EnergyCo

NSW GOVERNMENT

Managing impacts to koalas

New England Renewable Energy Zone

April 2026

EnergyCo is leading the development of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) and priority network infrastructure projects to deliver affordable, clean and reliable energy for everyone. We recognise the strong community connection to koalas and the importance of protecting koalas as a threatened species.

A koala identified during a thermal survey at night

How we are avoiding impacts to koalas and their habitat

All developments in NSW, including Critical State Significant Infrastructure projects, are carefully planned to avoid and reduce impacts on koalas and other wildlife. We apply the 'avoid, minimise and offset' hierarchy, which is required under the *NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme and Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.

We consider a range of mapped and known constraints as part of our corridor route selection process, such as mapped koala habitat, and aim to avoid these areas where possible. As we progressively refine the corridor, we will continue looking for opportunities to avoid koala habitat while balancing impacts to landholders, communities, agriculture and other considerations.

To support this work, an accredited assessor is undertaking on-the-ground surveys and field work to verify koala habitat, other key habitats and broader biodiversity values. We are working closely with the NSW Government's ecologists and specialists to ensure our approach meets their guidelines and reflects the most current information available. We are also engaging with landholders, regulators and other stakeholders and carrying out detailed biodiversity field surveys which help us avoid impacts as we refine the corridor and prepare our environmental assessments.

There is less koala habitat mapped in the revised corridor, and we are working to avoid and minimise impacts on koala habitat as we develop the design and the environmental impact statement (EIS).

Environmental team carrying out an ecological survey

Environmental impact statement

We are preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) which will be placed on public exhibition in the second half of 2026. The EIS will provide a detailed assessment of the project and its potential impacts during construction and operation, as well as measures to avoid, minimise and mitigate these impacts.

The EIS will include a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR), which will outline the project's potential biodiversity impacts, proposed avoidance and mitigation measures, and how unavoidable impacts will be offset. This EIS will be informed by our ongoing field work program.

Communities, stakeholders and agencies will be invited to provide submissions on the EIS as part of the public exhibition process, with the feedback to be addressed in a submissions report.

We also know that there are important habitat corridors in and around the study corridor, which we will consider as we plan the future transmissions lines.

Heat signal drone monitoring

Biodiversity survey site visit

Minimising impacts during construction and operation

Large infrastructure projects like transmission lines must balance many factors, including community, environmental, engineering and safety considerations. This means it is not always possible to avoid all impacts on koala habitat. We will use a range of measures to minimise impacts to koalas while the project is being delivered.

Before construction starts, a detailed Biodiversity Management Plan is approved by the NSW Planning Secretary. This plan will outline procedures for what surveys need to be carried out before construction, how animals will be identified and safely moved away from the clearing footprint and what to do if an animal is found during clearing activities. Areas of vegetation and habitat to be retained, including koala habitat, will be identified on site and on plans, and no equipment will be allowed in these areas.

Independent environmental audits will confirm these measures are in place and effective during construction.

Pre-clearing surveys will be completed and wildlife will be identified within the proposed vegetation clearing areas, so they can be encouraged to move away or be relocated. An ecologist will be present during clearing activities to supervise tree removal and manage any animals that are detected.

Project personnel will receive inductions, toolbox talks and targeted training on biodiversity protocols.

Biodiversity field survey drone

Vegetation management and tree retention

We will need to remove some vegetation to build the transmission towers, tower pads and other infrastructure. Minimising vegetation removal will be a key consideration during construction, in balance with other considerations such as visual amenity. As much as possible, we are looking to locate construction compounds and construction access tracks in places where we do not need to remove trees.

This could include locating new infrastructure on already cleared and disturbed areas, using or upgrading existing access tracks to reduce the need for new access tracks and disturbance, or ‘micro siting’ infrastructure within approved impact assessment areas to further avoid and minimise impacts.

Once the project is operational

We are looking at ways to minimise disruptions to how animals, including koalas, to move across the transmission corridor once construction is complete. This may include retaining trees in some places, providing koala refuge poles, glider poles, rope bridges and keeping important habitat features like hollow logs and rocks on the ground for smaller animals.

We are working to keep smaller trees and vegetation where we can in the transmission easement.

A connectivity strategy will be prepared that identifies where habitat linkages are, and how we will encourage animals to continue to move through the transmission easement to those habitat linkages.

Biodiversity offset measures

We are seeking to avoid key koala habitat where possible, but also recognise this is not always possible for large linear infrastructure such as the New England REZ project. Where residual impacts to koala habitat and other important species cannot be avoided, these will be offset through strategic biodiversity offset measures.

The NSW Government has introduced a new way for major projects to meet their biodiversity offset obligations through entering into a strategic offset delivery agreement (SODA) with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The project's offset requirements are expected to be delivered under a SODA, with delivery of offsets to be managed by DCCEEW's Planning, Offsets and Threatened Species and Ecosystems team.

Offsets will align with a conservation investment strategy which identifies regional priorities for biodiversity protection, habitat connectivity and long-term conservation outcomes. We will keep communities informed as the conservation investment strategy is developed.

Landholders can take part in offset opportunities by establishing biodiversity stewardship sites and generating biodiversity credits. If you are a landholder in the project area and would like to learn more, you can contact supplyfund@environment.nsw.gov.au.

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**.

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Scan the QR code for more information.

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