

Regional Major Infrastructure Studies



New England

Fact Sheet | December 2025

Overview

The NSW Government has undertaken a series of studies which aim to provide a point-in-time analysis of potential impacts and opportunities associated with major infrastructure projects in the New England region.

The studies consider the potential impact of other industries within the region, including mining interests, in addition to the electricity infrastructure.

NSW Government agencies will use this information to develop the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) in a way that supports growth and sustainable demand for skills, services and infrastructure across the region in the years to come.

Help shape initiatives for your local area

EnergyCo is holding a community feedback period until Friday 20 February 2026 to hear your thoughts on local issues and priorities for REZ delivery.

Have your say

EnergyCo is inviting the community to share feedback through a survey which you can access on our website or by following the QR code. You can also request a paper copy. Thank you for providing feedback to help shape delivery of the New England REZ. If you have any questions, please contact EnergyCo.

Training and skills

Key findings

- The REZ is expected to bring more than 6,000 full-time construction jobs and 2,000 ongoing operational jobs.
- The capacity of the existing regional workforce is limited, with low rates of unemployment across each of the local government areas within the region.
- An important way to expand the renewable energy workforce will be through increasing diversity, including for First Nations people, women and underrepresented and diversity groups (such as long-term unemployed), people with a disability and skilled migrants.

- Building pathways for school students into the renewable energy workforce will be critical.
- Offering pre-employment programs for construction can enable more local people to access renewable energy job opportunities.
- There are existing training facilities in the region with the capacity and capability to support training.

Potential opportunities may include:

- Considering ways to improve the flexibility and usability of existing training facilities through renovations and upgrades.
 - Developing new courses at existing training facilities like the University of New England and TAFE.
 - Expanding mobile training offerings to service regional towns.
 - Finding opportunities to attract new trainers and using registered training organisations to respond to demand peaks.
 - Looking at new ways to enable businesses to employ more apprentices.
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Workforce accommodation

Key findings

- The study found that accommodation will be needed for about 4,800 non-local construction workers for the New England REZ at peak construction.
- The unemployment rate across the study area is low, ranging from about 1.8% to 3.2%. While there will be significant opportunities for local employment, due to this limited capacity in the local labour market, the study found that a significant proportion of workers will travel to the region – both on a temporary and permanent basis.
- Rental vacancy rate is low so to accommodate additional workers, temporary workforce accommodation will be needed to help minimise pressure on existing housing and short-term accommodation.
- The study identifies that ideally workforce accommodation should be within about 45 minutes' drive of a worksite for safety and efficiency purposes.
- Temporary accommodation will create investment opportunities for industry, including for local businesses. These will generate local jobs such as for catering, cleaning, facilities management and other essential functions.
- Workers will also need to access nearby towns for goods such as meals out, recreation, fuel and other conveniences. Through holistic planning, temporary workforce accommodation will provide opportunities for legacy housing outcomes for communities.

Potential opportunities may include:

- Building workforce accommodation will help provide for future growth by providing homes that can later become permanent residences for the community, or providing utilities connections for future development.
- Coordination between government and industry to provide accommodation solutions which aim to revitalise towns, bring more opportunities for local businesses and boost economic growth.
- Coordinating workforce accommodation sites between projects in an area.

Water and wastewater

Key findings

- Delivery of the REZ will need water to make materials for construction, such as concrete, and for workers to use at construction sites and workforce accommodation. Construction activities will also produce wastewater which will need to be managed and treated.
- Water use is considered for each individual project through the comprehensive development assessment phase prior to approval being granted.
- Projects will need to provide solutions to address increased water needs and additional water treatment infrastructure may be required in LGAs with more development.

Potential opportunities may include:

- Working with councils and developers to review regional water management.
- Strategies to help improve water management practices and prepare for dry periods.
- Coordinating project timelines to reduce peak water demand.
- Designing supporting infrastructure like workforce accommodation to help upgrade and expand the regional water and wastewater network to cater for future population growth.
- Continuing to ensure that community benefit schemes are providing legacy benefits to regional communities including improving water treatment capacity.
- Coordinating the use of shared water sources like the Hunter River between REZs. Continuing to incentivise renewable energy project developers to incorporate sustainable water management in their project designs and investigate increasing the use of alternative water sources, such as recycled water.

Waste and circular economy

Key findings

- Communities in the New England region currently generate around 120,000 tonnes of waste per year. Community-generated waste is not expected to significantly increase during the development of the REZ.
- Most waste will be generated during construction of major projects in and around the REZ. Key waste types include construction and demolition waste, organic waste and packaging. Waste management related to end-of-life-cycle decommissioning will also need to be considered.
- Renewable energy-specific waste streams (such as solar panels, wind turbine blades and batteries) will contribute a smaller proportion of total waste but present greater management challenges due to their complexity and recycling opportunities. In the right recycling facilities, many materials like solar panels, batteries and metals can be recovered, reused or remanufactured.
- Without intervention the volume of waste generated from major projects may exceed the existing capacity of local waste infrastructure, such as landfills, which are typically set up to manage residential waste. Local waste systems may need to be upgraded to manage expected volumes and types of waste, especially during peak construction.

Potential opportunities may include:

- The REZ provides an opportunity to boost recycling, better understand waste infrastructure and support long-term environmental and economic benefits for the region. Opportunities may include:
 - Developing strategies and frameworks to align with NSW circular economy goals.
 - Developing a regional waste facility database and a digital system to track project waste and recovery and coordinate waste planning across the region.
 - Coordinating project decommissioning schedules to improve recycling efficiency and ease pressure on local facilities.
 - Working with councils to identify where infrastructure upgrades are needed most.

Local supply chains

Key findings

- Assuming all proposed major energy and non-energy projects considered in the study are delivered, demand for goods and services across the region is expected to increase.
- Local industries in key supply chains are well placed to support the delivery of the REZ.
- Demand for construction services, transportation and plant and equipment hire will increase during construction, with some specialist skills and equipment needed from outside the region.
- While there are some challenges, materials businesses are well placed to adapt to supply major infrastructure projects.
- Without additional support, small businesses may not be equipped to service new large-scale projects in addition to existing clients.
- More publicly available information about supply and demand for the REZ and its project pipeline would help businesses better understand how they can best contribute.

Potential opportunities may include:

- Supporting small and medium businesses to partner and tender for work on large-scale projects.
- Creating a local supplier database to connect developers with regional businesses, which is now in progress through EnergyCo's partnership with the Industry Capability Network online hub at gateway.icn.org.au/energynsw.
- Offering subsidised training to help businesses upskill staff and expand their workforce.

Contact us

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.



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