

# Aboriginal heritage impact assessment

## Hunter Transmission Project environmental impact statement

March 2025

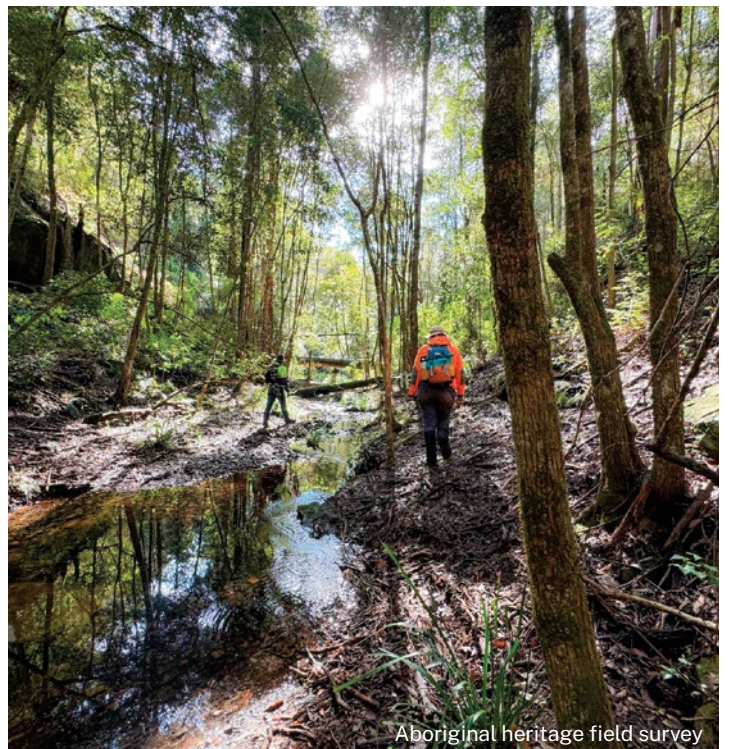
EnergyCo is committed to protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage throughout the planning, construction and operation of the Hunter Transmission Project. As part of the environmental impact statement, we're conducting an Aboriginal heritage assessment to identify and evaluate the potential impacts to culturally significant sites, places and artefacts within the project study area. These assessments are guiding our approach to avoiding, minimising and managing potential impacts.

### What is an environmental impact statement?

As the Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) is a critical State significant infrastructure project, it requires an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the NSW planning system.

The EIS must assess the potential environmental, economic and community impacts of the HTP as well as the opportunities. It will also include ways to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate potential impacts.

The EIS will be submitted to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for assessment. Once the EIS is lodged there will be a public exhibition period and interested members of the community will be able to provide formal feedback on the proposed development directly to the department.





Example of a test excavation. Aboriginal stone artefacts are commonly found near watercourse like this



Inspecting creek lines for grinding grooves

## How we assess Aboriginal heritage

The HTP is located in an area primarily associated with Wonnarua, Awabakal and Darkinjung people, who maintain a strong connection to Country.

Aboriginal heritage includes both tangible elements like stone artefacts, culturally modified trees, rock shelters and grinding grooves, as well as intangible aspects like Dreaming traditions, stories, customs and rituals.



### Engagement

With Aboriginal community, traditional owners and local Aboriginal land councils.



### Extensive field surveys

Archaeological surveys and test excavations with representatives of the Wonnarua, Awabakal and Darkinjung traditional owners. More than 533 kilometres of pedestrian surveys.



### Cultural values study

Undertaken by an anthropologist and local Elders and knowledge-holders to help identify, describe and manage places of traditional, historical and contemporary value.



### Impact assessment

Evaluating how the project impact cultural heritage values in the HTP corridor.



### Mitigation planning

Developing strategies to avoid, minimise or mitigate these impacts.

## Minimising impacts

The HTP corridor has been carefully chosen to avoid and minimise impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage.

**Insights from the local Aboriginal community have helped refine the project and inform the Aboriginal heritage assessment.**

The HTP corridor avoids or minimises impacts in parts of the State forests that are culturally significant for the Aboriginal community.

## Early Aboriginal heritage findings

We're sharing some early findings on how construction and operation of the HTP could impact Aboriginal heritage, along with potential mitigation measures to manage these impacts.

The assessment is ongoing and these findings may change as we finalise the EIS.

Potential impacts:

- 29 Aboriginal sites that may be impacted have been identified within the project area. Several high significance sites will be avoided, while all will be subject to impact mitigation measures.
- Possible disturbance to identified stone artefact scatters, culturally modified trees, grinding grooves and rock shelters during construction.
- Some culturally significant viewlines and landscapes may be impacted.



# Minimising and managing Aboriginal heritage impacts

When finalising the design of the HTP and during construction, key mitigation measures include:



**Developing an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan. This would detail processes for future consultation, management and mitigation of cultural heritage, reporting and long-term curation of cultural materials, and unexpected finds procedures**



**Avoiding or minimising impacts on all identified cultural heritage sites when finalising project design**



**Creating a cultural values offset package with Awabakal Elders to address impacts to areas of cultural importance**



**Conducting further on-Country investigations including archaeological test excavations of key geological deposits and features**



**Co-designing a heritage interpretation strategy with traditional owners to share and explain the area's cultural heritage at the project site or off-site**



**Updating databases with new findings**



**Ongoing engagement with Aboriginal community**



Example of grinding grooves identified in a field survey

## Key planning milestones



## About the HTP

The Hunter Transmission Project is one of the State's most critical energy infrastructure projects. It involves building a new overhead 500 kV transmission line of around 110 kilometres between Bayswater in the Upper Hunter and Olney in the Lower Hunter to connect the State's existing 500 kV transmission lines.

This will fix a missing link in the electricity network and help unlock the supply of electricity from the Central-West Orana and New England Renewable Energy Zones.



Example of stone artefacts

## Have your say

Share your feedback on bushfire risk by completing our quick survey.



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.

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 Scan the QR code for more information.



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