EnergyCo

Fact sheet

About the Hunter-Central Coast REZ - Generation and Storage Consultation Paper

July 2026

EnergyCo has released the Hunter-Central Coast REZ Generation and Storage Consultation Paper, which outlines proposed approaches for coordinating renewable energy generation, storage and network infrastructure within the Hunter-Central Coast REZ.

The paper proposes an access scheme for the Hunter-Central Coast REZ and covers potential access scheme design features to reflect the unique characteristics of this REZ. We are seeking feedback to ensure the proposed approach is effective and delivers benefits for all stakeholders.

Access scheme: managing who connects to the grid

What is an access scheme?

An access scheme is how we plan to bring more renewable energy into the grid in a coordinated way. It is a set of rules to manage how renewable energy projects (like wind and solar) as well as storage projects (like large-scale batteries) connect to an area of the grid to ensure efficient use and avoid overloading.

What are the benefits of an access scheme?

Access schemes help EnergyCo manage impacts on communities hosting new electricity infrastructure as well as deliver benefits for these communities.

For communities, access schemes provide certainty that all large-scale connecting projects have met NSW Government eligibility criteria and have committed to a high standard of community engagement. Connecting projects will also be required to pay access fees which include funds for community and employment purposes, to ensure that communities hosting the new infrastructure benefit from the energy transition.

For developers, an access scheme can provide greater certainty of network utilisation and provides certainty that other projects connecting in the REZ have all committed to consistent high standards of behaviour.

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)

© State of New South Wales through the Energy Corporation of New South Wales. Information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing, July 2026, and is subject to change. For more information, please visit energy.nsw.gov.au/copyright

What tools are used to control access?

There are two main tools to control how projects connect to and use the network in an Access Scheme:

1. Access Rights Regime

Under this approach, projects must first secure an *Access Right* before applying to connect to the network.

- The total number of Access Rights is limited (capped).
- This means only a set amount of generation and storage can connect and export power.
- By limiting capacity, this approach provides greater certainty for projects, particularly by reducing the risk of curtailment (i.e. being required to reduce output due to network constraints).
- Access Rights are allocated through a competitive process (~6months process).

2. Access Control Mechanism

Under this approach, projects must obtain consent from EnergyCo before applying to connect.

- There is no fixed cap on the amount of capacity that can be approved.
- This provides greater flexibility, as any number of projects can potentially be granted access, subject to assessment and approval.
- Consent will be granted through a non-competitive process where applicants will need to demonstrate they have met certain eligibility criteria (~3 month process).

Both tools can be used within the same Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), but they are applied to different parts of the network. They cannot be used on the same piece of infrastructure at the same time.

What is being considered for the Hunter-Central Coast REZ?

Currently, EnergyCo is considering two different options for the Hunter-Central Coast REZ Access Scheme. The decision on whether to adopt **Option 1** or **Option 2** to control network access will be informed by the feedback received through this consultation process, as well as additional analysis and design work.

Option 1: Access Rights and Access Control	Option 2: Access Control Only
• Projects require **Access Rights to apply for connection to the network augmented as part of the Hunter-Central Coast RNIP** and other parts of the Access Scheme Network materially benefiting from this infrastructure; and • Projects require consent from EnergyCo to apply for connection to any other part of the Access Scheme Network.	• Projects require consent from EnergyCo to apply for connection to any part of the Access Scheme Network, including network infrastructure augmented by the Hunter Central Coast RNIP.

Who does the access scheme apply to?

EnergyCo proposes that the access scheme applies to large-scale generation and storage projects connecting at **132 kV and above**, including most transmission-connected and major distribution infrastructure. Projects below the relevant thresholds are typically exempt, including wind and solar developments under 30 MW and battery energy storage systems under 5 MW.

Proposed exclusions also include the Hunter Transmission Project and the portion of the New England REZ network infrastructure located within the Hunter-Central Coast REZ.

What about projects that are already progressing?

Transitional arrangements would be used to facilitate the development of well-progressed generation and storage connections, so these projects are not delayed by the introduction of an access scheme.

Projects that are already connected to the grid or are well advanced in the connection process will not need an access right or consent from EnergyCo to connect.

We are also proposing that projects holding executed government underwriting agreements, such as a Long-Term Energy Service Agreement (LTESA) or a Capacity Investment Scheme Agreement (CISA), on the date the Access Scheme Declaration is published, will be exempt from the access scheme.

What an access scheme may mean for communities

An access scheme is designed to ensure that renewable energy projects across the Hunter-Central Coast REZ are developed in a coordinated way that delivers consistent benefits and minimises impacts on local communities.

If introduced, it would mean that all major generation and storage projects connecting to the network would be required to:

- **Meet consistent engagement standards**: projects must demonstrate best-practice community and First Nations engagement, including clear communication, genuine consultation, and transparent decision-making.
- **Contribute to community benefit funding**: projects would contribute to shared funding used to support local communities, jobs, and regional development initiatives.
- **Coordinate impacts across the region**: projects would be expected to work with EnergyCo to manage cumulative impacts such as traffic, construction timing, workforce demands, and local infrastructure pressures.
- **Meet consistent expectations and accountability requirements**: All projects would be assessed against the same eligibility criteria and required to commit to ongoing reporting, coordination, and responsible development practices.

Importantly, there are no immediate changes. This consultation paper is seeking feedback only, and no decisions have been made. Communities will continue to be engaged as the design of any future access scheme is developed.

Why EnergyCo is seeking feedback

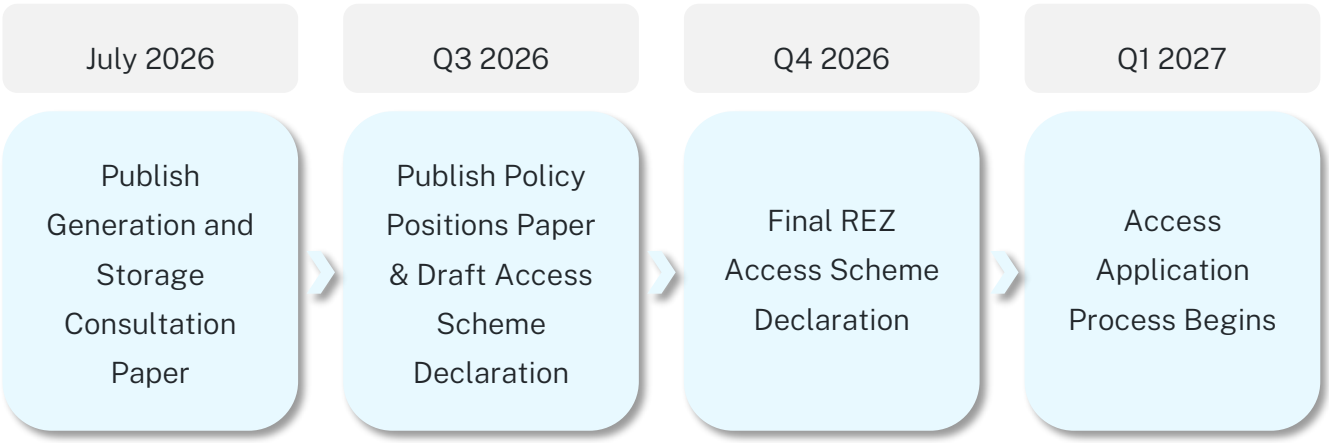
EnergyCo is seeking early feedback to help guide how renewable energy and storage projects are coordinated as part of an access scheme across the Hunter-Central Coast REZ.

The consultation paper sets out possible options and key questions and invites input on how an access scheme could work, including its scope, design and requirements for project developers. This feedback will help shape the next stage of detailed design.

If supported by the Minister, a draft access scheme will be released for further consultation in Q3 2026 in the form of a Policy Positions Paper, giving communities another opportunity to have their say. A final decision on whether an access scheme will go ahead, and what it will look like, is expected later in 2026.

EnergyCo will continue to engage with communities and stakeholders throughout this process. Importantly, there are no immediate changes, this is an early consultation stage only.

Indicative timeline for the Hunter-Central Coast REZ Access Scheme



Next steps

Webinar

A public webinar will be held as part of the consultation period. The webinar will provide stakeholders with an overview of the consultation paper and highlight the key design questions under consideration.

The webinar date, time, and registration details will be published on the project website once confirmed.

Submissions

EnergyCo is seeking written submissions on the consultation paper. You can send us your feedback by:

- completing our online feedback form, or
- sending a free-form email to hunter-centralcoast.access@energyco.nsw.gov.au
    - with the subject line 'Your Name – Hunter-Central Coast REZ Generation and Storage Consultation Paper'

Consultation will be open for 28 days, with submissions due by Tuesday 4th August 2026.

Contact

For more information, please contact:

Email: hunter-centralcoast.access@energyco.nsw.gov.au

Phone: 1800 118 894