NSW Government and Australian Government will conduct a final assessment of the EIS, submissions report and any amendment reports.

Planning approval may include conditions of consent.



We are here



Technical studies

Technical studies are well underway on required assessment areas and these will continue into 2025.

Biodiversity (plants and animals)

We can't avoid clearing some vegetation to build the HTP – but we can keep this to a minimum. Especially in areas that studies show us are important for plants and animals.

For the environmental impact statement we're collecting data from various biodiversity studies that will give us information about plants and animals in the HTP corridor. This includes spring and summer surveys across the corridor.

The Hunter Valley floor (known as 'the valley floor') has been heavily cleared over the past 200 years. The remaining vegetation tends to exist in fragments, which have a high conservation value.

Did you know? The Hunter has two distinct landscapes: the Hunter Valley floor and the forested plateau.

As well as being home to several threatened ecological communities, these parts of the valley floor are important habitat for a number of critically endangered species.

In contrast to the valley floor, the forested plateau is relatively common around NSW and features prominently in our national parks and State conservation areas.

Vegetation in the forested plateau isn't rare – but it does provide significant habitat for threatened species.

Knowledge like this is important when it comes to selecting the transmission corridor and designing the new transmission infrastructure because our goal is to minimise impacts to plants and animals.



Photo credit: Allan Richardson

A long-nosed potoroo spotted by our cameras in the Olney State Forest during a nocturnal spring survey, as part of the HTP's biodiversity assessment.

Charles Darwin described this vulnerable species as “an animal, as big as a rabbit, but with the figure of a kangaroo”. They're mainly nocturnal and like to hide in thick vegetation during the day.

The cannister in the photo contains a food bait to attract the long-nosed potoroo. When it came to investigate, it triggered a motion-sensing camera.



Example of the Hunter Valley floor



Biodiversity development assessment report

The environmental impact statement for the HTP will include a biodiversity development assessment report that describes in detail the region's existing biodiversity, estimates how much vegetation will need to be cleared if the project is approved, and assesses the effects on threatened plants and animals.



Example of the Lower Hunter spotted gum ironbark, a threatened ecological community



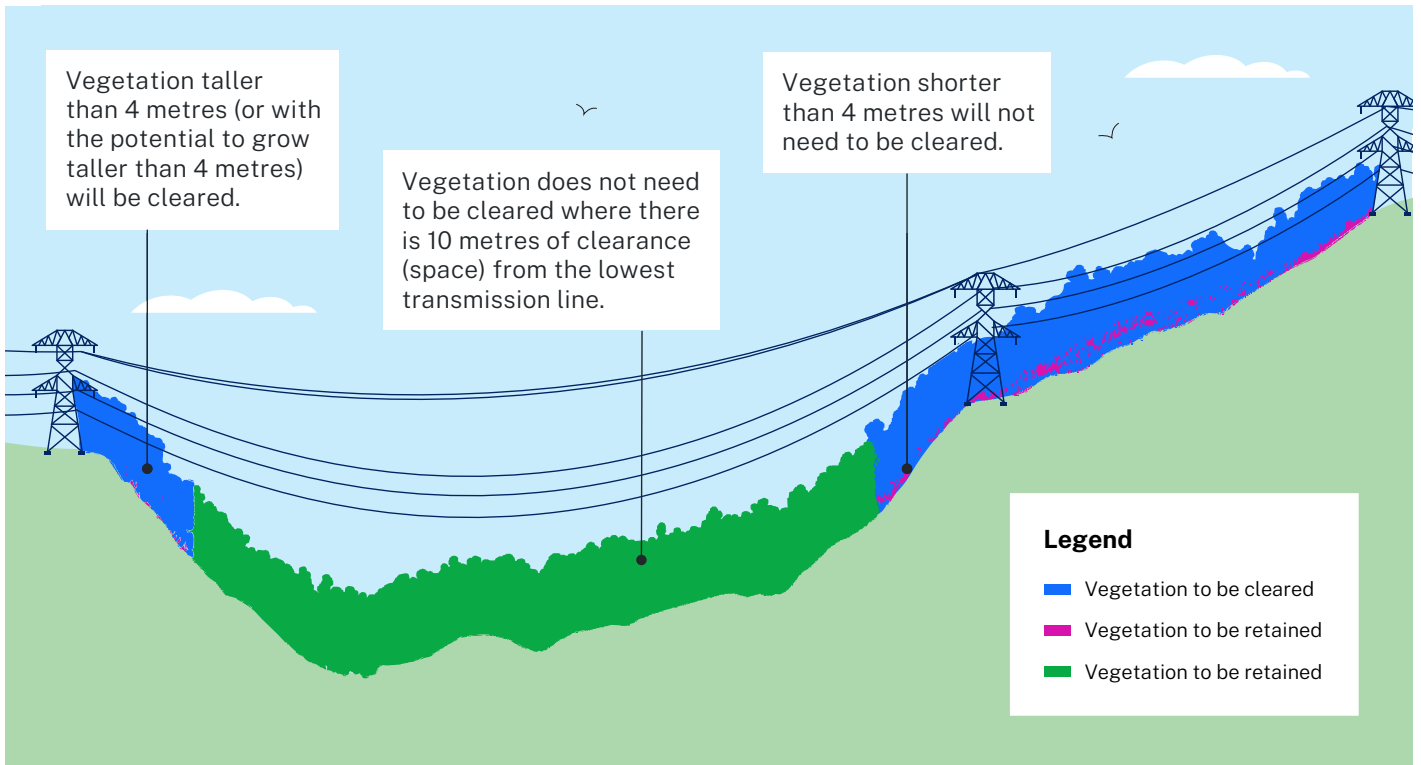
These photos taken by our ecology team in the Corrabare State Forest show landscape features including wet forests (top), woodlands (centre) and various rocky outcrops and slopes leading into gullies (above). Our team has been doing spring and summer plant and animal surveys in these areas.



Ridgetop in the Pokolbin State Forest overlooking the forested plateau

Partial clearing

One of the ways we can minimise vegetation clearing is to span the transmission line across valleys – as shown in this conceptual diagram.



Biodiversity offsets

The [NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme](#) aims to ensure there's no net loss of biodiversity from developments, including projects like the HTP. This works by offsetting (or replacing) a negative biodiversity impact with a positive one elsewhere.

EnergyCo is developing a strategy to ensure a consistent approach is applied to biodiversity offsets across projects, with maximum conservation outcomes.

This involves a joint analysis with the Biodiversity Conservation and Science group (part of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water) on the suitability of prospective biodiversity stewardship agreement sites for the HTP.

If land is suitable for biodiversity offsets, **biodiversity stewardship agreements** may be established with landowners. Once established, these agreements would be held in perpetuity – in other words, they would last forever.

For more information about the NSW Government's Biodiversity Offset Scheme, visit environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity-offsets-scheme





Look carefully at this photo taken in the Corrabare State Forest and you'll spot ecologist Mark Stables in the midst of native vegetation undertaking a spring threatened flora survey. This type of vegetation is sclerophyll forest with thick shrubby sub-formation that occurs on many steep sloped gullies.

These gullies were historically managed with cultural fire by Traditional owners and later low intensity burns by early foresters, this maintained a more open grassy understory. The post traditional fire environment tends to have dense thickets of native vines in the ground and shrub layer, which makes surveying these areas challenging.

Targeted surveys for listed threatened flora species in these environments are important. Our team has recorded the critically endangered small tree species scrub turpentine growing within these dense tangled vine thickets—its scientific name is *Rhodamnia rubescens*.

Aboriginal cultural heritage

Test excavations have started to investigate the presence of Aboriginal stone artefacts in HTP North and HTP Central. This is an important way to assess the HTP's likely impacts on Aboriginal heritage (cultural and archaeological).

Our team is carrying out test excavations across Wonnarua and Awabakal country with participation from local Aboriginal traditional owners and organisations. Darkinjung traditional owners have been involved in field surveys in HTP South but no test excavations are currently proposed for this part of the project.

Cultural values mapping exercises with traditional owners and organisations are another way we're investigating the HTP's potential impacts.

These studies will provide data to ensure decisions about the HTP are based on a comprehensive understanding of both tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage. This will help to avoid or minimise harm to important sites and places.

Cultural views or sightlines are also important to the local Aboriginal community – read more about visual impacts on page 27.



Example of a potential scarred tree recorded in the Corrabare State Forest during a field survey

The HTP's environmental impact statement will include a detailed Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment.

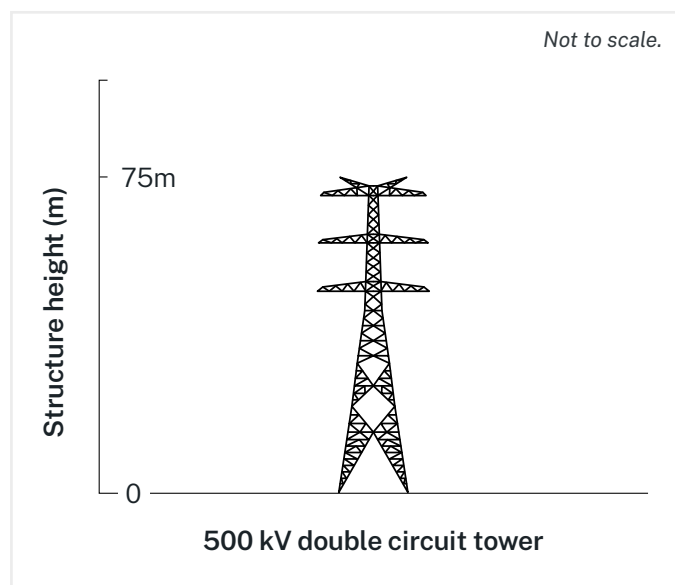


Aboriginal stone artefacts are commonly found near major water courses and test excavations often focus on their banks. These photos were taken by our team on alluvial flats near Congewai Creek. The data we collect for the HTP's Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment will be used to further define and characterise the location, extent and significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the project area.

Visual impacts

For the HTP we need to build around 230 transmission towers.

The environmental impact statement (EIS) we lodge in mid-2025 will include an indicative alignment (proposed location) of towers.



But their final placement may not be confirmed until much later in the project. Adjustments are likely because of engineering constraints, site conditions and construction methods.

The placement of each tower will be carefully considered in light of its effects on people and private property, plants and animals, views of the landscape, and access during construction and operation.

At the time of writing, our planning indicates most of the HTP transmission towers will be up to 75 metres tall. A small number may be up to 85 metres tall to avoid sensitive environments such as crossing the Hunter River. They'll generally be spaced between 400 and 700 metres apart.

Keep in mind, while the transmission corridor is reasonably defined at this stage following substantial option analysis and investigation, the transmission line alignment (including location of towers) is still under design development.

Further changes are possible as feedback continues to minimise impacts—and this means the potential visual impact in some areas could change too.





Existing transmission tower behind a ridgeline

How we're minimising visual impacts

Where possible, the transmission towers will be set back from the main ridgelines rather than being placed on top – and this will help to preserve scenic views.

Protecting scenic views and Aboriginal cultural sightlines is a priority for the community as we plan the HTP. As part of the EIS we're developing a detailed visual impact assessment in line with the [Transmission Guideline: Technical Supplement for Landscape and Visual Assessment](#).

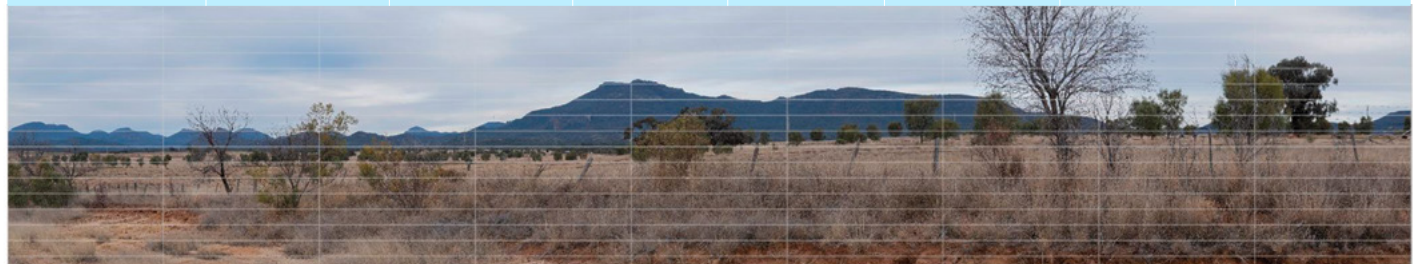
This involves taking photographs at a number of public and private viewpoints for a detailed technical assessment using specific criteria to determine a visual impact rating.

This will continue into 2025 and is a requirement for the HTP's overall assessment and determination (whether approval is granted).

Our team has been in touch with landowners whose homes may be affected by a visual impact from the HTP to organise visual inspections, which are carried out by our technical team.

The photographs are taken from locations identified by the resident as having important views. These are stitched into 180-degree panoramas (in line with the guideline) to provide a panoramic view from each identified viewpoint. The panoramas will be the base for photomontages used to determine the magnitude of the visual impact from that location.

Distance to development	Viewpoint type	Viewpoint sensitivity	Scenic quality	Overall sensitivity	Occupied cells	Magnitude rating	Impact rating
556 m	Rural dwelling primary view	Moderate	High	High	6 (zero cells within cutoff)	Very low	Low



0° 10° 20° 30° 40° 50° 60° 70° 80° 90°

A visual impact example included in the [Transmission guideline](#)



Ridgetop in the Corrabare State Forest

Bushfire risk

A popular question about the HTP is whether the new transmission line will increase the risk of bushfires in the Hunter Valley, particularly in the State forests. And will the 75-metre transmission towers prevent or limit aerial firefighting activities?

Paul de Mar has more than 30 years of experience in bushfire operations, management and consulting in NSW including as a former State Manager of Fire Protection for Forests NSW. He's leading the bushfire risk assessment for the HTP.

Paul points out that 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission lines have operated continuously in bushfire prone areas of NSW for more than 42 years.

During this time not a single fire has started from 500 kV lines, despite being subject to many severe storms and multiple very severe bushfire seasons.

Historically, all significant electricity-caused fire events in Australia have been from distribution lines (typically the much smaller lower voltage 'poles and wires' networks most commonly carried on wooden power poles).

A detailed bushfire risk assessment will be included in the HTP's environmental impact statement.



Paul de Mar, Bushfire assessment lead for HTP

Bushfire landscape in the HTP corridor

HTP North has experienced a very limited history of bushfires. The landscape in this part of the corridor is dominated by large coal mines, irrigated agriculture next to the Hunter River, and Singleton Military Area in the south. The presence of the mines has historically constrained the spread of fires from the west. To the east, fires are limited by irrigated cropping land near the Hunter River.

HTP Central has a long history of fires, particularly on the top of the rugged plateaus in Pokolbin and Corrabare State forests.

However, historically fires that start on the Pokolbin and Corrabare plateaus have largely stayed on those plateaus with limited impact on the steep forested footslopes.

Historically fires have not run out across the cleared rural lowlands to impact locations like Pokolbin, Cessnock, Millfield, Pelton, Paxton and Ellalong. This has held true in very severe conditions including the 2002/2003 Oakley Lane fire in Pokolbin State Forest and the 2019/2020 Crump Complex fire in Corrabare State Forest.

The main fire threats to Hunter Valley townships are from forests within the valley.

HTP South benefits from a combination of higher annual rainfall and expansive rainforest areas, which helps to limit bushfires. Historically, fires starting west of Watagan Forest Road (where the HTP South corridor is located) haven't spread into the Dora Creek valley or Mandalong areas.

Bushfire emergency management and evacuation plans

If the HTP is approved, bushfire emergency management and evacuation plans will be developed for the project in conjunction with Forestry Corporation of NSW and the Rural Fire Service. These will draw on the approach applied successfully by Forestry Corporation of NSW over many decades to keep forest workers and visitors safe from bushfires.

Plans will be prepared in line with NSW Rural Fire Service guidelines for HTP North, Central and South as well as temporary workforce accommodation sites.

Did you know?



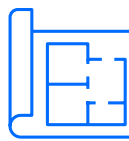
500 kV transmission lines are suspended by very large steel lattice towers and are made from non-combustible materials – they can't catch on fire



Transmission lines are operated remotely and never need to be defended by firefighters – their robust design provides them with passive protection against bushfires



Transmission lines are built to withstand most bushfire conditions and designed to prevent the ignition of bushfires



To manage the risk of fire in a transmission easement, vegetation is managed using regular cyclic programs to keep all vegetation outside minimum clearance distances (to meet regulatory standards)



Transmission lines rarely if ever prevent aerial firefighting activities from being carried out. Aircraft can and do operate effectively near powerlines, both before fires reach powerlines and immediately after they spread beyond them

To find out more please read our fact sheet: [Managing bushfire risk](#)

Social impact assessment

Social impacts generally refer to the consequences that people experience when a new project brings change (source: [NSW Government Social Impact Assessment Guideline, 2023](#)).

State significant projects like the HTP can affect people in different ways, both positively and negatively.

Assessing social impacts on individuals, households, groups, communities and organisations is an important part of the planning approval pathway for all State significant projects.

EnergyCo is required to consider social impacts throughout the HTP's planning and development in line with the [Social Impact Assessment Guideline](#). The guideline sets out a clear and consistent approach to assessing social impacts of State significant projects in environmental impact statements. It also ensures the assessment of social impacts is targeted and proportionate to the project's likely impacts.

The HTP is complying fully with these guidelines. We submitted a [social impact assessment worksheet](#) with the project's scoping report in May 2024 and a social impact assessment will be placed on public exhibition as part of the environmental impact statement.

Planning any new infrastructure involves carefully balancing social, technical, environmental and economic factors – but it's important to understand that sometimes negative impacts are unavoidable, despite our best efforts to minimise them.

For example, some impacts to private property affecting landowners will be unavoidable as we build the HTP. And some traffic impacts for local communities and recreational users of the State forests will be inevitable, due to construction traffic.

That's why social impacts are subject to a rigorous assessment through the planning approval pathway for State significant projects – and may inform the conditions of consent if the HTP is approved.





Existing transmission line

Road upgrades and traffic impacts

If the HTP is approved, some public roads and access tracks will need to be upgraded. In places they simply aren't wide enough or suitable for large trucks carrying oversize loads of construction equipment, plant machinery and the transmission towers.

Access roads will also be needed for maintenance when the new transmission infrastructure is operational.

Potential road upgrades, especially to Pokolbin Mountains Road, Broken Back Road and Mount Baker Road, have attracted strong community interest since we presented the revised corridor in May 2024.

Popular questions include how the access roads and tracks identified in the HTP scoping report were chosen, what sort of upgrades will be needed to facilitate heavy vehicles, and expected traffic volumes during the construction period.

A small number of landowners who live on a road that will be used by the HTP for access will be impacted by an acquisition or construction lease. Our team has already contacted these landowners.

In some cases, the local community members who use and rely on these roads are keen to see upgrades that

benefit locals and may even solve what they say are existing trouble spots. This is an example of where local knowledge will continue to be considered as we plan the HTP.

Our HTP engineers will continue working with local stakeholders in 2025 to plan the best options for potential upgrades that will provide safe access for the project. But it's important to understand that some aspects of those upgrades, including detailed designs, may not be finalised until after the design and construction contract is awarded.

Detailed designs will be carried out by the contractor based on their construction methodologies – and to solve any unforeseen issues on site.

Project engineers are also consulting with local councils, particularly Cessnock Council in HTP Central. This is where access to the State forests through sections of unsealed, narrow access tracks presents the most complex engineering challenges.

A detailed traffic and transport assessment will be part of the environmental impact statement and placed on public exhibition in mid-2025.

Want to know more about access roads and proposed upgrades? [Sign up to our HTP e-newsletter](#) for the latest news and details of upcoming briefings.

Next steps

The environmental impact statement (EIS) for the HTP will be lodged with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure in mid-2025. It will then be placed on public exhibition and published on the NSW Planning Portal ([Hunter Transmission Project](https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/hunter-transmission-project)).

This will be the start of its formal assessment by the NSW Government and Australian Government.

It's also when you can make a submission to offer your feedback on the EIS.

You can follow the HTP's progress on the NSW Planning Portal: [planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/hunter-transmission-project](https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/hunter-transmission-project)



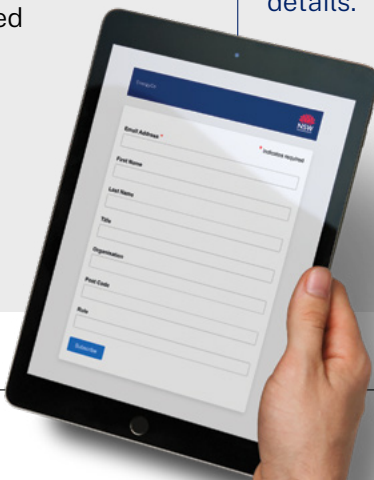
How to stay informed

Follow the QR code to sign up to our monthly newsletter.

These feature project updates and notifications, fact sheets, explainer videos and frequently asked questions.



Scan the QR code for details.



Contact us

EnergyCo is the NSW Government statutory authority responsible for delivering the HTP as a critical part of transitioning to a cleaner future under the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

 htp@energyco.nsw.gov.au

 1800 645 972 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

 [energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp](https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/htp)

 Scan the QR code for more information.



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** and ask them to call us on **1800 645 972**.



