

Planning approval process

New England Renewable Energy Zone

July 2024

EnergyCo is leading the delivery of the New England REZ network infrastructure project to connect new renewable energy generation and storage in the REZ to the existing electricity network. The first two stages of the project are scheduled for completion by 2033 to ensure energy security across NSW as our coal-fired power stations retire.

Planning pathway for the project

The New England REZ network infrastructure project was declared a Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) project by the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces in June 2024 as it is considered ‘essential for the State for economic, environmental or social reasons’.

Under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act), CSSI applications must be approved by the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces following a comprehensive assessment process. This includes extensive community consultation and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

As well as being responsible for infrastructure planning for the New England REZ, EnergyCo is also the proponent of the REZ network infrastructure project and is responsible for preparing and submitting the EIS to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) for public exhibition and assessment. Development of the EIS began in 2023 and will continue through 2025.

Key planning milestones



Scoping report

EnergyCo lodged a scoping report with DPHI in July 2024, marking the first major step in the planning process for the REZ network infrastructure project. The scoping report provides an overview of the project and potential impacts that will require further assessment under the EP&A Act.

The scoping report supports EnergyCo's request for Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) which will guide the development of the EIS.

Environmental Impact Statement

The EIS is a document required for state significant infrastructure projects under the NSW planning system. The EIS will be prepared to address the SEARs (once issued) along with other relevant NSW guidelines and legislation.

The EIS will provide a description of the project, how it will be constructed, and a technical assessment, including potential environmental, social and economic impacts. It will also outline a range of mitigation measures which would be implemented to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate potential impacts to the surrounding environment and local communities during construction and operation of the project.

The aim of the EIS is to inform communities and key stakeholders about the project and help them make an informed submission as part of the planning process.

We will engage closely with the community and stakeholders throughout the development of the EIS.

During the exhibition, members of the public, government agencies and key stakeholders will be invited to make submissions to DPHI on the merits of the project. The EIS will be made available to view on the NSW Major Projects Planning Portal and EnergyCo will host a series of community information sessions for people to view the EIS and ask questions of the project team.



Public exhibition of the EIS

The EIS will be submitted to DPHI and displayed for public exhibition for at least 28 days. The length of the exhibition period will be determined by DPHI.

Submissions report

After the EIS public exhibition, DPHI will collate all submissions and provide them to EnergyCo for review and consideration. EnergyCo will then prepare a submissions report that responds to the issues raised. The submissions report will be made publicly available on the NSW Major Projects Planning Portal.

Planning approval

After the submissions report is published, the DPHI Secretary will prepare an assessment report for the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to consider for project approval. The Minister's approval would be subject to a set of conditions EnergyCo must comply with when delivering the project.

Additional approval may be required if the project is determined to be a 'controlled action' under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth). If this occurs, approval would be required from the Australian Minister for the Environment and Water in addition to the NSW approval process.

If the project is approved, it would be built and operated in accordance with the plans and mitigation measures described in the EIS, submissions report and conditions of approval.

Contact us

EnergyCo wants to hear what you think about our plans. If you have questions or want to give feedback, please get in touch with our team.



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1800 061 114 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)



energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne



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